


Lehigh moves Council to approve the pilot traffic study

The Bethlehem Gadfly | Lehigh University, Southside | February 21, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about Lehigh University and the Southside* 

Charles Malinchak, "Bethlehem closing Packer Avenue to study impact." Morning Call, February 19, 2020.

As previously reported here, Lehigh made a presentation to City Council Tuesday supporting their request to do a pilot traffic study on the closing of Packer Ave. between Vine and Webster. Council approved the traffic study 3-2. It will begin March 9 and last 45 days.

As Gadfly also said previously, he thought it was a good meeting: improved Lehigh presentation, good resident comments, good (and diverse) Council comments.

Let's take 2-3 posts and appreciate what went on.

First, the Lehigh presentation. This is the 3rd time Lehigh has presented its 3-part rationale: pedestrian safety, the changing core of the Lehigh campus, and a pedestrian walkway for the campus and wider community. Lehigh has already done a traffic study that shows "minimal impact" from the street closure, and the proposed pilot study will enable "proof of concept." This particular point, as we will see later, seemed especially appealing to some Council members. Details of planning with the school district and the Bethlehem Parking Authority and other logistical matters were also covered.

<https://youtu.be/zgL5aMm2XHM>

The Lehigh consultant performing the study outlined such things as 1) observations morning, noon, and afternoon at Broughal for the safety of the students (a major concern raised at the public meeting on January 23), and 2) studies of 20 different traffic points, the goal being to document the changing traffic patterns.

<https://youtu.be/3MzCXLWEovM>

Here the Lehigh Chief of Police addressed in more detail than ever before point #1 in the Lehigh proposal: pedestrian safety. He gave “numbers” for the first time about “pedestrian-vehicle conflicts” along that stretch of road, numbers that are “some of the highest I’ve seen in my law enforcement career.” (Where did your video of the Chief go, Gadfly?)

Here in support of the third point in Lehigh’s proposal, the Lehigh rep outlines the considerable community service work that Lehigh does on the Southside that is “blurring the lines” between the campus and the community and provides a basis to explore the possibility of closing the street (Lehigh has little flat surface on the campus itself) to offer other options for this worthy work.

<https://youtu.be/wVJJr7oI2lo>

Followers will remember that Gadfly has been grouchy at the quality of Lehigh’s presentation in its previous two stages. But this was definitely a better presentation. You will see Gadfly’s interesting generally supportive response to this third iteration of the proposal later.

Resident response to the Lehigh presentation was excellent. Going there next.

Resident voices. Gadfly loves them.