

MEMORANDUM

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

DATE: November 9, 2017

BOARD: Mobile GR Commission

FROM: Kristin Bennett, Transportation Planning Supervisor
Mobile GR and Parking Services Staff

SUBJECT: Proposed Resolution, Ordinance and Policy Changes related to Pedestrian Safety/Accessibility

Action Requested

Recommendation by the Mobile GR Commission to City Commission to move forward with proposed resolution, ordinance, and policy changes to improve safety and accessibility as well as the experience of pedestrians in the public right of way.

Overview

In response to policy directions and values identified in Vital Streets as well as staff-identified concerns and Commission and citizen requests, City staff from several departments (City Attorney, Engineering, Mobility, Planning, and Traffic Safety) worked together to develop a responsive set of proposed resolution, ordinance and policy changes to address several pedestrian safety and accessibility issues. Staff presented the following proposed changes to the City Commission's Committee of the Whole at its October 24, 2017 meeting. Staff is now bringing these proposed changes through various Boards and Commissions before returning to City Commission to set a public hearing (target date is November 28).

Proposed Resolution, Ordinance, and Policy Changes

1. Vision Zero

Issue: Reported traffic crashes are increasing nationally, statewide and locally, including a 20.8% increase in reported traffic crashes in Grand Rapids between 2009 and 2016. In response to these trends, many cities around the U.S. are adopting and implementing "Vision Zero" policies and programs, which work to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Michigan State Police (MSP) have similar policies and programs, known as "Toward Zero Deaths", which also focus on interdisciplinary and data-driven approaches using education, enforcement, engineering and emergency medical/trauma services to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

The adopted Vital Streets Plan includes Vision Zero as one of six key values of the Vital Streets vision. This Vision Zero value identified the City's commitment to

provide safe street design for all users and maintain the street infrastructure quality to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Recommendation: Resolution supporting the adoption of a Vision Zero strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries while increasing equitable mobility options for all users.

Intent: demonstrate a commitment that even one traffic-related fatality or serious injury in Grand Rapids is too many and that the safety of people walking, bicycling, using transit or operating a motor vehicle is of the utmost when designing, operating and maintaining city streets.

2. No Parking in Transit Stops

Issues: Rapid and DASH buses are low floor vehicles, which allow for passengers to walk on and off the buses flush with the height of the curbside transit stop pad *if* the bus can fully pull along the curb at designated bus stops. These vehicles are also equipped with kneeling capabilities to slightly raise and lower the bus at the front door of the vehicle to accommodate any modest changes in curb height to maintain flush access.

However, in many locations throughout the City, Rapid and DASH buses cannot align with and pull flush against the curb because of vehicles legally parked in the bus stop area. This results in several safety and accessibility issues including:

- Passengers entering the street to get on and off buses;
- Passengers required to step up into and down from the bus, which can be difficult for persons with some types of disabilities, seniors, people traveling with children/strollers, and passengers traveling with bags/packages, grocery pull-carts, suitcases, etc.;
- More frequent deployments of the lift equipment for passengers who cannot navigate the step on/off the bus because the bus cannot pull flush to and level with the curbside waiting pad.

These actions slow boardings and alightings, which can result in route delays. Moreover, when transit vehicles cannot pull to the curb, they can more frequently block (partially or fully) the adjacent travel lane, which can result in additional general traffic delay on some corridors.

Recommendation: Amend Chapter 51 “Streets”, Article 4. Parking Restrictions, Section 10.45 Prohibited Parking by adding a new Section (19). Recommended clearance dimensions are based on transit stop parking regulations found in other cities in the Great Lakes region. Both The Rapid and DASH currently use 40’ vehicles:

- Near side bus stops = 80’ clearance for a single 40’ bus

- Far side and mid-block bus stops = 120' clearance for a single 40' bus
- For articulated buses, near side stops = length of the articulated bus + 55', and far side and mid-block stops = length of the articulated + 40'
- The length of the bus stop zones shall be increased by 15 feet for near side stop zones where buses are required to make right turns at that intersection.

Intent: to create uniform access to/from transit stops for Rapid and Dash vehicles citywide. Currently, parking is allowed at many bus stops but restricted partially or fully in other bus stops, which creates challenges for safe and accessible transit service for passengers and for transit operations.

3. Construction Projects Using Public Rights-of-Way (ROW) that Block Pedestrian, Bicycle Access

Issue: With the increasing number of construction projects in Grand Rapids and the increasing number of people walking and bicycling, the City is receiving a corollary increase in the number of safety and accessibility complaints where pedestrian and/or bicycle access has been severed to accommodate construction activities.

Recommendation: Amend Chapter 51 "Streets", Article 3. Sidewalk Obstructions, Section 4.2, 4.3, and 4.20 and add a new Section 4.21 to require traffic control plans to maintain access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Intent: to change the default approach to sidewalk obstructions and traffic control plans prior to the 2018 construction season to insure clear, safe and accessible passage for pedestrians and bicyclists where construction activities are present.

4. Improve Temporary Occupancy Permit (TOP) Enforcement Abilities

Issue: Currently, City inspectors lack adequate enforcement mechanisms to address violations of temporary occupancy permits (TOP).

Recommendation: Amend the City's Omnibus Fee Schedule to include the authority to ticket TOP violations as well as establish the violation fine structure and amounts.

Intent: to provide City inspectors with ticketing authority plus a violation fee schedule to improve compliance with and reduce violations of temporary occupancy permits.

5. Change "Yield to Pedestrians in Crosswalks" Regulation to "Stop"

Issue: Clear pedestrian crossing locations are important to support predictive behaviors by roadway users. Additionally, there are numerous studies that show that drivers and pedestrians have limited knowledge of pedestrian right-of-way laws,

including confusion about more vague or ambiguous terms including when, where and even how motorists are required to yield to pedestrians.

Recommendation: Amend Chapter 181 “General Traffic Regulations”, Article 7. Pedestrians, Section 10.122 Crosswalks to replace “yield” with the word “stop”. Vehicle operators would be required to fully *stop* while a pedestrian is in or entering into the crosswalk. Proposed regulation language mirrors what has been adopted in Ann Arbor and Traverse City.

Intent: to modify the existing “yield to pedestrians in crosswalks” regulation to require vehicles to fully “stop” for pedestrians to improve safe driving behaviors.

6a. Amend City Commission Policy to Allow Decorative Painting on Local Streets

Issue: The City is receiving a growing number of requests for place making projects, including adding artistic / aesthetic elements to public streets.

Recommendation: Amend the City Commission Arts Advisory Committee Policy 89-03 to allow for decorative street painting on local streets with annual daily traffic (ADT) levels below 4,000 vehicles per day. Amending Policy 89-03 would allow the City’s Arts Advisory Committee to decide to accept or decline the “gift” of the proposed art.

Intent: to allow for decorative painting on local streets in approved locations for place making purposes. If approved, street art would be allowed in the travel and parking lanes as well as intersection murals on streets with traffic volumes lower than 4,000 vehicles per day. However, this art must not interfere with any crosswalk and be located away from the curb and curb ramps. Proposed art work cannot include any commercial messages and cannot look like any type of traffic sign, marking or traffic control device (e.g., arrows, letters/words, numbers, crosswalks). Maintenance expectations will also be defined.

6b. Amend City Commission Policy to Allow Some Forms of Aesthetic Crosswalk Treatments

Issue: The City is receiving a growing number of requests for place making projects, including adding artistic / aesthetic elements to crosswalks. Given the traffic control function of marked crosswalks, their design is governed by the federal and Michigan Manuals on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and related federal guidance and policy on crosswalk design.

Due to the increasing demand for artistic crosswalk treatments, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued an [official ruling](#) in August 2013 on the application of colored pavement to clarify any ambiguity about other patterns or colors that were allowable within crosswalks. This ruling followed a prior ruling in 2001 that aesthetic

crosswalk enhancements had no discernable effect on safety or crash reduction, and another ruling in 2011 that freeform crosswalk “art” may degrade the contrast of white crosswalk markings with the pavement and could be contrary to increased safety.

Moreover, although there are not currently any rulings related to crosswalk art and accessibility, City staff has been cautioned by technical staff of the US Access Board to keep artistic treatments out of the crosswalk area, including the curb ramps and approaches to curb ramps on the sidewalk, as they may have an impact on persons with certain types of disabilities.

Recommendation: Amend the City Commission Policy for “Sidewalks” to allow for variations in design and colors of crosswalks that still follow MUTCD language and FHWA Guidance:

“Subdued-colored aesthetic treatments between the legally marked transverse crosswalk lines are permissible... All elements of pattern and color for these treatments are to be uniform, consistent, repetitive, and expected so as not to be a source of distraction...No element of the aesthetic interior treatment can implement pictographs, symbols, multiple color arrangements, etc. or can otherwise attempt to communicate to any roadway user.” (FHWA Official Ruling 3(09)-24(I) – Application of Colored Pavement).

Intent: allow more placemaking opportunities to neighborhoods to enhance aesthetics while staying within the official Federal guidance for crosswalk design.

6c. Amend City Commission Policy to Allow Decorative Painting/Treatments in the Public Right-of-Way

Issue: The City is receiving a growing number of requests for place making projects, including adding artistic / aesthetic elements to public assets in the public right-of-way (i.e., traffic signal boxes, street light poles).

Recommendation: Amend the City Commission Arts Advisory Committee Policy 89-03 to allow for decorative painting or other approved artistic or aesthetic treatments within the public right-of-way on various public assets like traffic signal cabinets, sidewalks, street light poles, etc. Amending Policy 89-03 would allow the City’s Arts Advisory Committee to decide to accept or decline the “gift” of the proposed art.

Intent: to allow for public art on other facilities within the public right-of-way, including sidewalks, traffic signal cabinets and street light poles. Proposed art work cannot include any commercial messages and cannot look like any type of traffic sign, marking or traffic control device (e.g., arrows, letters/words, numbers, crosswalks). Maintenance expectations will also be defined.

PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED POLICY REVISIONS (10/24/17)

Topic	Existing Policy	Considerations for Policy Revision and Justification Thereof	Suggested Language	Notes
1. Vision Zero	Reference in Vital Streets Plan	Vulnerable road users	Resolution	
2. Parking in transit stops	Chapter 51 Streets, Article 4. Parking Regulations, Section 10.45 Prohibited Parking	Bus needs to be able to approach bus stop and align with curb to allow for persons to approach and depart front and rear bus doors flush with the low floor of the bus vehicle to provide an accessible service. Currently, parking restrictions within bus stops are inconsistent, often resulting in passengers boarding from/ alighting into the street.	Add new Section (19)	Near Side Bus Stop = 80' clearance for a single 40' bus; Far Side or Mid-Block Stop = 120' clearance for a single 40' bus. This may also allow bus to pull out of live travel lanes in some locations.
3. Projects using public right-of-way (ROW) that blocks pedestrian and/or bicycle access	Chapter 51 Streets, Article 3. Sidewalk Obstructions, Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.20	Change the "default" traffic control for construction and related projects so that pedestrians and bicyclists have a safe passage without a detour (or significant detour)	Amend Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.20 and add a new 4.21	Consideration to be given for staging of materials and activities; duration of the inconvenience; linear feet/amount of space used; type of district (e.g., Downtown versus 44 th St); pedestrian LOS; grid continuity; ADA accessibility; variety of alternatives; sight lines; logical terminus for

				projects.
4. Temporary Occupancy Permit (TOP) violations	Policy 1000-06 Use of ROW for Construction Policy 80-01 Public ROW Use	Better enforcement mechanism is needed than current process. Inspectors should be able to ticket obvious TOP violations like a parking ticket.	Amend Omnibus Fee schedule	Coordinate with Land Use Development Services (LUDS) inspectors to allow for ticketing authority
5. Yield/stop for pedestrians	Chapter 181 General Traffic Regulations, Article 7. Pedestrians, Section 10.122 Crosswalks	Pedestrians as vulnerable road users should be reasonably accommodated by motor vehicles	Amend Section 10.122 from "yield" to "stop"	Clear pedestrian crossing locations are important to support predictive behavior of road users
Topic (cont.)	Existing Policy (cont.)	Considerations for Policy Revision and Justification Thereof (cont.)	Suggested Language (cont.)	Notes (cont.)
6a. Decorative painting on local streets	City Commission Policy 89-03	Demand from neighborhoods for placemaking projects	Amend Arts Advisory Committee Policy	For use on local streets with ADT below 4,000 cars per day. Allows greater opportunity for street art, intersection murals; must not interfere or act like a traffic control device; process to accept or decline art "gift"; establish maintenance expectations; no commercial messages.
6b. Decorative treatments in crosswalks	City Commission Policy	Demand from neighborhoods for placemaking projects	Amend City Commission policy for decorative treatments in crosswalks	Reference MUTCD and Federal Guidance in policy; allowable materials; must not interfere with traffic control

				device; establish maintenance expectations.
6c. Decorative painting, treatments on other assets in the public right-of-way	City Commission Policy 89-03	Demand from neighborhoods for placemaking projects	Amend Arts Advisory Committee Policy	Allows for treatments on other facilities within the right-of-way (e.g., signal cabinets, sidewalks, light poles); process to accept or decline art "gift"; establish maintenance expectations; no commercial messages

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