

2015-11-10 North Avenue Task Force Meeting #8 at the Miller Center

NATF Attendance

Jason L'Ecuyer - Co-chair, Ward 7 Council Appointee
Paul Sisson - Co-chair, Ward 4 Council Appointee
Andrea Todd - Ward 3 NPA Appointee
Ben Bloom - Ward 3 NPA Alternate
Rich Nadworny - Ward 4 NPA Appointee
Patrick Kearney - Ward 4 NPA Alternate
RJ Lalumiere - Ward 7 NPA Appointee
Nicole Losch - Dept. of Public Works (DPW)
Jason Charest - Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
Eleni Churchill - Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
Marshall Distal - Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
David Armstrong - Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA)

City Council Attendance

Tom Ayres - Ward 7

Community Attendance

Approximately 20-25 persons

CCTV video of the meeting

<https://www.cctv.org/watch-tv/programs/north-avenue-task-force-meeting-8>

Agenda

Housekeeping

- North Avenue Task Force (NATF) introduction by Jason L'ecuyer.
- NATF members and public introduced themselves.
- Councillor Ayres noted he is here to listen.
- ACTION: Approved agenda without modification.
- ACTION: Approved October minutes without modification.
- ACTION: Approved change to co-chair titles.
- ACTION: October meeting was not properly warned so re-approved September minutes, October agenda and having pro/con discussion and vote on phasing at the November meeting
- RJ Lalumiere volunteered to take notes.
- Next meeting is Dec. 8 2015 6-8PM at Burlington Police Dept. Community Room.

Public Comments

- Jason L'ecuyer invited Tom Ayres to speak first and he noted he is here to listen.

- Jim Carrier from Madison, WI described a similar project that city did on a street with ~17,000 average daily traffic. Business owners were the primary concerned group before implementation. The post implementation report found that the overall crash rate dropped significantly, average travel times slightly slower but still over the speed limit, more cyclists, walkers and bikers reported feeling more comfortable, no business impact. The conclusion was that the change was positive and should be made permanent. He supports the change. Jason L'Ecuyer asked about side streets; Jim noted that rat running was a concern but it end up not being an issue.
- Justine Sears asked about changes south of VT127. RJ Lalumiere noted that the existing bike lanes would get minimal painted buffers, but parking would remain unchanged.
- Question about parking on North Ave. Nicole Losch noted that there are multiple segments to the project, the 4 lane to 3 lane conversion, the parking changes and 5 new crosswalks at Ward St, Burlington College, Kilarney Dr/Village Green, Gosse Ct and Green Acres Dr / Cayuga Ct. Council resolution states parking removal on at least one side. Final decision on parking changes goes to the Public Works Commission.
- Comment that Shore Rd to Plattsburgh Ave is not as much a problem for biking as the south of Berry St section.
- Person commented that they live between VT 127 and the High School. They see lots of bikers, skaters, walkers and rear endings. Supports removing parking.
- Tom Wally from Sandy Ln noted here was involved in a crash on the 4 lane section. He thinks it is unsafe as designed. He lives a quarter mile from Hannaford's but does not ride his bike there. Supports the pilot 100%. "When you build these things people come and use them."
- Person noted her family just bought a house here in the last few years. They moved here rather than Essex, etc. to have a bikeable commute. Noted that females are more risk averse; if we make it feel safe more women will do it.
- Someone questioned what is the opposition? Noted primarily fear of lengthened commutes/travel time. Suggested to put out statistics on road diets.
- Andrea Todd noted that 11% of the crashes in Burlington are on North Ave. Traffic volume is less than Colchester Ave.
- There was a rebuttal that North Ave is the longest street in the city.
- Question asked how do we pay for this? What are the metrics?
 - Nicole Losch said the ~\$200,000 funding comes from the Street Capital and Bicycle Capital budgets. The new crosswalks are grant funded.
- How much money to undo? What are the materials?
 - Materials are mostly paint and flexible delineators. VT 127 reconfiguration is the only concrete work.
- What happens at the end of the pilot? How is it evaluated? Who evaluates it?
 - Rich Nadworny said there are a number of factors. Ultimately the City Council decides. Data feeds into that as well as public input. Behooves us to ask as many people as possible. City will collect the sentiment data.
- What happens between Berry St and Battery Park?

- Nicole Losch said that is the be looked at in the future. Not going to be looked at immediately. With regards to comments about Plattsburgh Ave noted folks can give feedback on the draft Walk/Bike Master Plan.

Proposal to Phase In Pilot

- Paul Sisson described two things on mind, the 4 lane to 3 lane conversion and squaring up the VT 127 intersection. Do we do it all together? Or do we do Shore Rd to Ethan Allen Pkwy first and the later Ethan Allen Pkwy to VT 127 plus the intersection.
 - Tom Ayres asked what the timelines would be. Paul said at least within the same construction season.
- Opinions
 - Patrick Kearney - Pro phasing. Bikes use the full lane now, moving them aside is better. 127 intersection changes have a chance of failure, people don't like change.
 - Ben Bloom - Smaller changes often get adopted better, but in this case do it all at once.
 - Jason L'Ecuyer asked how long to work toward the 127 intersection from the ends?
 - Nicole Losch said less than month, more than a week. 2-3 weeks.
 - Rich Nadworny - Last meeting was pro-phasing. Switching; all at once as long as 127 not first.
 - RJ Lalumiere - Pro all at once. Promotes transformational change to show the true benefits.
 - Jason L'Ecuyer - Pro all at once. Transparency. Gets all the pain and benefit together. Gets better metrics.
 - Paul Sisson - Changed to all at once. No need to have all the pain twice. Preferred after school gets out.
 - Nicole Losch - Does not feel strongly about it either way. Food for thought; phasing makes data collection easier, All at once minimizes construction.
 - Andrea Todd - All at once towards the middle.
 - David Armstrong - No opinion.
 - Public -
 - Open up locked street to Plattsburgh Ave to allow for better access to 127.
 - Professionals should know best.
 - Rich Nadworny disagreed. If public input is so important to the then how we do it really matters.
 - Nicole Losch - If they thought one way would not work they would remove it from consideration.
 - Tom Ayres - When the North Avenue Corridor Study was underway it spoke of short term (1-3 year), mid term (3-5 year) and long term (7-10 year). Originally the pilot was slated for the mid term and he for moving it

to the short term. Pro all at once to get the sea change. North Ave is not safe.

- Man supports all at once. Lives on Riverside, having through traffic would be bad.
 - Nicole Losch - 127 section may take a couple extra weeks beyond the painting.
 - Man to minimized disruption has consideration been given to doing construction at night?
 - It was noted that the City does have policy around this and that doing so can increase costs significantly.
 - Concern about the safety of right turn on red noted.
 - Katelin Brewer-Collie - Is there a cost benefit to all at once versus phased?
 - Nicole Losch Some but not much benefit to the overall budget.
 - Katelin Brewer-Collie - Pro all at once. Cost reason, better sense of perceptions.
- ACTION: Unanimous vote in support of all at once implementation.

Proposal to swap on street parking with bike lanes

- RJ Lalumiere noted that the city council resolution specifies removing parking on at least one side, that DPW traffic counts indicate very low utilization and then described the proposed configuration. From Plattsburgh Ave to Shore Rd and VT 127 to Institute Rd would have the 8' on street parking removed from both sides, except for in front of St. Mark's, and be striped with 10.5' main travel lanes, 3' buffers and 5' bike lanes. In front of St Mark's it would be 10.5' main travel lanes, 1.5' buffers and 5' bike lanes. In the end the Public Works Commissions make the decision on parking changes.
- One person thought that removing only one side of parking would meet with less opposition.
 - RJ Lalumiere noted that maintaining parking on one side would force cyclists in to the door zone on that side.
- Jay Catalano noted that VT 127 to Institute Rd had a painted bike lane that has faded.
 - Nicole Losch noted that parking is currently allowed on both sides.
- Someone noted that parking reduces visibility when pulling out.
- Ken Peterson noted that he travels North Ave many times a day and parking is very lightly used on the northern section.
- Someone asked if there is a possibility for a 2-way cycling facility? Would it require less width?
 - Nicole Losch noted it would not save much space and greatly complicates the intersections.
- Katelin Brewer-Collie - Pro buffered bike lanes. Noted that kids are riding to schools along the Avenue, bike racks at BHS well utilized. Thought that motorists don't note kids on the sidewalks.
- Question about feedback from schools.

- Andrea Todd noted anecdotally that she has been engaging at the High School. They are the most multi-modal group she knows; walking biking, scootering, bussing and driving. Some of the driving kids want bike lanes to get cyclists out of their way.
- Tom Ayres had a question about attendance of the NATF meetings by emergency services representatives.
 - Andrea Todd said she has worked John Young from Burlington Police Dept and he has come to one of the meetings and provided the radar guns for citizens to use. Also noted that Barry Simays from Burlington Fire Dept has been to multiple meetings.
 - Rich Nadworny noted the desire for signal preemption so emergency services can force a green.
 - Tom Ayres was inclined for signal preemption
- A man noted that he lives on North Ave and losing parking would be an inconvenience but he does not want to stand in the way of improvements.
- Patrick Kearney - No parking on either side.
- Ben Bloom - No parking on either side. Safer for pull outs
- Rich Nadworny - No parking on either side.
- RJ Lalumiere - No parking on either side.
- Jason L'Ecuyer - Maintain parking on one side. Compromise if it makes it easier.
- Paul Sisson - Against parking on both sides. Right of way is for moving people. Folks have driveways; it is a convenience thing. Does not belong on thoroughfares generally, not just North Ave.
- Nicole Losch - No opinion. From a cost perspective it is tens of thousands cheaper to remove parking on both sides.
- Andrea Todd - No parking on both sides.
- David Armstrong - Noted buses will be pulling into the bike lanes at stops.
- ACTION: NATF recommends maintaining on street parking next to St Mark's church. Yay - 6, Nay - 2, Abstain - 1
- ACTION: NATF recommends on street parking be removed from Plattsburgh Ave to Shore Rd and VT 127 to Institute Rd. Yay - 7, Nay - 1, Abstain - 1

Outreach

- How did the community members hear about the meeting?
 - ~10 folks said Front Porch Forum
 - 3 folks said word of mouth
 - Signs on North Ave
 - North Avenue News
 - NPA
 - Social Media
 - Parking letter from DPW
- Rich Nadworny - We've been planning engagement tools, e.g. postcard handout. Places for engagement include Hannaford's plaza, senior centers, PTO, etc. Welcomes

suggestions on outreach. Working on web content. What would you need to have informed discussions?

- Publicly visible things.
- Anti-change signs are a result of canvassing. One man reported a sign was left on his porch and then he was approached the next day asking if it could be put up.
- Need a pamphlet to hand out. So much misinformation.
- Tom Ayres - Signage is a strategic placement. Disturbed to hear that a sign was left on someone's porch without asking for it. Hearing from many people it has gotten out of hand. People want fact based information.
- Andrea noted the task force has little financial support. AARP grant is the only funding.
 - Tom Ayres noted that councillors have some discretionary funds. He will check with the city lawyer if he can provide support here.
- Patrick Kearney said there should be more of the Bike May Use Full Lane signs.
- Man likes green paint for bike lanes.
- Man thought that one pro-change sign at VT 127 would go far.
- Man thought some pro-change signs would be helpful. Said pamphlet should include talking points. Noted that the elderly are often not online.
 - RJ Lalumiere noted that in previous meetings the need to have both online and offline materials was recognized.
- Tom Ayres said he has a moderate number of signs which may be good for repurposing. Print stickers? Hosting the monthly Channel 17 "5:25" show tomorrow. Rich Nadworny will be joining him.
- The Bagel was suggested as an outreach spot.
- Props to Tom Ayres for posting to Front Porch Forum.
- Tom Ayres noted that Chief Del Pozo is crafting a response to the police take on the changes.

Resident feedback after implementation

- Jason L'ecuyer noted the need to put this topic on the agenda for 30 minutes next meeting.
- Paul Sisson noted there has been no response from Verizon about using tablets for feedback.
- Andrea Todd - What forms for feedback? What Questions do we ask?
- Rich Nadworny thinks we are tasked to come up with a plan to present to City Council. Draft document is circulated to task force, needs more feedback. What is public input? What is meant by the New North End? North of Institute Rd? Wards 4 & 7? Not a vote; it should take into account everyone who uses North Ave, ages 6-90+. Survey, online and offline running for 30-45 days. Engage as many people as possible.
- Tom Ayres asked how do you quantify input?
- Man noted that bus and taxi drivers use North Ave as well.
- Woman suggested engaging colleges and universities to help.

- Rich Nadworny noted that this has been considered and that UVM has experts in sentiment measurement.
- Tom Ayres said we need to avoid a war of Downtown / South End versus the New North End.
- Question was asked how long the pilot will run for.
- RJ Lalumiere noted that the resolution specifies at least four months. He would like the pilot to run for at least a year to be able observe its operation in all our varied seasons.
- Woman liked the idea of having an independent assessor.
 - Noted that City will handle the evaluation.
- Man asked if it would be possible to have a non-binding resolution on the November ballot. May be used as an augmentation to other feedback.

Actions Taken

- Approved agenda without modification.
- Approved October minutes without modification.
- Agreed to discuss arguments for phasing the pilot or implementing all at once and vote on the matter this meeting.
- October meeting was not properly warned so re-approved September minutes, October agenda and having pro/con discussion and vote on phasing at the November meeting
- Vote in support of all at once implementation.
- NATF recommends maintaining on street parking next to St Mark's church.
- NATF recommends on street parking be removed from Plattsburgh Ave to Shore Rd and VT 127 to Institute Rd.