



**PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
December 02, 2013**

The Pedestrian Advisory convened in a regular meeting on December 02, 2013, 721 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas.

Guests in Attendance:

Lauren Bennett
Jennifer Bennett-
Reumuth
Charlsa Bentley
Mark Bentley
Daniel Butler
Ken Craig
Nancy Crowther
Betty Dickson

Jerome Garvey
John Dennis Harketts
Girard Kinney
Jess Lowry
Cynthia Medlin
Joel Meyer
Nic Moe
Emily Risinger

Reyes Rodriguez
Delfin Salazar
Tom Wald
Heyden Walker
Ed B. Wallace
Robyn Webre
Thomas Zapata

Staff in Attendance:

Cari Buetow
Aleksiina Chapman
Michael Curtis

Lawrence Deeter
John Eastman
Randy Harvey

Chris Moore
Katie Mulholland
Molly Ritter

CALL TO ORDER

Staff called the Board Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

The first 3 speakers signed up prior to the meeting being called to order will each be allowed a three-minute allotment to address their concerns regarding items not posted on the agenda.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Wald mentioned that Jace Deloney was absent from the list of attendees.

3. STAFF BRIEFINGS

A. Pedestrian Program – Sidewalk Master Plan and ADA Transition Plan implementation, CapMetro bus stop improvement partnership, Safe Routes to School sidewalk grants.

Presentation by: Mike Curtis, Division Manager, Public Works Department
Neighborhood Connectivity Division

- There are approximately 2200 miles of missing sidewalks. Program received approximately \$5-7 million in bond funds.
- ID/IQ model reduced costs by 45%.
- Geographic and demographic balance to selection of sidewalks.
- CapMetro funds with \$2 million for bust stop improvements.
 - 200 bus stops have been or are being improved, at a rate of approximately 1-2 /day, but over 2000 non-compliant stops (4-5 year program)
- Partnerships:
 1. Child Safety
 2. Austin energy where poles, etc. interrupt sidewalks (\$200 k per year)

Questions:

Lauren Bennett asked about the even distribution of new sidewalk construction. She said East Austin is heavily represented on missing sidewalk map. Mr. Curtis said equitable distribution of new sidewalk construction is an informal policy. The distribution is in high and very high priority areas within the Sidewalk Master Plan. Areas with low priority aren't getting any funding right now.

Unidentified citizen asked about whether citizen input is considered in new sidewalk construction. Mr. Curtis said, yes, it is a factor in the Pedestrian Infrastructure Management System (PIMS).

Reyes Rodriguez asked about stretch of road on airport between Bolm and Springdale. Is that a priority? Mr. Curtis clarified it is TXDOT controlled. He said we would have to get TXDOT permission to do work and they have rules for when we can do that work (time of day, pricing, quality of materials, etc.). He said ADAPT has worked with TXDOT to get them to fund projects.

Mr. Curtis also said they have close working relations with the Texas School for the Blind.

Jerome Garvey said he was very happy with work done on Euclid. He said the crew worked well with neighborhood. He also said he has seen a great increase in people using sidewalks.

B. Urban Trails Program

Presentation by: Mike Curtis, Division Manager, Public Works Department Neighborhood Connectivity Division

- Work is being done to complete the Urban Trails Master Plan.

Staff mentioned there is the possibility of creating a subcommittee of the PAC to provide input to that document and that Public Works will come back to present on a draft of the Urban Trails Master Plan.

C. Sidewalk Maintenance

Presentation by: Molly Ritter, Division Manager, Public Works Department

Previously operating under bonds (1.2 million per year)

Maintenance on sidewalk and curb and gutter

- Calls to 311 are sorted by zip code locations, then sent to program coordinator on master repair list
- Repairs done according to severity and locations (destinations), master plans, etc.
- Funding equitably distributed.
- There is a maintenance plan for streets (every five years). Goal is to group by neighborhood and to coordinate efforts with street improvements for greater impact.
- Just received funding for more staff this year. Hoping for two year repair cycle.
- Temporary patches put on everything that's called in within 24-hours.
- Outsourcing for sidewalk lifting and grinding.

Questions:

Jess Lowry asked what is response time from 311?

Ms. Ritter said it depends. A call is made to the citizen within 48 hours if requested. If not, someone visits site within 24 hours for temporary fix. Permanent repair can take longer, though – from a few months to over a year depending on prioritization. It is added to list for permanent treatments. Bond funding ran out last year. She said she submitted a request for \$1 million dedicated Transportation User Fee (TUF) funds, but only received \$250,000.

Lauren Bennett wonders if one can access master repair list or completed projects.

Ms. Ritter said a master repair list is available. Ms. Ritter said she will work with GIS folks to possibly make available a public map of completed projects.

Mr. Eastman said maintaining a publicly viewable map is unlikely to occur due to staff resources. Ms. Ritter said the computerized system they are working on may have the ability to perform more regular mapping.

Ms. Bennett asked for clarification of the map shown within the Sidewalk Master Plan. Mr. Eastman clarified that Ms. Ritter's group is working on existing sidewalks, whereas the map shown displays prioritization of *missing* sidewalks. So, there is no impact from her group's work on that map.

Ms. Ritter said she has seen programs where interns walk sidewalks to assess for condition. She said she wants to implement similar program here. Technology needs (such as GPS devices) make that even more difficult.

Delfin Salazar asked about trip hazards left over from Austin energy and whether he should address that through 311 system? Ms. Ritter said yes.

Nancy Crowther asked, does Austin energy provide money for repairs?

Ms. Ritter said work requested by specific department is paid for by that department.

Gerard Kinney identified himself as a member of the Cherrywood Land Use and Transportation Committee. He said he has requested repairs for many years, and to his knowledge none have been implemented. He said there is frustration with city requiring new homeowners to put in sidewalks where they are not wanted. Neighborhood plan

specifies sidewalk locations for one side of street. He said this is a problem of the pay-in-lieu program.

Ms. Ritter said this is a problem of disconnect between plans. Also, there is a problem in how to get to everything. She said it is troubling that they aren't seeing any repairs being made but that there is an opportunity to work with Neighborhood Partnering program to address these particular issues.

D. Street Reconstruction Program

Presentation by: Randy Harvey, Project Manager, Public Works Department

- Sidewalks aren't primary focus of his team, but they address when sidewalks are impacted from street projects
- Director Lazarus interested in performing complete projects so it is not necessary to continue to return to a site for street projects.
- Criteria exists for evaluating whether sidewalks will be included (Great Streets, Sidewalk Master Plan, Subchapter E, TOD, UNO)
- If project isn't triggered by any of the above, look at: Compliance with Texas Accessibility Standards, Approved Neighborhood plans, City Council Resolution No. 020418-40
- Align work with Neighborhood plans, subject to funding.
- City Council Resolution No. 020418-40: recognizes that sidewalk network is insufficient and needs to establish high-quality network. That is a long-term goal. Funding continues to be an issue, but we are proactively implementing facilities. For major street reconstruction projects, facilities are implemented if less than 20% of total project costs, on both sides off arterial or at least one side of collector. However, this resolution is redundant because ADA requirements would already require facilities being implemented when reconstructing.
- Street reconstruction funds really only spent for sidewalks when required. That is mostly bond funding. Trying to be cost-effective because spending public money. Also want to be mindful of neighborhood desires.

Questions:

Staff asked if City Council Resolution No. 020418-40 requires condition above other requirements? Mr. Harvey said no, construction is baseline ADA requirements.

Cynthia Medlin identified herself as a former Planning Commission member and 2006 bond advisory group. She said she initiated infill ordinance for sidewalks while on Planning Commission and sidewalks are required per infill ordinance. She said it is important for building infrastructure. This has created some gaps for new houses being built. She acknowledged it is debatable whether it is good to require for those who don't want sidewalks versus requiring installation for those who need sidewalks for mobility.

Mr. Kinney again talked about construction of sidewalks on both sides of street and neighborhood desires. He said he was in fact referring to infill ordinance. He said there is interest in providing sidewalks that provide actual connections.

Ms. Mulholland asked how the fee in lieu is collected and used. Mr. Eastman said fee in lieu is required by state to be spent in same geographical area. Because of this requirement, very little has been spent because there is insufficient funds to perform projects. He said they are looking for opportunities to direct small dollar amounts to projects that are going to happen anyway.

E. Local Area Traffic Management

Presentation by: Gary Schatz Assistant Director, Transportation Department

- Traffic engineering basics:
 - Mobility not just moving cars. Traffic does include pedestrians per state law.
 - Fatality stats even higher for children and the elderly for vehicle speeds.
 - 90th percentile of driver speeds equals almost 40 miles per hour on local streets.
- Mr. Schatz said Houston has lower speeds and narrower street because of gridded system. He said a paradigm shift is occurring to make places people-centered and to focus on placemaking, as well as focus on quality of service for all users. This requires what he calls Imagineering.
- Mr. Schatz pointed to two documents: 1.) Urban Street Design Guide; 2.) Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach. Council has endorsed both documents. Both documents call for sidewalks on both sides of streets. He said a person should not be trapped in home because the sidewalk is on the other side of the street.
- Mr. Schatz said problem of wide streets and speeding vehicles is the result of applying standards originally designed for highways to local streets. He said the Highway Capacity Manual now talks about multi-modal levels of service, and that MM LOS is not averaged. Because of this, each community can make its own value-based decisions to support each type of mode.

F. Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons

Presentation by: Gary Schatz Assistant Director, Transportation Department

- Mr. Schatz presented on various pedestrian actuated devices. In order for the pedestrian hybrid beacon (PHB) to be utilized, a change in state law was required because formerly drivers were required to stop at a “dark” light.
- He said we have 35 PHBs now (highest municipal rate in the US). He said there are a hundred requests, but only have money for 6-8 per year. Developing criteria for who goes first. Staff communicated that Transportation Department staff has requested input from the Pedestrian Advisory Council and will be presenting to the group in January.
- Mr. Schatz said that right now there is an interim desire to switch out the push button devices at intersections to better push button. (Can retrofit intersection with these interim devices for about \$2500). He said this is a good interim step but not where we need to be ultimately. The aim is for accessible pedestrian signal with audio. (These cost about \$7000 per intersection)
- Wayfinding for visually impaired:

- Pressler Road extension goes by park. Plans are for wider sidewalks, trees and street lights on side travelling uphill as it overlooks park. Mr. Schatz compared this side of street preference to the East side of Congress Avenue bridge.
- Y at Oak Hill – working with TXDOT and Travis County. Where possible, adding sidewalks and signal treatments. He said where sidewalks can't be added, they are adding at least 6' shoulders. (US 290 at William Cannon)
- S Congress Improvement Project. Previously, Congress Avenue had long signal cycles, high vehicle speeds, and old crosswalks push buttons. Mr. Schatz said this resulted in jay walking. He said there was also a very wide curb-to-curb space requiring longer pedestrian crossing distances. He said they filled in missing signals, and added in PHB as a tool. He said they worked with Cap Metro to consolidate bus stops, provide superior bus stops, and better connectivity between bus stops. He said Cap Metro has seen a 12% ridership increase whereas other parts of the bus system seeing only a 2-3% increase in ridership. Mr. Schatz discussed the direction of intersection curb ramps for mobility and the visually impaired, railing and drainage at the new Bus Rapid Transit stops, accessible parking spaces at the new bus stops, the effect of creating bulb outs for shorter pedestrian crossings, and better driver visibility achieved with back-in angle parking. He said speeds have been lowered to 30 mph on S Congress, that traffic signal timing has been lowered, too, as well as fewer instances of jaywalking. He said the reconstruction has resulted in a narrower pedestrian crossing (from 90 feet to 57 feet curb-to-curb).
- S. 1st & Barton Springs Road. Mr. Schatz said there was previously 80-100 feet crossing distances, but now it is 70-95 feet. He said they pulled crossings back to end of radius which works to shorten crossing distance and helps to alleviate cars stopping in crosswalk. He said this intersection has the preferred audio crosswalk signals in addition to staggered stop bars and bike boxes to facilitate bicycle commuters.

Questions:

Lauren Bennett asked how it is decided which intersections require pedestrians to push a button? She said at some intersections pedestrian crossing phases are automatically a part of the signal cycle. Mr. Schatz said push buttons go where we are looking for pedestrian actuation. In downtown all traffic signals are on fixed time; no actuation. Adding signals in fixed time situations provides audible and textual clue to cross. Also, they are appropriate where high vehicle speeds exist and there are low pedestrian volumes. At present in the city there are 925 signals but only one engineer. Mr. Schatz said they are working to re-time signal timing so pedestrians don't have to ask for permission to cross. Gary said if there are issues with intersection devices or concerns about timing to call 311.

Unidentified citizen expressed issue with signal devices is visually impaired individuals still have to find buttons. They asked if there are other technologies? Mr. Schatz said no.

Jess Lowry said she likes the feedback buttons. She asked about whether Austin has explored different sounds. She said in Toronto, because of bilingual population, different sounds are used for different directions because there is insufficient time to translate. Mr. Schatz said there has been significant research nationally on this. Inconsistent treatment renders chirps ineffective. He directed to the Uniform Traffic Control Manual.

Reyes Rodriguez asked if buttons are coming out of same budget as PHB? What criteria for PHB? He expressed concern for the location of a PHB. Mr. Schatz said in some instances legacy flashing yellow signals were swapped for PHB. He said for PHB they look at repressed latent demand, not just simple counts. Also, he said they look to most logical spot. He said PHBs cost about \$60,000 - \$80,000 and that requests for these devices can be made through 311. Nick Moe identified himself with Children's Optimal Health. He said they are updating children collision mapping. He asked how that data is used? Mr. Schatz said crash history is a ranking factor. He also said they have a great working relationship with Children's Optimal Health. Tom Wald said the PAC like the BAC can help to develop criteria and guide city.

G. Parking Benefit Districts

Presentation by: Gary Schatz Assistant Director, Transportation Department

No information was presented on parking benefit districts.

H. Great Streets Master Plan and Reimbursement Program

Presentation by: Tonya Swartzendruber, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Review Department Urban Design Division

- Ms. Swartzendruber said urban design is not just about putting a facility in place, but about the experience. A high quality place will result in pedestrian comfort which encourages walkability.
- Urban design includes such things as shade, benches, relationship of buildings to width of roadway and open space, materials, lighting, and connections. Great Streets is downtown program to pull these things together to make walking downtown more enjoyable.
- History: a typical downtown block is 276 feet with a right of way (ROW) of 80 feet except for Congress. She said they were designed for pedestrian. Almost one-third of our downtown occupied by streets with approximately 60% of ROW assigned to cars. She said Great Streets standard re-allocates space so that 45% is given to pedestrians with sidewalks on both sides, 18' minimum. She said that 2nd street is unique and has 32 foot wide sidewalk on the north side.
- Ms. Swartzendruber said streets are not just to facilitate travel from point a to point b. Streets can be about place creation and said managed traffic congestion is actually healthy to a place.
- Implementation of Great Streets Program done in one of several ways:
 - As part of Capital Improvement Project (street reconstruction or maintenance)
 - Developer is asking for something not entitled, such as additional density or height. (constructed at developer's expense)
- Challenges to Great Streets Implementation:
 - Multiple entity partnerships

- Utility upgrades (don't always know where they are, or size)
- Existing conditions (modifying more of 3rd in warehouse district this weekend)
- Ms. Swartzendruber discussed the role of art in public places.
- Progress to date: Ms. Swartzendruber said so far there have been 38 public-private partnerships and 202.5 block faces under construction and planned.
- Ms. Swartzendruber said funding prioritization occurs by looking at maps and identifying blocks with gaps in the Great Streets system and filling those in, and / or working with Public Works on street reconstruction.

Questions:

Heyden Walker observed that business have enormous curb cuts. She said this is a detriment for walkability and lost city revenue in parking. Ms. Swartzendruber said we are aware of this issue. Through reconstruction, curb cuts are evaluated and narrowed where possible. Mr. Harvey said we do make adjustments in street reconstruction such as consolidating entrances.

Aleksiina Chapman asked if Parklets have ever been done as part of Great Streets. Ms. Swartzendruber said we have not as a city done parklets, but we are allowing owners to do. She said parklets are definitely on her radar and pointed to Royal Blue Grocery as an example. She said permission to do one is a fairly streamlined process.

4. OLD BUSINESS

A. Bylaws – Discussion and Possible Action

Postponed until January meeting.

B. Relationship to the Urban Transportation Commission and Bicycle Advisory Council

Postponed until future meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Subcommittees – Discussion and Possible Action

Postponed until January meeting.

6. FUTURE BUSINESS

A. Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons – Discussion on Draft Location Criteria

Postponed until January meeting.

B. Urban Trails Master Plan – Discussion of Draft Master Plan

Postponed until January meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Staff adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m. without objection.

