



AD HOC PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #10

City of Alexandria | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Thursday, February 25th, 2016 | 7:00-9:00 pm
Alexandria City Hall, Sister Cities Room | 301 King Street

NOTES

Welcome, Introductions

Committee members in attendance:

- Jennifer Hovis, Chair
- Carol Abrams
- Dave Brown
- Linda Couture
- Alan Dinsmore
- John Fennel
- Casey Kane
- Skip Maginnis
- Christine Michaelis

Project staff:

- Steve Sindiong, City of Alexandria
- Carrie Sanders, City of Alexandria
- Patrick Reed, City of Alexandria
- Karen Callaham, City of Alexandria
- Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group

Public:

- Eight (8) persons signed the sign-in sheet

Meeting Goals and Schedule (Jennifer Hovis)

- Ms. Hovis summarized the goal of the meeting, which was to review the edits and changes made to the draft plan based on the Committee's feedback at their last meeting, as well as from the public via AlexEngage. Ms. Hovis reviewed the Committee's original Charter from the City Council resolution, which does not require that the group reach consensus or hold a formal vote to approve the plan. The committee does need to submit a letter to the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services regarding their level of consensus and/or support for the final document

Plan Updates (Steve Sindiong)

- Mr. Sindiong noted that this is the 10th and final Committee meeting of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee.
- The last Committee meeting in January focused on the draft plan. At this meeting there was general support expressed for the draft plan, as well as requested edits in several key areas. Edits and revisions have been made and will be reviewed tonight.
- Also since the last meeting, the City conducted public outreach on the draft plan via AlexEngage, an online public engagement platform.

Summary of AlexEngage Input (Patrick Reed)

- Mr. Reed provided a review of the public input that was received related to the draft plan via AlexEngage. A total of 415 users provided feedback on the plan via AlexEngage. The survey was available from January 14 to February 5, 2016.

- The majority of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 64. Approximately 44% of respondents were female and 53% were male. 83% of respondents live in Alexandria. Del Ray, Old Town and the West End were the areas in the City where the most respondents lived, though other areas were also represented in smaller numbers.
- When respondents were asked to rank the goals in the plan in terms of importance (Safety, Engineering, Encouragement and Education), Safety and Engineering were the most commonly ranked as the most important goal areas. This was true for both the pedestrian and bicycle goal areas.
- When asked to rank the top 10 prioritized sidewalk projects in the draft plan, the King Street and Commonwealth Avenue sidewalk projects were the highest ranked projects by respondents.
- When asked to rank the top 10 prioritized on-street bike projects in the draft plan, the Mount Vernon Avenue and Duke Street on-street bike facility projects were the highest ranked projects by respondents. City staff commented that this does not mean that these projects are the only priorities for the City, or that they will be implemented first. This public input will be used alongside other analysis to determine next steps regarding funding and implementation.

Plan Highlights / Updated Changes (Steve Sindiong)

- In total, there have been approximately 1,650 interactions with people throughout the Master Planning process. This occurred through two public meetings, ten Ad Hoc Committee meetings, several summer outreach activities, an online interactive map and survey, and the AlexEngage process.
- In total, the draft plan includes over 500 pedestrian recommendations in six case study areas, and ten prioritized sidewalk projects distributed throughout the City.
- The draft plan recommendations also include 88 miles of new bicycle facilities that connect all major destinations in the City.
- Mr. Sindiong reviewed changes that were made to the current draft since the last Ad Hoc Committee meeting.
 - o Implementation was a key theme from the Committee and public input. People requested more detail about when and how improvements identified in the Plan would be implemented. The draft plan now includes new content about what strategies will be pursued in the first five years.
 - o Based on public input, clarity was added about how the planning process and recommended network focused on providing more facilities on the west side of the city.
 - o Vision Zero was moved to the first strategy in that section and a new text box was added to provide additional detail on the program.
 - o More terms were added to the glossary.
 - o Other minor text changes were completed.
 - o A few changes were also made to the recommended bike network, including adding more enhanced bicycle facilities in the Potomac Yards area and in the Slaters Lane area.
 - o In closing, staff wanted to sincerely thank and acknowledge all of the members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the time and effort they put in to the planning process.

Committee Questions / Comments (Jennifer Hovis)

- Committee Chair, Jennifer Hovis, stated that in the beginning of the project there were some concerns that the plan wouldn't be detailed enough, but now there is an incredible amount of detail compared to where we thought we'd be at this point. The amount of public participation that has gone in to the plan is also very impressive.
- A committee member stated that a good master plan should not be a snapshot in time, it should be a good guide to the future. This plan does that.
- A committee member expressed appreciation for the emphasis on the west end in the plan and throughout the planning process.
- Have any of these projects been submitted to the City's budget process already?
 - o City response: There was a change this year that increased the sidewalk repair and maintenance program to support projects in this plan. Also, in the Complete Streets budget for this year, funding has been set aside to implement the recommendations from the Case Study Areas. Other projects from this plan have not been pursued yet but now that the plan is done and we hope to have it adopted soon, that will give staff more momentum for pursuing funding for these projects.
- A committee member agreed that the plan does a good job of being specific and in incorporating lots of input along the way.
- How can this plan inform future decision-making that we can't fully anticipate right now?
 - o City response: The prioritization tool that was used to identify the priority projects can be re-run over time using new projects and updated data. Also, the goals and associated performance measures in the plan should guide decision-making on future projects that we can't foresee at this time.
- The BPAC would like to see more specificity about timelines for implementation, particularly related to Vision Zero. It would be worthwhile to capture how important the committee thinks this is in the endorsement letter. The City needs to do more than talk about Vision Zero. We should also emphasize how Vision Zero will be funded – it should be a standalone line item in the city budget process.
- It would be useful to have a report each year on the degree to which the plan is being implemented (i.e. if this is a 20 year plan, are we aiming to implement 5% each year?).
- The glossary isn't entirely alphabetized.
- A committee member agreed with the need for a better timeline regarding implementation. However, there already exists many avenues in the City budget that could be used to implement this plan. From time to time we are going to have to come together to figure out whether adequate resources are being provided each year, so we can intervene early if we're not making good progress on plan implementation.
- The Vision Zero program is exceptionally important to the wellbeing of older adults.
- As a resident of the west end, one committee member commended the draft plan for emphasizing projects in the west side of the City, and concurred with comments about the need for additional funding for Complete Streets.
- A committee member stated that the plan has turned out beautifully and there is a high level of connectivity in the bike network plan. This is also a realistic plan that isn't full of pipe dreams.
- The plan needs more specific language about how we are going to address skateboards and hoverboards.
- A committee member reported that she has, on several occasions, reported places where bricks were jutting up and making sidewalks unsafe and the City has been very responsive.

- Can you provide any additional information about the three pedestrian crashes that have occurred over the past 10 days? Could this be part of the Vision Zero effort?
 - o City response: The City police have been conducting a careful review of each site and incident to understand what has happened. It is the goal of the Vision Zero program to eliminate pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries. That program would likely include a closer look at the police reports from locations that have recurring pedestrian crashes, to better understand what can be done.
- There is no existing bike lane on Pegram Street – why does the map show one?
 - o City response: In a few instances, we knew that we were going to implement a project within a few months so we went ahead and marked it as complete.
- It is important to figure out what happens to bike facilities during construction and have a process for dealing with transition periods as new projects are being completed.
- It is also important to distinguish between the recreational riders and the commuters, so that we can understand what routes are being used for what purposes.
- There is a need to look at near misses as well as actual injuries and fatalities. Many close calls are not captured in crash data.
- Committee members thanked Jennifer Hovis for chairing the committee.

Public Comment

- Union Street is a catastrophe. It is difficult to walk, bicycles don't belong there, and with construction we are going to have five years of chaos. Bicycles need to be routed off of Union Street in the near term.
- As a crossing guard at Beauregard and Sanger, a speaker spoke about challenges related to slowing down traffic. Enforcement is only one way to slow traffic. The speaker witnessed an accident this week and regularly observes speeding in this area. School zones are where the most vulnerable pedestrians are. Since he started in September, he has seen four occasions where a child changed their mind and walked into the street, and he had to abruptly stop traffic. There should be better markings and signs in the school zones, particularly at Ramsey and Hammond.
- South Royal and the Union/King Street need improvements it is good to hear that Royal Street isn't planned for a dedicated bike lane. The speaker supports any efforts the city is making to encourage bicyclists not to use Union Street. At one point the City talked about Lower King being a pedestrian plaza – this idea might eliminate some of the conflicts on Union Street.
- The idea of bike lanes on King Street near the Baptist Church is lunacy. It is a busy street with four lanes of through-traffic. Bike lanes were put on King Street recently (further east) and since it was installed, the speaker has seen a total of 5 people riding a bike on this street. No one who lives there wants bike facilities on King Street. Most of the problems near the high school are students walking without looking where they are going.
- A speaker came to a meeting for this Plan several months ago because he saw a police stop a cyclist who ran a stop sign. He sees bicyclists barreling through stop signs all the time. He wanted to thank the police for doing this – it is a big problem in Alexandria especially in Old Town.
- Where are the pedestrian activity centers in Alexandria? There are schools, churches, and other commercial centers where people want to walk. We need to see a map of these

locations. King Street is essentially Leesburg Pike and no one should be considering putting a bike lane on Leesburg Pike.

- Complements to the Chair and Committee for undertaking this arduous task. It is hard to please everyone but overall this plan is in good shape. Now comes the important part – funding the plan. The public needs to stay focused on pushing for more funding to get this plan adopted.
- The King Street Bike lanes are not just about bikers, they help slow the traffic and create a buffer between cars and sidewalks. The existing bike lane is an incomplete project so it currently isn't particularly safe for bikers, which is why it isn't being used very much.
- Complements to the committee on the work that you've done in encouraging citizen input, listening to input and reflecting it in the plan. The challenge now is about money going forward. The speaker would like to see an equally effective process that allows the public to weight in and try to get funding for the projects in this Plan. We need structured ways to advocate for funding the projects in this plan.
 - o City response: The City Budget process includes Town Hall meetings and other avenues for public input.

Consideration of Endorsement (Jennifer Hovis)

- Ms. Hovis recommended that the Committee consider endorsement of the plan. If there is unanimous consensus, the Committee can develop a letter stating that and expressing any particular topics that need emphasized moving forward.
- A motion was made by William Schuyler, and seconded by Carol Abrams, to endorse the draft plan, and draft a letter of support for the plan that stresses the following themes:
- The committee voted unanimously to draft a letter of support for the plan that stressed the following themes:
 - o Emphasize Vision Zero
 - o Encourage transparency in reporting progress over time
 - o Emphasize the importance of funding projects over time
 - o Stress the significant public engagement in the plan and importance of that continuing over time
- There was a unanimous endorsement with one abstention, which was based on the member's view that he didn't have authority from his commission to endorse a draft plan

Committee Member Updates

- No updates were provided by Committee members

Wrap Up and Next Steps (Steve Sindiong)

- Mr. Sindiong reviewed the following next steps:
 - o Transportation Commission - March 16
 - o Planning Commission – April 5
 - o Council Hearing – April 16
 - o Council – Amendment/ Approval – May
- He again thanked Ms. Hovis and the entire committee for their work and distributed certificates of appreciation signed by the Director of the Department.