City of Saint Paul Complete Streets Action Plan

March 11, 2016

This Draft Action Plan is based on the Citywide Streets Evaluation, the outcomes from the pilot project design workshops, including the East 7th Better Block Event, and ongoing meetings with City staff and community partners. The Action Plan also takes into account other cities' Complete Streets plans and policies as well as Complete Streets best practices as outlined in:

- *Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices*, American Planning Association, 2010.
- *Complete Streets Implementation Resource Guide for Minnesota Local Agencies*, Minnesota Department of Transportation Research Services, 2013.
- *Getting Results: Complete Streets in Minnesota*. *A Report from the Minnesota Complete Streets Peer Exchange*, National Complete Streets Coalition, 2012.

The Action Plan outlines the next steps to continue implementing Complete Streets policies. These should be competed or in progress prior to the next major update of the Street Design Manual, which is anticipated to happen every five years. Several of these initiatives are currently underway; some will be fairly brief exercises and others are longer-term items that will take several years and additional funding to complete. For the purposes of this plan, "short-term" means to be completed within one year, "mid-term" means completed within two years, and "long-term" means to be completed within 3-5 years.

1. Goal: The City and community should explore traffic problems and options together, resulting in recommendations that will be the most likely to achieve the neighborhood's objectives (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 4.11).
    a. Issue: There is a wide variation in neighborhood capacity around transportation-related issues.
    b. Action: Support District Councils' capacity for transportation issues by providing training to transportation committees particularly around safety and arterial roads.

        A vital component of implementing citywide transportation networks is to carry out citywide goals and policies while addressing neighborhood issues. The shift in focus in the public works five-year plan form residential streets to arterials is to make improvements on the streets that will have the greatest benefit to the most people. Understanding how arterial streets can influence the character of adjoining neighborhoods is important when scoping and designing a project.

        Many current district plans have not previously had a transportation chapter and this leaves a gap in information at the neighborhood level. Developing priorities is a time intensive process and those neighborhoods with clear priorities can help to lead to a more expedient process. One way to facilitate this process of developing transportation goals and working through traffic issues is by creating Transportation Committees at the

District Council level. This can can improve dialog and increase the capacity of the organization. The process of creating the neighborhood policies, goals, and objectives related to transportation creates a valuable discourse around streets and infrastructure. Once neighborhood transportation priorities have been established they can be adopted in a supplemental transportation chapter to an existing district plan, or as part of a comprehensive district plan update.

City departments can provide assistance Staff can support the process by providing templates to help organize the plan, facilitating workshops, and/or provide training based on the Street Design Manual to present best practices. Part of a training effort should include continuing to develop, use and evaluate, new outreach tools. A productive and efficient public process is a key part of the street design process. Events such as the design workshops used as part of the Street Design Manual development process, Better Block, Open Streets and Friendly Streets events should continue to be developed as ways to get more people engaged in street design. Other tools such as the Multimodal Balance Worksheet, web-based interactive tools, such as StreetMix, and Open Saint Paul can help to increase capacity. New tools should be continued to be evaluated.

Timeline: Short-term

Responsibility: Planning and Economic Development (PED), District Councils, Public Works (PW)

2. Goal: Provide safe citywide connections to schools, libraries, parks, and recreation centers, with improved crossings and comfortable pedestrian environments at high demand destinations (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 3.11).
    a. Issue: Some neighborhoods are missing the infrastructure necessary to allow children to walk to school.
    b. Action: Develop a Safe Routes to School or similar program.

    There is a citywide trend toward neighborhood schools, which means more children are walking and biking to school, and fewer are riding busses. Additionally, recent trends in childhood obesity rates have identified the need for children to have more physical activity. Although Public Works regularly works with schools on transportation and traffic issues, current efforts could be enhanced with additional funding. The current lack of a program makes the City substantially uncompetitive Safe Routes to School funding. Given these factors, a program could be an effective way to support children getting to school by their own independent means. A program should include funding for education, planning, enforcement and safety improvements around schools. This program should be coordinated with citywide bike and pedestrian planning efforts as well as ongoing street maintenance programs. Safety items such as reevaluating and remarking crosswalks on school walking routes could be implemented in the short term;

reviewing and updating all school zone signing could be implemented in the medium term; and replacing and building new sidewalks could be implemented long term.

Timeline: Short-term

Responsibility: PW, Schools, PED, Police

3. Goal: Design should be sensitive to the context and community in which it is located. Performance standards should be established with measurable outcomes (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 1.1).
    a. Issue: Reports to Transportation Committee provide minimal information and do not allow for tracking project characteristics related to complete streets.
    b. Action: Modify Transportation Committee report to explicitly include how projects are meeting complete streets policies.

    The current Transportation Committee report contains basic information on projects but could include specific information on modes, accessibility and land use context of a project. This information could make clear how we are implementing our complete street policies through projects. Developing and using a new complete streets "checklist" to be included in the Transportation Committee report is recommended to be an effective way to ensure we are meeting intents of our policy without becoming overly laborious. This report should be 1-2 pages and should include basic project characteristics as to not be overly respectful of staff resources. Additionally, this would allow staff to compile statistics and report on projects annually.

    Timeline: Short-term

    Responsibility: PED, PW

4. Goal: Support transit-oriented design through zoning and design guidelines. Compact, street-oriented design should be emphasized to promote walkability and transit use, especially in commercial corridors. Standards for building placement and design based primarily on the needs of the pedestrian should be enforced and expanded (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 2.2).
    a. Issue: Traffic studies done as part of site plan review typically are only for auto traffic and pedestrian accommodation is limited to sidewalks.
    b. Action: Review and implement pedestrian-oriented features adjacent to development projects as part of site plan review.

    Development projects that include uses, such as senior housing, schools, and those that would generate a large number of pedestrians, should incorporate pedestrian-focused review into any traffic impact studies. This may include review of existing signals adjacent to the project to ensure that pedestrians have enough time to cross the street, or physical features such as bump-outs, or crossing islands. This evaluation can be done

as part of a traffic study by the applicant, when required as part of the site plan review process. Basic improvements, such as making the sidewalk and curb ramps ADA compliant are included in any substantial development review.

Timeline: Short-term

Responsibility: PW, PED, DSI, Parks

5. Goal: Develop a strategy for investing in a broad range of infrastructure projects, including, but not limited to, street and traffic improvements to support the growth of existing employment, services, parks, and schools (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 2.4).
    a. Issue: Public Works has not as standard practice coordinated with other departments in the street design process.
    b. Action: Build on recent efforts of inter-departmental collaboration by continuing project planning coordination meetings and scoping retreats for upcoming street projects. This collaboration facilitates identifying "win-wins," implementing plans, and designing streets that live up to the City's vision.

    There is an established process for private development review in the City. For street projects this process is often less clear and may depend upon the project manager, history and jurisdiction. If multiple agencies are included at the front end of a project it can potentially reduce costs and save time by avoiding unforeseen issues. Reviewing the project against the Complete Streets Checklist could be an effective format to facilitate these meetings. This would allow staff to identify and implement win-win improvements, such as implementing a portion of the bike plan or a school route as part of a street repaving project. It also allows staff to learn from and rely on the strengths of staff from other departments.

    Timeline: Short-term

    Responsibility: PW, PED, Parks

6. Goal: Collaborate with non-profit, volunteer, and business organizations to coordinate bicycle counts at sample intersections and on selected routes. Regular counts will help the City better understand trends in bicycling citywide and prioritize improvements and maintenance (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 3.14).
    a. Issue: Very limited biking and walking data impair decision making processes.
    b. Action: Establish a practice of bike and pedestrian counts including frequency and methodology.

    Bike and pedestrian counts have not been collected as regularly as motor vehicle traffic counts historically. Bike counts have been counted for the past three years and on only a limited basis. There is currently only one permanent counter being used in the City. This has been partly a factor of cost and reliability of technologies available. New technologies are making the bike and pedestrian counters less expensive and more

reliable. Having data on pedestrian and bike traffic can improve the City's analysis abilities and help to allocate resources. This is especially important now there are more tools, such as multimodal level of service, that depend upon this data. Available systems and methods for collecting this information should be evaluates for cost, benefits and ease of implementation.

Timeline: Short-term

Responsibility: PW

7. Goal: Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and motorist safety through effective law enforcement, detailed crash analysis, and engineering improvements to reduce the risk of crashes (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 1.14).
    a. Issue: Projects have been prioritized based pavement quality rather than safety especially the safety of those most vulnerable.
    b. Action: Refine data-driven methodology to rank street projects for citywide programs.

    Continue to refine data and analysis used to rank projects for the 5-year plan and CIB and consider merging the two processes. The process of using data to document priorities increases transparency and understanding regarding why projects have been identified and funded. This can be an important tool to prioritize scarce resources. The tools used to select pilot workshops for the Street Design Manual were a test of what could be done with existing data and where gaps in data exist. The exercise identified the need for pedestrian and bike counts citywide as well as the need for a consistent source for crash data. This is a rapidly developing field and should be monitored closely. The City should continue to partner with and support peer agencies efforts in data-driven analysis as well as continue to develop in-house capabilities. This process could add an additional objective rating factor to existing programs such as CIB and the 5-year plan.

    Timeline: Short-term

    Responsibility: PW

8. Goal: Connect neighborhoods that have poor sidewalks or little access to trails and bike routes, especially east and north of Downtown (Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Chapter, Policy 4.7).
    a. Issue: Many gaps in sidewalk infrastructure exist throughout the city.
    b. Action: Initiate a Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan.

    Often pedestrian infrastructure is overlooked or taken as a given, while a good pedestrian network depends upon the details of design. The City would benefit from a holistic review and plan for pedestrian infrastructure in the city focusing on safety and crash reduction, especially as it relates to the City's ADA Transition Plan and Safe Routes

to School planning. This has partially been taking place on a grass-roots level with walkability efforts around the Green Line LRT. It is important that pedestrian issues are also evaluated from a citywide perspective. This plan would help to prioritize pedestrian infrastructure including closing gaps in the sidewalk network.

Timeline: Long-term

Responsibility: PW, PED

9. Goal: Define parkway character, features, and amenities; clarify parkway designations; and assign improvement responsibilities and resources (Comprehensive Plan – Parks Chapter, Policy 6.10).
    a. Issue: Policies guiding parkway design and management are confusing and do not identify goals.
    b. Action: Develop specific guiding policies and priorities for parkways as part of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan update.

    The Systems Plan for Parks provides some guidance on parkways, especially organizing them into types and calling out differences among the types. However, this plan was not adopted and does not provide a context for the overall goal of parkways or the long-term vision of what they should be. Furthermore, it does not prioritize modes within the right of way. The Comprehensive Plan does not provide any guidance on what parkways should be, though past comprehensive plans have. The last update of the Comprehensive Plan only recommended that there be more clarity on parkways. Finally, the City Code description of departmental roles is unclear which leads to inconsistency with project execution.

    There is a need for clear design guidance for parkways. The comprehensive plan update is an opportunity to provide policy direction for parkways. Several parkways have recently gone through a design process as part of the Grand Round project. This work can be used to help guide the development of parkway policies. Other parkways citywide are in need of a similar effort. Additional clarification is needed under the City Code. This can also be completed with the comprehensive plan update.

    Timeline: Long-term

    Responsibility: Parks, PED, PW