

Meeting Minutes
Lake Street Connections Project
Policy Advisory Committee #4
August 18, 2016 | 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Participants: Allison Sharkey – Lake Street Council, Chair
Bob Speeter – East Business Representative
Cristina Le – West Business Representative
Randal Tigue – International Gateway
Andrew Carlson – City of Minneapolis
Nathan Koster – City of Minneapolis
Michael McLaughlin – Urban Works
Max Holdhusen – Metro Transit
Anna Springer – S.E.H.
Bob Kost – S.E.H.
Mike Kotila – S.E.H.
Jason Owens – S.E.H.
Weiyu Miao – S.E.H.
Charleen Zimmer – Zan Associates
Alex Magee – Zan Associates

Introductions, Welcome and Housekeeping Items

Allison Sharkey welcomed meeting attendees and asked for any changes to the June meeting minutes. None were noted. She asked new people to introduce themselves.

Allison reminded everyone that there are two PAC meetings remaining, one on Oct. 20 and one on Dec. 15 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Colin Powell Center.

Nathan Koster noted that Jim Grube, Hennepin County, was not able to attend today.

Debrief on Recent Meetings

Bob Kost provided a summary of the I-35W retaining wall open house, which was held by MnDOT about three weeks ago. Attendees were able to review alternative designs for the I-35W retaining walls near Lake Street. Approximately 24 people attended. The exhibits from the open house were posted on the website for two weeks following the meeting, and people were asked to comment on the options. Staff received approximately 324 comments on the design plans, from both the open house and the on-line survey. The majority of responses noted a preference for the wave pattern. This option will now be added to MnDOT's Visual Quality Manual for the project. Bob noted that staff received one lengthy comment regarding wall color. MnDOT uses only certain colors to help with maintenance, particularly repainting over graffiti. Bob reported that the next steps in the retaining wall process are to meet with the form liner consultant and to update the Visual Quality Manual. The revised manual will be posted once it is complete.

Bob reported that project staff also had a meeting with some of the property owners between 2nd Ave. and Columbus to discuss streetscaping elements. The team received some good feedback from the

property owners. One major concern was the transit shelter adjacent to Taco Bell, which is a popular spot for illicit activity. The property owners would like to see the shelter relocated or re-oriented so police have a better view into the shelters. Max Holdhusen will take this issue back to Metro Transit.

Nathan provided an update on the meeting with businesses and property owners held on July 14 at the 5th Precinct. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information to property owners and businesses and solicit input on all elements of the Lake Street Connections project. Approximately 30 property owners and business representatives attended. A number of comments were received related to streetscape elements, special service districts, assessments, and safety. All comments are available in the meeting summary (sent in the PAC packet). Nathan noted that the meeting summary is still in draft form and will be re-sent to PAC members once it is finalized.

Project Update

Mike Kotila reported that both the Lake Street design and MnDOT's I-35W Transit/Access design are 60% complete. This is a good time for all agencies to review plans and incorporate them into one seamless project. The team is identifying right-of-way easements, areaways and other impact details. The Lake Street project is on schedule to meet the June 2017 bid letting date. Milestones prior to the bid letting include 95% plan completion in October and 100% plan completion in December.

Mike reported that the work on Lake Street will likely not occur until 2020 even through construction on the rest of the project will begin in 2018, due to the need to complete some of the bridge work first. He noted that this gives property owners some time to address areaways. Nathan stated that there is a City of Minneapolis ordinance that property owners, at their expense, must abandon areaways or ensure that they are certified as structurally sound by a structural engineer. The city will proceed with the work as part of the project if it is not completed in advance, and the cost will be billed back to the property owner. Cristina asked for an explanation of areaways. Nathan responded that it can be a basement, coal chute, delivery area or storage room in a basement where the building extends underground into the public right-of-way.

Mike added that the City of Minneapolis is planning to clean and line the water main in 2017. This work will involve some lane closures. It may help to speed up street construction when it occurs in 2020.

The landscape architecture team is identifying easements that may be needed. Hennepin County will receive a full set of easement needs in September. The County will then go out and meet individually with property owners. Some easements are related to enhanced landscaping elements; others are related to roadway and/or ADA improvements. The enhanced streetscape easements would not be needed if the property owners do not approve the enhanced streetscape concept.

Discussion of Enhanced Streetscape Elements

Bob Kost provided an overview of the baseline streetscape elements which include: trees with grates, lighting, and updated ABRT transit shelters. Bob Speeter asked if a camera could go in the smaller transit shelters. Max responded that Metro Transit don't usually put them in the smaller shelters – only the larger ABRT shelters. The only local shelter is at 3rd Ave. and, if ABRT is implemented, there may not be a local shelter at 3rd Ave.

Bob also provided an overview of the enhanced streetscape elements which include: trash receptacles, freestanding planter pots, bike loops, benches, brackets for identity banners on light fixtures, decorative fences at parking lots, and flowers and shrubs. Bob gave a summary of the comments received at the recent meeting with some of the property owners between 2nd Ave and Columbia, which included:

- Desire to maintain identity of area as International Gateway
- Like the new Lake Street lighting with banner capability
- Like street trees in grates but the electrical connection should be secured
- Like decorative planter pots but might want to choose their own
- Would like to see existing concrete litter containers refurbished to preserve the artwork being installed on the sides of these containers
- Would like a street crossing banner (similar to Uptown)
- Do not like the parking lot fencing near Taco Bell
- Would like to see flag poles in the bumpout areas

Trash Receptacles

An image of a recycling bin used in the Lyndale and 54th area was shown. Andrew noted that the containers have decals, recycling containers are lined with clear bags, and trash receptacles are lined with black bags. The ash urn is highly desirable, and they are used frequently. Michael added that the recycling material is actually recycled, not thrown away. Allison noted that she thinks it is a good idea to include recycling but asked if the adjacent service districts will add recycling. Michael responded that, by 2020, most other service districts will likely have sidewalk recycling systems. Bob Speeter asked how the trash receptacles are emptied. Michael responded that they can only be emptied manually.

Allison commented that she appreciates the placemaking efforts by International Gateway. However, she doesn't think the area should bypass the opportunity to get new trash and recycling cans. Bob Speeter asked if the new cans could be fitted with artwork. Michael responded that they can be wrapped. Allison added that utility boxes can also be wrapped. Michael recommended that the budget include a line item for wrapping utility boxes. This helps reduce maintenance cost while making the boxes more attractive.

Decorative Fencing at Parking Lots

Bob Kost stated that there are two different designs of decorative fencing along Lake Street but they are both green. The arch design is used west of I-35W and the plant design is used to the east. Allison commented that she likes the plant design better. Nathan asked if there is a cost difference. Bob responded that there is most likely not a difference but he will confirm this.

Charleen Zimmer asked if decisions about parking lot fencing and landscaping are made individually by each property owner, and if there would be an option for property owners to add additional elements at their own cost. Bob responded that he will need to follow up on that. Michael noted that, in his experience, it was not optional for the property owner to have decorative fencing. There is a section between 5th Ave. and Columbus Ave. which opted out (as a group) of the service district so the street was reconstructed without enhanced streetscaping. Nathan added that the team will need to close the loop with these properties and Hennepin County regarding the decorative fencing.

Freestanding Planters

Bob noted that the freestanding planters don't all need to be the same size, but the size needs to be based on sidewalk width.

Bike Racks

Allison noted that she had received two main comments about bike racks – first, that they should not be too close to street and second, that they should be placed where they are visible from business doors/windows rather than near bus stops. Bob responded that the number and location of bike racks will be refined as design progresses. He also noted that the new parking meter posts can be designed to also serve as bike racks. Allison asked if there are parking meters on these blocks. Nathan responded that there are coin meters on the east side from 3rd Ave. to 5th Ave. These will likely be updated to the newer versions but that has not been determined yet.

Benches

Allison asked if there is a consensus on benches. Bob Speeter commented that property owners in his area prefer not to have benches because the area is prone to illicit activity. Cristina added that she agrees that benches support illicit activities, and benches should be left out. Andrew noted that the city is sympathetic to removing benches at the request of property owners because they do not have a predictable location as is required for trash receptacles. However, he thought it would be best to include the cost in the budget and delay the decision. Nathan commented that federal funding could not be used to purchase benches unless they are used in the project area. Allison agreed that a minimal number of benches should be included but they would not have to be in the locations currently shown in the plans. Bob asked that a decision be made by September 12. It was agreed that the streetscape elements should be identified in an email to the entire PAC with a request for their comments. Jim Grube will also be visiting with individual property owners and will be asked to raise this question when appropriate.

Allison asked what was included in the enhanced streetscaping for tree lighting. Bob responded that the conduit for tree lighting would be installed. He explained that, while trees will be planted by Minneapolis Parks and Recreation as part of the project, they will not be large enough to support lighting initially. All electrical work to the tree grates will be installed as part of the project. However, the outlets will not be powered until power is needed. Bob Speeter asked if the number of trees is set in stone. Bob responded that the plans are still being developed and the number of trees is dependent on factors such as spacing for proper growth and underground utility locations. He requested that property owners let the team know now if they have concerns about tree placement in front of their businesses.

Bob Speeter commented that a traffic light at 5th Ave. would be very helpful for freeway access and their future parking garage. Mike responded that there is higher traffic demand at 4th Ave. so the signal is located there. However, he acknowledged that 5th Ave. is also important for freeway access. Mike asked if this location had been studied for the parking garage. Bob Speeter responded that there is a traffic management plan for the garage. He will send a copy of the plan to Mike. Nathan asked Mike to touch base with Allan Klugman with the city's traffic department. The team will review the signal request.

Update on Special Assessment Process

Nathan provided an updated handout on special assessments which outlines the overall assessment costs (see attached). The uniform assessment, which is set by city policy and updated yearly, is a given for every street reconstruction project. The assessment rate for each property is based on an “influence zone”, shown on the handout. Rates typically go up slightly each year. Since this is a reconstruction project, the assessment can be paid over 20 years.

There will be a special assessment for the base level of streetscaping which includes sidewalks, trees and tree grates, bus shelters, lighting that meets the city standard, and electrical conduit. However, the base level of streetscaping does not trigger a special service district and a petition is not required. The enhanced streetscape option, which includes enhanced lighting, banner brackets, benches, tree lighting, trash receptacles, bike racks, decorative fencing, and additional landscaping, requires a special assessment and the establishment of a special service district. There will only be one special assessment for streetscaping, either base level or enhanced level, not both. Since the enhanced level of streetscaping requires ongoing operation and maintenance responsibilities provided by a special service district, a petition process will be required to establish an ordinance for the formation of a special service district. The results of the special service district petition process will determine if the project moves forward with either the base level or enhanced level streetscaping elements and corresponding special assessment.

The City of Minneapolis will hold a public hearing for the street reconstruction special assessments, which will include all land area of benefited parcels located within the street influence zone along the improvements to Lake Street. If the project moves forward with the base level of streetscape, special assessments for streetscape improvements will be levied, but this will not require a petition process. The enhanced streetscape option requires a petition process for the purposes of establishing a special service district.

Residential properties are not exempt from streetscaping assessments, but were included in a process that involved evaluating the process by which residential and non-residential properties are assessed as a part of other City street improvement projects, per City policy. This process applied the pro-rated costs on a lineal foot basis for each property type and then applied the Federal and County funds. The end result was a \$0 assessment for the base level of streetscaping for residential properties.

The enhanced level of streetscape consists primarily of parking lot screen fencing, benches, and bikes, the benefit of which could not be justified for residential properties. Therefore residential properties were not assessed included in the enhanced streetscape assessment. Allison asked if Intown would be assessed since it is a mixed use. Nathan responded that the commercial component of the property would be subject to the streetscape special assessment, but the residential area would not. He also noted that the streetscape assessment is based on linear feet of frontage, not on an influence zone.

Update on Special Service District Process

Andrew Carlson stated that the city’s intent is to expand the Lyn-Lake Special Service District to include the Lake project area west of I-35W, and to create a new combined service district east of I-35W, called the Mid-Lake Special Service District, which will include the area between I-35W and Hiawatha Avenue. He noted that the team met with property owners east of I-35W on July 15, and will meet with property owners again on August 31. He also clarified that these costs are not special assessments, they are

services charges which are set annually. Andrew provided a process timeline handout (see attached) that Michael McLaughlin discussed.

Michael explained that the petition process will start with an information packet that will be mailed to all affected property owners after Labor Day. These packets will include a transmittal letter, an overview of the enhanced streetscape improvements, an individualized cost estimate for each parcel owned, a petition to enlarge or create a service district and impose service charges, and a return envelope for the petition. Project representatives will then conduct outreach to individual property owners to answer questions and collect petitions. Project representatives will also be available to answer questions via email or phone. The team will then have another open house to answer questions and collect additional petitions. Michael also provided an overview of the city approval sequence and timeline.

Randall Tighe asked what elements are included in the enhanced streetscape option that would require a special service district. Nathan handed out a cost table for the elements in the base and enhanced streetscape options. Mike Kotila explained the spreadsheet (see attached), which provides the streetscape elements, the unit costs, the expanded costs and the funding sources.

Allison asked if planters should be move up into the recommended category. Nathan responded that the team needs consensus from the group now if planters should be included. There are capital costs to installing the planters but the ongoing maintenance is the main cost. Allison noted that planters are a large maintenance commitment and asked if the PAC could see the cost before deciding to purchase them. Michael responded that a ballpark maintenance cost is around \$1,000 per planter per year, including spring planting, watering, weeding, and fall clean-up. Charleen noted that, like banners, planters may be something that individual property owners could purchase and maintain outside a special service district. Michael responded that the property owner could apply for an encroachment permit to buy their own planters and put them in the public right-of-way. However, these cannot be purchased through federal funds. Cristina asked if this needs to be decided on today. Michael responded that the team needs to know now so they can put together budget projections. Michael suggested leaving the planters out of the special service district cost assumptions. Allison agreed with this approach.

Bob Speeter asked if private groups could adopt certain streetscape elements to maintain themselves rather than through a service district. Michael responded that it depends on the element. This can be easily done with banners, for example, but past practice has shown that it is best to cover most elements through a special service district. Bob Speeter stated that he would like to start that conversation.

Randall asked who decided to create one special service district between I-35W and Hiawatha. Andrew responded that this has been the conversation for the last couple years and is the direction of the policymakers.

Next Steps and Next Meeting

Charleen stated that the consultant team will send an email to all PAC members and ask for feedback on the enhanced streetscape elements. She also reminded attendees that the decision from PAC is a recommendation only, and the actual approval will come from the petition process.

The next PAC meeting will be held on October 20, 2016 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Colin Powell Center.