

MINUTES
4-20-2023



WALKABLE NOVI COMMITTEE MINUTES

CITY OF NOVI

April 20, 2023 6:00 PM

Council Conference Room
45175 Ten Mile Road, Novi, MI 48375
(248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

- Present:** Gary Becker, Laura Marie Casey, Jay Dooley, Justin Fischer, Supriya Joshi (alternate), Edward Roney
- Absent:** Joe Tolkacz
- Staff Present:** Lindsay Bell, Senior Planner, Community Development
Barbara McBeth, City Planner, Community Development
James Hill, Planner, Community Development
Jeff Muck, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Rebecca Runkel, Plan Review Engineer
- Consultants Present:** Norm Cox, The Greenway Collaborative
Carolyn Prudhomme, The Greenway Collaborative

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Item B. Engineering Update was moved to the first item on the agenda. Motion to approve the April 20, 2023, Walkable Novi Committee Agenda made by Member Fischer and seconded by Member Casey. Motion carried 6-0.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

B. ENGINEERING UPDATE

Rebecca Runkel presented a summary of public sidewalk projects currently in design and/or construction.

The Bond Street extension is currently underway, it's going along well, the sidewalk on one side was just poured. The project should be completed in approximately a month, but it has not been determined yet when it will be open to traffic as the signals still need to be installed.

The Ten Mile Road project from Haggerty Road to Meadowbrook Road had some debate over the sidewalk location, ultimately it is staying where it is. The water main replacement is being finished and paving is being started. The road should be open by the end of the summer.

The Lakeshore Park Pedestrian Tunnel project is ahead of schedule. The new tunnel is in, and paving is being done now. It should be open in about two weeks, in time for Memorial Day weekend.

Novi Road Rehabilitation from Nine Mile Road to Ten Mile Road (RCOC) has begun with concrete replacement at the Novi Road and Ten Mile intersection, which is stage one. Stage two will be the remainder of the paving along with sections of sidewalk repair. Some sidewalk sections will be relocated for guardrails and culverts.

The Nine Mile/Taft roundabout is complete. Beginning June 12th, bike lanes will be added between Nine Mile and Ten Mile, and then the road will be paved. The road will be down to one lane during paving.

The Wixom Road rehabilitation is in the design process now; the construction will be moved to next year. Sidewalk gaps will be filled in on the east side by Stonebrook Drive. We are waiting on two easements, one from Target for minor grading and the sidewalk. As it is MDOT led and funded, all the easements are required to be submitted and recorded. We did not make the submittal cutoff for this year.

AECOM is working on a final report for all 37 boardwalk inspections, so there will be some CIP recommendations coming from that.

Spalding DeDecker is working on the preliminary design for Northwest Park trails with possible construction to begin this summer.

Coming up, but not far into the design yet is the Beck Road widening project from Eleven Mile Road to Grand River Ave. There will be some sidewalk gaps on the east side completed there. The noise study was completed, and no major issues were found.

The Twelve Mile Road widening, from Beck Road to Dixon Road, which is being led by the RCOC, has a preliminary design for a four-lane boulevard. That will have a ten-foot asphalt pathway on the north side and a six-foot concrete sidewalk on the south side. There are some drainage issues that RCOC is looking into now.

The neighborhood sidewalk repair pilot program started in Meadowbrook Glens this year. Initially, it was proposed to incentivize it for residents with 0.75" deflections to 2" deflections. About half of the eligible properties returned signed agreements. After reviewing the cost, it was determined that the City will pay for everything with a 0.75" deflection or greater.

The City Forester reviewed which trees needed to be removed, and the trees were removed over the winter. The sidewalks are now about 75% complete. The total cost right now is around \$500,000, which is over budget due to unexpected things like irrigation lines that were hit and additional sidewalks that were found that needed to be repaired. In speaking with Aaron Staudt and Matt Wiktorowski, Meadowbrook Glens was considered to be the worst-case subdivision due to age, size of trees, and size of the subdivision, so hopefully going forward the program will be easier.

A lot of communication about the sidewalk repair was conducted with multiple meetings, letters to residents, and door hangers. There were still a lot of phone calls and emails from residents.

Member Becker inquired if there was any investigation or determination as to whether the trees involved in damaging the sidewalks were planted by the original builder as a City requirement or planted by homeowners. Ms. Runkel was not certain but will follow up with the City Forester. Member Becker would like to ensure we are not building in more sidewalk repair costs with tree requirements or residents planting trees with incorrect spacing. Ms. Runkel relayed an issue was residents' lack of understanding of the right of way line.

There was a lot of time spent to implement the program from staff, additional contingency funds should be included in the future for issues such as irrigation and landscaping. Although most residents seemed to be in favor of the tree removals, those who opted out of the program were those who did not want a tree removed.

The trees and sidewalks were marked early on. Some residents did their own marking as well, as a result marking for the next program will not be done until we are ready to construct.

The City Forester will need to follow up with the remaining trees to make sure they don't die from root damage over the next couple of years. He will be working on replacements for any resident who would like a replacement. The trees continue to grow, and roots spread, so this is not a permanent solution. Additional repairs may be needed in the future for deflections from trees. City Council backing of the program was helpful.

Ms. Runkel asked for feedback from the Committee regarding next year's program, thoughts on whether the program should be continued, and noted it is budgeted. Some considerations are

should it be continued in subdivisions, or should the focus be on pathways around subdivisions which may be more heavily travelled. Staff have identified Willowbrook Farms, Bristol Corners and Chase Farms as potential subdivisions for next year. Rather than incentivizing again, it is proposed that the City handle the cost of repairs.

Member Casey inquired as to the timeframe Ms. Runkel is seeking recommendations from the Committee. Ms. Runkel replied that the next program would begin with the next budget, around July timeframe.

Member Becker inquired if there was any input as to how other rapidly growing nearby subdivisions, such as in South Lyon or Farmington, handle sidewalk repairs – do they require residents to help cover the cost or does the City pay for repairs. Ms. Runkel replied that Megan Mikus did an analysis when the Novi program was first initiated and found it varies as to whether the surrounding City's cover the cost or incentivize.

Member Becker inquired if it was anticipated that \$500,000 per year would be the budget. Ms. Runkel relayed that the current budget is \$400,000. Meadowbrook Glens is a larger subdivision which accounted for the overage this year.

Member Fischer relayed that as the budget is \$400,000 and \$500,000 was spent this year, the carryover budget would be \$300,000 on July 1st. He relayed it might be helpful for the Committee to review the chart that was created regarding what other cities have done. It was not the intention for this to become an administratively burdensome process when it was being put together. As the deflection amounts initially discussed were 0.75"-2" under the assumption that would be covered by some of the residents, Mr. Fischer inquired if it would make sense that the funds be best used to selectively cover some of the higher deflections, and hold off on replacing those at .75" deflection that may have 5-10 more years in them, to spread the funds further.

A. NOVI NON-MOTORIZED MASTER PLAN UPDATE

1. Public Engagement Summary

Norm Cox relayed an overview of the public engagement summary in the packet. For community outreach, the Committee held joint community open houses with the Master Plan for Land Use, which were successful. There was a very productive focus group with Regional Trails. The Committee was present at a couple of local events, including the Eggstravaganza and hosted other public engagement opportunities.

The community input was not what was hoped for but was enough to get information. Novi residents may be suffering from survey fatigue or public input fatigue with several things happening. A good cross section from people walking and biking was achieved. Some interesting things were found. Public input was received from a lot of residents, a number of people who work in the city, and retirees. One third of the respondents had school-aged children, which is a good marker to get input.

Mr. Cox relayed that Carolyn Prudhomme reviewed all the open-ended questions to try to synthesize what is rising up to the top. The same question was asked twice, "what is preventing you from walking to destinations right now?" and "what would you like to see changed?". We find this approach sometimes gets different answers from different people. The #1 response was incomplete sidewalks. It's important to note, respondents weren't just talking about along the roads, but in the neighborhoods. How we go about addressing neighborhoods that don't have sidewalks is a politically difficult question as to what the threshold is and how is it paid for. Given the season, snow and ice really became an issue, not just on sidewalks but also trying to keep the ITC trail accessible in all seasons. Safety concerns ranged from traffic safety such as crossing roads to personal safety such as encountering aggressive dogs or lightning. That element is something to consider so everyone is comfortable.

More mid-block crosswalk locations are desired. For example, if a sidewalk is ending and there is a sidewalk across the street, how do you safely cross. This is a combination of design as well as behavior, for example motorists not yielding, or not seeing pedestrians, or running red lights.

Responses for things to be changed include more sidewalks and wider sidewalks for bikes and pedestrians to get to destinations both civic and private as well as additional mid-block crosswalks, safety improvements including snow and ice removal. Maintenance, such as was discussed regarding roots lifting sidewalks, is an issue.

Respondents are interested in walking for fitness and recreation on the top of the list, tapering off to walking to school. Walking to work had a fairly low response but given that residents and workplaces are spread out in Novi, it is not surprising.

Regarding bike riding, respondents were asked what is preventing them from riding. Responses were lack of bikeways, trails, bike lanes, family friendly options. Traffic safety and personal safety were a concern. Pavement conditions and poor connectivity when a path ends were mentioned. Crossing busy roads and lack of bike parking, which we are trying to encourage with private enterprises, was mentioned.

Respondents were also asked what they would like to see changed regarding bike riding. The #1 response was more pathways and sidewalks, and #2 was more bike lanes and paved shoulders. That response was not predicted, we thought this community would be more focused on the pathways and crosswalk improvements, snow removal and maintenance, and more bike parking.

Member Becker relayed it seems the #2 response of more bike lanes feeds into the #1 response of more pathways and sidewalks as the existing pathways and sidewalks are not wide enough for both bikes and pedestrians. Mr. Cox added this makes sense as when he was conducting field work it was not easy going on the busier pedestrian/bike paths on a bike, since it was necessary to navigate through people with dogs and kids.

To get general feedback, respondents were also to indicate which four items they would like to see more of - as you'd expect responses were more sidewalks, more off road trails, just over half want more mid-block crossings and more on-road bike lanes. Other items respondents suggested were important were more park trails and natural areas, better maintenance, more funding for walking and bicycling facilities, and speeding enforcement on roads with heavy pedestrian usage. A speed limit sign won't be an enforcement, the design of the roadway is what will determine how people navigate the trails. The roundabout that was mentioned earlier is an excellent example of a change to the environment that will make a difference.

There were a couple of mentions, especially on the ITC trails, to clean up after dogs. There were some requests for more community events involving biking and walking. We've heard a lot in casual conversations that people would like to see organized group bike rides.

The last page in the packet is from the crowd sourcing map used to collect comments on the specific themes we've talked about. For example, the lines begin to show many people would like to see connectivity from the end of north end ITC trail to Lakeshore Park, or from I-275/M-5 trail to Maybury State Park. We've talked about these connections for some time, the challenges of connections along dirt roads, and how they should be addressed.

Mr. Cox asked for thoughts on bike lanes vs path lanes, or families using one and professional bikers the other and how that would be handled in the budget. Sidewalks serve pedestrians, joggers and easy-going cyclists. Cycle lanes on roads are for the more serious bikers.

Member Becker suggested using the 74 acres at Bosco Fields to create a bike path for the more serious bikers.

Mr. Cox presented a PowerPoint presentation showing where we have done inventory analysis, listened to the land, and what is in the existing plans. Community input is being wrapped up, we are going into preliminary plans and will combine inventory analysis with public input.

For the first pass outline we will make sure we are hitting the planned elements - building, promote and evaluate. Considerations are health and safety first, and creating an environment that encourages walking and bicycling. While the requirements might be met, it should be a place

where people want to walk so it should include the niceties – landscaping, benches, trash receptacles.

Other considerations are personal safety, including areas that should be lit, which is a huge cost issue, providing patrols for remote areas, or call boxes. With best practices, employ HAWK signals where they make sense, these rectangular rapid flashing beacons are proven safety counter measures. If we have on-road facilities get them separated to where they make sense.

The next set of policies are dangerous gaps where people come out of neighborhoods and are trying to cross. Connecting to destinations, making sure people get to key areas, more mid-block crosswalks and employing crosswalk enforcement should be addressed. Police are monitoring, beginning with warnings, then tickets.

Policies for accessibility in their true form, meaning strengthening snow and ice removal policies, working on surface of trails and vegetation management, especially low hanging branches.

Other considerations are supporting the infrastructure, adding benches, water, and year-round access to restrooms. Support for different types of bicyclists, an all age and ability network to share with dog walkers, then the on-road cyclists, should be achieved.

We will look at building the complete system - a sidewalk/pathway system, incorporating the sustainability elements, such as street trees which are invaluable to address the first flush of rainwater, reducing the heat island and the comfort level of separation from the roadway. Bioswales and ditches help to filter storm water. Plant material should be considered so it doesn't need as many chemicals and mowing. The pavement marking plan should be updated.

Transit stops and how we get the key bicycle/pedestrian networks linked up and feeding directly into transit stops should be considered. Off road trails should be promoted, we've talked to people who had no idea the ITC trail exists. We've also talked to regional trail partners, and they are very interested in creating a network to make a seamless wayfinding system.

Analyzing some of the hazards, where we have some abrupt turns, gates, blind curves, areas to remove, and the dog waste issue should be addressed. Addressing the gaps within the City and to the regional trails is an important focus.

We want to create better places, integrate community gardens, add sculpture gardens and interpretive themes, use the idea of telling a story along a lake, to add to what we have.

The Walkable Novi webpage should be used to promote events such as group rides, wayfinding, and have downloadable bicycle maps with suggested routes of various lengths.

On the ground, add wayfinding for the trails, incorporating time and distance for a route and integrating information kiosks to learn about trail systems or group riding events.

Group rides and building local walking and bicycle groups should be promoted. In talking to the Temple, they already have a once-a-year walking group that comes up a long distance and shorter distance during the nice season.

Evaluate the use of year-round counters along trails, which will provide automatic feedback of how many people have used a trail. SEMCOG would love to have that data. Seasonal count days, and apps which can give types of users are a great way to collect data and get an idea of what's happening year-round.

Requested a dashboard to go online to see counts, see safety, yearly crash reports, what are trends,

Satisfaction can be gauged through a yearly community survey that goes out to residents with a couple of tracking questions such as "do you see progress being made?". For larger discussion a C-Click fix app could be used, which is basically an app that allows reports to be made. Novi currently uses Q-send.

Member Casey relayed that putting information online, where people can learn about trails we have, learn what they will see on the trail and plan a purposeful visit should be addressed. The value of taking time to build content online will continue to drive usage and it becomes a reinforcing opportunity for people to continue to become engaged. Amplifying the work that we've done to add trails and pathways will allow people to walk and bike around more. The easier we make it available for people to know where to go the better off they'll be.

It was relayed some of the trails we have currently in Novi have markers that tell what kind of birds or animals you may see as you are on trails. There is a very engaging trail with markers right behind the ice-skating rink.

Mr. Cox relayed the BridgetoBay.org trail website in St. Clair County is an example of kiosk linking to website and routes, heads up navigation, recommend walks and bikes and promote trail towns.

Lindsay Bell inquired if June 15th is still a good date for the next portion. Mr. Cox confirmed he will have a preliminary plan for review and feedback from the Committee.

C. ACTIVE MOBILITY PROJECTS IN 2023-24 CIP

Lindsay Bell relayed that also in the packet is for the Active Mobility projects the CIP, highlighted in yellow are line items that have an Active Mobility component in them. This is scheduled for a public hearing on May 8, 2023.

D. MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 15, 2022

Motion to approve the December 15, 2022 Walkable Novi Committee meeting minutes made by Member Casey and seconded by Member Fischer. Motion carried 6-0.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

COMMUNICATIONS

None

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn the April 20, 2023 Walkable Novi Committee made by Member Casey and seconded by Member Dooley. Motion carried 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM.