

**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ATAC) AND AGE-  
FLOURISHING SAINT CLOUD – TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY WORK  
GROUP JOINT MEETING**

***Friday, January 26 @ 9:00 a.m.***

A meeting of the ATAC and Age Flourishing Saint Cloud – Transportation and Mobility Work Group Joint Meeting was held at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, January 26, 2024, at the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce in Saint Cloud. Chairperson Alex McKenzie presided with the following people in attendance:

Zoom Attendees

Todd Holman	Citizen/Advocate
Jennifer Wucherer	City of Saint Cloud - RSVP Program Director and Co-Chair of Age-Flourishing -Saint Cloud Taskforce
Andrea Nistler	Citizen/Advocate
Brian Gibson	Saint Cloud APO – Executive Director
Sara Weed	Stearns County Parks – Parks Operations Coordinator
Ben Thoele	Citizen/Advocate

In-Person Attendees

Nate Keller	City of Saint Joseph – Community Development Director
Tyler Bevier	Director of Downtown Planning and Development
Vicki Johnson	Saint Cloud APO – Senior Transportation Planner

Introductions were made.

**Transportation Alternatives (TA) Project Rankings**

Mr. McKenzie presented an overview of how the transportation alternatives (TA) program fits within the APO’s metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) and TIP projects. He also explained how TA funding is distributed in Minnesota and within the Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP). He then went on to explain how regional priority points work to ideally boost the region’s top projects for funding consideration. MnDOT District 3 received 17 applications, six within the Saint Cloud APO area.

Mr. Holman commented that the Beaver Island connection between Opportunity Drive and Clearwater Road is not one of the TA projects. Ms. Johnson responded that the project is on the city's radar, and they will construct the trail in conjunction with the Heatherwood Road extension. This connection is in the city's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2026, but they are requesting the state's bond money to complete the project.

Mr. McKenzie presented the City of Saint Cloud's 22<sup>nd</sup> Street S. TA project. The existing corridor is a rural section with steep ditches and no shoulder, making walking and biking difficult. The project will include bike lanes, sidewalks, and transit stop enhancements. There are multiple active transportation facilities on nearby roadways, such as Cooper Avenue, County Road 136/Oak Grove Road, 33<sup>rd</sup> Street S, and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street S. This stretch of roadway is the missing piece that will connect all active transportation facilities. Mr. Thoele commented that there isn't an alternative route in this part of the city, so that is one metric that should be considered. Ms. Johnson commented that these proposed projects would coincide with the roadway improvements in 2026, which include a full reconstruction, curb and gutter, and other enhancements. Mr. Keller asked if they aren't successful in TA funds, will the proposed project still be constructed? Ms. Johnson did not have an answer. Mr. Thoele asked if the APO provides design recommendations to the city. Mr. McKenzie responded, no, that is up to the city. Mr. Thoele commented that frequently, when a shoulder or sidewalk is installed, it becomes storage for snow during the winter, so are there any design guidelines to prevent that from happening? Ms. Johnson commented that the APO does not have that answer, but the TA application does ask for maintenance and if the facility will be open year-round. When a project is within city limits, ordinances often state who is responsible for snow removal on sidewalks and other facilities. Mr. Thoele stated that we have the capital part, but the operations part of the project is often overlooked. Facilities are built but not maintained, such as the US 10/MN 23 interchange shared use path, which is not currently plowed. Often, it's not the citizens neglecting snow removal; it's the government entities. It is important to design the future operational cost in the project design detail. Mr. Holman asked if this project is in a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan, and Mr. McKenzie responded that it's in the Oak Hill Community School SRTS Plan.

Mr. McKenzie presented the City of Saint Cloud's South Junior High School and 13<sup>th</sup> Street S. improvements project. The project will include the installation of a pedestrian-activated crossing at Ninth Avenue S. and a sidewalk along 13<sup>th</sup> Street S., which would improve pedestrian safety. The corridor connects the Southside Boys & Girls Club, Haws Park, and the primary residences of many students. This project was a recommendation in the South Junior High School SRTS Plan. Phase two of this project is to connect a path from the end of the sidewalk on 13<sup>th</sup> Street S. to the school entrance. Mr. Thoele commented that this only installs a single feature to get students across the street at one intersection. In Edina or Stillwater, there are curb extensions/bulb-outs at multiple intersections to shorten the distance across the street. Would a curb extension be cheaper and safer than the activated crossing? Mr. McKenzie stated he would need to ask the engineers why they picked this particular safety improvement over another. Ms. Johnson stated that the APO will bring Mr. Thoele's comments to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for input.

Mr. Keller presented on the City of Saint Joseph's downtown synergy connections project. Project A involves a trail connection between Elm Street E. and Clark Street, connecting the Lake Wobegon Trail. Project B is a proposed sidewalk along College Avenue S. near Saint Benedict's College. It connects to important destinations, such as commercial downtown, residential, and City Hall. Project C is

a proposed sidewalk along Second Avenue NW. This will connect to parks, businesses, and residential uses.

Mr. McKenzie presented on the City of Sartell's Pinecone Road and 15<sup>th</sup> Street project. The proposed project is to add a sidewalk along the west side of Pinecone Road, creating vital connections to multiple destinations along the corridor, such as residential, commercial, office, and employment areas. The project will also provide an enhanced crosswalk system to cross Pinecone Road at Roberts Road. Mr. Thoele commented that the intersection of Pinecone Road and Roberts Road was built for future connections but, in doing so, created a hazard for active transportation users. Building a turn lane that goes nowhere makes the road wider for pedestrians trying to cross now. Could the city have installed other features, such as curb extensions or building the intersection smaller, until there was a need for the turn lane? This intersection is an example of bad design, a waste of taxpayers' dollars, and bad for pedestrians.

Mr. McKenzie presented the City of Sauk Rapids CSAH 3 at Sixth Avenue and Summit Avenue project. The project involves increasing safety at two roundabouts along CSAH 3/Second Street N. by installing a pedestrian crosswalk flasher system. The corridor provides a continuous and vital connection from the Mississippi River and downtown to the Sauk Rapids-Rice High School. There are numerous key community facilities in between, including the Middle School, Bob Cross Nature Preserve, and the Government Center. Mr. Thoele favors design over enforcement. Roundabouts are overengineered in favor of higher speeds, and traffic calming measures should be implemented at these roundabouts, such as smaller radius and narrower lanes. Relying on law enforcement is not a way to design our roadways. We should build/design roads for the speed at which we want drivers to drive. Radar speed-back signs, such as the one on Ninth Avenue N. before the Sauk Rapids bridge, are ineffective, and vehicles speed up instead of slowing down. Mr. Keller asked when these roundabouts were constructed. Ms. Johnson commented around 2015.

Mr. McKenzie presented on the City of Sauk Rapids Second Avenue S. project. The proposed sidewalk will cross the BNSF railroad tracks. This sidewalk will close the existing active transportation network gap and connect to residential and commercial businesses. This project will occur shortly after the Second Avenue S. roadway project, which extends from where this project begins south to the city limits. Ms. Nistler asked if the intersection of Benton Drive and Second Avenue has a stoplight, and Mr. McKenzie confirmed. Mr. Holman asked if Second Avenue goes down to Lincoln Avenue and if the planned improvements on Second Avenue include paved shoulders. Mr. McKenzie commented that Second Avenue is a parallel route to Lincoln Avenue. Ms. Johnson stated that the planned improvements on Second Avenue will include multimodal improvements, with sidewalks and ADA features. There are known speeding problems along this roadway, which is very wide, so the city is looking into calming measures such as mini-roundabouts to help with that. Mr. Bevier commented that crossing the railroad with no sidewalk is awkward and will considerably improve access to downtown businesses such as Coborn's.

Discussions on the priority ranking to the TAC began. Ms. Nistler asked if the 15<sup>th</sup>

Street N. trail project in Waite Park was dropped. Ms. Johnson stated that the project was funded last year through this program. Mr. Holman suggested that the City of Saint Cloud's 22<sup>nd</sup> Street S. project be ranked number one because it closes a gap, is called out in an SRTS Plan, and will complement the future 33<sup>rd</sup> Street S. Mississippi River bridge crossing with active transportation facilities. The second-ranked project would be the City of Sauk Rapids – Second Avenue S. project due to safety concerns with the railroad, and the user volumes must be high. Mr. Bevier suggested moving the City of Sartell Pinecone Road and 15<sup>th</sup> Street project to sixth place since it seems visionary and will be needed more once development in the area happens. He also liked the City of Saint Joseph's downtown synergy connections, especially the Lake Wobegon Trail connection to downtown. Ms. Wucherer has seen firsthand the problems at the Saint Cloud's Ninth Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street S. intersection, so her suggestion is to make that project priority number one. Mr. Bevier asked what the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street S. transit stop enhancements entail. APO staff responded that it's to be determined. Mr. Gibson stated that from a process standpoint, a technical evaluation will be done on all these projects. Today, the APO is looking to give the users a voice in the process and hear which project is most needed based on their experiences. Mr. Keller stated that he is in all these jurisdictions daily, and all are needed. However, based on his experience, the City of Saint Joseph – downtown synergy connection is priority number one. The City of Sauk Rapids Second Avenue S. project is priority number two. Mr. Holman commented that the most important project in the Saint Joseph project package is the connection to the Lake Wobegon Trail, and the other connections could come later as part of the CIP process. APO staff asked each member which project was their number one and number two priority. Based on the members' votes, the priority rankings from one to six are as follows.

1. The City of Saint Cloud – South Junior High School and 13<sup>th</sup> Street S. Improvements.
2. City of Sauk Rapids – Second Avenue S.
3. City of Saint Cloud – 22<sup>nd</sup> Street S.
4. City of Saint Joseph – Downtown Synergy Connections.
5. City of Sauk Rapids – CSAH 3 at Sixth Avenue and Summit Avenue.
6. City of Sartell – Pinecone Road and 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **ATAC Representative**

This action item was tabled until the next meeting.

### **Other Business and Announcements**

Benton County is planning the reconstruction of the existing Mayhew Lake Road/County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 1 between State Highway 23 and 35<sup>th</sup> St./CSAH 29. Benton County is looking for your feedback on the proposed improvements as part of the current design phase. If you are willing to attend an

hour-long virtual meeting in the coming weeks, Mr. McKenzie will send an availability survey.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.