

## Traffic and Transportation Committee

March 8, 2021

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date, beginning at 2:32 p.m. over Zoom Conference Call.

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

### **Present**

Councilmember Seekings, Chair; Councilmember Brady, Vice-Chair; Councilwoman Jackson, Councilwoman Delcioppo; and Mayor Tecklenburg (joined at 2:34 p.m.). **Also Present:** Andrea Derungs, Keith Benjamin, Robbie Somerville, Chip McQueeney, Rick Jerue, Amy Wharton, Matt Frohlich, and Bethany Whitaker.

The meeting was opened by a moment of silence led by Councilwoman Delcioppo.

### **Approval of Minutes**

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilwoman Delcioppo, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2021 meeting.

### **Approval of an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to execute a memorandum of agreement with Palmetto Railways; the South Carolina Department of Commerce; and the South Carolina State Ports Authority regarding the Navy Base Intermodal Facility (NBIF) project**

Mr. McQueeney said that negotiations for this project had been going on since 2017, and involved the former W.R. Grace site, which the City owned. A new offer had been made to pay the City \$11.5 million in satisfaction of two obligations. One was the purchase of a portion of the W.R. Grace site for use of the railway and the other was for a portion of the funds to be used as mitigation for existing and future impacts from the southern loop. The language, as far as what they could do with the funds, was fairly broad except that \$4.9 had to be used for mitigation improvements. The City's current plans for the site, related to the Magnolia Development agreement for W.R. Grace, were to construct a new Public Works facility. They were now trying to find an alternative site to build that. The Ports Authority wanted to purchase around 2.5 acres of the W.R. Grace site, which would leave roughly 13.5 acres for the City to continue to use.

To give history, the Ports Authority proposed mitigation projects of \$4.3 million in 2017. The City wanted closer to \$38 million for mitigation projects, so discussions had stalled. The General Assembly was currently debating economic bonds that would support the construction of the southern loop and the NBIF facility. The City's agreement with the Ports Authority would be contingent on that legislation being passed. If it wasn't passed, the City wouldn't be giving up anything and the Ports Authority wouldn't have an obligation to pay the City any money. The conversation in the General Assembly had revitalized talks and caused the Ports Authority to increase their offer. Mr. McQueeney said his intent with this authorization was to lock in as much as possible in the obligation of the money and what the City was going to give up. A future ordinance would have to specify the exact property being given up.

Councilwoman Jackson asked at what point the decision would be made about how much land the City would sell. Mr. McQueeney said that he and the Mayor were in discussions about trying to

decrease the 2.53 acres that were currently on the table and said it would be finalized in the purchase agreement. Right now, he was only asking for the authority to sell up to 2.53 acres as part of the deal. Councilwoman Jackson said it seemed like they were being asked to solidify a lot of moving parts without having all the information. Mr. McQueeney said that he really didn't think they'd be able to get a better deal than the current offer. Councilwoman Jackson said she appreciated that, but she was more concerned with that they were being obligated to do by some fairly generous definitions of mitigation and improvement. What were they giving up and what did they have to do with the money that they were getting? Mayor Tecklenburg said the primary focus of all the mitigation discussion was on traffic. They had a thorough study done, which had been reviewed by the SC Railways and Commerce. He said the big shift in numbers occurred when it became apparent that the preference for the Lowcountry Rapid Transit was on the King Street side rather than the Meeting Street side. Most of what mitigation would accomplish is, if you were coming up or down Meeting St. and you saw a big, long train ahead, to provide some other connectivity between King and Meeting and improve what was already there, as well as have a connector on the north side to the port access road, so that Public Safety vehicles and citizens could get around.

Councilmember Seekings said he remembered when Jennifer Bihl did her study on traffic. He thought she had shown projected backups at rush hour to be around 6,000 feet. He verified that King Street would be outside the southern loop and that there would still be unfettered access going through that area. He also confirmed that they would be using some of the money to make improvements along the corridor to make it more passable, more accessible, and safer for bikes and pedestrians. He said they should include signage that would alert drivers that a train was coming so that they could reroute. He said the projections showed that some of the trains using the southern loop could be 15,000 feet long and go 10 mph. He asked if Ports Authority had mitigation with North Charleston, too. Mayor Tecklenburg said they had a long-standing agreement from over 10 years ago to pay for certain overpasses at certain locations and that those agreements had been modified recently. Councilmember Seekings asked if they would zone the area properly before handing it over. Mr. McQueeney said he had been thinking about that. It was currently zoned HI, so he wasn't sure how much differently it would need to be zoned.

On a motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Brady, the Traffic & Transportation Committee voted unanimously to approve an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to execute a memorandum of agreement with Palmetto Railways; the South Carolina Department of Commerce; and the South Carolina State Ports Authority regarding the Navy Base Intermodal Facility (NBIF) project.

### **Director's Update**

Mr. Benjamin said he came to the Committee not too long ago regarding the I-26 lease agreement with SCDOT and had reported that they had figured out how to navigate the appropriate language with SCDOT. Since then, they had learned that SCDOT needed to run that language past the Federal Highway Administration. That had been handled, they had the cosign from the Federal Highway Administration, and that document was sitting on the secretary's desk, already signed by the Mayor. The Maybank and Rivers intersection was up and running. That was a County project, but it had a signal that the City would have to operate and maintain. He had received a couple questions about flashing yellow arrows at Farmfield, Lockwood, and Calhoun. They were still waiting on SCDOT to make a final review of

those. Meeting and Brigade was finishing up, but there was still some thermal and green paint work to do. They had activated the location of Island Park Drive and Fairchild intersection, as well. He said he knew that signal intersections seemed like they took forever, but when you wanted decorated mast arms, they had to be customized for every intersection. That project was done entirely by a minority-owned business and a women-owned business, and it looked like they would be under budget, as well.

The Project 700 Crosswalks, another partnership with SCDOT, was trying to improve signalized intersections for pedestrian safety. It started as a trial project with the City but was now throughout district 6. They had 4 other locations that would hopefully be moving forward in July: Coming at Vanderhorst, Coming at Radcliffe, Coming at Morris, and Rutledge at Cleveland. The Bees Ferry/Sanders Road intersection was also supposed to be signalized. They had reviewed those plans, which was also a County project, but another intersection they would have to maintain and operate. They were told the project was trying to be bid out this year. Councilmember Brady asked if that would be an intersection where traffic cues on Sanders would trip the light and other than that Bees Ferry would always have priority. Mr. Benjamin said they would be working to make sure that all the lights on Bees Ferry were coordinated. He said they had also completed reviews on Rivers Ave. at Fenwick Hall to signalizing that intersection, which would also be a County project.

This year they had taken on the dispatch that used to be at the County. All of that staff had been relocated to office space on the third floor at 2 George, so all the parking enforcement was together now. They started golf cart enforcement last week and had issued 2 citations. A one sheet application and \$5 would get you in compliance. They had been working with CARTA and Ron's staff on 9 shelter locations that were going to have digital signage. Last week, he signed off on 27 locations that currently weren't sheltered that were going to get solar lighting. They had been doing the COVID testing at the Mary Street station since the beginning of February and, as of last week, over 830 people had been serviced at that location. Councilwoman Jackson asked if they had learned anything new about the 2021 resurfacing yet. Mr. Somerville said the County indicated that the pothole was supposed to be done in April as part of 2020 resurfacing, and they had not finalized the 2021 resurfacing plan. Mr. Benjamin said that they usually sent out the TST awardings and the roads that had been identified in that sales tax process at the same time.

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.