

City may take a look at Main

Peoria council to vote on funding Main Street traffic study Tuesday

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PEORIA - Every day when Miriam Taylor leaves work from One World Eats & Drinks on Main Street, patience is required.

"It's super congested," Taylor, the restaurant's manager, said. "Every day around 3 or 4 p.m., Main Street (and University Street) is backed up pretty much to where the old Walgreen's is at."

On Tuesday, the City Council is slated to vote whether to spend \$52,259 on a study of the high-traffic intersection and the area surrounding it.

The traffic study by Hanson Professional Services Inc. would gather data and develop a "travel demand" model of traffic flow in the area surrounding the Main and University streets intersection.

"The ultimate goal it to see if we can get a more walkable Main Street with perhaps less traffic (or) slower, calmer traffic in that area so people can walk around with some degree of comfort," 2nd District Councilwoman Barbara Van Auken said. "Having said that, we don't want to do something on Main Street that dumps traffic throughout those neighborhoods as people look for alternate routes."

Public Works Director David Barber agrees, saying Hanson's work would focus on the impact to surrounding neighborhoods if Main Street traffic is calmed.

"Traffic flow is like water through pipes," Barber said. "If you restrict in an area, it goes somewhere else."

Barber said Hanson's study, if approved by the council, is part of the company's overall work of performing a regional traffic demand model for the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.

The city had budgeted \$35,000 in its 2008 budget for a traffic analysis of the intersection. Barber said he hopes the council will approve an additional \$17,000 or so to pay for a model that will look at the entire area surrounding the intersection.

Main and University, along with the surrounding neighborhoods in the West Bluff, are part of a form district, which takes into account the ideas of New Urbanism - slowing down traffic and making streets more pedestrian friendly.

Barber said the Hanson study will help the city determine what can be done to make this area more aligned with New Urbanism principles.

"Before we make any improvements, we need to know what to do with removing parking or restricting turn movements," Barber said. "What do we need to do to make it more pedestrian friendly? What changes do we make for traffic flow in the area?"

Barber said he also hopes the Hanson work will develop a model of how traffic will increase if Main Street's lanes are reduced. He said the model could determine whether any neighborhood streets will be negatively impacted if added parking lanes are included on Main.

"The concern is where might that traffic go," Barber said. "Will they cut through a different neighborhood? What is the impact of a change if we make it on any streets in the area? The (Hanson) model should help us (determine what happens)."

Taylor said she understands what the city is trying to do, but is concerned if any part of Main Street is reduced, it could lead to even more time-consuming backups.

"It is a busy intersection at Main and University," she said. "When I went to Bradley (University), I almost got hit by a car in that intersection."

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