



Traffic Engineering and Parking Divisions

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TO: Pedestrian/Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Commission
FROM: David C. Dryer, P.E., City Traffic Engineer and Parking Manager
RE: Petition to remove traffic island on Rowley Ave at S. Spooner St.

Issue before PBMVC

In May 2007, the City of Madison received the attached petition (attachment #1) from Mr. Steve Puntillo. Mr. Puntillo requests that the City remove the "traffic calming devices installed at the intersection of Rowley and Spooner Ave." Further details of the request provide that the petitioner seeks the removal of the single traffic island located on Rowley Avenue at Spooner Street (see Figure 1).

Procedurally, the petition was referred by the Mayor's office for action. As the oversight for the City's traffic calming program, the PBMVC's action would be reported back to the Mayor's office and Council as an informational report.

Background Information

When Spooner Street south of Regent was reconstructed in 2006, residents sought to include Neighborhood Traffic Management features as part of the project. This section of Spooner St. is a collector street and the only devices acceptable to the Madison Fire Department in this case were traffic islands. The City administered a survey of the property owners and residents, and from this it was determined that there was sufficient support for the project to proceed to the Common Council for consideration (14 residents in favor; 2 not).

It is important in the consideration of the Puntillo petition to review the reconstruction project of Rowley Street, done in 2003. Some Pedestrian/Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Commission members may recall reviewing the street geometrics in advance of the Rowley Street reconstruction project undertaken in 2003. The Puntillo petition claims that "Three and a half years ago, the 1800-1900 block of Rowley Ave. voted either in favor or against the installation of a traffic island on Rowley Ave. About 85% voted against this traffic island." While some degree of traffic calming was reviewed with Rowley Street residents at the time of this reconstruction, the fact is that an island on Rowley at Spooner was not part of the proposal reviewed by the neighborhood in 2003. It is clear that there is some confusion between the Rowley reconstruction project and the Spooner reconstruction project which did include the island in question. Notwithstanding this, there is nothing that precludes residents from re-requesting traffic calming on their street after previous efforts.

To provide a basic framework from which to review requests and apply traffic calming, the City developed its Objectives, Policy and Procedure for the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program. While the NTMP provides a general procedure for installing traffic calming, it does not identify a procedure to follow for requests to remove a traffic calming device.

It is important to remember that the Common Council is the governing body that determines whether a public works project proceeds – this includes traffic calming. In the NTMP process, the City staff-administered survey is only used to inform the Council that some resident support exists for a project. Removal of any device will also need approval by the Common Council.

Options for PBMVC's Consideration

Because the PBMVC will be advising the Mayor and Common Council on the ultimate disposition of this petition, staff have identified two options for consideration:

1. **Recommend the petition be placed on file.** Questions the PBVMC may want to review are:

Is the petition valid?

Are all the signatures valid, accurate and/or within the NTMP prescribed survey area?

Are the points made in the petition valid, such as is the subject island a concern or any different than any other center island treatment in the City?

Are there special issues with the subject island for service agencies?

Was the original survey done correctly, according to adopted policy/procedure?

2. **Recommend the PBMVC develop a process for removal of a traffic calming feature and update the NTMP Manual - Objectives, Policies and Procedure—thereafter use this process for removal requests on all projects and this project in particular.** Questions the PBVMC may want to review are:

If the petition is valid, what is the process for removal of traffic calming measures?

Who would be involved in deciding the removal? The original survey area or an expanded area?

Should there be a minimum waiting period before removal is considered?

At what point in time is a removal survey initiated? 1 year after installation? 2 years?

Should there be demonstrated problems or issues before removal is warranted or is the petition by itself enough?

What happens if there is a competing petition that supports keeping a traffic calming measure?

Once a removal policy is developed should it be used on the subject petition or should a new petition be required to comply with the new policy?

Attachments

- Letter to Mayor and petition from Steve Puntillo
- Figure 1, island requested for removal
- Map depicting results of petition for removal
- Email correspondence between Mr. Puntillo and Traffic Engineering (Oct. 2006)
- South Spooner Street traffic calming project documents
- City Streets and Madison Fire Dept. emails (Oct. 2007)
- Emails from neighborhood residents and former Ald. Ken Golden
- Spooner traffic calming history FAQ provided by citizen Chamond Liu