



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

*25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

*Telephone: 651-266-6700
Facsimile: 651-228-3220*

DATE: June 12, 2017

TO: Comprehensive Planning Committee

FROM: Lucy Thompson & Bill Dermody, PED staff

RE: Comprehensive Plan Transportation Chapter

BACKGROUND

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is Saint Paul's "blueprint" for guiding development for the next 20 years. It addresses city-wide physical development, and contains chapters on Land Use, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Housing, Historic Preservation and Water Resources. While the policy focus is on physical development, the Plan's core values, goals and policies reflect an understanding that how we arrange the physical elements of our city – streets, parks, housing, public infrastructure – impacts and is impacted by the people in our city. The current update of the Comp Plan also has several overarching issues integrated into each chapter, including racial and social equity, aging in community, community/public health, economic development, sustainability/resiliency and urban design. The policies contained in the Comp Plan are based on Saint Paul's core values; history; community priorities; and emerging social, economic and environmental trends.

In Saint Paul, several other plans have been adopted periodically as addenda to the Comp Plan, including the *Central Corridor Development Strategy*, station area plans, master plans, area plans and district plans. These documents are not required by the Metropolitan Council to be updated every 10 years; they are updated as needed at any time.

Legal Framework

The state Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires that every municipality and other local government in the seven-county metropolitan region have a Comp Plan, and that it be updated every 10 years consistent with the Metropolitan Council's regional plan and system plans for transportation, parks and water. The guiding regional document for this update of Saint Paul's Comp Plan is *Thrive MSP 2040*. The Metropolitan Council also has a Housing Policy Plan that is not required by statute, but provides guidance to municipalities as they prepare their own Housing chapters. The mandated planning time frame for this update of the Comp Plan is 2040.

Thrive MSP 2040 is one of the guiding documents the Saint Paul Comp Plan must respond to, in addition to regional growth projections in population, housing units and employment. The following projections have been established for Saint Paul to 2040: an increase of 40,000 residents, 20,000 households and 30,000 jobs. We have to show how we will accomplish this

growth, as well as how our local policies will implement regional policies. In its review, the Metropolitan Council also considers our Comp Plan's compatibility with the plans of neighboring municipalities and agencies with jurisdiction over our development (e.g. watershed districts, Ramsey County, MnDOT). Saint Paul is designated as an "Urban Center" in *Thrive MSP 2040*.

Planning Commission Role in Review and Adoption

One of the core responsibilities of the Planning Commission is to oversee the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, and to recommend it to the City Council for adoption. Once the City Council has adopted the Plan, it is sent to the Metropolitan Council for final approval. For three chapters – Transportation, Parks & Recreation and Historic Preservation – a Planning Commission committee or other City commission will review the relevant draft chapter first, and then recommend it to the Planning Commission. A public hearing on the complete draft Comp Plan will be held at the Planning Commission and likely at the City Council prior to adoption. The role of the Planning Commission is to ensure that the chapters of the Comp Plan respond to our regional mandate for growth, maintain a city-wide perspective, are consistent with one another and reflect the city's core values.

2010 TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER

In the existing Comp Plan adopted in 2010, the Transportation Chapter contained 59 specific strategies organized under four broad policies: (1) Provide a safe and well-maintained system, (2) Provide balance and choice, (3) Support active lifestyles and a healthy environment, and (4) Enhance and connect the city. The strategies were very thorough and addressed issues that are largely still relevant. However, many strategies were more like workplan items than visionary policy, and others were overly broad to be helpful in implementation. Also, with the adoption of the Bicycle Plan in 2015 (as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan) and the Street Design Manual in 2016, many of the strategies have been essentially incorporated into those documents.

City staff have identified the lack of priorities in the 2010 Comp Plan as a significant issue for effective implementation of the sometimes competing policy guidance, whether in project selection or in designing projects to fit within limited rights-of-way. The sheer number of strategies has also contributed to implementation difficulties.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Extensive community engagement – far more than in a typical process – has been undertaken to set the community vision and priorities for the Comp Plan, and to identify issues to address within it. The engagement approach has been to reach as many people as possible; be genuine about the role of engagement; and be representative by race, age and geography. Major engagement kicked off in May 2016 with three broadly-advertised open house events, and continued throughout 2016 into 2017 with attendance at community festivals, pop-up meetings in public locations, district council meetings, City department meetings, policymaker interviews, radio interviews on WEQY (Voice of the East Side) and KMOJ (The People's Station), Open Saint Paul online input, and discussions with experts and advocacy organizations. As of this writing, staff has spoken with over 2,000 people at 62 events, generating over 3,700 comments. At least one event was held and at least 25 people were engaged in each of Saint Paul's 17 planning districts, with an average of three events and 100 people per district. During the big engagement push of May-September 2016, the over 800 people of color engaged represented approximately 50% of the total participants compared to a city-wide population proportion of

40% (in 2010). The age of participants was also mostly representative of the city-wide population, if somewhat older.



Nine themes and priorities emerged from the community engagement. In December 2016 and January 2017, staff sent an e-blast of the preliminary themes and priorities, and posted them in 81 strategically-selected “third places” (gathering spaces like coffee shops, libraries, and community centers) to invite feedback. Seventy-one comments were received, mostly confirming the themes and priorities, with the most commonly suggested additions relating to climate change resiliency and adaptation. Responding to this feedback, “sustainability” was added to create a modified final list of nine themes:

- **Livability, equity and sustainability.** When we asked about regional themes established by the Metropolitan Council, a majority said livability and equity are the most important for Saint Paul. Further public input established sustainability as also being vitally important. Other regional themes to be incorporated into the updated Comp Plan include prosperity and stewardship.
- **Parks and open space.** Parks and open space, from Como Park to Swede Hollow to the Mississippi River to local playgrounds, were consistently identified throughout the city as cherished places that we should preserve and enhance.
- **Sense of community.** Many people identified social connections, diversity and their neighborhood’s character – whether “vibrant” or “quiet” – as key advantages of living in Saint Paul.
- **Public safety.** People want to be safe and feel safe in their communities, and to have positive relationships with police officers. Strategic investment and thoughtful design can improve public safety. While this issue goes beyond typical development policies covered in the Plan, other ways to meaningfully incorporate this deep concern will be explored.
- **Road safety for pedestrians and bicycles.** Pedestrian safety at crossings and improved facilities were frequently identified as issues, as were bicycle facility improvements and safety.

- **Invest in people.** Whether job training or programming at recreation centers (especially for youth), people identified this as an important issue for Saint Paul. Many commented that these investments pay dividends for livability, prosperity and public safety.
- **Jobs.** People said we need more and better jobs to allow people to provide for their families and lift up the entire community.
- **Quality affordable housing.** People said we need more affordable housing, and that existing housing must be well-maintained.
- **Saint Paul is full of opportunity sites.** The range of “places with potential” identified was astounding, including major projects like Snelling-Midway (soccer stadium area) and the Ford site, large geographies like “the East Side,” “the Green Line” or “the riverfront,” commercial corridors like White Bear Avenue or Selby Avenue, and individual sites throughout the city. People said there are gems throughout the city, ready for (re)discovery and investment.

In addition to the overall themes and priorities, staff sorted through the engagement input to identify public priorities specific to transportation:

- pedestrian safety/traffic speed;
- bike and vehicle safety;
- safe and well-maintained infrastructure;
- transportation options (bike, walk, transit) in all parts of the city;
- a desire for complete streets;
- transit station safety; and
- residential street lighting and safety.

Going beyond priorities and themes, every single public comment has been read by multiple staff and considered for use in the Comp Plan or in its implementation. A sortable database was created for additional analysis by topic and geography.

Parallel to broad general community engagement, staff has communicated with experts, advocacy groups and focus groups related to transportation and other Comp Plan issues, including the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition, Port Authority, business organizations, major railroad companies (BNSF, CP, UP), the City’s sewer division, the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Aging and Saint Paul Public Schools. More such outreach is ongoing.

TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER PROCESS

The draft Transportation Chapter was created over the course of a year, guided by public input, additional expert issue identification by a 12-person interdepartmental staff team and the Transportation Committee, and research/mapping. Over 600 public engagement comments specific to transportation issues were reviewed, sorted and analyzed, both for visionary themes and unique ideas. The staff team and the Transportation Committee collaborated to identify over 50 issues, and prioritize them for further



analysis and potential inclusion as topics to address in the draft policies. Further engagement with advocacy groups and other outside organizations identified additional issues to address.

With a solid understanding of issues and priorities, staff conducted research and mapping exercises to explore unanswered questions and inform policy development. Though some research questions led to dead-ends, much of the research was fruitful. Some 20 written research summaries and 30 maps were produced.

Staff created a chapter draft and four potential organization strategies for internal review. The draft was based principally on public engagement priorities and identified issues, then backfilled with policies from the existing Comp Plan to cover other topics that are still relevant.

The staff team spent several weeks reviewing and debating policies and their organization within the draft chapter. This review included assigning six team members a “lens” through which to analyze the draft and propose revisions (lenses include: racial and social equity, aging in community, community/public health, economic development, sustainability/resiliency and urban design). The resulting team consensus was forwarded to the Transportation Committee for review. The staff team also participated in selecting key research and maps to include in the document and alongside it.

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Transportation Committee reviewed the draft chapter over the course of three meetings in May and June. The attached draft chapter incorporates their revisions to-date. On June 19, they will review the chapter once more and forward a formal recommendation to the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Any revisions are expected to be minor; outstanding issues for June 19 include setting mode share goals and providing guidance on potential sidebars and infographics. The formal Transportation Committee recommendation and a summary of any changes they make on June 19 will be provided to the Comp Planning Committee on June 27.

DRAFT CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

The draft Transportation Chapter takes a new, bold step forward by establishing clear priorities for how we improve our transportation system, both in project selection and design.

Project selection would now prioritize safety and equity benefits, followed by support of quality jobs. Equity benefits entail improving livability for those who live in racially-concentrated areas of poverty. Maintenance is also established as a “first cut” for project selection because regular maintenance is much more cost-effective in the long run than allowing surfaces to deteriorate to the point they require total reconstruction. Regular maintenance, such as sealcoating or mill and overlay projects, allows for a greater number of projects to be accomplished over time. Besides, streets without potholes are safer for all users. For competitive funding processes, project selection will also account for the anticipated ability to obtain funding. Furthermore, these priorities – as well as our land use priorities – will guide our approaches to future technology changes such as automated vehicles, that will have different needs, opportunities and stressors than what is on the road today.

Priorities are also established for the *design* of our rights-of-way, with pedestrians and bicyclists placed at the top. Pedestrians are the most vulnerable users of our rights-of-way, and almost everybody is a pedestrian for some portion of each trip. Considering pedestrians first will ensure a safe transportation system that works well for everyone. In many places this will mean

expanded, enhanced or separated pedestrian or bicycle facilities, especially at intersections. In industrial areas, these priorities may mean simply keeping pedestrians and bicyclists out of the way of trucks. This set of priorities will guide how the various tools in the City's Street Design Manual are used to design our rights-of-way in any given situation.

The public priorities of safety, well-maintained infrastructure and improved multi-modal options are emphasized throughout the document, as seen in the goals that provide the policy direction and structure for the chapter:

- investment that reflects our priorities;
- safety and accessibility for all users;
- a transportation system that supports employment and access to jobs;
- true transportation choice throughout the city, with a shift from single-occupant vehicles toward other modes;
- sustainable and equitable maintenance models;
- environmentally sustainable design;
- functional and attractive parkways; and
- a system that shapes and responds to technology.

NEXT STEPS

The Comprehensive Planning Committee will review this chapter (and all the chapters) before authorizing staff to release the entire draft plan for public comment in early 2018. Upon revising to respond to public comment at that time, staff will then return to the Comp Planning Committee to request that a formal public hearing be set in front of the Planning Commission in April 2018. The plan document is anticipated to be before the City Council in June 2018 for a public hearing and adoption.

Attachments

1. Draft Transportation Chapter (June 12)
2. Potential sidebars and infographics (still under Transportation Committee review)
3. Additional background maps
4. Research Summary
5. Saint Paul Roadway Safety Plan
6. Implementation Overview
7. Public Works 5-Year Capital Plan