

MEETING MINUTES

WILLOW ROAD STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING (Meeting #12)

February 14, 2008

Attached are meeting minutes from the Steering Committee Team Meeting for the Willow Road Context-Sensitive Enhancement Plan held February 7, 2008 at the Village Hall in Northfield.

Steering Committee Members

	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Present</u>
Ken Behles, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
John Birkinbine, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Peter Fischer, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Fred Gougler, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Becky Hurley, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Mark Kurensky, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Ian Sherman, Village of Winnetka	<u>X</u>	_____
Scott Turban, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>

Alternates

Carolyn Kurtz, Village of Winnetka	<u>X</u>	_____
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Staff Liaisons

Stacy Sigman, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Steve Saunders, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Doug Williams, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>

Consultants

Scott Freres, The Lakota Group	_____	<u>X</u>
Daniel Grove, The Lakota Group	_____	<u>X</u>
Kevin Clark, The Lakota Group	_____	<u>X</u>
Mike Kerr, Christopher Burke Engineering	_____	<u>X</u>

Additional Participants

Anne Kane, Northfield Dept. of Community Dev.	_____	<u>X</u>
Jeffery Liss, Resident, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Ervin Hobson, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- Lakota distributed meeting minutes for Steering Committee meeting #11. John Birkinbine motioned to adopt, and Peter Fischer seconded the motion. Vote was taken and motion passed.

DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF DOWNTOWN NORTHFIELD FROM EDENS TO BRISTOL

- Scott Freres summarized the meeting Lakota had with Village of Northfield staff to discuss goals and issues of their current Downtown Master Plan as they relate to Willow Road. A draft enhancement plan for this area depicted the following:
 - Potential realignment of the Edens on-ramp intended to slow down automobiles and make a safer pedestrian crossing
 - A continuous 8' multi-purpose pedestrian/bike trail on the south
 - Possible right-in/right-out for Walnut Avenue on the south of Willow
 - An extended left hand turn lane westbound on Willow at Happ Road and Northfield Road
 - Maximizing the length and width of medians throughout downtown
 - Potential bump-outs at four corners on Happ Road and Central Avenue for increased pedestrian safety
 - Consolidating curb cuts where possible or as part of future redevelopment
 - Improved pedestrian crossings throughout downtown
 - Potential underpass for the Skokie Valley Trail along the vacated railroad right-of-way
 - Pedestrian safety amenities such as bollards or planters as barriers
 - Enhanced river bridge character and aesthetics with pedestrian access on both sides, railings for pedestrian safety
 - Eliminating the right turn only westbound on Willow at Old Willow Road
 - Potential 5 lane cross-section from the river bridge through downtown, including 2 lanes moving each direction and left hand turn lanes at the major intersections

- Stacy Sigman clarified that the Walgreens access should be limited to a right-in only from Willow Road, as opposed to a right-in/right-out as shown on the draft plan.
- Peter Fischer asked for clarification on whether the medians would be raised or flat; Scott Freres indicated they would be raised in most locations.
- Mark Kurensky suggested delineating lanes on the plan for the north/south streets, such as Northfield Road and Happ Road, for clarity.
- Ken Behles questioned whether realigning the Edens on-ramp would increase safety or instead shift the risk from Willow Road to the Edens. Stacy Sigman added that in conjunction with the realignment recommendation at Willow, the Committee could include the recommendation of lengthening the ramp.
- Mike Kerr added that the Edens ramp was sub-standard, and agreed that it should be studied and would benefit from being longer. He suggested that the Committee include this in the Plan, as well as the bridge idea over the ramp.
- There was Committee discussion on whether an under/overpass was feasible at the on-ramp. Becky Hurley suggested leaving it off of the plan.
- Peter Fischer suggested a stop light for cars at the pedestrian on-ramp that could be activated by pedestrians. Steve Saunders indicated that this could cause traffic and safety issues.
- Mark Kurensky stated that if an expanded multi-purpose path is shown on Dominicks' property, it should be noted on the plan that it extends into private property.

- Stacy Sigman asked to clarify on the plan where the medians would be mountable.
- Anne Kane indicated that the median at Walnut would need to be mountable for emergency access purposes.
- Mark Kurensky suggested removing one north through lane on Central so the lanes could be shifted east to align better with South Happ. Stacy Sigman indicated this might be possible, but could create back-ups and affect traffic on Willow.
- Scott Freres asked the Committee their feelings of having the width of five lanes across the bridge, made up of four lanes and a planted median. The Committee generally supported it.
- Mark Kurensky suggested showing right-in/right-outs at all curb-cuts through the Main Street. The Committee discussed this recommendation and agreed that it coincided with the idea of a raised planted median. Anne Kane indicated that Best Hardware would prefer to maintain full access, and that a mountable curb at that location should be shown.
- Steve Saunders asked that the final plan note that detailed traffic generation of the cross streets will be needed for final layout of all intersections.
- **The Committee agreed on the following recommendations for Willow Road in downtown Northfield:**

 - Revise the plan to reflect right-in/right-out restrictions at all Willow Road curb-cuts, with the exception of Best Hardware, where there would be full-in/right-out.
 - Revise plan to show mountable medians at Best Hardware and Walnut.
 - Modify Walgreens' access on Willow to be right-in only.
 - Modify the Edens on-ramp to be less perpendicular, while maintaining a narrow pedestrian crossing.
 - Relocate the sidewalk in front of Dominicks so that it is located fully in the right-of-way.

DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF ROAD CORRIDOR FROM WAGNER ROAD TO BRISTOL

- The Committee began its review of this section with a discussion of the concept for the underpass connecting Clarkson Park to Willow Park. Ken Behles asked if the road would need to be elevated to make the concept work, and Scott Freres confirmed that it would. Mr. Freres also indicated that a retaining wall feature would be necessary for appropriate grading. Steve Saunders confirmed that the retaining wall would need a guard rail by code if it was over 30" tall.
- At the request of the Committee, Mike Kerr gave a brief summary of the previous engineering plan.
- Doug Williams indicated from his discussions with the Winnetka Fire Chief, that better emergency access was needed through this section of the Corridor, including room for vehicles to move over and allow emergency vehicles to pass.
- The Committee then discussed the potential cul-de-sac at Churchill. Fred Gougler stated that the street needed new, cleaned-up parking for Clarkson Park. John Birkinbine expressed concern for losing park space and trees with the addition of a cul-de-sac.

- Doug Williams asked if a dedicated right-turn lane would be needed on westbound Willow at Wagner. Mike Kerr indicated he didn't believe it was necessary.
- Scott Freres asked the Committee if there was support for the underpass, knowing that Churchill would need to be a cul-de-sac to accomplish the grading. Fred Gougler indicated that he had mixed feelings and would only feel comfortable supporting it if Village Staff and Police supported it.
- Doug Williams asked Steve Saunders to comment on the state of Winnetka's pedestrian underpasses. Steve indicated that there were graffiti problems within the tunnels. He clarified that they were only 8'-10' wide, and 150'-200' long. Ken Behles commented that they are a very different character than what the intended design for connecting the parks is.
- Peter Fischer cited examples in the City of Chicago at the Museum Campus and at North Avenue where there are large, open, well-lit underpasses that are successful in a more urban environment.
- John Birkinbine indicated that he felt the underpass was a popular solution at the workshops, and the Park District would probably heavily use the underpass, which would mean some self-policing by the Park District.
- Stacy Sigman indicated she would ask the Police Chief for any global comments or notes on the plan.
- Scott Turban asked what the width of the light-well would be. Mark Kurensky indicated that it should be proportional to the lane widths to make it appear like two separate bridges over the pedestrian underpass. Mike Kerr added that the lightwell would shorten or eliminate the left turn lane into north Bristol. Scott Freres commented that it could be accomplished with a striped middle lane if there was insufficient room for a left-turn lane. Committee members commented that Bristol did not receive many left-turners, so it did not need a lot of stacking room. The Committee was asked if they supported the lightwell, and they agreed.
- Fred Gougler asked where the lane taper would occur, and Mike Kerr indicated it would be to the west of the overpass.
- Becky Hurley encouraged the Committee to begin discussion on the number of lanes for this section.
- Mark Kurensky stated he had three primary concerns that he wanted to have addressed in this section of the roadway. The first was to resolve left turns so that traffic does not back up behind them. The second was to remove the ability for drivers to pass on the right in the shoulder. The third was to resolve the short tapers that exist currently. Mark indicated that he felt the first two had been solved through the Committee's recommendations, but that the third had not yet been addressed.
- Fred Gougler indicated that he wanted to make sure that there was protection for pedestrians waiting to cross the intersections, insulating them from vehicles.
- Ken Behles commented that the pedestrian underpass between the parks addresses some of the safety of pedestrians by creating an alternate route.
- Mark Kurensky discussed the idea of a pedestrian underpass at Wagner Road. The estimate is that the ramping would need to extend to Dickens to meet ADA requirements. The Committee felt that this was too large to be useful.
- The Committee discussed the idea of pedestrian refuges in the medians. John Birkinbine mentioned that he thought that IDOT did not recognize medians as

pedestrian refuges. Scott Freres and Mike Kerr commented that the Federal Highway Administration does indicate that they improve pedestrian safety, but local agencies may be slower to adopt them. Peter Fischer indicated he is concerned that a two-step crossing would be more difficult for a crossing guard to manage. Scott Freres indicated that in European cities, pedestrians are channelized for safety by both defining and limiting where they can cross. He also added that the stop bars are often further back from the intersection to create additional room for pedestrians. Daniel Grove mentioned that at workshops and interviews with students, several people raised the proximity of cars, the location of stop bars, and the location of sensor plates as subtle things that create an uncomfortable pedestrian environment. Mark Kurensky requested a large scale look at the intersection for the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Jeffery Liss had the following comments:
 - He believed the Edens on-ramp on the south side of Willow should maintain the existing edge of pavement on the south/west side, but the north/east side should be extended like a peninsula to reduce the length of the pedestrian crossing.
 - He suggested studying the need for dedicated right hand turn lanes on Willow Road at the Central/Happ/Willow intersection.
 - He suggested studying a solution at Wagner where the Willow Road through lanes would be underground and only the turn lanes would be at grade, which would narrow the pedestrian crossing. He referenced Palatine road as an example of this solution.
 - He indicated the he felt a pedestrian underpass at Wagner was more valuable than one connecting the two parks.
 - He noted that the meeting minutes for the January 11, 2007 Steering Committee meeting do not accurately reflect his concern about the potential “hourglass” effect on the roadway and he would like the minutes changed. *Note: The January 11, 2007 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes have been updated to reflect Mr. Liss’ comment and the updated minutes have been placed on the Village’s web-site as well as the project web-site.*
 - He encouraged the Committee at the next meeting to study the S-curve (between Old Willow and Wagner) as a good location for four lanes. He indicated that he believes that four lanes would not create a safety problem in this zone because there should not be mid-block crossings, that instead four lanes presents a psychological problem. He commented that applying four lanes in this area could be “grand compromise.”
- Ervin Hobson commented that to successfully implement the park connection underpass, some sort of dyke will be needed to hold back flooding. He suggested that a raised bike path be used to accomplish this.

NEW ITEMS/COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

- No new items.