



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

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TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, March 28, 2006

PRESENT: Aids. Becker, Herzog, Krol, Maher, Purins -5

ALSO PRESENT: W. Kappel, Director of Public Works

Ald. Becker as Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Request for Traffic Signals at N. 68th Street and Milwaukee Avenue

Doris Miller, 2220 N. 63rd Street, said she has grave concerns about the intersection of 68th Street and Milwaukee Avenue. Conditions there vary with the time of day, but drivers going north or south on 68th Street have to be very careful in order to avoid accidents. Because of the jog in 68th Street, drivers proceeding south at Milwaukee Avenue have to first make a left turn, then veer into the right lane in order to turn right and continue to go south on 68th. Furthermore, bushes on the northwest corner obstruct the view of those drivers, which will be worse when they leaf out and when traffic increases in the summer. Drivers have to edge out into the road to see what is coming from the east or west, and it becomes something of a game of "chicken" as to who is willing to take the risk of proceeding. Some neighbors have taken alternate routes, but there are no convenient north-south streets that go through. Ms. Miller said she is also concerned about pedestrians, especially children or joggers. It is difficult for them to determine which car is going when. She suggested that even a traffic signal operating just during busy times of the day would alleviate problems quite a bit.

Nancy Becker, 1626 N. 71st Street, said she and her husband, the Chair of this committee, are frequent walkers, and she mentioned this intersection to him two or three years ago. It is one of the most dangerous ones in the city. It is chaotic with no order and is extremely dangerous. Traffic on Milwaukee Avenue is increasing and adds to traffic heading to the hardware store on the corner or going down 68th Street to Sentry.

The Chair agreed about visibility problems at the north leg, noting that drivers proceed so far out that pedestrians need to walk behind them. Noting budget constraints, he mentioned possibly closing the hardware store entrance and timing signals similar to those at 115th and 116th Streets and Watertown Plank Road.

Mr. Kappel distributed a graphic of the intersection. He said that a traffic signal study was done in the 1980s, but it did not meet warrants based on traffic volumes. More recent counts on 68th Street north of State Street and north of North Avenue indicate that average daily traffic volume has decreased. A study of this intersection today could cost from \$15,000-\$25,000 due to the anomaly of Mountain Avenue and the five legs of the intersection. There has been talk in the past of a cul-de-sac at Mountain Avenue or a traffic circle, but extensive land would be needed for the latter. Mr. Kappel agreed that there are times when it is very difficult to make the southbound-to-eastbound turn or to continue southbound. He was doubtful, however, that warrants could be met and also noted that signals might actually delay traffic more, especially on Milwaukee Avenue in rush hour. Signal installation would run from \$125,000 up to over \$200,000 based on the cost of the signals recently installed on Watertown

Plank Road at Innovation Drive that cost over \$100,000 for three directions. If the committee wishes to pursue this, Mr. Kappel recommended getting an estimate on the cost of a traffic study. If a study establishes that the intersection meets traffic signal warrants, then the matter of proceeding with installation would have to be considered.

The Chair asked about establishing current traffic volumes. Mr. Kappel said that could be done with the Police Department's speed monitoring trailer. Now is not a good time to do that, however, because construction around this area would give an artificial reading.

Ald. Maher asked about possible design solutions. Mr. Kappel said that a traffic circle design was considered in perhaps 1998 or 1999, but the need to acquire property put that out of the realm of possibility. Any type of acquisition of land to help straighten this intersection becomes extremely costly.

Ald. Purins indicated that he uses this intersection frequently and finds that the problem is breaks in traffic for drivers heading southbound. He asked if an additional stop sign for the westerly leg of 68th Street would give people enough of a break. He also asked about the location of crosswalks, which Mr. Kappel said is on the far east side of the southern leg.

Ald. Krol also spoke of his familiarity with the intersection and noted the effectiveness of rotaries in other cities. He noted the difficulties for northbound and southbound drivers and commented that it would be difficult even to determine positioning and timing of any traffic signals. He mentioned the possibility of not requiring a stop at all for westbound Milwaukee Avenue traffic in the right lane.

Mr. Kappel said that any signals would have to be activated by traffic rather than working at all times. A good example of that is at Underwood and Harmonie. He could get an accident history but doesn't believe there would be a lot. While there is an appearance of being unsafe, it is really not unsafe if everyone understands the rules of the road. For drivers, it is more a question of the time spent waiting to cross, especially in rush hour traffic.

Moved by Ald. Krol, seconded by Ald. Maher to refer this matter to the engineering department for further study and report back at a future meeting with any recommendations that may result –

Mr. Kappel said that there is a crossing guard during the school year as well as islands. Other than the rush hour, there is not constant, steady traffic. Warrants for signals are eight hours of 600 cars or more.

Ald. Herzog asked about availability of state transportation funds. Mr. Kappel said that he and the City Engineer have looked at that, but generally there has to be a large number of crashes to qualify for that type of funding.

Ald. Herzog agreed that an additional stop sign on Milwaukee Avenue might possibly help southbound drivers and suggested looking at that possibility under a 90-day trial with appropriate warning signs.

The Chair explained the concept of warrant criteria, and there was further discussion of past and current methods of counting traffic.

Vote on the motion, Ayes: 5

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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