

Hennepin County
Complete Streets Task Force Minutes
January 28, 2013 2 – 4 PM
Hennepin County Government Center
Conference Room C2350
300 South 6th Street, Minneapolis MN 55487

Attendees: Commissioner Jan Callison, Debra Brisk, Dave Fink, Joe Gladke, Mayor Kathi Hemken, Cooper Hanning, Joshua Houdek, David Hough, Margot Imdieke Cross, Tom Johnson, Michael Larson, Pete Lemke, Nick Mason, Ahmed Muhumud, Danny Nadeau, Karen Nikolai, Rose Ryan, Brian Shekelton, Craig Twinem

1. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Jan Callison called the meeting to order. Participants introduced themselves.

2. Hennepin County Pedestrian Plan

Rose Ryan provided an update on the Pedestrian Plan. She overviewed the goals, process and timeline (see associated presentation). The draft of the plan will be reviewed by staff next month, available to the public in March 2013 and expected to be adopted by the county board by June 2013. Community involvement has included workshops in different cities and with different groups, and an online survey. Rose reviewed key themes from public participation which included maintenance, missing sidewalks, crossing challenges, and enforcement of laws. This input will be reflected in identifying locations for needed improvements, as well as developing strategies and priorities. Strategies will include infrastructure improvements (e.g., curb extensions, countdown timers, Safe Routes to School) as well as changes to the design process. See web site at www.hennepin.us/pedestrianplan.

Mayor Hemken thought the county should publically promote the plan once it is adopted and offered to assist.

3. Hennepin County Bicycle Plan

Tom Johnson provided an overview of previous bicycle planning efforts, including the bicycle plan adopted in 1997 and the 2030 Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan. Bob Byers said that it had been their intent for the existing bicycle plan to be a living document, and that it has worked well. He mentioned that design guidelines need updating. Important pieces include the bikeway map and the bikeway gap map that identify important missing links. The purpose of updating the plan is to guide Hennepin County to the next level of bicycle friendliness and improve safety, comfort, and convenience for bicycle users. New considerations include the Complete Streets and Active Living approaches to planning. The approach to public involvement will likely mirror that of the Pedestrian Plan, where county staff reached out to stakeholder groups at their regular meeting times and places.

The consultant scope of work will involve supporting an internal team,; information gathering and assessment of current practices and deliverables such as technical memos, graphics and sample “application tech sheets”, which are one page summaries of specific interventions and their potential application.

Release of the RFP is expected by end of February with community engagement beginning in the summer. The plan is expected to be completed by the summer of 2014.

Rose mentioned that they want to reach people who bike some but would bike more if not for certain barriers or limitations. These people are important in helping take the bicycle system to the next level.

Commissioner Callison asked how the Hennepin County BAC is involved. Bob Byers said that they, as well as the Minneapolis BAC, will be engaged a number of times throughout the study. He hopes that the process will be collaborative. Commissioner Callison asked about how they might prioritize improvements in the future plan. Bob and Rose said that communication with the cities, and partnering with them, will be important. The County can support this engagement with data and analysis to identify potential locations on the system and the value of closing particular gaps. Bob mentioned that different stakeholder groups were involved in supporting the Park/Portland bike lanes, including outreach. Mn/DOT and Three Rivers Parks have partnered with the county on big infrastructure challenges like freeway barriers. Tom Johnson mentioned that the county needs to better define what a gap is. Karen Nikolai emphasized the importance of connections with transit and station area planning.

Nick Mason asked about the consultant selection process and Bob Byers emphasized the importance of having a consultant that understands local conditions as well as a strong community engagement process. Tom Johnson said that they want to include a broad consultant selection team. Karen Nikolai emphasized the importance of community engagement.

4. Pedestrian and Bicycle Capital Improvement Program

Rose Ryan reviewed the timeline for the just completed CIP solicitation process (see associated presentation) and the process used for selection. High priority considerations included safety, readiness for the 2013 season, cost, and transportation (vs. recreational) purpose.

Sidewalk Participation

Nine projects were recommended for funding (see map and table in presentation). Improvements included new construction, reconstruction and crossing improvements.

Bikeway Development

Rose reiterated that this program funded both infrastructure as well as planning/feasibility studies to address projects that would likely have design challenges. Three infrastructure and three studies were recommended (see map and table in presentation). Rose showed a graphic of the proposed cycle track on 36th Street in Minneapolis, and Bob Byers noted that although it is not a county road, it is on the county's bicycle system. Tom Johnson reiterated that the county supports a system that is county wide, which is also one that includes certain segments on local streets.

Bikeway Gap

Three projects were recommended for funding (see associated map and table in presentation). Rose presented the bicycle boulevard project that Minneapolis is proposing along 6th/5th Avenue from the Stone Arch Bridge to Columbia Heights.

Changes to CIP Process

Changes to process in 2014 will involve a greater head start, with release of applications in August 2013 so that communities can better anticipate this funding source. Bob Byers mentioned that in this first round applicants didn't have much time to engage other cities and their own communities.

Questions

Margot Imdieke Cross asked about accessibility improvements on projects. Rose stated that all of the projects are ADA compliant and the sidewalk participation program specifically requires that.

Debra Brisk said that Public Works wanted to pull these items from the general capital improvement program to demonstrate a commitment to this work. She said they look forward to the next solicitation.

5. Hennepin's Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan Update

Pete Lemke provided an overview of ADA law, including the need for a transition plan (see associated presentation). The first draft of the plan was released in March 2011. The final draft is being readied for public review with adoption anticipated in the first quarter of 2013. This process for developing the plan included a review of the complete streets inventory as a high-level self-evaluation of how the county is providing accessibility for all users on its transportation system. An upcoming self-evaluation will be more detailed and will address how the county does things (policies and practice) as well as action (what we do--implementation).

The county has an annual curb ramp program; and for 2011 and 2012 the county focused efforts in North and Northeast Minneapolis. The 2013 program will focus on the vicinity of the Central Corridor. Pete showed photos of before and after treatment. Next steps involve release of the transition plan, meeting with stakeholders, continuation of the self-evaluation, continuation of the annual curb ramp program and internal/external coordination.

One key issue from the last meeting was how ped ramps are addressed during the overlay program. Pete showed the proposed 2013 overlay program map, stating that where there is pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalk, trail) but missing pedestrian ramps, the county would install new ADA ramps. Pete emphasized that the design work involved with curb ramps is complex. Timing for the work includes an assessment of areas that are part of the annual overlay program, construction of the curb ramps, then completion of the bituminous overlay work. Margot Imdieke Cross emphasized the importance of installation of curb ramps in a timely way. Debra stated that a new line item in the CIP, Preservation Plus, has been developed, which will help with improvements in conjunction with our overlay program for areas that warrant additional attention. She stated that we are working on earlier development of the annual program to improve coordination (determining the 2014 and 2015 programs yet in 2013). Pete mentioned that staff is now beginning its effort to complete this assessment for the 2013 overlay program.

Pete overviewed the county's practices related to the installation of new curb ramps. He stated that the designers refer to MnDOT's curb ramp guidelines and standard plans which discourage the use of diagonal ramps (which are angled into the intersection). Rather, the county standard is to install ramps that are oriented in the direction of travel whenever possible, using a diagonal ramp only if all alternatives are deemed impractical. Margot emphasized the risks of diagonal ramps to wheelchair users and the blind, and Pete stated that they understand that.

Pete overviewed the use of APS messaging, which provides intersection and crossing-street specific information in an audible format to visually-impaired pedestrians.

Margot asked about when the assessment would be done and asked about compliant versus non-compliant ped ramps. Pete said that pedestrian ramps meeting the standard at the time of their construction (but not current standards) would not be replaced in conjunction with the overlay program; but Tom Johnson emphasized that the geographic based curb ramp program will continue to replace ramps built under old guidelines with ones built to current guidelines. Ahmed Muhumud, ADA Coordinator for Minneapolis, asked about prioritization of ramps as it related to complaints. Pete said that complaints can be directed to him.

Pete said that the county's approach to its program is geographic and understands that the needs are greatest in Minneapolis related to specific populations and areas where there would be greater needs like access to the Central Corridor.

6. 2013 Mill and Overlay Opportunities

Bob Byers addressed opportunities to include improved bicycle facilities on county roads as a result of restriping of mill and overlay projects. They have engaged stakeholder groups and will have discussions with traffic operations and maintenance as well as city staff to figure out details and coordination. A map was presented on potential projects in Minneapolis and countywide (see detail in associated presentation).

Brian Shekelton brought up the recent example of Park/Portland, stating that follow-up occurred with residents/owners along the corridor to determine the reaction to the recent changes. Discussion occurred that the county could have allowed more public process prior to the project. Bob Byers said that complex projects require (more) time. Commissioner Callison emphasized that the larger point is that the public process can be better and that it is helpful to talk about what could work better.

7. 2013 Complete Streets Staff Report and Work Plan

Karen Nikolai distributed a draft report of work of Complete Streets Task Force, which recaps the work of the last two years, and the issues that the County faces such as funding and the modification of State Aid standards. Karen highlighted the new use of the Complete Streets checklist (which is an evolution of the Context Sensitive Solutions approach) and its companion project summary. Other issues addressed by the Task Force include 4-to-3 lane roadway restriping, ADA transition planning issues, the Ped Plan and the Bike Plan. Karen emphasized the role of the Task Force in encouraging better collaboration, and the message of integrating public works programs. Karen emphasized the importance of city support for a complete streets approach, collaborating across jurisdictions, and identification of the continuing role of the Task Force.

8. 2012 Public Works Strategic Plan

Deb Brisk distributed a card that identifies the vision and mission of Hennepin County Public Works, which stems from recent strategic planning work that has occurred over the last year. This document was developed internally, but impacts how staff and programs collaborate and

communicate with external partners and stakeholders. Deb emphasized that there are many roles in Public Works and the different divisions are coming together better through this effort.

9. Announcements

Michael Larson announced that the web site, like other county web sites, now allows for feedback. He encouraged comments if there would like to see additional information or resources. The website may be found at www.hennepin.us/completestreets.