

# Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

## Full Committee Minutes

Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Present: Neal Baxter, Abigail Johnson, Julia Curran, Adelheid Koski, Barbara Olson, Christian Huelsman, Jim Welsch, Christopher Hoffer, Peter Vader, Aaron Berger; Matthew Dyrdaahl, Julie Danzl, Steve Mahowald, Suzanne Murphy, Heather Gillich, Emily Kettell, Rattana Sengsoulichanh, Chris Kartheiser, Millicent Flowers, Carrie Christensen; Luís Dax, pedestrian

### Resolutions

#### Infrastructure and Engineering

##### #1—Franklin Ave

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee feels strongly that the Franklin Avenue Study does not meet the Complete Streets or Towards Zero Deaths policies adopted by Hennepin County. The timeline for these proposed changes fails to support the city and state's carbon emission reduction goals, which include the transition away from single-occupancy motor vehicle use. This street is a community corridor, not a regional corridor: the city has named it one of 6 Cultural Corridors. Hennepin County needs to take immediate action to make this street a safer place for those walking, rolling, biking, or taking transit. The level of service for users not in private motor vehicles is abhorrent and inequitable. Failure to act swiftly will exacerbate racial and socioeconomic disparities, and condone additional severe injuries and deaths, for the most vulnerable users of this street.

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee recommends that Hennepin County fund and implement temporary improvements to this stretch of Franklin during the 2020 construction cycle: convert Franklin, from Lyndale to Bloomington Avenues, to 3 vehicle lanes of 10 feet each (two travel lanes with a center turn lane), remove parking from the corridor, and place 8-foot protected bike lanes on each side of the street, and widen the bike lane, as needed, where there are particularly tight sidewalks on this corridor around 35W, so people can move freely outside vehicles along every block of this street.

After making these temporary improvements, Franklin Avenue could then be reevaluated, with adjustments made as needed, before the street is designed with new curb cuts and concrete.

#### Programs and Policies

##### #2 – Hennepin Ave Downtown

The PAC expresses its deep disappointment in the final plans approved for Hennepin Downtown (Washington Ave to 12th St). As a body tasked with and committed to advising our City as a whole and Public Works department specifically, we are frustrated that our considerable efforts within the most favorable conditions many of us have ever experienced in our tenure on this committee have resulted in a net loss of pedestrian-oriented amenities.

If the City of Minneapolis so deeply misses the mark on Hennepin Avenue, one of the faces of Minneapolis and a street within the City's purview, a unique occurrence in a city whose major community corridors and bus routes are controlled by the County, we question the City's commitment to its adopted policies. The City has squandered this rare opportunity by failing to even reinstall basic pedestrian infrastructure that was previously in place. PAC members collectively spent over 60 hours offering our expertise and engaging our communities. Beyond our standard engagement via PAC meetings and resolutions (30 hours), we provided direct feedback to city staff via multiple public open houses (10+ hours) as well as two separate invite-only working groups each attended by multiple PAC members (25+ hours), not including outreach and prep work, and related engagement not directly requested by the City of Minneapolis.

In light of these best-case-scenario conditions (city-controlled street, robust and direct engagement of the PAC by Public Works and project contractors through all stages of the process), we are extremely disheartened to see that the approved plan for Hennepin Downtown:

1. Provides no benches or even bench-like furniture, which were previously present (albeit too infrequently). Benches are non-negotiable, a fundamental, critical part of pedestrian infrastructure, allowing those with limited mobility to extend their range, particularly those who are disabled and elderly, and providing respite for all users.
2. Has highway-scale lighting and signage rather than human-scale lighting and signs.
3. Makes prodigious use of metal tree grates; the PAC has advised against metal grates in specific projects in the past because of how dangerously slick they become in many weather conditions, particularly when covered by snow.
4. Has inflexible, rigid planters that reduce the flexibility of use of the space (c.f. Nicollet Ave).
5. Lacks tactile differentiation between sidewalk and bike path for guiding users with impaired vision.

We understand that this design represents a systemic failure in how Public Works understands critical pedestrian infrastructure and how the City as a whole designs and funds (or fails to fund) streetscape elements most vital to creating a truly walkable public realm, rather than a failure specific to this project or its in-depth processes. Additionally, we remind the City that street design that protects people outside cars from dangerous and reckless drivers is not pedestrian or bike infrastructure; it is car infrastructure designed to minimize the consequences of driving and of streets designed for cars at the expense of other users.

The PAC urges the City of Minneapolis and its Public Works department to learn from this systemic failure by addressing how it conceptualizes pedestrian infrastructure and funds streetscape elements.

Chair Abigail called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM and asked all present to introduce themselves.

## **Acceptance of the Minutes for December**

Aaron moved to approve the minutes; Barb seconded. Approved.

## **Infrastructure & Engineering Subcommittee Meeting—Aaron Berger**

We saw 2 projects at our last meeting. Hennepin County is working on a study of Franklin Avenue, to prepare a plan for future funding. The study includes Franklin from Lyndale to Bloomington Avenue. We asked for a design that maximizes pedestrian and bike safety, three lanes of 10 feet each, then let the neighborhood ask for more room for cars if they wish. The County asserted their priority is modal balance, not pedestrians first. The design we saw was out of date, and not in harmony with Complete Streets. We will see a new plan later.

Aaron read a resolution (#1 above); Neal seconded. Approved.

During discussion of the resolution, Steve Mahowald offered the official Metro Transit view that 10-foot traffic lanes pose a problem because of the rear-view mirrors on the buses.

In the second half of our meeting, we saw the design for Osseo Road, from 44<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The current road has 3 traffic lanes, a bike lane and 4 bus routes. Hennepin County wants to improve the corridor for all modes.

Speeding is an issue here. Businesses have often been struck by vehicles. We asked the planners to look for places where pedestrians cross or would cross if they felt safe, and to install automatic pedestrian crossing here. We'll see this plan again in March.

## **Programs & Policies Subcommittee Meeting—Julia Curran**

In December we discussed how to define walk-friendly infrastructure (an ongoing concern), and we talked at length about the Hennepin Avenue reconstruction project downtown, which is a big disappointment. Julia read resolution #2 above; Aaron seconded. Approved as amended. During discussion of the resolution and the project, Adelheid suggested sending the resolution to the papers. The PAC agreed.

In December P&P also looked at the checklist the I&E committee drafted to ensure we ask planners basic questions about their projects. Lastly, we looked at the Cedar-Isles Master Plan, a Park Board initiative that Emma Pachuta showed us. Emma asked PAC members to weigh in on the proposal by means of the survey, and she said the Park Board would like a PAC member to sit on the CAC that will meet to develop the plan.

Abigail: we didn't have time to draft a list of CIP projects, so we'll focus on that at the January meeting.

## **Meeting Expectations and Efficient Meetings—Matthew Dyrdaahl & Abigail Johnson**

Matthew and Abigail thought we might discuss whether members feel we cover our business effectively, especially the subcommittee reports.

Barb: if members want more information about what we did in I&E, they should feel free to call me.

MD: it would be useful to schedule a time before the full committee meets to draft resolutions.

Suzanne: to whom should we send suggestions for changes?

.MD: unless you have a complete re-editing, send ideas to Millicent and me.

.Abigail: or the chairs.

.Hoffer: in addition, each of us needs to be aware of our responsibility for the flow of business during our meetings.

## **Annual Report to the City Council's Transportation Committee—Abigail Johnson**

.On January 21, Abigail and the chair of the BAC will report to the TPW Committee. We propose to cover the following items. In general, both chairs want to stress the urgency of adherence to City policy when drafting projects. We will cite the committed membership of both the PAC and the BAC, and especially mention those who have left, including Julia Tabbut, Sarah Stewart and Phil Ailiff. We will cite Don Pflaum's years of service, too.

.Projects we will mention include 46<sup>th</sup> Street and the gap between the County's concerns and City policy; the end of approval for drive throughs; painted bus lanes; the Broadway bridge debacle; Vision Zero; the ADA Transition Plan; the Transportation Action Plan; and of course, winter maintenance of sidewalks and streets.

.Curran: point out the need to address climate change by achieving the proposed greenhouse gas cuts by December 2020.

.Hoffer: per Vision Zero, cities larger than Mpls have achieved zero deaths.

.Suzanne: relate the pedestrian deaths to race and ward, too.

.Mahowald: mention our interest in automated enforcement of speed limits.

.Barb: stress that the Council's aspirations and goals are marvelous, but action is even more important.

## **Announcements**

.Hoffer: I would like to propose a 4-hour PAC discussion about our long-term work. How does PAC generate more leverage, see more heft in City projects, and the like? Let me know if you want to plan such a meeting.

.Mahowald: I aim to bring in another Metro Transit staffer, who will add her energy and ideas to the committee. She's keen to join us.

.Hoffer: and we still have no police presence on the PAC (a vigorous conversation ensued).

.Julie Danzl: Wednesday, February 5 is Winter Walk in the schools. We'll celebrate wellness all week.

.Neal moved to adjourn; Barb seconded. Approved, and adjourned at 6:01 PM.