

2015-12-08 North Avenue Task Force Meeting #9 at BPD

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
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)
Chris Dubin - Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
Marshall Distal - Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
David Armstrong - Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA)

City Council Attendance

Sara Giannoni - Ward 3
Tom Ayres - Ward 7

Community Attendance

Approximately 15-20 persons

Agenda

Housekeeping

- North Avenue Task Force (NATF) introduction by Jason L'ecuyer.
- NATF members and public introduced themselves.
- ACTION: Approved agenda without modification.
- ACTION: Approved November minutes without modification.
- RJ Lalumiere volunteered to take notes.
- Next meeting is Jan. 12 2016 6-8PM at the Miller Center.
- Nicole Losch reiterated that Vermont's Open Meeting Law applies to this body. So whenever there is a quorum, even in emails, it counts as a meeting. Proposing agenda items for future meetings is an exception.

Public Comments

- Woman lives near the 4 lane section and believes strongly that the 4 lane section should remain as it is. She wants to not chase federal money. Taking a left out of Lakewood is currently a nightmare especially in the mornings.
- Katelin Brewer-Collie from Local Motion noted that this is just a pilot that will be evaluated. Projects like this are not just about biking, but safety for everyone. North

Avenue traffic volumes are well under the maximum capacity of a center turn lane design.

- Christine has been coming downtown for 18 years. Going to have a nightmare on your hands there are crashes on the beltline, inclement weather, etc. 8am is very congested, leaves at 8:15. Says it takes her 30 minutes now to drive to Essex, thinks it will take 45 minutes after.
- A Lakewood resident asked what will the effect on left turns be? What will speed limits be.
- Dave Bogdan[?] lives in Van Patten and said he has trouble getting out currently. Thinks 3 lanes will be better and safer.
- Tony Bell against this from the get go. As Vermonters we're about local. Thinks the pilot is a waste of money. Is quite sure it's not going to do much for safety but will slow things down. Stated that very few people bike in Winter.
- Eric Corbmin from North Ave moved to Burlington 3 years ago and initially found the current configuration confusing and thinks it will be better.
- Karen Rowell listed some cities that have reversed road diets. Bikers should ride on the sidewalk. Thinks sidewalks should be widened like Riverside Ave, Dorset St, etc. When the car flipped on North Ave it would have killed a biker. 30MPH on North Ave; thinks police enforcement would bring speeds down. Worries about the money to change back.
- Christine Hill from Bike Recycle VT talked about low income folks who rely on bikes for transportation. She gets stories from people who have been hit by drivers. Rides North Ave herself and said it is her least place to ride. She has heard from people who would commute to downtown by bike if it were safer. The changes will make the neighborhood more livable.
- Woman noted that it is a commercial district with a lot of turning. Changes will make that hard. Making a left out of Lakewood is hard. Act 34; it's about trying to get rid of cars altogether. There is a cost to the pilot.

Councilor Comments

- No councilor comments.

Recommendations to Public Works Commission

- NATF will recommend no parking on either side of North Ave between Institute Rd to VT 127, and Shore Rd to Plattsburgh Ave except for in front of St Mark's.
- Will also update on general project updates.
- Meeting is Dec. 16, 6:30PM at 645 Pine St.
- Commission has the final say on parking changes.
- They do allow and appreciate public input at the meeting.

Public Outreach Materials & Schedule

- Andrea Todd suggested brainstorming who/what/where/when for first half of the time and then work on commitments to do so.

- Jason L'Ecuyer said is still committed to bring some flyers to St Mark's to put in the back; already OK'd with the priest.
- It was noted there are 1000 flyers. Looking to get another round printed as well. Funded by an AARP grant.
- Locations to distribute?
 - Bagel Cafe - Jason L'Ecuyer said he knows the owner, who does have some concerns, and will talk to him about it.
 - Hannaford's - Paul Sisson
 - Jim Carrier offered to help distribute flyers.
- Andrea Todd noted that the point of the flyers is to engage and inform people.
- Jason L'Ecuyer noted that this is not a bike project. His interest is safety for his kids walking to school and shops.
- Tony Bell had a question about turning into the driveways between Shore Rd and Plattsburgh Ave.
 - RJ Lalumiere noted that operationally it will be probably be the same as today.
- Jim Carrier noted a similar change worked well in Madison, WI where he previously lived.
- A comment that we need to advertise the cost of the pilot project. Would like to see that information mailed to people.
 - Nicole Losch noted that final estimates are still being compiled.
 - Jason L'Ecuyer noted that the NATF will post the information Front Porch Forum as well. "Once we have it we will publish it."
- Man was surprised to hear a cost estimate earlier.
- Ron McGarvey asked if it is possible to do a mailing to all households?
- Ben Bloom noted the website is mostly built, loaded with content. It should launch in the next few days. Describes the new configuration, collected data, cost, similar examples.
 - Pat Kearney asked about listing cons as well.
 - Ben Bloom noted that can be included.
- An input mechanism will be on the website.
- Eric Corbmin asked if we will wait to distribute flyers.
 - Noted that the plan is not to distribute until after the website is live.
- Woman asked if a link will be included on City Website or included in utility bills?
- Nicole Losch asked how we will manage ongoing website updates.
 - Ben Bloom noted he and Rich Nardworny have access currently and more people can be added if needed.
- Tom Ayres noted the city manages the water bill and it may be included there?
- Nicole Losch asked what message are we trying to get through with mailing?
 - Timeline
 - How long to do?
 - What sections?
 - Cost and funding sources
 - Describe the length of the corridor
 - Pilot, pilot, pilot.

- Christine Hill noted that the project will be comparatively cheap to other transportation projects.
- Tom Ayres said re: pro/cons we won't know for real until we try it. He also noted that a significant amount of transportation in general is federally funded.
- Tony Bell noted that everyone pays federal tax. Cons should include a list of cities that have undone projects.
- Jason L'Ecuyer on mailing suggested it should have just the timeline, pilot description, cost and refer everything else to the website.
- Woman suggested that mailing should include how the pilot project will be evaluated.
- Jim Carrier asked when we are doing public outreach? Suggested that it seems too early now and may be a waste of time. People will forget about it by the time construction comes; suggested doing it a month before.
 - Jason L'Ecuyer noted that through the whole process some people have complained that they didn't know, so we intend to keep publicising through the whole period.
- Man suggested a ballot/vote.
 - Tom Ayres noted that the ballot petition comes before the pilot is implemented, but the council resolution says input comes after.
- Kirsten Merriman-Shapiro appreciates all the efforts of the task force. Citizens and community members with a breadth of opinions. Website should clearly lay out evaluation. Respects that it is being promoted for everyone.
- Lawn signs should include the web address.
 - How funded? Same AARP grant.
- Jason L'Ecuyer asked how many members constitutes a quorum?
 - Nicole Losch said 6. So outreach committee needs to be 5 or less. Nicole and RPC staff are not members.
 - Volunteered: Jason L'Ecuyer, Nicole Losch, Paul Sisson
 - Jason L'Ecuyer will also invite Rich Nadworny
- Front Porch Forum & Neighborhood Planning Assemblies - continue to share as we have been.
 - Jason L'Ecuyer asked what else people would like to see.
 - Karen Rowell said she'd like to see cons posted.
 - Jim Carrier noted that pro/con can be stated as "What are the questions that the pilot will answer?"
 - Jason L'Ecuyer noted that he called up David Kirk since he knows him and that he opposes the change to ask what his concerns are.
 - Nicole Losch noted that a Frequently Asked Questions list is in development. Will make sure it includes such things.
 - Woman said "potential impacts" is good phrasing.
- Katelin Brewer-Collie suggested mentioning potential economic impacts. Noted that the bike path does not meet all transportation needs.
 - Jason L'Ecuyer asked Nicole Losch about data on economic impacts. She said she is working with Kirsten Merriman-Shapiro on that.

Measuring people's reaction to the pilot once implemented

- Jason L'Ecuyer suggested skipping in favor of the next agenda item due to running behind on time.
- Nicole Losch noted that the Department of Public Works updated the area councillors and mayor on where we are and how we'll measure. She would like to bring something to them in late January/early February after the next NATF meeting.

Update on data collection review of updated modelling by CCRPC

- Jason Charest introduced himself and the CCRPC.
- They are tasked with collecting a lot of data about the pilot; speeds, traffic volumes, side street delays, etc.
- Question was asked about which side streets would be measured.
 - Jason Charest noted that Saratoga Ave in particular is being measured for delay and is in the highest volume segment.
- Segment travel times have been collected both before and during the school session during AM and PM peak times (7:00-8:30AM & 4:50-6:00PM). ~2 minutes for the 0.8 mile 4 lane segment between VT 127 and Shore Rd and includes time spent waiting at lights. CCRPC will collect new data after implementation to compare.
- Current free flow speed is ~35MPH. If speeds were to go down to 25 MPH that would add ~30 seconds.
 - RJ Lalumiere noted that no speed limit changes are part of this project.
- Jason Charest noted that with this configuration entrances from side streets can be slower, but safer due to less complex decision making.
- Pat Kearney asked the gas station owner about the project. He said that people can't get out of Lakewood now and it makes them agitated. Calming can make it easier and stops create gaps.
- Tony Bell asked about the VT 127 intersection.
 - Jason Charest noted there will be two lanes exiting VT 127 onto North Ave; left and right/through.
 - Tony Bell said semi-trucks cannot make the turn now without mounting the curb.
 - Jason Charest and Nicole Losch noted that problem should be eliminated by the island removal.
- Jason Charest played a simulation of the reconfiguration, including the the VT 127 intersection, the Ethan Allen Parkway intersection and the length of the 0.8 mile restriped segment. Simulation uses current traffic counts as it's basis. No growth factor included, noted that traffic volumes have actually been declining over the last few years with many factors possibly contributing to that. Simulation was 8 minutes long modeling the PM peak, roughly at 5:15PM. Queue time at VT 127 to make right turn onto North Ave could be up to a minute (up to two light cycles at the "peak of the peak").
- Noted that the simulation videos will be added to the website.

- Suggested to add side street queue times as well.
- Question to if there is any way to predict how people choose their path, e.g. will some who use North Ave switch to VT 127?
 - Jason Charest said it is a possibility, but a different model is needed for that simulation.
 - RJ Lalumiere noted that before and after data has been and will be collected on VT 127 ingress/egress so we will be able to see if that changes.
- Eric Corbmin noted that 0.8 miles over 2 minutes averages out to 24 MPH.
- Jason Charest showed the AM peak video. He noted that the southbound flow is heavier in this one. He noted that Little Eagle Bay driveway had to be treated as signalized for the purposes of the simulation but doing so was not part of the immediate project.
 - Patrick Kearney asked what the split between North Ave and VT 127 is?
 - Jason Charest said something like 60/40 or 65/35, North Ave/VT 127. Did not have numbers on hand.
- Tom Ayres asked about preemptive signalization for emergency responders.
 - Nicole Losch said that it can be expensive. DPW is talking to the Fire Department about their priority routes.
- Tom Ayres noted that zooming in on the video is important for people with poor eyesight to get a clear view.
- Nicole Losch noted the videos should get introductions as well to help people understand them. E.g., time of day, queue times, etc.

Schedule update from DPW

- Will be asking CCRPC for help with sign, marking and signalization plans. Also request for survey input.
- Andrea Todd asked about a sub-committee for “measuring people’s reactions”. End of January/Late February.
 - Andrea Todd and Pat Kearney volunteered for that with Rich Nadworny and Nicole Losch.
- Noted that the first draft of the public input document is on the DPW North Ave web page.
- Pat Kearney wants next meeting date highlighted on the DPW North Ave web page.
 - Ben Bloom said it will also be prominently on the NATF web site.

Actions Taken

- Approved agenda without modification.
- Approved November minutes without modification.