

Como Regional Park - McMurray Fields Area Transportation Improvements Project

Community Advisory Group Workshop Meeting Summary

September 22, 2015

Community Advisory Group Workshop (CAG) Meeting #1 Overview

The City of Saint Paul held the first of two McMurray Fields Area Transportation Improvements Project CAG workshops on Tuesday, September 22. The purpose of the first workshop was to identify issues and opportunities and provide feedback on two alternative roadway and pedestrian access improvement scenarios.

The goals of the CAG meetings were as follows:

- Provide a project overview and background information to CAG workshop attendees
- Review preliminary traffic data, feedback from the three pop-up meetings conducted the week of August 24 and share the two preliminary design concepts
- Solicit feedback from group members about the previous identification of issues and opportunities and about two design concepts through small group discussion and activities

Meeting Format

- Meeting Location – Como Streetcar Station
 - Date/time: Tuesday, September 22, 2015, 5:30 – 8:30 PM
 - Number of attendees: 11

City staff, with assistance from consultants specializing in engineering and traffic data analysis, gave a presentation outlining the project and preliminary concepts to the entire group. Next, the group was split into two groups to review maps of the two design concepts more closely and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each concept. Following the group exercises, each group presented the conclusions from their small group exercise to the larger group. Finally, city staff thanked CAG members for their time and told them that they will take the feedback from this meeting and make improvements to the concepts, or perhaps a hybrid concept, to show them at October's workshop.

Concepts

Concept A-Jessamine Avenue



Concept A disconnects current Jessamine Avenue with Lexington Avenue and realigns Jessamine Avenue up to Wynne Avenue. This would convert Jessamine Avenue to a two way road and Wynne Avenue would be a dedicated access road to Como Pool and Woodland Classroom, eliminating through traffic. Beulah Lane would be a cul-de-sac, providing access to Animal Control and Humane Society and some additional on-street parking. Both back in angle parking and regular angle parking are possible options. Back in parking allows people to back the car into the parking spot so field equipment can be unloaded and children can get out of the car on the curb as opposed to the street. Drivers exiting the parking have a clear view of passing vehicles.

Concept B- Wynne Avenue



Concept B would make Wynne Avenue the through route, somewhat similar to how it functions today, but routed on the south side of the parking lot. This removes the safety issues associated with traffic flowing through a double loaded parking lot. Additional parking is provided on the east side of the pool. This also addresses the safety concerns at Jessamine Avenue and Lexington Parkway by rerouting Jessamine Avenue to Wynne Avenue. Jessamine Avenue would remain one-way. Angle parking would be available for the pool area and the ball fields. Both back in and regular angle parking are also options for this concept. There are also potential opportunities for transit stops.

Feedback and Questions from the CAG

Issues and Ideas

- People speed through the Como Pool parking lot. Maybe speed bumps or a raised intersection near the pool entrance on Wynne could be used to slow traffic. There is an example of a raised intersection on W. 7th Street and Kellogg Boulevard
- Crash data indicates that some of the safety concerns are perceptions vs. factual. However, some people noted that the data was collected in August and this does not reflect fall activities at the ballfields, when there are the most traffic and parking challenges.
- Coming out of the tunnel onto Jessamine on a bike heading north is very unnerving. Drivers turning left from Lexington Parkway on to Jessamine Avenue are often not paying attention. Bike traffic has increased due to the new bridge south of Energy Park Drive. Many times, bikes have to wait up to four minutes to cross.
- Utilizing the Como shuttle service could help address parking issues.
- Traffic data should also be conducted when the Woodland Classroom is in session. Many students are transported by buses and parking for buses is a need in this area.
- Some expressed the idea that a new road could take away parking spots.
- Concern that new parking will eliminate green park space.
- Sidewalks are old and in need of repair.
- Many people don't use transit to the pool or fields because they have to carry equipment for sports or swimming.
- There should be a walkway from Bandana Square.
- Even though the general public doesn't use public transit often, the kids who use the Woodland Classroom often do and there are safety concerns for kids crossing from the bus stop to the field/pool area.
- It is important to balance the need for additional parking with taking green space for parking.
- The bike trail isn't utilized very much.
- There should be timber stairs down to the field; they could also be used like stadium seating
- There should be police cameras in pool parking lot area
- There should be a pedestrian connection
- Roundabouts could be useful for traffic calming
- There is a large mud pit on the fields across from the pool area
- Signage is bad and fields are poorly marked
- There is no good field access on the corner of Beulah Lane and Jessamine Avenue
- Concern that new trails will break up fields
- Consider need for access to Animal Humane Society and Animal Control

Questions

Question: How many parking spots will be lost from the southern area in Concept B?

Answer: It will eliminate about 40 spots, but the additional parking on the east side will offset the loss.

Question: When was the traffic data and public outreach collected?

Answer: August 2015

Question: If Jessamine Avenue is cut, will congestion on Wynne be worse?

Answer: Traffic analysis will be done for each of the design concepts – this work still needs to be done.

Question: If additional transit stops are added, where would they be located?

Answer: Some ideas are in front of the Como Pool or near the Woodland Classroom.

Question: What did public feedback say about using the shuttle?

Answer: The question was not that specific, but most people stated that they would not increase their use of transit with transportation improvements because they usually are bringing equipment and supplies.

Question: How will the steepness of the hills be addressed?

Answer: Both concepts address access and ADA issues. Potential solutions include building stairs and installing ramps down to the field.

Question: When is the field most heavily utilized?

Answer: In the evening

Question: When is the pool most heavily utilized?

Answer: It is open into the evening, but the use drops off around 3:00 or 4:00 PM when school and other large groups leave.

Question: In terms of a one way vs two way, which one is better?

Answer: It depends both on personal preference and many other factors such as parking. A two way also has the potential to create better circulation.

Small Group Conclusions

Pros of Concept A

- Concept A will help calm traffic
- Concept A could help address left turn concerns if Jessamine is cut
- It will help create and affirm both the pool and field as destinations where Jessamine will be more for the fields and Wynne for the fields
- Like improvements to bike and pedestrian access
- Could potentially accommodate shuttle parking on Jessamine Avenue
- Likely reduce speed on Wynne Avenue

Concerns about Concept A

- Parking improvements may encourage use from zoo and conservatory visitors
- Despite cul-de-sac on Wynne, cars have to turn around to exit which doesn't really reduce traffic in the pool area
- Will elimination of a throughway create problems for maintenance and emergency vehicles?
- There is some wasted space with the new roads and loss of green space
- Don't like bumpout for plowing/maintenance
- Doesn't include enough new parking on Wynne Avenue near the cul-de-sac; another row should be added across from the proposed parking on Wynne Avenue near cul-de-sac

Pros of Concept B

- The net gain of parking spaces
- The cul-de-sac creates a defined space for the Woodland Classroom
- Reduces through traffic
- Traffic calming effects on Wynne Avenue

Concerns about B

- Don't want to encroach on green space north of Como Pool
- Concept A parking improvements may encourage use from zoo and conservatory visitors
- Keeping a through street gives drivers additional time to accelerate