



**Town of Surfside Beach Transportation Sub-Committee  
Workshop Minutes  
August 31, 2011, 4:00 p.m.  
Town Council Chambers**

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Samples called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Chairman Samples, and Committee Members Dodge and Johnson were in attendance; a quorum was present. Staff present: Administrator Duckett, Deputy Administrator Fellner, Public Works Director Adair, and Code Enforcement Official Morris. Others present: Town Clerk Herrmann.

Chairman Samples noted for the public that:

- Improvements on 17 Business are long-term goals
- 17 Business is controlled by SC Department of Transportation (SCDOT)
- Town leaders and staff need to stay focused and consistent with improvement requests
- SCDOT is currently experiencing financial constraints
- Support should be developed with State elected officials that will be critical to approving funding and/or projects for the Town

Chairman Samples called for motion to amend the agenda to allow discussion of Item B, Discussion of Frontage Roads before Item A, Staff Update, because of technical difficulties. Ms. Dodge so moved. Mr. Johnson seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION CARRIED.

2. **BUSINESS/WORKSHOP TOPICS**

B. Discussion of Frontage Roads.

Chairman Samples said Councilmember Childs and others had received suggestions to replace yield signs with stop signs along the frontage road, which he believes should be considered. Ms. Dodge said ingress and egress at 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North was very difficult. Cross traffic from the frontage road exacerbated the problems. She believes controlling traffic off the frontage road should be a priority for this committee. Mr. Johnson agreed that stop signs on the frontage road could be a possible remedy. He also considered flashing red lights, but believes they would add visual clutter and create more confusion. Ms. Dodge asked who owns the frontage road. Ms. Fellner said SCDOT. Chairman Samples agrees as a temporary solution to replace yield signs with stop signs. He believed the Town Council should send a letter or resolution to SCDOT requesting that stop signs are installed and that painted guides be applied. Because this issue is so important to the public's safety, he suggested that the Town fund the improvements, if SCDOT cannot fund them, but would otherwise approve the changes. He explained the Town already funds maintenance for the portion of Highway 17 within the town limits. The committee **CONCURRED.**

Chairman Samples received an email from Mr. Ken Harbin suggesting that right-hand turns only be allowed from the frontage road onto Highway 17. He asked the committee to consider that option. Mr. Johnson said right-turns only would immediately require extending turn lanes heading south so drivers needing to make U-turns to head north would be out of the way of traffic. Chairman Samples agreed; turn signals at 5<sup>th</sup> North, Surfside Drive, and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue South would be the logical turn around points. Ms. Dodge had also received a suggestion that right-turns only onto the front road be allowed. Chairman Samples suggested that the committee mention the right-turn only limitations to Town Council for more discussion. The committee **CONCURRED.**

Chairman Samples explained this was a workshop and asked for public comments.

Gene Maruca, 116 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, wondered how many accidents had been caused through the years because of the frontage road. He believed all the outlets along Highway 17 should be closed as they pose a public safety hazard, and that ingress/egress be allowed only at traffic signals. He

believed one more light on the north end would provide sufficient ingress and egress to the frontage road. Chairman Samples said that was an excellent suggestion, and that SCDOT should be consulted, and that directional signals would improve traffic flow. Mr. Maruca believed SCDOT would welcome the idea to close all the access points.

Glenn Curtis, 257 Palladium Drive agreed that stop signs on the frontage road were a good solution. He suggested placing cameras at key locations to ticket offenders. Closing the access points might cause problems for the businesses, and it was important to keep them in mind. Chairman Samples said the SC Supreme Court ruled that traffic cams were unconstitutional.

Mary Ellen Abrams, 311 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, agreed with Mr. Maruca that access to the frontage road should only be at traffic lights. The Grand Strand Area Transportation Study (GSATS) "To Do" list proposes traffic signals for 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. Those lights need to be moved to the top of the list if access to the frontage road will only be at traffic lights. Town Council decided that a traffic light would not be installed at 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and that is matter of public record.

Mary Sparragin, owner of Consign at 5<sup>th</sup>, agreed that something needs to be done. She didn't know if closing all the access points would help, but it will create more problems at the signal lights. She would like to see the entire frontage road closed and Highway 17 become three lanes with access from there. The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North access is so dangerous that she will not use it.

Tom Dodge, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, believes that right turns in and right turns out is the best way to manage frontage road traffic. There are six directions of traffic at 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North: three east and three west. He understood that 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North has a higher accident rate than any other street in town, but no one was present that could verify the information. He believed that cross traffic for a left turn was the cause. He supported stop signs along frontage road.

A. Staff Update. Ms. Fellner presented a slide presentation, a copy of which is in file.

i. Surfside Drive and Business 17 Intersection. SCDOT agreed to work on improvements to pedestrian accommodations.

ii. Highway 17 Median Landscape Improvements. Project calls for removing Bradford pear trees and replacing with palms, crepe myrtles, and knock-out roses. SCDOT engineers do not believe palm trees are suitable and this is being discussed. SCDOT will be project manager on these improvements. September 7<sup>th</sup> is the next meeting, when the palm tree issue should be resolved.

Pursuant to SCDOT meeting held October 12, 2010, it will not hold any other meetings regarding funded road projects unless Town Council has first demonstrated by a majority vote its intent to move forward with a project. This includes:

- US 17 Business and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North intersection barricade plan, funding has been taken away permanently and given to other municipalities;
- Light on Highway 17 between 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenues North. SCDOT engineer vehicle counts do not agree with the subcommittee's assessment to support the light at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North instead of 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. If SCDOT determines its information valid, funds will be taken away from the Town. This project should take priority when SCDOT makes its recommendations; the subcommittee would need to make a recommendation to Town Council.
- 2011-2015 GSATS intersection improvements at US 17 and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. The committee should make a recommendation to Town Council, and Town Council would need a majority vote showing its intention to move forward with the project for GSATS and SCDOT to approve.

Chairman Samples referred to the minutes of that October meeting and asked if SCDOT traffic engineers had provided any suggested improvements as stated. He recalled that the only approval received from SCDOT was for the barricades at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, to which Town Council objected, because the barricades would block access to the post office.

Ms. Fellner said no; staff expected a response in March or April of this year. SCDOT believes 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue could pose a major safety issue and could possibly overrule the town and place the traffic light there. To her knowledge SCDOT has never overruled a municipality's preference for a signal location. Funding would not be removed from the GSATS hierarchy without first notifying the town. Chairman Samples asked who owns 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. Mr. Adair said the road is partially owned by the town; he would send the information to Chairman Samples.

iii. Highway 17 Long-Range Improvements. Widening of Business 17 in 2035 that will eliminate the frontage road.

Mr. Johnson suggested that the work in the business district begin as early as possible so it could be completed before December due to the high number of spectators expected for the Christmas parade. He believed traffic lights at 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, and possibly 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, were needed. He did not understand SCDOT's position about the signal at 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, which is a narrow street. The committee should take action necessary to get a signal installed on the north end.

Ms. Dodge agreed and was concerned that 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue was only two blocks long. In her opinion, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North was preferable, but she didn't know what problems might be created, if a light was placed there.

Chairman Samples said the concern had always been a straight-shot across the highway from Deerfield. That is why 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue appealed to him, because it would curtail traffic. There are three other locations with signals that provide straight-shots to the beach. He asked if the traffic count information had been provided. Ms. Fellner said no; it was still being analyzed.

C. Planned In-Town Maintenance (Changes to Town's Adopted Plan.) Ms. Fellner said the adopted plan was evaluated and it was determined that roads needing repair should take priority over roads placed on the list. Chairman Samples asked if the proposed changes would be presented to Town Council soon. Mr. Adair said the plan changed constantly. He believed street repairs should have priority over sidewalk construction. CTC funds would be applied for in October to complete street paving on four streets. Chairman Samples appreciated the initiative to try the "liquid road," product, but cautioned against wide-spread use before tests were completed. He also mentioned that the tourist district should be well-maintained. Mr. Johnson said the parking area and roads near the Holiday Inn needed to be striped. Mr. Adair said that curve arrows, middle line in the road, and parking stripes were scheduled to be painted this fall. Chairman Samples asked if sidewalk maintenance would be done instead of building new sidewalks. Mr. Adair said the Comprehensive Plan would be adhered to as closely as possible, but adding new sidewalks impacts stormwater. There are several new sidewalks that extend to the beach and across town. Chairman Samples said the Surfside Drive sidewalk needs attention. Mr. Adair said the Bradford pear trees were removed and new trees planted as the first step in upkeep and repair.

Ms. Fellner added that the car charging station will be installed this fall. It will be located at the most northwestern parking spot in the Poplar park lot.

D. Other. There was no other discussion.

### 3. Public Comments.

Harry Kohlmann, 1610 South Ocean Boulevard, believed that the town should document accidents and other problems created by the frontage road to gain support from SCDOT. A traffic signal should be installed at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and that stop signs are a good idea for the frontage road. In the long-term the frontage road should be closed in sections and inter-connected blocks created. There are too many U-turns on Highway 17 Business. The lack of turn lanes causes accidents. He gave the chair photographs of some landscaped areas saying that adding mulch to the areas transformed the landscaping.

Glen Curtis, 257 Palladium Drive, said there are four major developments, a water park and flea market on the south end that create big problems on the frontage road. The busses at the pier should have to park properly to allow passengers to safely get on and off. He asked if the empty lot in the business district would be made into parking. Mr. Johnson said the town does not own that property.

Gene Maruca, 116 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, asked why parking was free for the Surfside Drive businesses, but the pier area clientele had to pay for parking. He believed the Surfside Drive customers should also have to pay for parking. Ocean Boulevard needs parking developed to help accommodate our tourists as they contribute towards our taxes, and suggested providing parking stickers for a fee. He also suggested that a parking committee be created to make recommendations to Town Council.

Tom Dodge, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, serves on a committee at his church to work with SCDOT on the widening project for Highway 707. SCDOT informed him that it expects 10,000 units less traffic on Highway 17 when that project is completed, as northbound traffic from the south end will be directed to Highway 707 to go north. He said 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue North does not have a turn lane into town; 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue is two blocks long, and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a through street to the beach. In his opinion, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue is the best location for a traffic light. He asked why nothing has been done before now to get a traffic light installed at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North as staff knew last March funding might be lost.

**4. Member Comments.**

Ms. Dodge said some great ideas and insight were offered during the meeting. Citizens live here and experience the problems daily. She thanked them and said it was vital to hear their comments.

Mr. Johnson agreed and thanked the residents for attending and expressing their opinions.

Chairman Samples said parking is beyond the scope of this committee's purpose as it was adopted by Town Council, but parking is certainly an issue. He believed that unless there was time to deal with the parking issues properly, they should be left alone. He was curious to know the amount of revenue generated from the non-resident parking stickers, and thought a different color sticker should be issued to non-residents. Another sub-committee meeting will be scheduled and the public notified. He thanked staff for their efforts in preparing for the meeting. He thanked everyone for attending.

**5. Adjournment.** Chairman Samples called for motion to adjourn at 5:23 p.m. Mr. Johnson so moved. Ms. Dodge seconded. Chairman Samples declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Debra E. Herrmann, CMC, Town Clerk

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_, 2011

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Douglas F. Samples, Chairman

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Ann Dodge, Sub-Committee Member

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Mark Johnson, Sub-Committee Member