



## ***Transportation Committee - Board of Representatives***

Robert "Gabe" DeLuca, Chair Terry Adams, Vice Chair

# **Committee Report**

**Date:** Thursday, January 14, 2010  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Place:** Legislative Chambers, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard

The Transportation Committee met as indicated above. Present were all members: Chair DeLuca and Vice Chair Adams and Committee Member Reps. Giordano, Lombardo, McNeil, Raduazzo and Young. Also present were Reps. Cannady, Savage, Uva and White; Ernie Orgera, Acting Director of Operations; John Leydon, Jr., Esq.; Mons. Stephen DiGiovanni; Laura Labosky and Ann Brown of the Urban Transitway Project; Mani S. Poola, Traffic Engineer and Lou Casolo, City Engineer.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Committee Action</b>
1. <a href="#">T28.001</a>	APPROVAL; of a lease agreement between the City and St. John's Roman Catholic Church for a city-run public parking lot located between Tresser Blvd. and Bell Street.	<b>COMMITTEE APPROVED 6-0-0 (as amended)</b>

Chair DeLuca stated that he had reached an agreement with Mons. DiGiovanni and Mr. Leydon to reduce the rent the City will pay from \$5,000 per month to \$4,500 per month. A motion to amend the rent amount on Page 2 was made, seconded and approved by unanimous vote (Reps. DeLuca, Adams, Giordano, McNeill, Raduazzo and Young in favor). A motion to amend Page 3 of the lease to reduce the total amount from \$60,000 to \$54,000 and the monthly rental from \$5,000 to \$4,500 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 6-0-0.

The main motion, to approve the resolution and the lease (as amended) was made, seconded and approved by a unanimous vote of 6-0-0.

2. <a href="#">T28.002</a>	REVIEW; Jefferson and Gleason Streets traffic flow.	<b>REPORT MADE</b>
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Chair DeLuca opened the discussion by stating that business owners were opposed to the installation of a median divider that precluded a left-hand turn on to Halloween Boulevard from Jefferson Street.

Lou Casolo briefly updated the Committee on the status of the project:

- The City is currently working on the east end of the project;
- They expect it to be finished by summer;
- Heavy construction is going on right now;
- They do everything possible to keep businesses open, including hiring traffic officers.

Mr. Casolo continued by reviewing the decision to not allow a left hand turn on to Halloween Boulevard from Jefferson Street:

- The project is designed for growth, specifically for the Year 2020, and anticipates future traffic increases.
- Left hand turning lanes are not found at older intersections.
- Based on traffic volumes, a median was warranted to avoid left turns from spilling into thru lanes.
- There is not enough of a site line for a left hand turn lane.
- Openings at raised medians should be provided at major traffic generators only where there is adequate site distance.
- This intersection is designed for maximum safety.
- The design is signed and sealed by a professional engineer; he is doubtful that the professional engineer would agree to modify the design in this manner as it is contrary to all design standards.
- Pedestrians are more likely to cross at street openings, and median openings encourage jay walking.
- When considering remuneration to those who experienced a partial taking of their property, any negative impact as a result of reduced access to the parking was included as part of the compensation package.
- The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) is paying 80% of the \$65 million cost of the project. In 2000, the FTA wanted the City to completely close off access to Halloween Boulevard by creating a cul-de-sac for safety reasons. The City fought this and maintained the street opening. The FTA will not approve opening the median if it is determined to be a safety issue. This could ultimately result in the FTA's refusal to reimburse the City or could result in the FTA requesting refunds.
- 3 public meetings and 4 public hearings were held over a four-year period, and the median was part of the original design.
- There are other areas in town where similar designs are utilized, such as the entrance to the mall restaurants.
- At the Board's request, Mr. Casolo hired an independent engineering firm to evaluate the feasibility of allowing left-hand turns, and their report

Mr. Casolo concluded by saying that 1) u-turns will be permissible at Magee Avenue so that drivers can reverse direction and make a right-hand turn on to Halloween Boulevard; 2) the City will consider signage instructing drivers how to access Halloween Boulevard; 3) business owners could be proactive by using signage instructing drivers how to access their businesses; and 4) business owners could retain their own engineer to review the decision.

Chair DeLuca stated that in his opinion u-turns are more dangerous than allowing the left-hand turn. Further, he had requested accident records, and since 2001, there were only 6 accidents at this location, all of which resulted in minor property damage. Further, this design is contrary to today's emphasis on "green," by forcing additional idling and driving.

Vice Chair Adams suggested that the City consider painting a median on the road and allowing the left-hand turns. If accidents do occur, the median can be constructed as designed at a future point in time.

Chair DeLuca stated not all engineering designs result in what the citizenry wants. Further, if the Committee wants to change the design, it will have to send a communication to the Mayor and request it as it does not have the authority to mandate the change.

Rep. Raduazzo stated that it is of little solace to businesses that are struggling today to hear the City talking about traffic volume expected in the year 2020.

Mr. Casolo responded by saying that property owners have other options. They can, for example, explore entering into agreements with neighboring property owners to arrange easements for alternate access routes.

Rep. White noted that not all businesses received compensation for the lack of access: 1) there are businesses that did not get any compensation; and 2) there are renters who operate businesses and the landlords received the compensation. Further, many property owners were not aware that there even was going to be a median divider blocking access at the time they negotiated their settlements.

Fire Marshal Bixby stated that it is his and Deputy Chief Brown's opinion that there should be a left-turning lane at this location for quick access by the Fire Department. Mr. Casolo responded that during the planning process, the City met with other city departments and the original design was agreed to.

Chair DeLuca opened the meeting to the public.

Former Representative Rich Lyons stated that there are left-hand turns to streets that have fewer businesses, and he cannot understand why the same restrictions on access to Halloween Boulevard don't apply to these other streets.

Mr. Cingari of David's Catering stated that while this was designed for 25-30 mph traffic, the area is so congested, there is no traffic going over 10 mps at this location. He has been there for years and never had a problem with a left-hand turn. Several other members of the public expressed the same opinion that left-hand turns have never been a problem in the past.

Mr. Casolo concluded by saying that if changing the design to allow this turn can ultimately be approved by the licensed engineer who designed the Transitway, and if the FTA agrees to it, then, in his opinion, this would next be a matter for the Legal Department. While conceding he is not a lawyer, he stated that if an accident occurred at this intersection, it would seem likely that the City would be sued. Mr. Lyons stated that the City would most likely be sued whether the turn was allowed or not.

The Committee then relocated to the Republican Caucus Room where members unanimously agreed to authorize Chair DeLuca to sign the [attached letter](#).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert "Gabe" DeLuca, Chair