



Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee

Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2020

Time: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

In attendance: Mike Rademacher, Heather Barber, Darcy Devney, Daniel Amstutz, Julie Wayman, Doug Mayo-Wells, Len Diggins, Rachael Stark, Phil Goff, Kristine Shah, Jenny Raitt, Ali Carter, Ezekiel Wheeler.

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction to Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.

Daniel Amstutz read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

2. Connect Arlington Draft Recommendations and Strategies.

For this section, Amstutz presented a modified version of the presentation given at the Connect Arlington Fall Forum on December 14.

Amstutz referenced the forum where Nelson/Nygaard presented. A little over 30 people attended and provided comments and feedback on the draft recommendations and strategies. For this meeting the goals are to get feedback directly from the committee members about the various strategies on how they can apply more specifically to Arlington, and to discuss the next steps for public outreach for these recommendations over the next couple of months. Jenny Raitt added that the committee should discuss any takeaways from the forum, identify where the plan recommendations intersect with existing work, and look at some of the bigger picture items. Len Diggins said the committee should focus on what's missing from the plan and less on whether strategies shouldn't be in the plan; the plan has a long timeframe and should be aspirational. Amstutz noted a couple of aspects to still be included are the metrics – which will depend on the final strategies – and two conceptual street designs to be produced by BETA

Group, Nelson/Nygaard's engineering subconsultant. One of the designs is expected to focus on Broadway, while the other is undetermined right now. Completing the plan in January is the goal but this will take a lot of work.

Amstutz went over the results from the first Connect Arlington survey related to the top transportation goals and how they have been translated into a vision for the plan. Darcy Devney asked for clarification about the first and second surveys. Amstutz explained the first survey received over 1,000 responses and the second survey had a little over 200 as of last week. The second survey deadline was extended to Friday, December 18.

Amstutz discussed the idea of a paradigm shift on transportation priorities with this plan, and displayed a diagram created by Nelson/Nygaard. The shift is very similar to Vision Zero principles, where safety and the most vulnerable users are prioritized for projects and policies. Rachael Stark said the plan should also reference the fact that less travel is needed when things are closer together. Amstutz noted this gets into zoning issues, which is currently missing from the plan. Phil Goff recommended changing the graphic of the priority modes to be a pyramid instead of a linear line so things like walking and biking can be put together on the same level. Doug Mayo-Wells recommended including autonomous vehicles and microtransit in the priority graphic, or changing the labels to be examples of different kinds of mobility, to account for potential changes in mobility options over 20 years. Amstutz noted it also needs to incorporate commercial vehicles. Kristine Shah said the plan should include greater reference to Arlington's aging population and other types of disabilities that are not specifically mobility-related. Raitt said referencing age-friendly initiatives and planning should be included. Stark said that adding footnotes to links about different subjects like Vision Zero and age-friendly planning would be helpful for the reader.

The committee discussed the strategies for the Safety goal. Amstutz went over the Vision Zero strategy. Ezekiel Wheeler noted that Vision Zero should be defined earlier in the plan if it will be referenced earlier. Diggins said sustainability should be better defined and noted different kinds of ways to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities that could be included under this definition. Goff said he did not completely agree with some of the assertions under "traditional approach" in the graphic for Vision Zero. Amstutz explained his understanding of Vision Zero and other ways to look at how roads are traditionally designed. Raitt pointed out that the graphic is directly from the Vision Zero Network and represents a policy change and is not meant to represent a single strategy. Amstutz added that this policy would change the way we look at how roads are designed and redesigned in the future, and discussed the work of the Town to redesign and improve pedestrian safety for Chestnut Street.

Amstutz went to the next strategy, "ensure all roadway design projects adhere to the Town's adopted Complete Streets policy." He noted that many aspects of the

Complete Streets policy are already being implemented, but there may be improvements to how it is applied or it may be impacted by new policies like Vision Zero. Stark noted that while planning for more transit is important in Complete Streets, the MBTA needs to improve frequency and reliability to make it work better in Arlington. Wheeler agreed with this statement. Heather Barber noted that federal advocacy will be important in regards to improving transit in the region. Goff noted that the Complete Streets cross-section diagram has a buffer between the sidewalk and the bus lane, which seems wrong.

Amstutz briefly discussed the strategy “Prioritize investments to improve safety at intersections and along road segments with the greatest user conflicts.” He noted a need to explain more about the priority areas they show on their map and what should be improved, because certain areas have had recent projects.

Amstutz brought up the slide about the strategy “Minimize pedestrian crossing distances to increase visibility at intersections where crashes involving pedestrians are highest.” The image showed an example of the bump outs that include bioretention areas at Egerton Road and Herbert Road to highlight that two goals could be addressed this way – safety and stormwater management. Darcy noted the ones in East Arlington had drainage issues recently. Mike Rademacher noted the volume of rain was significant and may not have been an issue related to the rain garden itself. Raitt added that ongoing maintenance is needed and these are being considered in other planning processes.

Amstutz went to the next slide about the strategy “Enhance lighting at intersections and other crossings to focus on pedestrians.” The images showed alternative forms of crosswalk lighting instead of top-down street lights. Rademacher noted that alternative lighting options that are not in the street are better due to issues with maintenance and snow plowing. Raitt noted that there are installations in Brookline of similar to the examples shown of bright lighting from the side. Diggins said he liked the examples shown. Amstutz said a specific strategy or action related to this would be to pilot these lighting alternatives.

Amstutz discussed the strategy “Develop educational programs that promote safe travel by ALL users.” He noted it would be preferred if this strategy was more targeted towards a particular issue or related to a specific safety message as a result of the crash analysis. Diggins noted that he supported this measure and it could be refined later on. Stark agreed that more education for Minuteman Bikeway users is needed since conflicts between users is a common issue. Amstutz noted that a Bikeway study has been funded through the Community Preservation Act that will begin next year.

The committee reviewed the strategies under Mobility For All. Shah recommended adding a reference to accessible ride share in this section as this is frequently an issue.

The committee reviewed the summary of Pedestrian First strategies. Stark noted the fourth strategy (“Expand and maintain the existing street canopy to improve pedestrian safety and comfort”) should say “street tree canopy.” Diggins noted that improved pedestrian push buttons should be included for pedestrian crossings. Goff added that unsignalized crossings need a strategy priority as well, especially for wider, multi-lane roads. These types of roads need additional safety measures, such as signalization, crossing islands, lighting, etc. Amstutz noted that all the recent pedestrian fatalities have been elderly residents and speaks to the need to tie this in with age-friendly planning. Stark added that referencing the mobility challenges of older pedestrians could be included here too. Barber said that communicating that this is planning for transportation for all stages of life is an important perspective to include. Devney said the pedestrian flag program should be mentioned as well, as a low-cost strategy.

The committee reviewed the Bicycle strategies. Committee members discussed the priority of the bicycle parking strategy. Goff said the Minuteman Bikeway should be mentioned here, and its connection to on-street facilities. The strategy “Prioritize new bicycle lanes connecting to existing bicycle facilities to build out a contiguous network” should reference on- and off-street facilities. Mayo-Wells said it would be helpful to have guidance on how to prioritize projects and to what level they should be improved. Amstutz noted he asked Nelson/Nygaard to provide more information on the suggested improvements in their bike network map. Barber suggested including separated bike lanes as an ideal bike facility as part of the strategy around prioritizing new bicycle lanes.

The committee reviewed the Transit strategies. Barber pointed out that increased bus frequency should seek to increase bus ridership as the main goal. Stark noted another possible action is to have the Town advocate for stable transit funding, perhaps through Town Meeting. Diggins suggested advocating for new transit routes via the Bus Network Redesign project, and for improved regional bus accommodations such as bus lanes for Route 77 on Mass Ave in Cambridge. Goff said this section should reference the importance of MBTA transit to serving middle and high school students in Arlington. Raitt noted the ultimate goal is Bus Rapid Transit and the strategies should not be limited just to bus lanes, but include level boarding platforms, transit signal priority, and other elements. Stark added that BRT to Alewife should be included. Devney said the plan should advocate for free and reliable transit service in the region.

The committee reviewed the strategies in the final sections regarding sustainability, quality of life, and transparency of decision-making. Devney pointed out that there should be more tie-ins to previous, current, or upcoming projects and studies, such as the project completed last year by MIT students about Broadway and the upcoming Bikeway study. Goff added that the concept “tactical” should be better defined for the general public.

3. Additional Public Engagement for draft plan and future STPAC meetings.

Amstutz discussed targeted outreach for a future iteration of the plan, after it has been further refined based on comments from the forum, the STPAC, and the second survey. Diggins noted that sending a draft of this to the Standing Committee of Envision Arlington could help disseminate review by their sub-committees and get good feedback. Julie Wayman noted the Capital Planning Committee and the Community Preservation Act Committee would also be interested in reviewing the draft of the plan. Amstutz said he will follow up with the committee on next meetings and provide this committee meeting recording to Nelson/Nygaard.

4. Approval of Minutes from November 6, 2020.

Amstutz noted that these minutes are incomplete and will be tabled until next meeting.

5. Automatic pedestrian walking signals (Automatic Recall).

This item was postponed to a future meeting due to time constraints.

6. Adjourn.