

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTIES OF POTTER AND RANDALL

ON the 20th day of March, 2013, the Amarillo Traffic Commission met at 1:30 p.m. in regular session in the City Commission Chambers on the third floor of City Hall at 509 S.E. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Traffic Commissioners present were D. J. Stubben, Dean Downey, Charlie Graham, Craig Gualtiere, Mark Nair, Tiller Watson III, and Walt Kelley. Commissioners absent were Frank Nelson and Steve Rogers. Staff members present were Jerry Bird, Traffic Engineer, David Szmagalski, Traffic Operations Technician, Michael Rice, Director of Public Works, Lt. Ken Albright, Amarillo Police Department, and Judy Alexander, Recording Secretary.

Commissioner Kelley led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Commissioner Watson gave the invocation.

Commissioner Stubben established a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following items of business were conducted:

1. **Approval of the February 20, 2013, Minutes:**  
Commissioner Kelley made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2013, meeting. Commissioner Gualtiere seconded the motion, and motion carried unanimously.
2. **Consider Creating a Dedicated Northbound Left-Turn Lane on Fillmore Street at S.E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Central Business District:**  
Commissioner Stubben asked if anyone in the audience would like to come forward to speak.

Richard Ware, 3012 S. Hughes, came forward and stated that Amarillo National Bank has requested the dedicated left-turn lane on Fillmore and S.E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue for the last two years. He said that Downtown, Inc., Center City, and the major commercial businesses in the downtown area also supported the lane. He stated it was the right thing to do and the right time to do it, and he asked for the support of the Commissioners.

Jerry Bird, Traffic Engineer, stated Downtown, Inc. and Center City are planning organizations, not engineering organizations. He reported that after the last meeting of the Traffic Commission, Traffic staff reviewed the signal at Fillmore and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and made a program change to delay a pattern change to 9:30 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. He explained that the downtown signals have four programmed cycles to accommodate changing traffic conditions during the day. He stated he had personally visited the intersection several times after the program change, and he said traffic seemed to be moving well. He stated that the dedicated left-turn lane does not meet any engineering criteria and would reduce safety and increase maintenance costs. He stated that larger vehicles making the turn would more likely sideswipe eastbound

traffic. He referred to a handout that showed tire mark damage to the concrete curb by vehicles making turns in the downtown area. He reported that the intersections of Fillmore and 6<sup>th</sup> differed from 10<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues in the number of lanes, lane directions, and street width. He stated that urban arterials streets should have a minimum of eleven feet lanes by TxDOT design standards and twelve feet is desirable. He stated that Fillmore Street is part of the National Highway System and thus, the City of Amarillo, TxDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration would need to approve any significant changes.

Commissioner Gualtiere questioned if parking on Fillmore could be eliminated to allow more street width for traffic lanes. Mr. Bird said it is possible, but it would require lane shifts. Commissioner Stubben asked what the costs would be to the City to make the changes. Mr. Bird responded that estimated construction cost would be \$10,846.51, and additional annual maintenance costs would be \$605.00. Commissioner Stubben asked about the accident history at the intersection. Mr. Bird said that there were two accidents in 2010, four accidents in 2011, and 3 accidents in 2012.

Commissioner Nair questioned what signal programming changes were made and questioned if the eastbound stop bar could be moved back to improve safety. Mr. Bird said the programming change has been effective for about a month. The purpose is to extend the pattern change back to 9:30 a.m. to avoid the peak traffic period.

Commissioner Kelly stated the city's authority to make the change concerns him, and he questioned the process of submitting it for approval to TxDOT and the National Highway System and any subsequent appeal process. Commissioner Stubben asked Mike Fowler, TxDOT Traffic Construction Engineer, to come forward to speak.

Mr. Fowler stated he was not certain about the rules and regulations that would be involved in the approval process or a subsequent appeal. He said TxDOT would look at the traffic engineering study and perform a traffic study of their own. He said he did see potential problems with the turn lane such as lane width, pedestrian safety, ADA access, and maintenance costs without any supported benefits. He stated the level of service at the intersection is an "A", which is the best it could have.

Richard Ware stated they had received a letter in 2011 from Howard Holland, District Engineer, with Texas Department of Transportation stating the State's position is neutral and that they have delegated it to the City Commission. He said Mr. Holland stated that they typically are in favor of eliminating on-street parking because it improves traffic flow and safety.

Mr. Fowler stated that eliminating parking would be a possibility and they could take a look at it to see if it would be feasible.

Commissioner Graham questioned what the street width of Fillmore is at 6<sup>th</sup> and the minimum widths for sidewalks. Mr. Bird responded that 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue is 49 feet back of curb and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue is 56 feet back of curb; he said that Fillmore had been widened in the past in the vicinity of 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>. He stated that TxDOT standards call for sidewalks to be a minimum of six feet wide on arterials.

Commissioner Nair suggested the problem should be recognized regardless of the barriers. Commissioner Gualtiere suggested the Traffic Commission pass it forward to the City Commission for their direction. Commissioner Kelley expressed concern about passing it forward if the project is not feasible.

Commissioner Graham suggested that commissioners should consider if there is a workaround to the issue and if there is space available to modify parking, lane width, or the adjacent sidewalks.

Michael Rice, Director of Public Works, came forward and said it was possible, but reconstruction of the corner had inherent major issues. He said the building on the southwest corner has a basement that extends to the back of curb on Fillmore, and the city had encountered problems on that corner when constructing ADA ramps to meet federal standards. He questioned if the project would make sense from a financial and logistics point of view. He reported that the Central Business District default for sidewalk width is eight feet, and any deviation would require an appeals procedure of the urban design standards. He also expressed concern about the weaving of traffic on Fillmore if lane widths varied along the roadway.

William Ware, 3012 S. Ong, appeared and expressed appreciation for the traffic study and the signal program timing delay to move it out of the peak traffic time. He stated he has noticed a slight difference, but it is too early to tell what the benefit will be. He proposed that parking be restricted on the west side of Fillmore St. between S.E. 6<sup>th</sup> and S.E. 7<sup>th</sup> to provide more room for turning traffic and more visibility for eastbound traffic. Commissioner Kelley questioned if he was removing his request for the turn lane. Mr. Ware said he was not officially removing the request, but wanted to see if the parking restriction would significantly improve traffic flow. Mr. Bird stated Traffic staff will begin work on a parking study and analysis.

Commissioner Kelley made a motion to table the dedicated left-turn lane on Fillmore and S.E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Commissioner Gualtiere seconded the motion. Motion carried with six members voting yes and Commissioner Nair voting no.

**3. Miscellaneous Discussion:**

Commissioner Gualtiere distributed drawings of an approved TxDOT "Share the Road" sign. He suggested the Traffic Commission request the City Commission fund replacement signs in the 2014 fiscal year budget that would be cohesive with the TxDOT sign. He advocated for a larger sign with a more pronounced coloring. Mr. Bird stated that a yellow diamond-shaped sign is a warning sign for a specific condition, and he said the abundance of the "Share the Road" sign presently used dilutes the effectiveness of the other warning signs. He said he has researched the website See the Blind Spot, which utilizes education, engineering and enforcement. He suggested the website or another similar one could be used to educate the public and supplement the safety campaign.

Commissioner Graham said he visited with a representative of Adventure Cycling and was told the Route 66 Maps will be finished in 2014. He said when Route 66 becomes part of the US Bicycle Route System, as many as 5000 bicyclists annually will be coming through Amarillo. He said he had noticed that other cities, such as Tulsa and

Edmond, have installed signage to guide the bicyclists through the city. He hoped Amarillo would consider doing the same and reap the benefits of their tourist dollars.

Commissioner Downey said he recently attended a Texas Motor Safety Forum in Waco. He is a proponent of the existing signs, but agreed that replacement signs of another color would be more visible and effective. He stated that education is of utmost importance for motorcyclists, bicyclists, and the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

  
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D.J. Stubben, Chairman