



MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council

Cc: Steve Schainker, City Manager
Diane Voss, City Clerk

From: Damion Pregitzer, Traffic Engineer

Date: July 19, 2019

Subject: Council Action Referral from June 25, 2019:
Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons

BACKGROUND:

This information is in response to the City Council referral "to get a memo from staff to see if anything is being done with the past requests for a rectangular rapid flashing beacon" (RRFB).

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION DETERMINATION ON RRFB's:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the Federal agency that controls approval for local agencies to utilize RRFB's. On December 17, 2017, FHWA terminated approval of RRFB's due to patent issues. These issues were resolved and three months later, approval was reinstated with the following statement from FHWA:

"(RRFB approval) was terminated due to patent protection issues associated with the RRFB - TERMINATED (DECEMBER 21, 2017). The MUTCD does not allow patented traffic control devices. Because the patents have been abandoned, the RRFB is now again eligible for consideration as a traffic control device INTERIM APPROVAL TO CONTINUE USING (March 20, 2018). The termination had nothing to do with the effectiveness of the RRFB, which is why the FHWA is once again allowing its use under provisional terms"

The City Clerk assisted Public Works by performing a search of any City Council referrals that may have been affected by the interim approval being temporarily terminated. **It was found that no formal referrals were impacted by the termination and that all referrals from City Council have been completed.** Staff notes, however, that the topic of the RRFBs has been brought up in the discussion at meetings, such as the joint City Council-Student Government meeting. It is possible the topic was brought forth in other meetings but formal referrals were not made because the Council was aware the devices could not be installed.

Additionally, it was during this temporary termination period that staff presented the findings from the Lincoln Way Pedestrian Study. It was noted at that time that using RRFB's were not a part of the "toolbox" of potential treatments due to the termination. The City Council then directed improvements that have now been completed in the Lincoln Way corridor through Campustown including retiming the signals, reconfiguring turn lanes, and enhancing the pedestrian crossing of Lincoln Way at Stanton Avenue. There will be a separate memo in the near future responding to City Council's additional referral regarding reporting on the success of these treatments.

STAFF COMMENTS:

As noted in the FHWA statement, **RRFB's are once again a viable treatment to consider for use in the community. However, as with other traffic treatments, it is important to remember that the use of these devices may not be appropriate in all settings. Overuse of these treatments in the community may reduce their effectiveness in producing the desired response from motorists.**