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MINUTES BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN ADVISORY GROUP March 27, 2023 – 3:00 p.m.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group meeting was held on Monday, March 27, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Chairman Craig Niedermaier.

Members Present:

Craig Niedermaier
Steve Sanders
Peggy Reins
Brian Lee
Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft

Staff Present:

Andrew Vitale, Senior GIS Coordinator
Nathan Bruemmer, Staff Liaison
Tom Powers, Director of Public Works
Tim O'Brien, Village Engineer

Also Present:

Akram Chaudhry, HR Green
Michelle Zuzio, HR Green
Pam Wolff, Niles Pride

Call to Order

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Craig Niedermaier, seconded by Group Member Brian Lee, moved to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2023 meeting. On voice vote all concurred.

New Business

I. Police Accidents Report

Village Planner Nathan Bruemmer shared that the representative for the Police Department wasn't able to attend the meeting, but had sent an email detailing two incidents which had occurred since the last meeting. On March 6 at the Howard St and Waukegan Rd intersection, a pedestrian said as he was walking eastbound on a sidewalk on Howard he was hit by a vehicle. There was some discussion about how this could happen given the design of the street on that stretch of Howard.

The second incident occurred on March 9. This was a fatal accident at the intersection of Milwaukee Ave and Church St where a pedestrian was crossing Milwaukee eastbound in a crosswalk, and was struck by a truck turning left from Maryland onto southbound Milwaukee Ave. The driver of the truck was cited for failure to yield to a pedestrian. Chairman Niedermaier said that continues to be a problematic intersection, he believes we had discussed extending the walk time for the light, but that it was an IDOT issue. Group Member Stephen Sanders asked if we could get a better description of this accident at the next meeting so the group can better understand what went on. For fatal accidents we should take a longer look at the circumstances.

Group Member Peggy Reins said that it would seem like the group should have a response any time there is an accident that results in a bike or pedestrian fatality, and this should be part of a Vision Zero plan. She went on to explain what a Vision Zero plan is, and that the goal is to have no crash fatalities. She asked if she could do some research and bring back recommendations to the group about how we could start implementing something like that. Nathan Bruemmer, Planner, shared that a performance measure in the Bike and Pedestrian Plan was to eliminate pedestrian and bicyclist deaths. Group Member Reins said she would do some research to see how other communities approach this and return to the group.

Group Member Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft brought up that there had been another fatal accident involving a parishioner at St. John Brebeuf, which didn't make the police report. [It was later verified that this occurred in Morton Grove.]

II. Engineering Updates

a. IDOT Rebalancing Study & Shermer/Waukegan

Tom Powers, Director of Public Works, shared the results of the IDOT rebalancing study for Waukegan Rd (getting rid of the SRA on Waukegan with the end goal of rebalancing lanes). They basically said they don't support removing the SRA designation, and they don't support the rebalancing. Their explanation for why they're against it include: additional stress at the Dempster/Waukegan, Dempster/Harlem, Caldwell/Oakton and Oakton/Harlem intersections, historically the average daily traffic on Waukegan has been greater than 20,000 vehicles per day, and an ongoing concern about the interrelation between Waukegan and Shermer. The end result is IDOT wants to push us back to the Waukegan/Cleveland intersection design the group looked at last summer and didn't like.

Mr. Powers says there are basically three options going forward, the first is to continue to fight this (knowing we don't have IDOT staff support which will be an obstacle), the second is to move forward with a revised version of the plan we saw last summer, and the third would be a plan that goes a step further with a T intersection at Shermer. Michelle Zuzio from HR Green shared three potential plans for the intersection. The widening on the street can be minimized by not providing the southbound left turn lane from Cleveland to Waukegan. The northbound left turn would be maintained. The widening on the road will all be to the north. There would be a 7' carriage walk on the west side of Waukegan after the widening. There will be a pedestrian island with mast arms holding a light, with a push button on each

side of the street. With the pedestrian island, there will be two 22' crossings. There was a lengthy discussion about the layout and how people would use the intersection. There was considerable concern about how cyclists traveling west on Cleveland would have to get to the crosswalk to cross, and how the crossing buttons don't cater to cyclists.

Ms. Zuzio shared Option 2, where the Shermer intersection becomes a T, and the Waukegan/Cleveland crossing remains the same as in Option 1. Chairman Niedermaier asked how bikers would connect to the proposed lanes on Shermer. Ms. Zuzio said there would be a shared path on the western side of Waukegan. Chairman Niedermaier had concerns about removing the fairway and adding carriage walks instead of traditional sidewalks. Members of the group had concerns about snow accumulation on carriage walks. There was a bit of a digression discussing snow removal on sidewalks throughout the Village. The second option would result in some land loss from Point Park, but not the usable portion.

Mr. Powers shared Option 3, which he dubbed "Tom's Crazy Idea." Option 3 proposes abandoning making a crossing at Cleveland and Waukegan, and instead installing a traffic signal at the T intersection seen in Option 2. Cyclists and pedestrians would be directed north from Cleveland to cross at the signal. This would require adding a multimodal path on both sides of the road. Group Member Reins suggested routing cyclists to Madison in this configuration rather than Cleveland, which would be more intuitive. There was continued discussion about this proposal relating to cyclist behavior and bike path width.

Group Member Reins requested to go back to Option 1 and asked if the cross button will be easily accessible to cyclists. She asked why we can't have a solution that provides easy access to signals for bicyclists who want to stay in the road and continue on the road. According to HR Green, IDOT doesn't want a cyclist to use the button and then not cross using the crosswalk as it could confuse motorists. Ms. Zuzio explained IDOT regulations relating to left turn lanes and pedestrian crosswalks. There was frustration expressed with the fact that we're clearly designing roads for cars only at the expense of other users. It was also pointed out that this configuration is essentially forcing cyclists to make less predictable movements. The group continued to brainstorm possible solutions.

Chairman Niedermaier said he feels like there's a sense of urgency now and that we need to make some sort of executive decision. We may need to take a non-ideal, unintuitive design and make sure it can function as smoothly as possible. He proposed angling the sidewalk to make it easier to access for eastbound cyclists. Group Member Lee said he liked Option 2 as it calms some of the southbound activity. Chairman Niedermaier said the T intersection is positive as it slows down people speeding from Dempster. Mr. Powers pointed out a signal at that intersection is in the SRA. Group Member Reins asked if the improvements at Cleveland and the Shermer intersection have to happen at the same time. Mr. Powers said they don't, but from a construction standpoint it would be ideal. There was some concern from HR Green that if there was a light at Shermer IDOT wouldn't allow a pedestrian

crosswalk at Cleveland. Group Member Lee asked Mr. Powers if he felt including the signal in the project would expedite or slow down the project. Mr. Powers felt it would slow it down but IDOT may be supportive of the T. Group Member Lee confirmed that the quickest path would be to go for Option 1 first.

Chairman Niedermaier moved for approval of Design Option 1 (demonstrating no left turn onto Cleveland eastbound, but still a left turn onto Cleveland westbound, with a refuge island on the northern side of the Waukegan intersection) provided we can make some adjustments to the position of the crosswalk, or the pathway to get to the crosswalk, to better accommodate cyclist behavior. Group Member Lee seconded the motion. On a voice vote all concurred.

b. Other Updates

Tim O'Brien, Village Engineer ran through some updates on various engineering projects throughout town. Regarding 2023 street improvements, the BPAG had asked for a sidewalk along Jonquil Terrace Park. The Park District agreed to it. At Gross Point and Touhy, the Public Works Committee has made a recommendation for awarding the contract for the project. For sidewalk infill at Greenwood, Golf and Milwaukee, the phase 1 addendum was recently approved. Phase 2 planning will be done by April 14th. Work has begun on the Oakton side path in Morton Grove, trees are being removed and sewer work has begun. For the Cleveland/Caldwell intersection, they have about three more IDOT reviews to get through. For Milwaukee/Mulford, plans have been made and will be sent to Community Development for review. For Milwaukee/Monroe, they revised the flashing beacons based on BPAG feedback, and are trying to get a meeting with IDOT.

III. Cycling Without Age

Group Member Steve Sanders provided an update about the Cycling Without Age program. On April 15th in the late morning he and four people are going to go out to Elk Grove Village to get training. Mr. Bruemmer shared that the Village will be making a social media post asking for volunteers.

Group Member Ticia Doughty-Ashcroft brought up an unrelated email she had sent about a bus backing up from New England onto Oakton last week. The reason the bus couldn't continue on New England is because there was a big SUV parked on the east side of the street. She was inquiring if no parking signs can be put on the east side of the street. Mr. Powers said he would take it to the Public Works Committee for consideration. The Public Safety Committee would also weigh in, and then it would go to the community.

IV. Bike Month - May

Mr. Bruemmer shared that at the April 25th Village Board meeting there will be a proclamation read announcing that May is National Bike Month. Chairman Niedermaier suggested having cyclists attend for the proclamation. Mr. Bruemmer said he would share the proclamation from last year with the BPAG if anyone wants anything added.

Other Discussion

Group Member Reins said she went to the Arts and Culture Committee and they are very open to the pavement art program that was previously discussed.

Comments from the Public

Pam Wolff, resident, read a comment sent in by her colleague Stephanie McDaniel. Ms. Wolff is here from Niles Pride, which is a new organization in town. This year they are starting with an inaugural Pride Walk/Bike/Roll. She read the following comment:

“We are coming together in support of the LGBTQIA community people of Niles for a Rainbow Walk on June 3rd at 11 am.

We will gather in Grennan Heights [park area] with a few speakers and embark on a one-mile loop around the neighborhood. We’re encouraging people to wear rainbows, wave flags, bring bubbles, whatever makes them happy. There will be a number of families at the event. Everyone of all ages is welcome.

We’d like to invite the Bike and Pedestrian Committee to attend and lend your support with advertising and public safety. Any help you can offer to raise awareness and recommendations for a fun and safe morning are welcome. And of course, we’d like you to attend to show our neighbors that we are here for them and that kindness and acceptance are our priorities in the Village of Niles.”

The fallback date will be Sunday June 11th in case of inclement weather. Their Facebook page is Niles Pride.

Next Meeting

April 24, 2023

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Chairman Niedermaier, seconded by Group Member Sanders; all concurred and the meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.

Nathan Bruemmer
Staff Liaison