
Date: Tuesday, March 15, 2016

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Executive Conference Room, City of Urbana, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL

Members Present: Brandon Bowersox-Johnson, James Roedl (Stacey DeLorenzo), Cynthia Hoyle, Audrey Ishii, Susan Jones, Jeff Marino and Craig Shonkwiler

Staff Present: Brad Bennett, Kevin Garcia, David Jayme

Members Absent: Elsie Hedgspeth, Michele Guerra

Others Present: Chris Hawk, Lily Wilcock, Jeff Yockey, Matt Yoder

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Roll call was taken and it was noted that a quorum of members was present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson asked to have Enforcement of Traffic Laws added to New Business.

Susan Jones moved to approve the agenda as amended for the March 15th meeting.

James Roedl seconded the motion.

The motion was approved.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Cynthia Hoyle had submitted suggested changes to the draft minutes that were incorporated into the copies sent to the Commissioners. She moved to approve the meeting minutes from the February 16th meeting as amended.

Craig Shonkwiler seconded the motion.

The motion was approved.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Those from the public chose to speak when items were being discussed.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) 2016 Bicycle Master Plan Update

Craig Shonkwiler reported on the status of the approval of the 2016 Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. He stated that the Urbana Plan Commission tabled the approval of the 2016 Urbana Bicycle Master Plan until comments submitted by Charlie Smyth and Jeff Yockey had been reviewed. Mr. Shonkwiler said that he had met with Mr. Smyth and would incorporate their comments into the plan once he had received their comments. He added that after those changes were complete, the document would go back to the Bicycle Steering Committee for review. Once it was accepted by the Steering Committee, the plan would be distributed to the BPAC members for their review before bringing the plan back to the commission for approval. The same process would occur for the Urbana Plan Commission. If the plan was approved by both commissions, it would go to the Committee of the Whole and then to Council. He hoped that it would be ready in time to be reviewed by BPAC and Plan Commission in April and City Council in May.

Audrey Ishii asked if the Commissioners would have sufficient time to review the plan.

Craig Shonkwiler said that changes to the plan would be tracked so the Commissioners could easily see the changes. He added that staff would try to get the revised plan back to BPAC as soon as possible.

Audrey Ishii asked for receipt of the draft at least two weeks before the meeting so it could be adequately reviewed.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that if the draft could not be submitted in timely manner, the request to approve the plan would be scheduled for the May BPAC meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a) Sidewalk Network Inventory and Assessment for the Champaign Urbana Urbanized Area

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson mentioned that BPAC had received a pdf file containing information about the report earlier in the year.

Brad Bennett mentioned that the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) had inventoried all of the sidewalks in Urbana, Champaign and Savoy.

Matt Yoder from RPC stated that the project was a result of goals approved by the Champaign Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study group (CUUATS) in February 2016. He explained that the agencies wanted a comprehensive database listing information about sidewalks that included Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, running and cross slope, vertical faults, and missing and damaged sidewalks. He stated that 690 miles of sidewalks along public streets and off-street sidewalks within the University of Illinois campus were observed and analyzed. Mr. Yoder said that the two-year study was completed by four two-person teams. He added that City staff had access to all of the data.

Recommendations from the study were discussed.

Sidewalk Slopes and Vertical Faults

Vertical faults were very common. Mr. Yoder stated that grinding could greatly reduce these hazards. He added that trees and vegetation were the most common contributors to the shifting of sidewalk panels.

- Install sidewalks before installing driveways so the driveways have to be level with the sidewalks instead of the other way around.
- Evaluate the types and locations of trees before planting them near sidewalks.
- Increase the minimum width of sidewalks to five feet.

Curb Ramps

- Install truncated domes the full width of the accessible ramps.
- Add a combination of ramps when the area covers a long distance.
- Conduct frequent audits of sidewalk infrastructure.

Pedestrian Push Button Signals

- Develop policies for pedestrian signal placement.
- Install tactile arrows on the signals.
- Update guidelines to incorporate new intersection treatments.
- Perform routine maintenance on sidewalk ramps to reduce the build-up of grass and dirt.
- Paint faded crosswalk markings.
- Provide a way for citizens to report issues and concerns.

Missing Curb Ramps

- Identify all areas where sidewalks are not on both sides of the street and add them to improve connectivity.
- Create plan in resurfacing projects to add sidewalks and ramps.

Priority Areas and Funding

- Establish priority areas for sidewalk infrastructure based upon the location of senior facilities, transit stops, shopping and schools.
- Use private and public funding sources to cost share for high priority projects.
- Create guidelines for establishing and installing marked crosswalks.
- Continue updating of sidewalk inventory.
- Develop an assessment tool.
- Develop an on-line dashboard to show progress in the community towards becoming more accessible.

Matt Yoder pointed to Downtown Urbana and South Philo Road business districts as areas that should receive high priority when considering sidewalk maintenance and repair.

Craig Shonkwiler asked when the study was conducted.

Mr. Yoder stated that the project spanned from May 2014 to November 2015.

Brad Bennett said that the project was an Illinois Department of Transportation funded study.

Audrey Ishii asked if the study noted many areas where there were vertical faults greater than ¼ inch.

Matt Yoder said that they didn't specifically record faults but they used categories to assess the condition of an area of sidewalk based upon the vertical faults.

Audrey Ishii asked if there was a mechanism for citizens to report concerns.

Brad Bennett said that the City was in the process of developing an asset management program that would track those issues.

Barb Stiehl added that the City received information from SeeClickFix, which was an application for smart phones.

Craig Shonkwiler said that Citizens' Voice was available on the City's website to allow the public with a way to report concerns. He added that the Operations Division then prioritized those concerns.

Brad Bennett said that the public could always call into the Public Works Department to report problems. He mentioned that accommodation requests received a high priority rating and asked that any accessibility concerns be directed to his office.

Audrey Ishii asked if the City had been incorporating sidewalk repairs into the routine maintenance.

Craig Shonkwiler said that staff looked at sidewalk conditions whenever street projects were being prepared. He added that staff assessed the entire length of a project and included addressing vertical faults and curb ramps even when doing patching work. Cynthia Hoyle stated that she would like to see a pedestrian plan similar to the Bicycle Master Plan that would perhaps qualify the City of Urbana as with a pedestrian friendly designation. She felt that much of the information needed for an application would be available as part of the Safe Routes to School project, the Sidewalk Network Inventory and Assessment, and the preliminary work done to establish priorities for a sidewalk snow removal plan.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the City had interest in a sidewalk master plan and had already adopted a complete street policy which included creating infrastructure for pedestrians. He commented that the bicycle system was award-winning, but he said the inadequacies for pedestrians should be addressed. He added that the City had been complying with ADA standards. He said that the standards had been changing and the City had been trying to keep current with them.

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson asked if there were any new sidewalks in Urbana with non-compliant slopes.

Brad Bennett stated that City sidewalk standards require sidewalks to be installed before driveways were installed. He added that if the sidewalks were not compliant, the area would have to be removed and replaced.

Jeff Marino asked if the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) required that sidewalks be installed before driveways.

Brad Bennett stated that it was the policy of the City of Urbana. He added that some communities did not require sidewalks to be installed first in new developments, but he said that the City of Bloomington was considering changing their policy to require sidewalk installation before driveway installation to minimize problems with steep slopes connecting sidewalks to the driveways.

Craig Shonkwiler mentioned that to gain understanding of accessibility issues, the Engineering staff attended a meeting at PACE where they travelled in wheelchairs around the Philo Road-Florida Avenue area. He said that a ¼-inch fault and other obstacles faced by those with limited mobility could make travel extremely difficult.

Audrey Ishii said that runners found it difficult to use the sidewalks and preferred to run on the street. She asked why it was more difficult to maintain sidewalks to the same level as streets.

Craig Shonkwiler mentioned that sidewalks were only 6" thick and that roads were thicker because of the load they had to take.

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson asked how the study would be updated over time.

Matt Yoder explained that as part of the partnership between RPC and the participating agencies, the participating agencies would give construction data to RPC and the database would be updated with the use of interns during the summer.

Jeff Marino asked if sidewalks were repaired on an as-needed basis and if there was a set-aside program for the construction of new sidewalks.

Brad Bennett said that funds were budgeted for sidewalk repairs and that significant portions of sidewalks were repaired as part of transportation projects. He stated that most of the money was budgeted for maintenance and repair, but he said that there were recent projects where a path was constructed between Adams Street and Fairlawn Drive and a sidewalk was constructed on Broadway Avenue along Crystal Lake Park.

Mr. Marino asked if there were any cost-share programs with residents and/or businesses.

Brad Bennett said that ultimately the City was responsible for maintaining and constructing the sidewalks.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the City had applied for grants and would seek funding when possible. He added that a cost-share program might be considered as part of the pedestrian master plan.

Brad Bennett said that in new developments, residential streets were required to install sidewalks on both sides of the street; industrial streets were required to install sidewalks

on one side. He continued that at times connecting properties to sidewalks had been deferred if there were no sidewalks to connect.

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson said that he would like to develop a pedestrian master plan.

b) North Cunningham Avenue Sidewalk Project

Brad Bennett discussed the North Cunningham Avenue Sidewalk Extension Project. He said that sidewalks would be extended on Cunningham Avenue from the intersection of Cunningham Avenue and Country Club Road and Cunningham Avenue and Perkins Road to the intersection of Cunningham Avenue and Kenyon Road. He said that the most challenging part of the installing the 8-foot wide path on the east side of Cunningham Avenue would be coordinating the temporary closures of driveways while constructing the sidewalks. He mentioned that the plans had been approved by IDOT and that construction was planned to begin in April or May of this year. He said that the project would close about six abandoned curb cuts along Cunningham Avenue.

Jeff Marino asked about the standard width for City sidewalks and how was the 8-foot width determined on the east side.

Brad Bennett said that the western portion of the sidewalk would be 5 feet in width, which was the standard width for City sidewalk. He stated that the width for the east side was determined as part of the plans in the Urbana Master Bicycle Plan. Mr. Bennett explained that project would include the improvement of sidewalk and curb ramps and pedestrian push button signals at the intersections of Cunningham Avenue and Country Club Road and Cunningham Avenue and Perkins Road. He added the IDOT had plans to extend the sidewalk to O'Brien Drive when IDOT resurfaced part of Cunningham Avenue. He added that the project would probably be completed within ninety days. He stated that staff had been working with those on Cunningham Avenue to develop a sequencing plan to minimize construction impact on businesses. Some work would have to be coordinated around the end of the school year since there was a storage facility used by University of Illinois students located within the project area.

c) Enforcement of Traffic Laws

Chris Hawk from the University of Illinois Police Department discussed the activities of the Police Department to promote safety among pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists within the campus area. He mentioned that at the beginning of the school year, enforcement was used more as an educational process. He said that officers often passed out cards about bicycle laws and safety when bicyclists violate traffic laws. He said that officers focused on violations that could cause injury.

Cynthia Hoyle stated that she believed that compliance was better when there was enforcement of laws such as jaywalking.

Craig Shonkwiler asked for clarification on when a vehicle had to stop at a crosswalk.

Officer Hawk said that cars had to stop whenever a pedestrian was in the crosswalk. He added that vehicles had no obligation to stop when a pedestrian was standing near the crosswalk on the sidewalk. He said that pedestrians could not walk out in front of a car and expect the car to stop. He emphasized that pedestrians were supposed to stop and wait before crossing a street.

Lily Wilcock stated that Facilities and Services were interested in educating motorists about the Rules of the Road and in training road users how to interact with pedestrians and bicyclists.

David Jayme asked if police provided educational stops for bicyclists and motorists and if the Rules of the Road applied to bicyclists.

Officer Hawk said that it was sometimes difficult to enforce traffic laws for bicyclists since there were a limited number of officers and certain requirements for having officers on call. He clarified that the role of bicyclists depended upon where they were riding. He said that bicyclists on the street should obey the same laws that motorists were to obey; bicyclists on sidewalks were to obey the same laws that pedestrians were to obey.

Craig Shonkwiler asked if it was illegal for vehicles to park in bicycle lanes.

Chris Hawk stated that Illinois law does not prohibit parking in bicycle lanes.

Craig Shonkwiler mentioned that restrictions had been considered on a local level.

Cynthia Hoyle thought that restrictions would not be very popular with the public. She thought restrictions should only be used when a motorist regularly parked in a bicycle lane.

James Roedl explained that when cars parked in bicycle lanes, bicyclists had to swerve into other lanes. He added that in general motorists were uncomfortable with bicyclists since their behavior was viewed as unpredictable. He said that swerving around parked cars in bicycle lanes would increase motorists' discomfort with bicyclists and possibly result in crashes.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the ordinance could allow for temporary unloading, but not parking.

Lily Wilcock said that the City of Chicago did have a law prohibiting parking in bicycle lanes. She added that vehicles could unload in alleyways.

David Jayme asked if bicyclists had to use bicycle lanes or if they could ride in other vehicle lanes.

Officer Hawk said that a bicyclist could not be forced to ride in a bicycle lane, especially since there were times when the lanes were not wide enough to avoid being hit by a car door. He said that bicyclists were to stay as far to the right as possible, but that the bicyclist determined when to do so.

Craig Shonkwiler asked what was considered an acceptable turn signal for bicyclists to use.

Chris Hawk explained that pointing toward the direction where you were going was acceptable as were the signals mentioned in the Rules of the Road.

Jeff Yockey asked if it would be helpful to translate the Bicycle Rules of the Road into other languages. He said that the Champaign County League of Bicyclists were working on a Spanish translation and would like to know if there were any other languages that would be helpful. He asked if capturing offenders on video would be helpful.

Chris Hawk suggested contacting the international student organization to determine which language would be helpful. As for the use of video, Officer Hawk said video would be helpful and could be used as evidence.

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson asked about cell phone usage.

Officer Hawk said that unless police could specifically prove that a person was texting, the person could not be ticketed for using a cell phone. He added that cell phones were used for directions and as phones so it was difficult to prove that a person was texting. He said that it was illegal for motorists and bicyclists to text while operating their vehicles.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- March 14 – Bicycle Safety Class in Spanish was held at Urbana High School
- April 23 – Traffic Skills 101 on-bicycle class
- May is Bike Month. This year’s theme is celebrating youth.
- May 3 – Bike to Work Day
- May 4 – Bike to School Day
- May 22 – Kickapoo Rail to Trail Celebration
- May 31 – Bike to a Movie Day at the Art Theater in Champaign
- June 10 through June 12, 2016 –League Cycling Seminar
- Saturdays in May will be Bike to Market at the Square Day
- Some events will be scheduled in Urbana’s parks and will include pumping bike tires
- Historic Preservation bicycle tour beginning at Market at the Square is in the planning stage
- Two Traffic Skills 101 classes have already been held

8. FUTURE TOPICS

- a) Urbana Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission Bylaws
- b) Urbana Bicycle Master Plan

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary