



DOWNTOWN BIKE LOOP AND JACKSON STREET RECONSTRUCTION
CAC Meeting
May 14, 2015

To: Community Advisory Committee Members
From: Ciara Schlichting
Project: Downtown Bike Loop and Jackson Street Reconstruction
Re: CAC Meeting 1 Notes – May 14, 2015

Meeting Attendees:

Kevin Nelson, Reuben Collins, Mark Riegel, Anne Hunt, – City of Saint Paul, Scott Beauchamp – St Paul Chamber of Commerce, Paul Deroin – Travelers, Matt Hill – D & H Consultants/Cap River Council/Heritage Preservation Commission, Nathan Houge – Brake Bread, Brenda Lamb – CandyLand, Bill Lindeke – Planning Commission/Transportation Comm./Minnpost, James McClean – HealthPartners, Sarah McGee – MnSCU, Joe Olson – Childrens Museum, Ben Ortega – GovDelivery, Juanita Ortiz – St Paul School District/League of Latino Teachers, Susan Overson – National Park Service, Brent Peterson – Regions Hospital, Rowzat Shipchandler – St Paul Foundation/MN Philanthropy Partners, Jim Stolpestad – Exeter Group LLC, Rosa Tock – Public Policy Analyst, Jessica Treat – Smart Trips, Cynthia Whiteford – Retired/Lower Phalen Creek BOD

Ciara Schlichting, K.C. Atkins – Toole Design Group

Meeting Notes:

Project Background

- The City of Saint Paul Bicycle Plan was approved by the City Council on 3/18/15.
- The Plan identified gaps in the existing bicycle network, including downtown Saint Paul.
- While the Plan only identified Jackson Street for a proposed, definite bike connection, all of downtown Saint Paul was identified as a location for further study.
- Downtown Saint Paul currently acts as a “donut hole” for cyclists, in particular those trying to get downtown via existing regional trails or to connect to trail systems north, south and west of downtown.
- It is important to connect cyclists from outside of downtown, into downtown and within downtown.

- Creating connections to downtown is important from an economic perspective to create a vibrant city and from a safety perspective to assist riders with accessing downtown.
- The Gateway trail will be extended south to University Avenue next year. Jackson Street is proposed to connect to University and the Sam Morgan Trail to create continuity.
- The Bike Plan focuses on “interested, but concerned” users, with a focus on designing facilities for users age 8 to 80.
- “Interested, but concerned” users benefit from protected bikeways and these facilities present the greatest opportunities for streetscape enhancement.
- Two-way bike facilities are the desired treatment as this provides the least disruption and impacts to the existing roadway network.
- The TDG Team consists of TDG, SEH, Cornejo Consulting, Little, Landscape Research, and Myklebust+Sears.
- The Team will study the downtown bike system, connections, provide alternatives and recommendations with a heavy public engagement process.
- In addition, the Team will develop evaluation criteria for use in determining recommended treatments and provide information regarding economic development potential for the downtown bike system, including parking considerations.
- Concurrent to the downtown bike system study, the Team will design and construct Jackson Street to include a protected bikeway (scheduled for main construction completion at end of 2016).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

- CAC members were guided through a SWOT exercise regarding the downtown bicycle system. Individual comments were recorded on Post-It notes and posted on a large piece of paper for other participants to view and comment. Then, participants worked in small groups to organize their responses in themed categories. The themed categories were developed by the participants, and were then ranked by them in order of importance or relevance. The results are presented in summary form and in detail as described below
- Each of the four SWOT categories had 5-6 different themes, or subcategories, for the post-it note comments
- Some of the strengths identified were the proximity to the Mississippi river and urban parks/green spaces, the culture and arts in downtown, a revived sense of economic and business opportunities, transportation options, the capital and history of the city, and the size and scale of downtown Saint Paul.
- The biggest weakness identified was the lack of retail downtown and the quiet street life/street activity. Various different street infrastructure characteristics were also identified as weaknesses. Additional weaknesses included civic concerns, topography, parking issues and weather.
- The biggest opportunity identified was new retail and activities in downtown, including connections to the river, the new Saints baseball stadium and family-oriented activities. Other

opportunities identified include a growth in residential/downtown housing, transportation and transit, making downtown “greener” and the future downtown bike system.

- The threats discussion focused on parking accessibility downtown and how to deal with parking availability with increased development. Additional threats including remaining at the “status quo” and the resistance to change, public safety, limited resources and funding, development concerns and others.
- Transcribed CAC Input - All of the transcribed individual Post-It note comments, participant themed categories and rankings follow.

STRENGTHS

1. The River + Parks

- Ample by parks + green space
- Anchored by two beautiful parks - Rice Park & Mears Park
- Proximity to the river/direct riverfront access
- Beautiful views – river & hills

2. Culture + Arts

- Union depot connects 2 national parks (via Amtrak)
- Lowertown: Arts, culture, sports
- Cultural institutions – awesome museums
- Community events, concerts, cultural events
- The Ordway and SPCO

3. Business and Economic Development

- Perception of new life in St Paul
 - i. Ball park
 - ii. New restaurants/dining options
 - iii. Lund’s
 - iv. Farmers market
- Committed corporations and foundations
- Mixed-use developments
- Great business communities and independent businesses
- Plenty of parking
- Healthcare institutions

4. Transportation

- Green line light rail
- Redesign access to buildings, streets, highways
- Easy bike trails up to downtown area
- Inexpensive improvements to increase safety for all users
- Nice Ride bike sharing system

5. The Capital + History
 - Capital city
 - Old, historical buildings
 - History of city
6. “Just Right” size
 - Small downtown
 - Small footprint
 - Low Density
 - Right scale for walking and biking

WEAKNESSES

1. Lack of Activity/Retail
 - Very little street life and street level retail (all in skyway)
 - High concentration of gov’t employees
 - Amenities are widely spaced
 - Lack of activity in core
 - Perception of a “sleepy” downtown
 - Keeping downtown alive; too quiet on weekends/evenings; Clears out at 4-6 pm
 - No street life in downtown core
 - Businesses close early
2. Street Infrastructure
 - Not enough secure bike storage
 - School children don’t have safe routes to schools
 - Intersections are dangerous for walkers and bikers
 - One-way streets
 - Narrow streets
 - Wayfinding
 - Broken-up street grid; multi-block complexes
 - Bike and car traffic mix together on road
 - Trashy streets; dark streets
 - I-94 cuts downtown off from capital; highway/interstate on-ramp access
 - Freeways surrounding downtown
 - Not a lot of retail downtown
 - Street level activity
 - Night life
 - Families do not have safe access to parks and existing trails
3. Civic Concerns
 - Pan handlers
 - Homeless
 - Cleanliness

- Lack of shelter for homeless people
 - Not family friendly
 - Police presence
 - Vacant buildings (Macy's)
4. Topography
- Limited access to river; Cut off from direct access to river in much of downtown/bluff
 - Sits in a bowl – requires hilly riding to exit; Up/down hills going into and out of city
5. Parking Issues
- Parking
 - Free parking after 5 pm = expectation of free parking
6. Weather
- Snow removal
 - Not a lot of daylight

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Retail/Activities

- New Saints stadium – CHS field
- 7th Place East and 7th Place West mall
- Historic preservation
- Riverfront connections
- New Retail and fun street level shops, restaurants, sidewalk cafes
- Family venues and family-oriented parks along river
- Opportunity for more cyclists downtown
- Catching the wave of momentum of new things

2a) Residential/Housing

- Growing residential community, more residential development
- New hotel on Kellogg
- Expand destinations and attract visitors
- Fill in development holes/empty storefronts
- Advocating for a fun family environment
- Underutilized or vacant building space (e.g. Macy's)
- Affordable housing

2b) Transportation

- Improve skyway-street connections
- Improve pedestrian experience (signage, wayfinding, lighting etc.)
- Match parking availability with areas of need
- Better signage for existing ramps

- Create places people want to be
- Large street ROW
- One-way streets = speed away out of town

3a) Transit

- Green Line brings Minneapolis and Saint Paul together
- Multimodal commuter and recreational connections
- Many institutions (government, hospitals)
- Increased accessibility

3b) Go Green

- Make downtown greener
- Overbuilt street network – more road width/travel lanes than needed
- Opportunity to address climate change
- Creating a healthier St. Paul by improving the place
- Beautify downtown Saint Paul with new bike facilities

3c) Bike Loop

- New downtown bike loop
- Bike route more directly to capital
- Facilities for bikes
- Connect different bike trails in the cities

THREATS

1a) Parking

- How to deal with traffic and other issues from new stadium
- Loss of parking
- Potential loss of street parking
- Over reliance on parking in front of destination – reluctance to walk
- Parking accessibility on downtown streets

1b) Status Quo

- Resistance to change; Longtime residents/businesses fear change
- Joe Soucheray
- Low gas prices
- We cannot agree to solutions, status quo continues

2. Public Safety

- Office vacancy

- People getting hurt in accidents
 - Uncontrolled traffic
 - Gangs
 - Safety risks
 - Snow removal
3. Limited Resources
 - Public perception of waste (taxes, public space)
 - Lack of federal or local funding
 - Tax base resources “tight”
 4. Development concerns
 - Uncontrolled development
 - Historic preservation
 5. Inferiority Complex
 - Overshadowed by Minneapolis
 - Second city mentality
 6. Equity
 - Improvements are only for the wealthy