

Traffic and Transportation Committee

January 12, 2021

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date, beginning at 2:00 pm over Zoom Conference Call.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

Present

Councilmember Seekings, Chair; Councilmember Brady, Vice-Chair; Councilwoman Delcioppo; and Mayor Tecklenburg. **Also Present:** Randall Keith Benjamin II, Robert Somerville, Janie Borden, Allen Davis, and Matt Frohlich.

The meeting was opened by a moment of silence led by Councilmember Seekings.

Golf Cart Discussion

Mr. Benjamin said that the golf cart discussions started as an inquiry from Councilmember Lewis to look into ways to better regulate golf carts, especially in downtown areas. Within the existing State Code and DMV regulations, they could update their procedures. Mr. Somerville said that under State Law, golf carts were required to be registered through the DMV. It was not a difficult process, just a form that they had to fill out indicating the ownership and that the golf cart had insurance. Once they completed that, they got a decal to be placed on the golf cart, which helped identify, kind of like a license plate, who that golf cart belonged to. The problem they were running into, as far as enforcement, was that they were finding carts that were parking illegally in prohibited zones or at meters that were not registered, that they could not find any identification for, like a VIN number. So, there was an enforcement problem. Last year, they did write 173 parking citations on golf carts, but a lot of them, they had to walk away from because the golf carts were not registered. After working with Janie and Legal, they were looking at enforcing that State Law by putting a boot on the carts. They would boot the vehicle and once the owner would come to claim the vehicle, they would have to pay the \$50 boot fee. Then, they could issue them a Municipal Summons for having an unregistered golf cart and they could get them into court that way. Mr. Benjamin said they had been asked a specific question of what may need to be changed within city ordinances, and what they wanted to emphasize was that there was an enforceability opportunity here without them having to do any City ordinances changes. However, parking enforcement officers would have to be given the ability to give out those summonses.

Mayor Tecklenburg said there were other towns that had developed intricate registration protocols, but they should enforce what was already on the books and see how that went before they decided to draw up their own ordinance. He said he'd also like to make sure that Charleston Police and Livability officers had this enforcement ability, too, so that not just parked golf carts, but ones that were riding around and it was apparent they were being negligent, that the officer could also give them a summons at that point for not having their registration.

Councilwoman Delcioppo asked if the only enforceability they had was, as far as the registration, if they didn't have a valid driver's license. There was nothing as far as the safety of it, like how someone was operating, or did that follow the same as vehicles. Mr. Somerville said that it was the same as vehicles.

They were required to have an active driver's license and to be over the age of 16 and a golf cart could not be operated at night. Councilwoman Delcioppo said the reason she asked was because she saw parents drive around with infants in baby carriers strapped to their chest, which they would never do in their big vehicles. She asked if it was like distracted driving, and if there was not enough meat on the bone to make it worthwhile to enforce. Mr. Benjamin said he could explore all those pieces with Police and Livability. He thought when the initiative came to this committee, it was specific around the enforceability with parking and with the golf cart usage. Internally, they saw an immediate opportunity on enforcement, from a parking standing situation with the golf carts, and the fact that what completely disabled them from even being able to get in touch with the owner of the vehicles was the lack of registration. He knew they wanted to move forward on that piece, and they could explore all other areas for how those vehicles should and should not be used.

Councilmember Seekings said they had been talking about this for a long time and thought that having some access to the unregistered golf carts was a really good idea, and they should do it. Councilmember Seekings said they had a bifurcated path. For the people that were responsible and came in to register their golf carts, he asked if they had a placard or something that gave them a summary of the rules of the road. He thought there was still a huge divergence between what people thought they could do with their golf cart and what they could do. Mr. Somerville said the DMV issued the registration and on that form it did indicate that you had to have a valid driver's license and that you had to have insurance. He knew Councilwoman Delcioppo referenced distracted driving. He did not think they required seatbelts, and he thought that was maybe what the Mayor was getting more into, that maybe they should look into a more firm ed up ordinance that would address all of that. Councilmember Seekings said he definitely agreed with Councilwoman Delcioppo, that they needed to beef it up. He thought Daniel Island and Downtown were the two places where the most golf carts were. There was zero compliance with some of the very basic rules that they already had in place. First and foremost, they wanted to make sure that the people who did register understood the golf cart rules, so they could enforce them. He thought it was great that they could get after the unregistered golf carts. He said they had to be able to boot them because they were all over the place.

Mr. Benjamin said they had a traffic work group committee with CPD and his department that Business Neighborhood Services also attended, so he would bring that up during that grouping. Councilmember Seekings said that if you went up to King Street on any given night, when it was dark, you would see a number of golf carts parked in funny places. He wanted to know if they could put a placard on them to say 'excuse me, you can't drive this after night. It's a bad idea and it's against the law.' Councilmember Brady said that even in the neighborhoods, golf carts would go on night cruises and they were really difficult to spot. Councilmember Seekings asked that Mr. Benjamin get back to them sooner rather than later.

Morrison Drive Sidewalk Project

Mr. Davis said there was a TIF allocation and this was an attempt to use the already mobilized private sector to deliver much-needed public infrastructure. Anybody who had driven down or walked down Morrison Drive had seen this. A lot of ponding occurred in the area above the curb line, so it was not associated with the drainage of the street itself but associated with the drainage of the adjacent properties. Obviously, the area needed a sidewalk, but they also looked for opportunities where basic

infrastructure, like sidewalks, could alleviate other priorities for the city, such as access to affordable housing and flooding. For reference, this was not exactly in the Cooper River Bridge TIF district, but it did connect to parts of the TIF district. Actually, the funding from the TIF district was going to pay for this improvement. There was \$150,000 already allocated and a 2017 TIF district bond, so the money was already in place and ready to be used for this infrastructure. The partners on this project were Origin development partners, and they were responsible for Morrison Yards. This was a BAR submittal from theirs of 2019. They were not required to deliver this portion of sidewalk, but since their crews were already out there, they were more than happy to help get this project done. There were some segments where the sidewalk was already constructed, so they would need to install sidewalk where it was missing and install ADA accessible curb ramps, and, if budget allowed, do some lateral crosswalks. There was a lot of runoff from the adjacent property that was pooling above the curb line that was not able to get into the street drainage. Simply adding a sidewalk would alleviate the transportation need in the area, but also allow water to escape into the Morrison Drive drainage system. They received a cost estimate from the partners. They could do a five or six foot sidewalk. It was well within the budget. The parking area that was fronting onto Morrison Drive, just before you got to the old Grace and Pyramid Bridge area, flooded. If there was any money left over after the basic needs of the sidewalk were met, they would like to add landscape improvements. The next step was to develop a Memorandum of Agreement with the private sector development partners. They would be doing that over the coming weeks and would be bringing that back to City Council on the 26th.

Mayor Tecklenburg said he thought it was a fine project. If they ran into a shortfall, they should let him know. He didn't mind asking the Housing Authority or Charleston Water Service to chip in a little bit. Councilmember Seekings said he had a group that ran up there and sometimes it was impassable because it was so muddy. He also asked who would be managing the project. Mr. Benjamin said it was listed on the City Capital Improvements Plan. Mr. Frohlich said two things would come up in the January 26th meeting: a MOA with the developer for the project itself and a resolution for the findings of benefit for the TIF district.

Director's Update

Mr. Benjamin stated that the Brigade Street project was supposed to begin on the 11th but had been pushed back to January 25. They were working with SCDOT on what street closures were going to look like. They had been sending monthly updates to the neighborhood presidents, councilmembers of those districts, and other advocates in area. As a reminder, this project was a partnership with SCDOT, it was them taking advantage of SCDOT's resurfacing plan to introduce what would be the first protected bike infrastructure in the city. It would also improve safety at Meeting and Brigade Street, which was one of the most dangerous intersections in the city.

Transportation Sales Tax with Charleston County, they had been asked to submit their list of application projects for the February 1st due date. They had presented the projects to the garden city staff and would also present those projects to the Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Things that had changed from last year to this year were the County asking that specific accident data be included, so they had been working with CPD on getting that together, that any right-of-way needs would be the responsibility of the requesting entity, and that they were required to have support letters for any of the

projects that they submitted. This was where Councilmembers came in. They would hear from T&T on projects that might be in their district and getting letters of support for those applications.

Project 700 Crosswalks was an initiative that they had started as a pilot with SCDOT District Six on improving signalized intersections for pedestrian safety. They had started with 9 projects and now the Tri-County area had 142. These were primarily on the Peninsula. They had some that were in the works at Rutledge at Cleveland, Coming at Vanderhorst, Coming at Radcliffe, Coming at Morris, Courtney at Dowdy, and Rutledge at Vanderhorst. They were trying to push safety as much as possible.

They had improved flood marker signs that were going to be at varying locations around the City. Specifically, as an indication to motorists as they came into varying intersections that GIS and CPD may open or close depending on tide flows. They were also making sure they were enhancing their flood notification and warning systems that they had been coordinating with the resiliency team on.

Another partnership they were excited about was with DHEC and CARTA. DHEC had been trying to prioritize reaching out to marginalized communities when it came to Covid-19 testing. One of the things that came up was maximizing the transit service systems for being able to reach those populations. They did a partnership in Columbia with COMET, so they approached the City of Charleston about doing a partnership with CARTA. They were in the midst of talking with DHEC about setting up a kiosk at Mary Street where transit riders and anybody else would be able to come up for rapid testing at no cost to the City. The majority of transit riders didn't have access to a car, so having a walk up site would remove a barrier to access.

The Committee had allowed T&T to close South Market Street at times to enhance social distancing and to be a support to the small businesses there and to the brick and mortar businesses. They institutionalized that on August 15th, and one of the things they were able to do was measure the pedestrian counts throughout that time. They used an eagle counter, which used infrared systems to track pedestrians and cyclists. Between August 15 and Christmas, from 9 to 5, daily, the raw data showed that there were over 129,587 pedestrians counted. If they took into account the margin of error for infrared, the actual numbers were between 142,000- 155,000. Councilmember Seekings asked what the future of this project was and if they would continue to use it. Mr. Benjamin said he would love to continue using it and introducing it to a number of different places. Mayor Tecklenburg said that hopefully later this year they would start on streetscape improvement projects at the Market Street area. He recommended they continue to do what they were doing with that closure until the streetscape program started. To be honest, closures were going to follow the streetscape project for probably two years. Councilmember Seekings asked for an updated copy of that streetscape plan. He said it might be worth putting temporary bollards up to follow those street closures instead of hardscape. Mayor Tecklenburg pointed out that the project was actually with Stormwater and not Capital Projects. Mr. Benjamin said that Mr. Fountain had actually shown him those plans and they had spoken about how they could be more pedestrian friendly.

Mr. Benjamin said he needed to bring nominations for the Bike/Ped Committee to the full Council and that there were two vacancies on the committee, one for a neighborhood advocate and one for communities with special needs. At the end of 2019, the County shifted all dispatch responsibility for parking back to the City. Thanks to Real Estate, IT, and Park/Facilities, they had a new space for the

entire parking division. Finally, the monthly maintenance schedule, they were currently on the Peninsula this month and would be back in March. They would be in West Ashley in February and May, in Daniel Island in November and July, and Johns and James Island in December and August. April was their flex month. Councilwoman Delcioppo asked to be looped into the conversations about Market Street openings and closures, as well as the French District. Mr. Benjamin also stated that they were waiting for the temperature to improve so that they could do thermoplastic paint on that intersection before they open it up. Councilmember Seekings asked Mr. Benjamin to bring an update on the Ashley River Bridge to the next meeting and an update on paving and relifting off the corner of Broad and Lockwood. Mr. Benjamin said Matt was handling that and would be the best person to speak to it. He also said the Federal Highway Administration was going to be doing a briefing on the bridge.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Andrea Derungs
Council Secretary