

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting
Saint Cloud Public Library Bremer Room
Jan. 22, 2019

Attendees: Joseph Mueller; Alison Henning; Alex McKenzie; Sarah Weed; Melissa Hjelle; Kim Pettman; Kurt Franke; Hannah Dockendorf; Doug Diedrichsen; Janine Foggia; Kim Hoff; Brian Gibson; Vicki Johnson; Nate Keller.

Meeting was called to order at 2 p.m. Chairperson Alison Henning presided.

Safe Routes to School Update

Ms. Henning provided an update about the work done to date with Saint Cloud Area School District ISD 742's Safe Routes to School Planning grant. In summer 2018, Ms. Henning and Ms. Hannah Dockendorf, Community Wellness Specialist with Feeling Good MN, were appointed team leaders for the planning work. Ms. Henning said since July the team has done a significant amount of data collection. Volunteers had conducted bicycle and pedestrian counts at the five (5) schools covered under the planning grant: Madison Elementary, Discovery Elementary, Talahi Elementary, North Junior High, and South Junior High. Parent data and student tallies were also compiled.

Ms. Henning said over the next few years the APO plans on completing plans for the remaining schools within the APO's metropolitan planning area. In spring 2019, Ms. Henning is looking for volunteers to conduct school zone hazard observations at two (2) new schools in the district.

Ms. Dockendorf said the five (5) individual schools that are being addressed right now were chosen based upon the Minnesota Department of Transportation planning grant. The local team leaders are working with the district to prioritize the remaining schools.

Ms. Pettman brought up sidewalk shoveling concerns in local cities, particularly along Second Avenue S near the Dollar Tree in Sauk Rapids. She stated that it is great to have grants but if there is no commitment from the cities to keep those sidewalks clear then it doesn't do much good. Ms. Pettman asked about possible buy-in from city officials.

Mr. Keller said in the case of Sartell the city does maintain through-ways but the majority of sidewalk snow shoveling is done by the property owners.

Ms. Pettman stated that there is confusion surrounding sidewalk maintenance.

Mr. Franke said he has issues with sidewalk shoveling around North Junior High in Saint Cloud. He stated Saint Cloud has an ordinance that snow needs to be removed from sidewalks within 24 hours. If not, there is a phone number people can use to contact the city to have city officials address the property owner(s).

Ms. Pettman said that some cities enforce or handle shoveling complaints differently. She stated that if the APO or Safe Routes to School could compile a six (6) list with links to ordinances and phone numbers to call in regards to shoveling sidewalks stakeholders can spread the message. She stated that kids are more vulnerable to the dangers of non-shoveled sidewalks.

Mr. Franke stated the City of Minneapolis is focusing on clearing sidewalks. Our Streets Minneapolis, a non-profit organization, and is focusing on advocating for cleaning sidewalks in the city.

Mr. Gibson said the APO can identify sidewalk maintenance as a need in various plans, however, it is up to each city to enforce its respective sidewalk shoveling ordinances. The APO would not be opposed if a separate (non-APO) advocacy group were to form in order to spread awareness.

MTP Active Transportation Chapter

Ms. Henning presented an initial draft of the APO's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan's (MTP's) Active Transportation chapter. Ms. Henning asked members of the BPAC to read through and review the chapter and provide feedback. She stated she wants to ensure that all of the bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups and organizations are listed. In addition, this chapter features multiple maps of each of the jurisdiction's on-road and off-road trails.

Ms. Pettman indicated she would like two or three printed copies of the draft chapter to provide to local activists who do not have email access.

Ms. Henning stated she would like to have all feedback received by the end of February.

Mr. Gibson said the Active Transportation Chapter is not the only place within the larger MTP where bicycle and pedestrian issues and concerns are addressed. He stated the plan's existing conditions chapter features safety and count data. Mr. Gibson said this chapter is meant to be a broader discussion about active transportation within the region. He stated this chapter will be found within the larger context of the MTP by late summer. He stated he wanted this MTP to be something the region could be proud of.

Mr. Keller said upon initial review he thought the information about the number of jobs that active transportation infrastructure creates was very interesting and could be useful information when addressing local city councils and county boards of commissions about the inclusion of active transportation infrastructure.

Ms. Henning said she was surprised to find that information out as well and stated that active transportation can create more than just a healthier community.

Metropolitan Area Active Transportation Plan

Ms. Henning presented a draft detailed outline of the proposed Saint Cloud APO's Active Transportation Plan. This plan, separate from the MTP, will be a deeper dive into the region's active transportation existing conditions and recommendations for the future. Ms. Henning is seeking feedback on the draft outline.

Mr. Keller asked about how the APO is planning on engaging the public to solicit feedback for the development of this plan.

Ms. Henning said she is hoping to do similar engagements to what is currently being done with Safe Routes to School – attending existing community engagement events – since they tend to draw a large number of people.

Mr. Gibson stated that if BPAC members know of any events this summer that would be a good fit for public engagement to let APO staffers know to see if the APO can latch on to these events. This would be especially beneficial for the long range plan.

Mr. Gibson also stated this active transportation plan would become a reference for the APO when developing the next MTP.

Mr. Franke expressed concerns about the active transportation plan. He stated that Regional Active Living Advisory Group (RALAG) currently has a regional active transportation plan. He was concerned the plans would be virtually identical.

Ms. Henning stated she had reviewed the RALAG plan. Her goal was to take the information from the RALAG plan and tighten it down and make it more specific to the Saint Cloud APO's Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

Mr. Gibson concurred.

Mr. Franke said he liked the Wikimapia tool which was used in the RALAG plan.

Ms. Foggia said RALAG still has the data gathered during the RALAG plan development. She stated it is the organization's new goal to work with partners to get the regional plans down to more specific levels.

Ms. Pettman asked if there was a summertime deadline. She suggested APO staff reach out to seniors at the senior expo in August. She said a lot of times people don't seem to think of seniors as pedestrians. She suggested at least dropping off posters or flyers.

Ms. Henning addressed a possible paved trail survey developed by the APO staff with the assistance of interns this past fall. The goal of this survey is to look at half-mile segments of off-road trail within the Saint Cloud MPA and evaluate them on various factors.

Mr. Gibson said within the MTP there is a section on pavement condition for roadways. This pavement condition is measured by lasers and other tools. However, there is no way to measure pavement conditions for trails. He said the goal of this paved trail survey is to, over the course of four (4) to five (5) years, assess every mile of paved trail within the MPA. This data could then be incorporated into the Active Transportation Plan. Mr. Gibson said this effort would be volunteer driven. The survey developed by the APO is designed to be simple and include a lot of pictures. Mr. Gibson asked if members of the BPAC would be willing to test this survey once the weather warms up to determine if the survey is doable. APO staff will also be testing the process. It is the goal of the APO to have this survey ready by summer 2019.

Ms. Weed said the survey items needed should include a preferred or recommended smartphone application to be used to determine latitude and longitude.

Mr. Diedrichsen suggested Nike's Track My Ride.

Ms. Henning said she was willing to hear all suggestions on the survey. She proceeded to go over the survey.

Mr. Gibson interjected stating that measuring certain items, such as drainage, may prove to be rather difficult.

Mr. Franke asked about specific trails this would be used for.

Ms. Henning said the APO will be segmenting various trails and distributing maps for specific trail sections.

Ms. Hjelle said she would like to incorporate the information presented as part of a short narrative for CentraCare Health's Daily Dose intra-hospital newsletter. She suggested presenting this at a CentraCare lunch and learn or other events.

Ms. Dockendorf said the Earth Day run would be a good opportunity to debut the survey.

Mr. Gibson said the trail assessment might be a good addition for people who are already using the trails, for example, those walking and/or biking with their children.

Ms. Weed said the length of the survey (five (5) pages front and back) could be cumbersome, especially if someone is planning on doing a larger stretch.

Ms. Henning said she is hoping to develop a smartphone application that could make completing the survey paperless.

Mr. Diedrichsen suggested utilizing a writable PDF.

Mr. Gibson said the goal of the survey was originally supposed to be one page. However, with the number of items which needed to be measured, the explanations, and pictures the survey ended up being much longer than anticipated.

Mr. Keller asked how the data would be presented to local cities and other jurisdictions. Would it take on the form of GIS with an overall trail ranking layer?

Ms. Henning said yes, but the cities will also have access to more specific data as well.

Mr. Mueller said for instances of major cracks, for example, the APO could create a dot map.

Ms. Henning said the maps would look similar to the Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) maps.

Mr. Keller said these maps would be very useful for cities, especially working in conjunction with street reconstruction plans. That way cities would have the opportunity to prioritize trail maintenance.

Mr. Mueller concurred and stated generally paved off-road trails do not typically exhibit signs of wear and tear as quickly as say roadways.

Mr. Gibson said it is the hope that after a few years of compiling the data he is hopeful the area would be able to better information about the rate of deterioration on off-road paved trails.

Questions, Announcements, and Open Discussion

Ms. Henning wanted to remind BPAC members of the upcoming spring bike counts.

Ms. Pettman had brought up several items for open discussion. First, she stated that she had attended the Saint Cloud 101 events and knows of a man who lives at her apartment complex who is a very experienced cyclist. She said that in talking with this individual, she said people need to get off of their cellphones while driving. She lives in Sauk Rapids and she said she doesn't want to see people get creamed by distracted drivers. She said not everyone can use the bus or trails and people should be able to bike without being creamed. She said that needs to be addressed.

Second, Ms. Pettman brought up pedestrian safety needs to be a year-round effort. In the winter, particularly with transit, people cannot get to the bus safely. She said local transit agencies want more people to be riders but said people cannot access stops safely.

Mr. Gibson said during initial public outreach for the APO's MTP distracted driving comments were heard. He said the APO has a performance measure incorporated into the plan.

Mr. McKenzie said APO staff are able to map distracted driving crashes and could use this data to address the issue if there is a cluster of crashes within specific areas.

Ms. Pettman said she is concerned that people don't know what is going on.

Mr. Gibson said all meetings held by the APO are open to the public. All APO staff does is planning and all data gathering goes towards the development of said plans.

Ms. Pettman said the message needs to be consistent. She said she has received push back from the APO. She said it is not lobbying if the message being spread prevents accidents. She said there are a lot of things that can be done. She said the APO needs to stick up for the transit dependent populations.

Ms. Hjelle said there is a local group, Stearns-Benton Toward Zero Deaths, that has recently had requests to address bicycle and pedestrian safety issues. As one of the organizers of TZD, she said she attended the BPAC meeting to show support and would be interested in presenting this information at the next TZD meeting. She also would like to present the bike trail assessment information to a local trauma team.

Mr. Franke said he had recently applied for and received supplies in order to host bike rodeos. He stated that this ties in with the Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum.

Mr. Gibson said it is nice to know that someone in town can provide that service.

Mr. Franke said he wants to raise the level of education and confidence among people. He said that will make a giant difference.

Meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Vicki Johnson.