

Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Online

Present: Abigail Johnson, Neal Baxter, Julia Curran, Peter Vader, Adelheid Koski, Paul St. Martin, Donna Hemp, Christopher Hoffer, Barbara Olson, Sarah Goodell, Matthew Steinrueck; Matthew Dyrdaahl, Chris Kartheiser, Emily Kettell, Steve Mahowald, Rattana Sengsoulichanh, Heidi Schallberg, Emma Pachuta, Millicent Flowers, Tom Thao, Mackenzie Turner Borgen

Resolutions—see after the minutes, below

Chair Abigail called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM and read the official notice regarding online meetings.

Millicent read the roll to account for all those present.

Approval of the Minutes for the March Meeting

Barb moved to approve the minutes for both meetings: Donna seconded. Approved.

Infrastructure & Engineering Subcommittee Report—Barb Olson

The first project we saw was the Hennepin Avenue Reconstruction. This is a full rebuild, from Douglas to Lagoon. We liked design #1, which included bike lanes, and not design #2. Green space, new crosswalks, and more is planned for this stretch. We expressed our concern about the number of traffic lanes between the transit hub and Lake Street. Barb read the resolution (#1 above); Neal seconded.

Curran here read another resolution concerning Hennepin, which has to do with freeway ramps; Donna seconded.

Next, we heard more about the Franklin West project. This project will improve Franklin Avenue between Lyndale and Hennepin for pedestrians.

Our third project was Lyndale, where small improvements are in store at 25th & 27th Streets. Striping, bollards and bump outs will be added to these intersections. This is one of the city's most dangerous stretches of road. The City will look at bigger solutions to pedestrian safety here in 3 to 5 years. Barb read the resolution (#3 above); Neal seconded.

The Farview Park project, in north Minneapolis, will fill a sidewalk gap, add a crossing and save a wonderful old tree.

The final project we heard about was the Lyndale Avenue North Safety Project. This is another dangerous street, with a lot of speeding. Upgrades include ADA improvements. We asked for a narrower street.

Barb read a resolution; Neal seconded.

We now voted for all four resolutions, and all were approved.

Programs & Policies Subcommittee Report—Peter Vader & Julia Curran

We focused on three agendas at our March meeting. We talked about the PAC's recommendations for the next CIP list, and we present them now. Curran read the full document. Barb moved and Peter seconded. Approved.

We discussed Hennepin Avenue at some length, and the resolution about freeway on and off ramps grew out of that discussion.

Summary of the PAC/BAC Annual Report to the City Council—Abigail Johnson

We discussed the annual report, and Hoffer, Barb and Peter had high praise for what Abigail and Elissa Schufman had to say. In response to Curran's comment on the Council's lukewarm reception, Matthew clarified that CMs Gordon and Bender thanked Abigail and Elissa and added that many of their constituents are not where the PAC is in understanding the problems we face. Barb added that getting residents to give up their cars will take making transit better. Steve Mahowald gave his support for City staff, which he said, has always given the transit company the support they needed.

Appointments to the Next Term of the PAC—Matthew Dyr Dahl

This year eight members on the PAC will be up for reappointment. As always, the new two-year term will begin at the July meeting. We have many fine applicants from the spring who can fill seats that become vacant. Sarah & Matthew will have to re-apply, as they are filling vacancies in this term. Applications will be accepted until April 30, and Matthew will present the eight appointments to the City Council's TPW Committee for approval on June 9.

Announcements

Abigail: Today's Star Tribune mentioned that the 3000 block of Hennepin will see a return to parking along the curb this year. This is a temporary measure that will affect the street's bike lanes. Becca Hughes was quoted in the article.

Emily: I am stepping down as the County's representative on the PAC. I enjoyed my service on the committee.

Curran: The last day to comment on the Hennepin Avenue project is April 16.

MTB: MnDOT's statewide pedestrian plan is now available.

Adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Resolutions:

#1--Hennepin Avenue South Reconstruction project

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee supports Design Option 1 of the Hennepin Avenue South Reconstruction project. While the PAC has reservations and recommendations for its improvement, Option 1 alone has within its reach the ability to measure up to adopted, crucial City policies addressing safety, mode share shift, accessibility, equity, and the climate crisis.

Hennepin Avenue South is a singular street, distinguished by its alignment, history, jurisdiction, and desirability as a place to be. By rebuilding to serve those walking, biking, rolling, and on transit—for its entire length—Minneapolis makes clear Hennepin Avenue is a community space and route for people, not merely a passageway for cars.

The PAC recognizes this is a generational opportunity to transform a car-centric corridor; demonstrating for future projects, both locally and state-wide, that the attainable goal of equitably serving all users and all modes is the appropriate one.

Pursuant to the above, the Pedestrian Advisory Committee resoundingly opposes Option 2; protected all-ages bike lanes are non-negotiable. Here are our notes to the specifics of Option 1:

1. The bike lane should be two-way and go all the way to Douglas Ave.
2. Bus lanes should be 24-hours and run the entire length of the corridor within the project area, including southbound between Douglas and Franklin, and in both directions south of the Uptown Transit Station.
3. The intersections of Hennepin Ave at Lake, Lagoon, and Franklin should match the rest of the corridor and not expand to a five-lane cross section.
4. All curb cuts to business parking lots that have alternate access points from side streets should be closed along Hennepin. Reduce as many curb cuts as possible into parking lots along the corridor. This is of particular concern along the west side of Hennepin.
5. Center medians on Hennepin should be as narrow as possible, giving that space back to the pedestrian and furnishing zones. Greening should be provided in furnishing zones instead of in the center median.
6. The City should prioritize working with MNDOT to gain federal funding to remove the redundant secondary highway on and off ramps at Hennepin.
7. The City plans do not currently fill the sidewalk gap on the east side of Hennepin between Douglas and Franklin.
8. We realize it is still not within City purview to provide benches, which are the most basic pedestrian amenity. We request that the City prioritize revisiting its policies and funding in order to ensure basic accessibility and equity by providing public benches on all streets within the Transportation Action Plan's Pedestrian Priority Network.
9. We request that the city prioritize the protection of the existing mature trees—self-adjusting year-round pedestrian amenities—on this corridor, even if this decision is at odds with city forestry policy on elm trees.

#2--Hennepin South/MNDOT

Urban freeways are inconsistent with Minneapolis' goals contained in the TAP, Vision Zero, Complete Streets, Climate Emergency Declaration, Social Cost of Carbon, and other policy statements. Urban freeways add public health costs that particularly burden lower income residents and renters in Minneapolis who live along these and most often bear the brunt of these environmental injustices.

Particularly relevant, freeway remediation in Minneapolis is expressly recognized by the City in its Minneapolis 2040 Plan as a goal under Policy 48. This provision states:

Freeway Remediation:

Recover and repurpose space taken by construction of the interstate highway system in Minneapolis and use it to reconnect neighborhoods and provide needed housing, employment, greenspace, clean energy and other amenities consistent with City goals.

Additionally, the on/off ramps of Hennepin South are redundant even by regional vehicle traffic management standards and planning, given two immediately-located ramp sets at Lyndale and Hennepin North. The confluence of City policies, City-only jurisdiction, the Climate Emergency, and national-level USDOT urban highway removal momentum create a unique opportunity for the City of Minneapolis to begin to implement freeway remediation.

Therefore, the Pedestrian Advisory Committee strongly urges the City of Minneapolis to work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to remove the Hennepin Avenue on/off ramps as a fundamental and urgent priority in its design process for the reconstruction of Hennepin Avenue South.

#3--Lyndale Avenue South Median

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee supports the proposed medians at 25th and 27th Streets on Lyndale Avenue South, with reservations. Maintaining two vehicle travel lanes in each direction is concerning, and the committee advises Hennepin County to pilot a 4-to-3 conversion on Lyndale Avenue South (from Franklin to Lake Street) at the soonest opportunity. This will ensure true pedestrian safety along the length of the corridor, beyond two intersections.

#4--Lyndale Ave N Pedestrian Safety project

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee supports the median-focused design option of the Lyndale Ave N Pedestrian Safety Project. As this project proceeds to final design we ask for every consideration be made to reduce traffic lane width and add pedestrian lighting.

PAC CIP Recommendations (resolution #5)

Goals of the PAC CIP Recommendations:

For Minneapolis to meet its aggressive Vision Zero, Transportation Action Plan, Comprehensive 2040 Plan goals, given the City's Climate Emergency, and Racism Public Health Crisis declarations and the social cost of carbon, all street projects must prioritize people-oriented, walkable spaces (defined below). Prioritizing the pedestrian experience for all projects will create the necessary behavior change and strengthen our communities.

As laid out in the Transportation Action Plan, mode share needs to shift rapidly (TAP's goal is 60% of all trips made by walk/bike/transit by 2030). Only by funding capital programs that are systems-wide in scale can we make this happen. The PAC recommends the CIP increase funding for pedestrian and bike infrastructure to align with the prioritization of modes, as per the Complete Streets policy. Increasing

funding in walk and bike programs now will lower costs for road maintenance for the future, as walking and biking do not wear out streets as vehicles do.

PAC Vision

Minneapolis is the best walking city in the world, year-round. Through deliberate, collective action, Minneapolis is a place:

- With world class pedestrian infrastructure—connecting people and places
- With a safe and engaging public realm—places where people want to be
- Where walking is the culture

Defining a Walkable Street

To paint a picture of what we mean by "walkable spaces," and prioritizing pedestrians as per the Complete Streets Policy, we have here our minimum characteristics of a walkable street:

- If your hat blows off, you feel safe picking it up
- Pedestrians feel safe crossing any leg of an intersection
- There is pedestrian scale lighting and signs
- There are frequent benches, gathering spaces, and green spaces
- There are wayfinding signs to major intersections, destinations, or facilities
- The street is safe and comfortable for all modes (people walking/rolling, biking, riding scooters, waiting for the bus, or in a vehicle)
- Corners and straightaways have unobstructed views (for safety, and for sunsets!)
- There are frequent public restrooms and water fountains
- The surfaces are walkable year-round: snow and ice are cleared down to the concrete on all sidewalks and corners, and all water drains off walking spaces so it does not ice over in freeze-thaw cycles
- People of all ages and abilities feel comfortable on the street and crossing the street
- Crossing the street is automatic (there are no extensive wait times to get across; under 60 seconds)
- The sidewalks allow for unobstructed flow (it is wide enough to walk next to someone and still allow another to pass)

Existing Programs

The PAC advocates for significant and continued increases to funding for Safe Routes to School (BP001), Pedestrian Safety Program (BP004), Defective Hazardous Sidewalks (SWK01), Sidewalk Gaps (SWK02), and Vision Zero Program (VZ001). Cutting or underfunding these programs in any way will derail all policy goals, as well as create higher costs in funding future projects/programs.

For the Sidewalk Gaps program, include creating temporary protected sidewalks to fill gaps by taking space from the street, instead of laying new concrete (See 36th Street leading to Bde Maka Ska as an example).

New Program Recommendations

1. Create a program to add benches, public restrooms, drinking fountains, and electric wheelchair charging stations in busy walking areas. Also, include these as standard features on all stand-alone reconstruction projects

- To support the Pedestrian Priority Network and mode share shift goals of the Transportation Action Plan.
- This also supports equity goals related to gender, aging, disability, climate resiliency, community health, and vulnerable populations.

2. Create a formal program for crisis response: identifying and immediately implementing pedestrian improvements using low cost materials that are community-driven, adaptable, and resilient (projects like Stay Healthy Streets).

- These improvements must prioritize projects that grow out of the impacts of interrelated crises, like police brutality and the global pandemic.
- projects must center racial justice and seek to address or repair systemic harm against marginalized or oppressed community members.
- The aim is to specifically meet mode share shift and community-led changes to uses of right-of-way.
- This will support the City's declared Climate Emergency goals and reduce carbon emissions.
- This will support the Transportation Action Plan's goal of having 60% of all city trips be made by transit, walking/rolling, and biking.
- This will allow Public Works to respond to community needs with speed and skill

3. Create a program to install curb ramps and crosswalk striping at intersections where one leg or more is missing, prioritizing crossings where street speeds are 25 mph or greater (such as intersections adjacent to many city parks)

- This takes action to support the City's approved Complete Streets Policy.

4. Create a program to improve pedestrian safety and experience several blocks around freeway on & off ramps

- Traffic calming measures here will support Vision Zero goals.
- This will create a more comfortable walking and biking experience near freeways.
- This will support the Transportation Action Plan's goal of having 60% of all city trips be made by transit, walking/rolling, and biking.

5. Create a program in the CIP to fund Neighborhood Greenways

- Neighborhood Greenways are routes that enhance local, low volume streets and give priority to people walking, biking, and rolling—and should significantly limit motor vehicles along sections of the street.
- The City's Neighborhood Greenway Study covers the benefits of this program; and Neighborhood Greenways are included in the Transportation Action Plan for Minneapolis.