

Ped Plan Advisory Committee – Meeting Summary

Friday, October 23, 2020

Participants:

Carol Andrews, St. Louis County
Eleanor Bacso, City of Duluth
Chris Belden, DTA
Andrea Crouse,
Amy Demmer, Zeitgeist
Judy Gibbs, BPAC
James Gittemeier, MIC
Russell Habermann, ARDC
Holly Kostrenzki, TZD
Kris Liljeblad, City of Duluth
Ben Margeson, CHUM
Shawna Mullen, Essentia Health
Teresa O'Halloran-Johnson...
Dena Ryan, WisDOT
Doug Stevens,
Rachel Thapa,
Alice Tibbets, We Walk in Duluth
Maren Webb, MnDOT

James began by reviewing the timeline for plan completion. He added that committee members will need to submit any comments by DATE
three categories of recommendations to be covered in today's meeting:

1. Close the gaps in the pedestrian networks

- -Showed map displaying sidewalk networks, pedestrian hubs/activity zones, sidewalk conditions, ADA ramps, street slopes and other attributes
- Will be identifying highest-priority areas, given the reality that not every gap will be able to be filled in the next 20 years

Maren: will income levels, neighborhood composition be one of the criteria for identifying high-priority areas? (James: yes, he will be drafting those criteria and the BPAC will be vetting the criteria used. the BPAC will be vetting the criteria used. Maren reiterated that from MnDOT perspective, this kind of equity consideration is key.)

She added that speeds or other road risk factors, would also be helpful to consider in that prioritization.

Kris L noted that rural section roadways do not need to be built to urban standards for pedestrian accommodations. James: the plan will include a discussion about roadway context – not every road needs a sidewalk, and what are other solutions could be.

Russell: I was just thinking about that too, Kris. I've requested sidewalks before that haven't been built because there isn't curb/gutter.

Carol Andrews: Would be cool if, eventually, there could be a map that combines "future bike facility" roads with this map showing highest priority pedestrian improvements

Russell: I was just thinking about that too, Kris. I've requested sidewalks before that haven't been built because there isn't curb/gutter.

James – important to design from the pedestrian perspective where are the “desire lines” that indicate where people are already walking

Buildings and land use and zoning also affects the pedestrian system

2. Safety

- James showed graphic illustrating how vehicle speeds impact the driver's ability to see and react to pedestrians, and dramatically the risk of pedestrian injury and death increases (from 10% at 20 mph, 60% at 30 mph and 80% at 40 mph).
- Average 5 serious injuries and 1 pedestrian fatality per year in the Duluth-Superior area. It's not increasing in our area – as it is statewide and nationwide - but it's not decreasing either.
- Other key safety factors include design where sidewalks are crossed by vehicle entrances and crossing distances across motor vehicle lanes need to be shortened
- Create better visibility between motorists and peds
- Design street for the appropriate vehicle travel speeds
- Fail-safe design – consider that mistakes happen – ped or motorist distraction, for example. Lots of design features on our roadways – but not so much margin of error is built in to sidewalks.

Dena: to track safety, could we track the results (what works/does not work) of recent bike/ped accommodations (i.e., Tower Ave reconstructions with raised medians, bike lanes, marked crosswalks?)

Chris Belden: it's difficult to identify exactly what is contributing to or causing ped crashes, especially with the low incidence

James: we do need a discussion about measuring safety performance

Russell: in addition to the infrastructure recommendations, we should include an education component about safe walking practice, and sharing space with vehicles – peds taking responsibility

Alice Tibbetts suggests that we could be explicit about promoting 4 to 3 conversions?

Russell Habermann added that national data suggests that more ped issues happen at non-intersection locations. Would be interesting to see if this translates to our area.

Accessibility – Gaps in the Pedestrian Network

- James showed photos of local destinations (library, clinic) that show how access to the main entrance is often not oriented to pedestrians –
- Mall area is super car-focused but it has high transit utilization for workers – limited sidewalks, crossing the highway, grade challenges. The existing setup discourages walking even though the distances are quite reasonable for walking. He added that it's all on the private sector to incorporate those features (not the jurisdiction).

Alice Tibbetts noted that if we required a more aggressive stormwater solution for these big developments a sidewalk could integrate with green space, making the sidewalk more attractive

and solving water issues at the same time. We really should be linking these two issues. Stormwater is a government mandate and we could do a lot more. She added that the Maplewood Mall included a beautiful connection between a mall/big box and stormwater/ped improvements, and that revenues increased. The same consultants did a plan for Miller Hill Mall and they had no interest. She suggested that we add "Plant Trees" to the buffer space - We should be thinking about the pedestrian experience, green space, and the value of trees to a hot city and as traffic calming.

Kris L. noted that the Home Depot was built before some of the development standards required the kind of design accommodations that we got with Savers and Aldi's. It's not as if the cities can require (Miller Mall for example) property owners to reconstruct their sites once built, unless they are trying to permit a major improvement. So, implementing the kinds of solutions like integrating stormwater and pedestrian amenities is cool, but will be a waiting game relative to existing development.

Carol noted that the Aldi/Savers parking lot accomplished that. Dena noted that native plant rain gardens could be incorporated as part of beautification. and stormwater treatments.

Shawna asked if stormwater/green infrastructure could be included as a strategy (James – yes, it's a key goal in the MIC's long range transportation plan.

She suggested that we add "Plant Trees" to the buffer space - We should be thinking about the pedestrian experience, green space, and the value of trees to a hot city and as traffic calming.

Accessibility – Snow Clearing

- James noted that snow clearing is a big factor in accessibility. He will be including short-term (interim) and long-term (permanent) recommendations

Shawna suggested including a discussion about "micromobility lanes" which are intended for all uses - bikes, skateboards, pedestrians. Alice noted that the "micro" designation is not needed or useful, in terms of diminishing their relative importance. Shawna responded that the use of that term refers rather to mean smaller in size, human scaled, not like a "sub" mode.

James noted that this may well be the future of "bike lanes" – that they are used not just by bikes but by other non-motorized users (people using scooters, skateboards, wheelchairs).

Maren added that there need to be some thought about combined uses and which are compatible. For example, bike and scooter speeds may be more similar vs. pedestrian speeds. I think any of us that have used a highly used multi-use trail have experienced the issues with bikes and peds comingling. Doesn't mean there aren't spots for it to work, but something that isn't necessarily going to work everywhere.

Accessibility – Overgrown vegetation and debris

- Short term response is to enforce sidewalk clear zones, and long-term is to create a system of routine responses.

Theresa noted that absentee landlords, in high rental areas, are fairly resistant to enforcement

Carol suggested that one option was possibly to engage with landlord associations to go over the problems identified in the plan and ask them for help identifying most effective solutions.

Alice agreed that the landlord community is important. We Walk in Duluth would be interested in helping. If their properties look terrible, it is bad for the city and for their own values.

Accessibility – Slopes

- Short-term (Interim) recommendations include installation of hand rails, inclusion of flat ‘rest areas’ for example at alleyways
- Long term (permanent) recommendations include frequent uphill-downhill transit routes, development of a funicular/gondola system

Theresa noted that maintenance of sidewalks is an ongoing issue.

James closed the meeting that he will be sending out these recommendations early next week for further review and comment by committee meetings.

The next meeting is set for Friday, Nov. 20.