



MOBILITY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room

(248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Brian Smith (Chair), Ericka Thomas, Gary Becker, Jay Dooley, Ed Roney

Absent: Justin Fischer and Joe Tolkacz (excused)

Staff Present: Jeffrey Herczeg, Director, DPW
Megan Mikus, Deputy Director, DPW
Aaron Staup, Construction Engineer, DPW
Rebecca Runkel, Project Engineer, DPW
Lindsay Bell, Senior Planner, Community Development
Barb McBeth, City Planner, Community Development

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded and passed 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a motion to approve the minutes from October 17th, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed 5-0.

DISCUSSION

Chair Smith introduced Northville guests, Barbara Morowski-Brown and Wendy Longpre. Barbara Morowski-Brown introduced herself as City of Northville Mayor Pro-Tem, Parks and Rec Commissioner, and member of Riverwalk Task Force, alongside Nancy Darga. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown thanked the committee for having her and Ms. Longpre at the meeting. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown said when they were here in 2022 the connection between Northville and Novi was discussed, and that Nancy Darga would be at the December 19th meeting to talk more about that. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown continued that there are two parts to the discussion, the Road Commission of Oakland County (RCOC) Novi Road project and the Wayne County 8 Mile Rd bridge project, which provide opportunities for improving the non-motorized network. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski stressed the importance of bringing the Northville trailways up into Novi, including the 9 Mile Rd corridor, which Wendy Longpre has been involved in.

Wendy Longpre introduced herself as the Director of Strategic Planning and Special Projects for the City of Northville. Ms. Longpre discussed the Northville Riverwalk, which

would provide a pathway from the southern border of Northville to the northern border. Ms. Longpre mentioned that the Riverwalk pathway would use paths in neighboring communities to access some of the regional and statewide trails, the I-275 trail and Hines Park trail, and others to the east and west. Ms. Longpre emphasized the connection between 8 Mile Rd and 9 Mile Rd as a missing piece of the connection north.

Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown described the phases of the upcoming RCOC Novi Rd project. Phase 1 is from 8 Mile Rd to Allen St, across from Guernsey's. This section is challenging because of the road curvature and the bridge over the Walled Lake Branch of the Rouge River. This phase is planned for fall 2025. Phase 2 is from Allen St north to 9 Mile Rd, with the biggest challenges being easements and utilities. Phase 2 will take place in 2026. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown praised Novi for requiring sidewalk be put in when there is redevelopment. That has led to good sidewalk coverage on the east side of the road between Border Cantina to 9 Mile Rd, where parcels have been redeveloped. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown said she spoke with RCOC Engineer, Andrew Peters, about adding sidewalk at Guernsey's but with the parking lot and two driveways plus the bridge and curve of the road south of Guernsey's, it isn't a safe location for sidewalk. On the west side, where Allen St comes out, there are two strip malls with businesses that local residents frequent, but there are no sidewalks, including as you go north of Galway. Between Galway and Timber Ridge, there's a sidewalk gap. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown went on to describe a public meeting on October 23rd that the RCOC held in Northville, which had good turnout from local residents and a good dialogue between the residents and RCOC. The RCOC met the following Monday, Oct. 28th, to discuss the feedback from the public meeting and decided that a sidewalk between Allen St and Galway Dr would be added to the project, in addition to the HAWK pedestrian crossing that is already included in the project approximately 100-ft north of Galway Dr. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown relayed a discussion with RCOC about the placement of the HAWK and the potential for the HAWK to be moved just south of Galway, since sidewalk is being added there. The RCOC is looking into relocating the HAWK. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown mentioned that Northville's Director of Public Works, Mike Domine, is in support of the sidewalk addition between Allen St and Galway Dr, and that the sidewalk is low cost, but there will still be some cost sharing, but maybe only \$5,000. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown suggested that if Novi wants to fill in the sidewalk gap on the west side of Novi Rd it might be able to get rolled in with the RCOC project. Filling in the gaps there would be a benefit to people from surrounding communities.

Chair Smith asked how far along the RCOC is on the Novi Rd project engineering and if it's possible to add a bike lane. Engineer Runkel responded that the RCOC is currently trying to get easements, so any further widening may require additional easement. Engineer Runkel explained that the Department of Public Works asked the RCOC about adding the sidewalk gap to the road project but the design is too far along, and filling in the gap between Galway Dr and Timber Ridge subdivision would require additional easements and 92 trees are estimated to be removed. Engineer Runkel advised committee members to refer to the memo in their packet which explains that and provides a cost estimate. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown asked if RCOC was proposing a bike lane. Engineer Staup replied no it doesn't. Director Herczeg added that bike lanes extend pavement and right-of-way so the RCOC isn't interested in adding bike lanes on major roads, RCOC is already adding an additional northbound lane because of the amount of ingress and egress on the east side of the road. Member Dooley commented

that he didn't think you'd want to put a bike lane on Novi Rd, cars drive too fast. Ms. Longpre asked how Northville was able to get sidewalk added to the project. Engineer Runkel replied that south of Galway there's existing right-of-way and they were already going to enclose the ditch so it's not too difficult to add. A discussion on the ease of obtaining right-of-way on the west side of the road and the potential for the properties to be redeveloped followed. Member Becker expressed concern over the placement of the HAWK crossing, cars turning out of Guernsey will have to look for people crossing. Keeping the pedestrian crossing to the north of Galway would keep it further from cars turning out of Guernsey. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown agreed but said that pulling it south would be just south of Galway, not very far south or near Allen St, but Andrew Peters with the RCOC will see if it's even feasible. She continued that the RCOC could make a determination that it can't be moved south of Galway because of utilities or safety reasons, but keeping it north of Galway could result in more non-compliance, with people continuing to put themselves at risk and cross at other locations. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown and Member Becker continued to discuss the pros and cons of keeping the crossing north of Galway. Chair Smith stated that this was a good conversation and that we should keep talking to each other. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown thanked Chair Smith.

Ms. Longpre shared that Northville is pursuing a planning grant to help make the connection being discussed between 8 Mile Rd to the Novi border since that is such a key connection. The connection could be an off road route or could involve using residential roads instead of high-traffic roads like Novi Rd. Nancy will discuss working together on a planning effort at the next meeting, it might take some creativity. Ms. Longpre stressed the challenges in making that connection. Member Becker mentioned that something brought up in the Planning Commission is pushback from residents not wanting extra non-motorized traffic going through their neighborhood. There might be some pushback in using Allen St. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown replied the good news is that it doesn't require any new shared-use pathways, it would use existing sidewalks. Member Becker clarified that you will likely get people saying they don't want the additional foot traffic in their neighborhoods. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown replied that Northville doesn't have any problem with that, they have routes all over downtown Northville directing people to Maybury State Park or other places but she agrees that when you're saying we've got all this green space behind these houses we can use, which Northville Township has done, but they do it early in design so when people are buying their homes they know that it's there. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown mentioned that when she was talking to Andrew Peters that he lives in Plymouth and his family uses the wide shared use pathway along Beck Rd because it comes out of Plymouth and goes north through the township and he and his family can bike to downtown Northville from Plymouth. Ms. Longpre mentioned that a lot of Northville residents enjoy having Novi so close and they would really enjoy having an easy way to get back and forth. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown reiterated that putting some ideas on paper is a good start, that helps with getting planning grants to actually know how does this go to fruition, what are the estimates, is it even feasible and where can we do it, and that's where Nancy will step in.

Member Dooley thanked Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown for coming and asked about the 8 Mile Rd bridge status. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown replied that they rely on Wayne County Road Commission for updates and that this section of road is challenging. So Wayne County did some work on 8 Mile Rd between the bridge and Haggerty Rd and

the bridge is next year. Northville is also doing a roundabout at 7 Mile and Sheldon Rd, which is a big project that will take place the same time as the bridge is down. Member Dooley stated that having the bridge done would help with the Northville to Novi pathway connections being discussed. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown said they last received an update about the bridge about 6 weeks ago, but she doesn't remember when the bridge is supposed to start relative to the Novi Rd project, it may be all summer into fall. Engineer Staup clarified that the two projects can't go at the same time, since it effects the detours. Mayor Pro-Tem Morowski-Brown described the traffic control that will be used during the 7 Mile Rd/Sheldon Rd roundabout project. She also added an update that the farmer's market property purchase was completed as a joint purchase between Northville Township and the City of Northville.

Chair Smith directed the conversation to the next agenda item, Neighborhood Sidewalk Program Update. Director Herczeg described what has been done since the last committee meeting. The program is in the budget, so no Council action needs to be taken, it'll go through the budget process, no ordinance changes required. The current reactive program that corrects two-inch deflections will stay in place, which is not placed on the homeowner. Director Herczeg continued that the draft outline of the program is in the packet, we're developing a district map with our GIS team and the consultant doing the current program, and we are budgeting for the engineering technician position. That will all fall into place during the budget process and Council will be able to comment on it then, so no action needs to take place now in terms of the program. We're completing Phase 2 now, and the new program may start post July 1, 2025. Director Herczeg added that staff met the other day and debated whether the selection criteria should be a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch deflection or a 1 inch deflection, which was also discussed by the committee, and we landed on doing the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to fix as much as we can while we are mobilized, and we can always change that as the program progresses. It will be packaged as a two-year program, \$1.2 Million. We're estimating \$250,000 for engineering and probably \$1 Million for construction. A spreadsheet is attached in the addendum to the packet that was sent this morning which shows the difference in cost between the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and 1-inch deflection which was about \$250,000, so that's where we felt that due to the size of the program, we should keep it at $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch deflection so we capture as much as we can and not have to go back two years later. Director Herczeg continued that first it will go the CIP committee, then Planning Commission, then Council. Chair Smith asked if the \$250,00 is based on the current program, so that cost is around 17 miles of sidewalk that we've done? Engineer Staup replied that we didn't really look at it as whole sidewalk, we're just averaging out what we've looked at so far, which is about 165 miles of sidewalk that fit into the parameters of the program, and divided by 10 gives you the answer. Director Herczeg added the current costs are conservative estimates, which we've talked about at the other meetings. One of the problems we're running into is finding contractors interested in doing this kind of work, so we'll see. Member Thomas asked for clarification on if trees are being removed are we doing replacements for those trees or giving residents the option to replace. Director Herczeg replied that if it's our tree and we remove it, we give the option of replacement. Chair Smith asked if any other comments and said that the program sounds good. Chair Smith moved to the next agenda item, CIP non-motorized projects.

Deputy Director Mikus gave a background on how CIP projects are submitted to City Management. Deputy Director Mikus described how during road projects we look at sidewalk gaps or bike lanes and if they can be added. The six projects on the provided

spreadsheet are specifically non-motorized that aren't connect to a road project, they are all existing projects in the CIP, so there's no new requests being made. Deputy Director Mikus mentioned the neighborhood sidewalk repair program, which had previously been allocated between the general fund and roads fund, and now we are requesting it be 100% in the roads fund and increase it to \$650,000 per year based on the recommendations of the program. Deputy Director Mikus continued that during the last budget cycle, we put in a boardwalk repair and replacement program. We have 38 boardwalks and in 2023 we identified 7 boardwalks were critical and needed to be done. Now with some movement, we've been able to move that forward. The bike lanes on West Park Dr we proposed when we did the design and presented the design to Council in July, that was not approved to add to the scope, so we removed that from the project. Deputy Director Mikus continued that there are two segments that are connectors to parks that we've pushed into out years to try to coordinate timing with other road projects or ditching projects so we can get better unit prices and do the work all at once. The last project on Grand River Avenue is being timed with development, when that occurs. Deputy Director Mikus summarized that we're trying to prioritize the maintenance of existing infrastructure first, and then adding the new infrastructure when it's the best timing and less disruption to property owners. Director Herczeg added that the projects identified in the Active Mobility Plan, which was approved last spring/summer are not in this current budget, so that's something the committee might want to take on, prioritizing projects in that plan. Director Herczeg continued that Planner Bell had used a formula or ranking system in the past, so that may be a future meeting, maybe the mobility plan as a whole discussion in itself. Chair Smith thanked staff and asked for questions, which there were none. Chair Smith reviewed the action items and Novi Rd, 8 to 9 Mile Rd, sidewalk gap was brought up. Engineer Runkel reviewed the information in the memo, which included a cost estimate, easements needed, and estimated number of trees to be removed. The easements needed could be challenging to obtain and prohibit the addition of the sidewalk gap to the RCOC project, it would have to be a separate project conducted by the City. Director Herczeg added that there are utility pole conflicts that we are unsure about where they will be relocated. Engineer Staup added that some of the poles will be moved to the east side but DTE is unsure which poles will need to remain on the west side. Chair Smith asked if DTE is considering burying their lines, Engineer Staup replied no they are not. Engineer Runkel added that there are several other communication lines on the poles also. Deputy Director Mikus and Director Herczeg clarified the direction of the sidewalk gap, since it can't be part of the RCOC project, but if it's something the committee wants to endorse or back, we can put the connection in or it could be a future project. Chair Smith recommended we put it on hold and address it at a future date.

Chair Smith asked if there were any public comments, which there were none. Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Thomas and Member Becker supported the motion.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Action items were reviewed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.