



AD HOC PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #4

City of Alexandria | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Wednesday, February 4th, 2015 | 7:00-9:00 pm
Alexandria City Hall, Sister Cities Room 1101 | 301 King Street

NOTES

7:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions

Committee members in attendance:

- Jennifer Hovis, Chair
- Scott Anderson, Vice-Chair
- John Fennell
- Kevin Posey
- Pablo Torres
- Dave Brown
- William Schuyler
- Linda Couture
- Mollie Danforth

Project staff:

- Sandra Marks, City of Alexandria
- Steve Sindiong, City of Alexandria
- Carrie Sanders, City of Alexandria
- RJ Eldridge, Toole Design Group
- Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group

Public:

- Sixteen persons signed the sign-in sheet

Goals for the meeting (Sandra Marks)

- Follow up and finalize the Vision, Goals and Objectives
- Explore the pedestrian focus areas
- Dr. Furman resigned from the committee. A new At Large committee member (Linda Couture) has been appointed.

Agenda Overview (Jennifer Hovis)

- Staff and consultants have responded to every comment made by the committee regarding the Vision, Goals and Objectives. Not every requested change was made but they responded to each point.
- Please refer to the Meeting Ground Rules and remain respectful and brief in your comments.
- There will be time for public comment at the end of the meeting.

Review Ad Hoc Committee Role / Project Process / Schedule (Steve Sindiong)

- The committee may not reach unanimous consensus at the end of the meeting but the goal is to get feedback and general buy-in on the agenda items.
- As a reminder, a Vision is meant to be aspirational; Goals are broad aims that set the direction for reaching the vision, Objectives are specific milestones that must be reached to meet the goal; and Strategies are specific actions that tell you 'how' you will get there.
- The final deliverables for the project will be two Chapters for the Transportation Master Plan (pedestrian, bicycle), as well as technical appendices that go in to more detail on some aspects. There is also a Complete Streets Design Guidelines Manual being developed.
- Project staff have received input from the committee that the plan process wasn't moving quickly enough. There was a review of the overall project schedule and what additional information/analysis has been underway since the plan started.

- A Progress Report was distributed. This document provides a review of what has been completed since the 2008 Mobility Plan was adopted, and what progress the City has made on the goals and objectives from that past plan.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Goals and Objectives (Carrie Sanders)

- Over 14 pages of comments were received from the committee and the public about the draft goals and objectives. Project staff catalogued all the comments and made a matrix showing how each was addressed (or explaining why it wasn't).
- Some of the changes that were made based on committee input include:
 - o balanced the pedestrian and bicycle goals and objectives (to make them more even in tone)
 - o added new objectives related to maintenance under the Safety goals
 - o moved the safety goals to be the highest priority
 - o added objectives aiming to reach platinum level status as a walk friendly and bike friendly community
 - o strengthened performance measures to address biking to school and other items
 - o will have a policy that requires performance measure targets to be updated every two years, and approved by the Transportation Commission
- Specific projects and strategies will be addressed in the plan recommendations.
- A glossary of terms will be provided in the plan.

General Discussion (Committee)

- Pedestrian
 - o There was interest in specifically calling out “people with disabilities”. The previous document had this and it was omitted in this version. If these individuals are not specifically called out they might be forgotten.
 - o The group decided to add the phrase “children, older adults and people with disabilities” in both the pedestrian and bicycle vision statement. Subsequently the document will use the phrase “all abilities” to reference the groups above.
 - o There was concern that the safety objective would not be able to be tracked and enforced. In response to this, consultant RJ Eldridge mentioned that a later step in the plan process is to identify project prioritization criteria and to develop weighting factors for them. The committee will be involved in that process and those criteria will identify the top projects that will be implemented first. Safety could be weighted heavily, making that a strong factor in prioritizing recommended projects.
 - o There was a discussion about Vision Zero, a Swedish approach to road safety thinking that attests that no loss of life is acceptable. After discussion, the group agreed to revise the safety goal to say “eliminate pedestrian and bicycle fatalities...” The committee and staff also agreed to further explore and consider Vision Zero specifically during the future discussion of strategies.
 - o The Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) submitted comments about some specific objectives for the plan that they hope are inserted somewhere. They also suggest that the Goal or Objectives specifically mention Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) as a partner.
 - o Generally speaking, BPAC supports the vision, goals and objectives as revised.
 - o There was a question about how this document helps the city and public ensure that the projects, programs and investments in the plan accomplish these objectives. RJ Eldridge responded that there is a feedback loop that occurs over time – whereby the City sets goals and objectives, prioritizes strategies, makes investments, checks in periodically to see how they’re doing against the goals, and then refines their approach. Carrie Sanders also mentioned that there is a new proposal in the

Objectives that requires the City to report to Council every two years about the performance measures.

- For any mention of specific websites and organizations (i.e. walksafe.org), it is important to confirm that these specific groups are aligned with and appropriate for Alexandria. Carrie Sanders stated that this particular program (Walk Friendly Communities) is the national standard at this time, and also that it would be defined/explained in the plan document itself. The group agreed that it would be important to be explicit about what elements of the program the city was endorsing/adopting, in case the national program changes in the future. Also there was a request to mention Alexandria's current "walk friendly community" status.
 - There are fewer performance measures related to education objectives than all other subjects, and the ones in the document all relate to children (whereas the objectives are more broad). Sandra Marks said that there would be more opportunities to add to the performance measures as the plan advances.
 - Change objective 2.1 to "ensure sidewalks are available both sides of all streets."
 - The chair mentioned that the committee is not a voting body and that the goal tonight is to get general consensus that there is nothing the committee members "can't live with" in the document. The chair asked if there were any remaining, significant issues and there were no additional comments.
- Bicycle Vision, Goals and Objectives
- Add "older adults, children and people with disabilities" to the Vision statement, and make other similar changes to phrasing as were agreed upon for the pedestrian section (i.e. "eliminate fatalities," etc.).
 - There was a discussion about whether people with disabilities benefit from different types of bicycle facilities, or if there are wider/higher-quality facilities needed to support riding by people with disabilities. There was discussion about the tension between the desire to have all facilities work for people of all abilities, versus the desire to build a lot of facilities, given limited funds and right-of-way. There was a discussion about how the highest quality and most accessible facilities should be the design standard, and that the City should need to "justify" anything less. The project staff agreed that this was an important consideration but that additional process (i.e. formal justification of anything less than "platinum-level" design) would slow down implementation, potentially significantly. Sandra Marks said that she wants to explore "accessible bicycle facility design" further and make sure we have a comprehensive understanding of standards and best practices.
 - The chair asked the committee if there were any major issues with the document and there were no additional comments.

Pedestrian Focus Areas (RJ Eldridge)

- RJ Eldridge gave an overview of Pedestrian Focus Areas in the plan. The goal is to identify a finite number of areas where the plan field work and specific recommendations will be targeted. The plan will not include a detailed assessment of every street, but the City wants to identify several places where consultants look in detail and make recommendations for specific improvements.
- The goal is to identify places that have characteristics or issues that are applicable to other places in the City. For this reason, several major themes were identified from the public input, and the Focus Areas can be viewed as "case studies" of these key themes. Themes:
 - Freeway interchanges/major barriers
 - Schools and neighborhoods
 - Transit access and integration
 - Neighborhood main streets

- Suburban commercial connectors
 - Trail/Roadway transitions
- For each of the Focus Areas, the consultants will look at general conditions for walking and bicycling and specific issues: pedestrian desire lines (worn paths or commonly used street crossings), ADA access needs and issues, intersection designs, needed connections, etc.
- There was a committee comment that the north leg of the intersection at Duke and Jordan is an example of a design that doesn't support safe driveway crossings for pedestrians.
- RJ Eldridge distributed a matrix that showed the focus areas, the key themes, and a long list of other issues that came up numerous times throughout the public input. The matrix shows how all of the issues related to the Focus Areas – every issue will be addressed through at least one (and often many) of the Focus Areas.
- There was a question about the King Street Metro Station parking redesign project. Sandra Marks responded that the Plan has been delayed but that it is still in the pipeline. That plan is entirely focused on the parking lot and Metro property, whereas this Focus Area would go outside these areas.
- There was a comment that many of the Focus Areas are in areas with lower income people.
- There was a suggestion that the consultant take a wheelchair with them for field work.
- There was discussion about the purpose of the Focus Areas and the project staff explained that there will be both specific recommendations for these areas, but also general recommendations that can be used to address common issues (i.e. in places with higher vehicle speeds, wider sidewalk buffers should be provided when possible.)
- RJ Eldridge asked for general input from the committee about the Focus Areas and Themes:
 - Walking from King Street Metro to Table Talk restaurant is a good route to take to experience some of the issues in this area.
 - Having enough crossing time for pedestrians at intersections is important.
 - The area surrounding Landmark Mall is extremely difficult for pedestrians, whereas Mt. Vernon is a generally good place to walk now. Project staff responded that there are a lot of crashes in in the Mt. Vernon area, which is partly why it is a Focus Area.
 - There was a question about how pedestrian demand factors in to this decision – if few people are walking to/in the Landmark Mall area, should that be a factor? Other committee members responded that there is a redevelopment project and a transit hub is planned in that area, meaning that we should plan for increasing pedestrian traffic in the area. Project staff responded there have been safety concerns in the Landmark Mall area and that was another reason the area was prioritized.

Public Comment

- There is a need for lower level street lighting that would allow drivers to see pedestrians from all directions. A committee member added that in Europe this is common practice.
- The City should be thoughtful about the use of language in the plan, requesting that the plan language is as broad as possible using phrases like “people walking” or “people bicycling” rather than “pedestrian” and “bicyclists”.
- There was a question about whether all of the Focus Areas should be “checked” for transit access since they all have bus routes in them. There was also a request to strengthen the language about transit access in the objectives.
- There is a need to consider the transitions at Jones Point Park between trails, boardwalks and sidewalks. There is discontinuity now and this needs to be addressed. There is also a group of bicyclists - “high speed hot rods” - that create challenges for other users. When these fast riders merge/interact with other users on trails another places there are conflicts. Last, the National Park Service should be specifically mentioned in the goals and objectives and coordination should be improved in the future.

- There has been a lot of discussion about how the City's thinking and policies have changed over time. Is there a plan for evaluating "anachronistic" infrastructure? The project staff responded that this was one of the central goals of this process – to come up with new ideas for facilities but also to look at potential improvements to existing infrastructure.
- Safety should be the top priority for this plan and process. Also, regarding accessible bike facilities for people with disabilities, what is needed is wider conditions in some areas.
- There was not enough progress made since the 2008 plan, suggesting that the City is better at detailed planning than implementation. How can we ensure that this plan is implemented and that the City makes progress toward becoming a Platinum bike/ped-friendly community?
- There was agreement about using "people who drive, people who walk and people who drive" rather than words like "drivers." The Coalition for Smarter Growth would support Vision Zero being incorporated into the plan. Also, the pedestrian performance measure charts should specify the objective numbers.
- There was appreciation for the plan addressing and incorporating school safety. There are parallel efforts that BPAC is leading. ACPS is developing a Strategic Plan, which includes a focus on health and wellness, and there may be a new school wellness policy coming out soon that addresses health and wellness. BPAC is working with a multi-disciplinary effort to advance Safe Routes to School efforts.

Committee Member Updates

- BPAC is having their first ever meeting at the Alexandria Police Department on Feb 17th at 7pm. The meeting includes a tour and discussion with police staff. The public is invited.
- The Transportation Commission expressed interest in keeping a regular and more frequent meeting schedule for this project, and in making steady progress on the Plan.
- There was a recent public meeting focused on the Callahan/King/Russell Road intersection which was a very productive, open and helpful meeting. Unfortunately there was a pedestrian incident there the next day, reinforcing the importance of that work.

Wrap Up and Next Steps (Steve Sindiong)

- The next Ad Hoc meeting will tentatively take place on April 16, and will focus on the draft bicycle network. Another meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 14.
- There may be a walking tour prior to one of the next meetings, and the public will be invited.

UPCOMING MEETING

- Advisory Committee Meeting #5
Thursday, April 16, 2015, 7:00-9:00 pm
Location TBD

To be kept informed of future Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan / Complete Streets Design Guidelines meetings, please sign up for eNews (Complete Streets group under Transportation & Environmental Services) at <http://www.alexandriava.gov/enews> and visit the project website at <http://www.alexandriava.gov/pedbikeplan>. For additional information, please contact Steve Sindiong, City of Alexandria, at 703-746-4047 or email steve.sindiong@alexandriava.gov.

The City of Alexandria is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended. To request a reasonable accommodation, e-mail Geraldyn.Taylor@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.4084, Virginia Relay 711.