



**PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
March 03, 2014**

The Pedestrian Advisory convened in a regular meeting on March 3, 2014, 721 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas.

Guests in Attendance:

Peter Baird
Mateo Barnstone
Janet Beinke
Mark Bentley
Charisa Bentley
Hatty Bogucki
Ken Craig
Betty Dickson
Valerie Fruge

Charlotte Garza
Jeff Gipson
Erin Grushon
James Harkrider
Lisa Hinely
Girard Kinney
Nathan Lynch
Carmen de la Morena
David Parvo
Daniela Radpay

Erika Ragsdale
Emily Risinger
Delfin Salazar
Alix Scarborough
Marla Schmitz
Ed Wallace
Heyden Walker
Andy Webre
Robyn Webre

Staff in Attendance:

Robert Anderson
Stacey Benningfield
Aleksiina Chapman
Lawrence Deeter
Emily Duda

Dustin Elliott
Pamela Larson
Kristy Hansen
Christian Malanko
Kathy Rock

Freddie Summer
Lydia Bryan Valdez
Tony Valdez

CALL TO ORDER

Staff called the Board Meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

2. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Marla Schmitts, Chair of Highland Park Neighborhood committee, presented on a property at 401 W St Johns which presently is leased to a youth sports foundation. The City is involved at this site because Watershed Protection Department (WPD) has identified it as an appropriate location for a storm water pond to address pollution. According to Ms. Schmitts, the City Manager wants the site to be a shared park and sports field or sports field only. The present use introduces traffic into neighborhood because users are coming from across the city. But Highland Park's 4,500 residents must drive to other parks when the fields are in use. Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) documents state that the best way to access a park is walking by foot. This park could fulfill PARD's ¼ mile walkable goal for many residents, and is near to

many City of Austin investments in walkability such as Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) stations, Highland ACC, Airport Blvd, etc. Ms. Schmitt deducts that the best use is a neighborhood park rather than a sports field accessible by car only and asks for a statement from the PAC to support a neighborhood park that provides walkable access while maintaining some sports on site if the sports only minimally impacts traffic into the neighborhood.

Charlotte makes a motion to make a comment, and Mr. Ed Wallace seconds. The motion is to draft a letter of support for the primary focus to be watershed which owns the land and a use that is the most pedestrian friendly. Carmen is in favor, but, would like to know more about the context to see all sides. Erin has the same concern.

Citizen commented that the purpose of PAC is to get people walking in all areas of Austin, and PAC can support generally.

Staff asks for a vote for a letter of support: 19 in favor, 0 opposed. Kathy Rock brought up whether there is public access, and if able to arrive by bus. The site is ½ mile from Crestview, Highland TOD.

Mr. Wallace would like a letter specific to the case addressed, a public park that prioritizes individuals walking from the neighborhood, and not those coming from the county. It shall serve those who are closest to the park, and the focus is on walkability. Staff asked for someone to write a letter on behalf of the PAC. Charlotte volunteered to write it and will submit this to Robert Anderson as there is no present Chair of the PAC.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Corrections to the minutes include specifying that each Neighborhood Planning Area has a fund of \$100,000. Also, it was pointed out that Girard Kinney's name had been misspelled in several instances in the draft minutes.

Motion to approve minutes made by Ken, seconded by Mr. Kinney. Minutes approved.

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION BRIEFINGS

A. Bicycle Advisory Council/Urban Transportation Commission

Ms. Chapman said there is nothing specific to pedestrians from last month's BAC.

No representative from UTC is present.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. I-35 Cut and Cap

Presentation by: Heyden Walker, Black + Vernoooy

Ms. Heyden Black presented on the I-35 Cap and Cover on behalf of Reconnect Austin, an organization composed of volunteers who want an Austin which aims to reduce the racial, economic and social barrier which I-35 presents; they are concerned primarily with downtown, but extend their area to central Austin as they analyze the TxDOT Mobility 35 Plan. Ms. Black

shared images of the buildings that are being built or planned to be built downtown, which demonstrate the need to accommodate the number of pedestrians that will be in downtown. Interested individuals can visit www.reconnectaustin.com or www.mobility35.com for more details.

Ms. Black recognized that the addition of the future transportation corridor in the Mobility Plan is good as it prioritizes higher density traffic, but, there are trade-offs as 2 additional lanes increase the roadway width. She discussed the conflict which highways and cities have with one another, as highways prioritize long distance and automobiles, whereas cities prioritize connections and people. Ms. Black demonstrated the impacts of auto-oriented development, where affordability is dramatically impacted by the need for multiple cars in each household, or the pedestrian overpass over highways which have elements of accommodating pedestrians, but, lack safe and people-centric design.

The Mobility 3 Plan will widen the lower ramps, shutting off cross traffic between MLK and Airport. The Implementation Plan calls for better east-west connectivity, yet the TxDOT plan takes away 30% of connectivity through closing cross streets.

Ms. Black shared information on the proposed Texas Super Streets which remove bridges and put turn-around bridges with a diagonal pedestrian walkway in the middle. A vehicle wanting to cross I-35 will have to travel to nearest turnaround (32nd to 38th Street makes the driver move 12 total blocks and cross 8 total lanes of traffic). For a pedestrian crossing he/she has to be on one side of the intersection before crossing diagonally, where he/she may need to jump out of the way of an emergency vehicle using the rolling curb. Though safe, this is not convenient for pedestrians.

Ms. Black shared information on a second TxDOT mobility change, the Diverging Diamond which is used in Springfield, MO. Video shows that it takes 10 minutes for a pedestrian to walk through the intersection.

Reconnect Austin wants bridges for individuals to travel across the highway at frequent intervals as this helps to create a compact and connected city. There are opportunities to influence the plan as the City is contributing money and time to this project, and the north/south traffic is prioritized, not the needs of the city.

Mr. Salazar asked if there is still time to add input for the cross streets; he wondered if there are examples. Asked about how ReconnectAustin efforts are shared to the public. Ms. Black asked for the PAC to help get the word out, though they are doing much outreach. Videos are posted on the Google Group showcasing the Diverging Diamond.

Ms. Black shared that two Diverging Diamonds exist in Texas, at the intersection of 1604 & 281 in San Antonio and at the intersection of two suburban arterials in Plano where the City of Plano is paying for its removal.

B. I-35 Improvements (6:45 to 7:15)

Presentation by: Stacey Benningfield, I-35 Program Manager, TXDOT

Ms. Stacey Benningfield, Program Manager with TxDOT, presented on the Mobility 35 plan. Ms. Benningfield advised that all concepts and implementation plan are subject to change. TXDOT has been working with the City of Austin (COA) for 2-2.5 years on the Plan. TxDOT still must work with Neighborhood Associations, environmental review, and stakeholders. Neighborhood Associations are not in favor of the east-west closures at Woodland and St. Johns and TxDOT has developed concepts to keep those open.

Bond money from COA initiated this project to address what needs to be done to enhance mobility along I-35 in downtown Austin. The project has expanded to north of Georgetown to south of Posey Road in Hays County. TxDOT's goal is to have a plan within the next 18 months which:

- increases capacity
- better manages traffic
- enhances safety
- optimizes the existing facility
- minimizes additional right-of-way
- improves east-west connections
- improves compatibility with neighborhoods
- enhances bicycle, pedestrian, and transit options.

There are 5 phases, the majority of which are unfunded. Some projects (between William Cannon and Stassney, and another near Oltorf have funding for environmental studies) but the total cost is \$1.3-\$1.9B, dependent on the improvements which happen near downtown Austin. Below are the phases:

- 1- Conceptual planning for corridor
- 2- Implementation for corridor ← everything they're currently doing (what can be done, cost)
- 3- Environmental/design studies: has many opportunities for community participation
- 4- Construction plans, ROW and utilities coordination
- 5- Letting and construction

Option 1: Modified existing concept (Holly to 12th Street)

Option 2: Depressed main lanes concept (just south of Cesar Chavez to 8th Street, and 11th to 12th Street)

Option 3: Fully depress main lanes and put bridges that could be developed as a park or open space(similar to Woodall Rodgers Freeway which the City of Dallas, TXDOT and other partners worked to complete). Cantilevered frontage roads are difficult as TXDOT needs to maintain access to downtown.

Ms. Beinke asked about how to access the Phase I concepts: visit www.mobility35.org to see all of the concepts which were presented in August. Changes which are not captured in the plan are on the website.

Ms. Benningfield spoke to the project's outreach which includes 90 stakeholder meetings since 2011, 11 public open houses, 2 online open houses, webpage, social media and community events.

Ms. Fruge asked about how they have done outreach; Ms. Benningfield responded that most has been by invitation, though at community events there is a sheet where people can ask for more information. Additional neighborhoods are welcome to request presentations.

Mr. Elliott, with HNTB (consultant firm on the project), spoke that due to the unpopularity of Texas Super Streets, TxDOT now is looking at the Modified Frontage Road concept, keeping any crossing that exists today and maintaining the crossings, with the exception of 6th Street. TxDOT identified that 6th Street's ramp presents a crossing issue as it presently backs up traffic onto the highway and extending the ramp would block the intersection.

Mr. Elliott spoke that TxDOT is proposing at Future Transportation Corridor (which has an unknown use) and Diverging Diamond Intersections (DDI). The DDI splits off instead of crossing all at once; presenting a shorter conflict time but a disadvantage arises as pedestrians may cross free-flowing traffic. Airport would be a center crossing.

To accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists they inventoried existing facilities and performed a gap analysis. Mr. Elliott then presented on the proposed concepts:

Roundabouts are an innovative intersection where traffic continues to move, but is slowed. Islands allow pedestrians to only cross one direction at a time. They can add Hawk signals for pedestrians. Bicyclists can ride with traffic, or a cycle track can be installed. Closest roundabout to downtown is the southbound side of 51st, another will also be at Howard Lane.

The Modified Frontage Road will allow pedestrian and cyclist to cross similarly to today. This will employ two-stage crossing if the distance is too long or adversely affects traffic flow.

TxDOT design may ask you to make right turn or U-turn at the next intersection, which reduces it from 4-phases to 2-phases. Similar to "Michigan left"; attendees presented some conflicting examples, thinking these were Michigan lefts, but these were Texas Super Streets.

TxDOT is beginning a Planning and Environmental Linkages study. Encourages input from the community.

Percy asked about how alternatives are being evaluated and the specifics of implementation. There will be a continual public input process moving through Phase III. Attendees asked to what extent can you modify concepts? Ms. Benningfield offered the following anecdote to how concepts have been modified: During SH130 an EIS was done, initial recommendation was to build SH130 through Round Rock, west of Decker Lake, or near Austin, as a result of public comment the entire

alignment was changed to east of all sites. Does plan include a Cap? The plan identifies two concepts: one that brings Cesar Chavez back up to the modified existing highway, the second that leaves frontage roads and depresses main lanes. This second option leaves opportunity for a future cap, but, does not fund it. \$1.3Billion pays for the modified frontage road, \$1.5B enables wider bridges at the intersections, and \$1.9B funds the cut (but not cap). Presently TxDOT does not have funding for any improvements.

A PAC member asked about pedestrian connectivity with/without Cap. Is this just a potential public amenity? Mr. Elliott mentioned that the cap provides additional connectivity opportunities but these must be balanced with road network—is there a Hawk provided, or will the pedestrian continue to the intersection? TxDOT is proposing to add pedestrian amenities such as art and lights.

Ms. Black clarified that the city will get what we need only by providing public input.

Mr. Wallace mentioned that neither design option is acceptable, but, these are being brought to environmental review. He asked *how do we add an alternative that prioritizes the need of Austin's residents, not the needs of NAFTA?* A TxDOT employee present mentioned that there has to be some compromise of city's needs as this is an interstate and National Defense Highway.

Ms. Benningfield affirmed that this interstate is important regionally and locally, and wants to make I-35 a better neighbor. Mr. Elliott mentioned that 75% of traffic on I-35 is from the 3-county area, and there needs to be a minimum level of connectivity for Hays, Travis and Williamson counties.

Staff affirmed that the PAC's goal is to provide recommendations to government bodies at a pedestrian level and the conversation should move to a PAC action.

Mr. Kinney mentioned that I-35 can take many ways to go through Austin, not just the modified and the depressed situations. There are other ways to get the 75% of roadways users through downtown. At peak hours Girard heard that 35% is going to downtown, if these users can take other routes this can increase capacity on I-35.

A community member mentioned that the covers like Clyde Warren Park are silos and Austin needs a technically feasible solution that solves the community's needs. Ms. Benningfield mentioned that Reconnect Austin's comments are not technically feasible.

A community member mentioned we cannot stop an interstate highway, it should go through. How does one couple the pass-through traffic with the local access?

Mr. Risinger asked how community feedback will improve and who will be engaged, and how will this be measured. Ms. Benningfield answered that the public involvement process continues weekly. Minimal rules established by TxDOT will continue, and they are embracing social media and online forums. TxDOT invites suggestions.

Ms. Morena asked how the PAC can continue to be involved to offer creative solutions, especially for pedestrian safety as proposed options are not adequate solutions. Ms. Benningfield mentioned

that they have been working with the BAC, and at present there are three present alternatives, the two mentioned, and a no build, more can be added. How can we offer substantial input? Ms. Black mentioned that Thursday's City Council session has a resolution asking staff to advocate for great east/west connectivity which is Item #25 on the agenda. Staff mentioned that there is an opportunity to submit comments to City Council on behalf of the PAC.

Mr. Elliott mentioned that the Implementation Plan should have a road map and dollars, as things move further they will move into greater detail on the intersections in the approximately 27-mile corridor.

Erin mentioned that the conversation needs to continue. A community member made a motion to vote that TxDOT's alternatives, as proposed, do not adequately provide the safety and access of pedestrians, and additional designs should be pursued. Carmen offered a friendly amendment to connect to Imagine Austin. Ms. Rock added a friendly amendment to extend safety to include visual safety. 27 in favor, 0 opposed.

Mr. Kinney made a motion to support Item 25 on the City Council agenda. Seconded by Ken Craig. 26 in favor. 0 opposed. Someone abstained because streets that act as collectors may not need improved east-west connectivity.

C. Pedestrian Safety and Enforcement Efforts (7:15 to 7:45)

Presentation by: Fred Fletcher, Commander, Austin Police Department

Lieutenant Gary Hanna is here on behalf of Officer Mahoney. Lt. Hanna has 21 years of experience with APD in enforcement and patrol, and is assigned to Region 1, which is West Campus from UT to 360, and north to Anderson Lane. Lt. Hanna is not involved in citywide strategies.

Staff mentioned that it has been a goal of PAC to collaborate with APD and we should think in large-picture, not focus on the recent jaywalking citation receiving wide media attention. Staff asked Lt. Hanna to share statistics.

Lt. Statistics show that of 166,800 citations, 1,361 were issued to pedestrians, which is less than 1%, he doesn't have figures for bicyclists. 103,152 citations were issued to hazardous motorists. In last 3 weeks, 107 failure to yield right-of-way (ROW) citations were given to drivers, this doesn't include running stop signs or stoplights. In the same period 34 citations were written to pedestrians citywide.

Carmen asked how do we re-educate drivers to respect pedestrians and bicyclists on the road. Lt. Christian Malanka asked instead what the community can do to help APD facilitate success. APD is often called to do "tough love", and had a recent campaign wherein 3,000 citations were split 50/50 between pedestrians and vehicles. 50% of the 28 pedestrian deaths were attributed to the pedestrians being impaired. If community prints a report and sends it to the media, the media may listen.

Erin asked how citations are handled. Downtown they can be sent through court and be deferred with community service. Lt. Hanna mentioned that the officer can give either a citation or a warning.

Ms. Chapman mentioned that the BAC has an APD Liaison to advise on sting operations which could be beneficial to the group.

A community member mentioned that it is important for officers to approach the issue in a civil way and explain the reasons for a warning, so that the public does not dismiss citations.

Mr. Kinney shared a vignette from a consultant where the best sign of a vibrant downtown is jaywalking. Slowing traffic allows for shared streets. Asked for confirmation at an unsigned, non-signalized intersection an individual is not jaywalking. Officer Malanka confirmed that as long as it is not an alley, it is an intersection, but, if there is signalization there must be compliance.

Carmen asked if Lt. Hanna feels comfortable bicycling. Lt. Hanna acknowledges sensitivity to urban areas.

Mr. Baird asked about the spectrum of jaywalking. “Pedestrian in the roadway” is a citation where he/she is interfering with traffic. “Disregard of pedestrian control signal”, is another pedestrian citation and “jaywalking” refers to going kitty-corner across an intersection.

Ms. Beinke asked whether pedestrians can walk in the roadway when there is no sidewalk. Lt. Hanna mentioned that this may be done, but should walk to the outside edge of traffic. Walking against traffic is advisable as a pedestrian can see oncoming vehicles. Janet asked where mid-block crosswalks exist, who has the ROW? Lt. Hanna mentioned that a pedestrian should exercise caution, and the law mentions that you should yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk, and stepping off the curb is not “in” the crosswalk.

Lt. Hanna was not able to get data subsets such as “fault” within the statistics. “Failure to yield ROW” is only half of a citation, and additional measures such as “in a crosswalk” is applied. He recommended contacting APD’s Analyst in Highway Enforcement for more detailed statistics. Lt. Hanna will share the contact information with the PAC Staff Liaison.

Lt. Hanna explains the cycling of the campus citation operation, where one day a week distinct modes of traffic are addressed through citations, including pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicular motorists. Lt. Hanna shared that PIO will provide more advance notice of citation operations, as it is a better outcome to not distribute citations.

Staff expressed that this is the first of a many part effort to improve coordination between PAC and APD.

6. OLD BUSINESS (7:45 to 7:55)

A. Land Development Code Working Group

Staff reported that PAC members are devising a strategy on how/when to send feedback to the LDC.

B. Ross Complex

Staff reported that the Ross Complex is still in process, and the applicants have presented a Site Plan, but Staff does not have additional news on this.

C. Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons

Staff reported that ATD has shared information on PHB Evaluation, and have included comments received from the PAC at a previous meeting where they presented.

7. FUTURE BUSINESS (7:55 to 8:00)

A. PAC Elections

Group has difficulty operating without elections taking place.

B. Bylaws

Emily will present draft bylaws at the April meeting.

C. E 6th Street Improvements

PWD asked Robert Anderson if they can make a presentation regarding East 6th Street improvements.

ADJOURNMENT

Staff adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m. without objection.

