

MINUTES OF A RESCHEDULED REGULAR MEETING
OF THE DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMISSION
AND
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
: TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION :

SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

A Rescheduled Regular Meeting of the City of Peoria's Downtown Advisory Commission and Joint Special Meeting of the Transportation Commission, for Public Workshop #2 Regarding the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, convened at 5:36 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015, at the Peoria Riverfront Museum located at 222 SW Washington Street, Peoria, Illinois.

CALL TO ORDER – DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMISSION

The following Downtown Advisory Commission Members were in attendance: Commissioner Alison Daly, Commissioner Rebecca Frye, Commissioner John Gibson, Commissioner Adam Hamilton, Commissioner Jon Jenkins, Commissioner Ray Lees, Chairman Mark Misselhorn, and Commissioner Kip Strasma – 8.

Absent: None.

CALL TO ORDER – TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

The following Transportation Commission Members were in attendance: Commissioner Mary Jane Crowell, Commissioner George Ghareeb, Commissioner Nathaniel Herz, Chairman Joe Hudson, Commissioner Brandon Lott, Commissioner Lon Lyons, Commissioner Pat McNamara, Commissioner Joe Messmore, and Commissioner Randall Ray - 9.

Absent: Commissioner Dan Adler and Commissioner Michael Vespa - 2.

Others in attendance are included on the attached Sign-In Sheet, and also included Councilwoman Beth Jensen, Assistant City Manager Chris Setti, Public Works Director Michael Rogers, Assistant Director of Public Works/City Engineer Scott Reise, City Traffic Engineer Nick Stoffer, Jereck Boss and Tarah Brand of OJB Landscape Architecture, Nick Vlahos of the *Journal Star*, and Public Works Administrative Specialist Ruth Blancaflor.

1. Welcome.

Public Works Director Michael Rogers welcomed all who were in attendance and he introduced presenter Jereck Boss of OJB Landscape Architecture.

2. Overview of Master Streetscape Planning Efforts.

Mr. Boss introduced his associate, Ms. Tarah Brand. He discussed their work for Oklahoma City's Downtown Business District and he said they were excited to be a part of Peoria's process.

He gave a quick background on the July 8th Downtown Streetscape Master Plan Workshop #1, which was held at the Gateway Building. He explained they discussed Complete Streets philosophies and the amenities that made for great streets.

Mr. Boss said his team had been walking the city and taking photos and looking at present conditions, while considering reinvigorating the Central Business District, Warehouse District, medical centers, and positioning Peoria for the next generation.

3. Summary of Input, Findings and Recommendations.

Mr. Boss outlined the specifics the Workshop #1 participants had considered as they took a walking tour through the city, including lane sizes and numbers, curb cuts, crosswalks, signage and signalization, and plantings. He said they considered the condition of the street trees and what pieces of the infrastructure felt the best. Then, he said, the participants met in groups and formulated comments on their findings. The comments received at the first workshop fell into 8 different categories, he said, and he pointed out each comment as summarized on the display, including the metrics of votes. He noted there were 65 people in attendance at the first workshop.

Mr. Boss said there were many comments and observations about streetscape typology including regarding parking and about the biking infrastructure in Peoria. In the study area, he said there were currently only three blocks just outside of the Central Business District, in the medical center along Hamilton, with any kind of noted bike facility on the street.

Using the information in the input summary, Mr. Boss said they then prepared a site analysis and worked with the city's steering committee to establish goals. He requested that those in attendance tonight add any new goals and ideas to the materials on their tables. He said the genius in the public process was the collection of ideas from the differing thoughts and experiences of those participating.

Mr. Boss discussed the Peoria Streetscape Goals and things like the freeze-thaw cycle, snow stacking and spacing of street trees that make Peoria unique from some other cities. He said the green and environmentally-friendly systems placed had to be easily replaceable with future development or improvements. Regarding downtown Peoria's walkability, he said there were challenges with accessibility, which could be for young parents with strollers or pedestrians with canes. He said there were four users downtown: pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles and users with special needs. He explained that and walkability gave all users a fair shot at navigating the city. Also important for consideration, he said, were lighting, clear wayfinding and signage.

Next in their site and existing conditions analyses, Mr. Boss said the team walked the corridor alignments of the city—north, south, east and west—in the study area to get an understanding and map the movements of traffic functions. He said they noted odd conditions at Fayette and Perry, relating to Kumpf. Then, when they drove a car in the city, he said they discovered interesting puzzles, such as on Fayette, where some spots weren't accessible. They noted that some streets downtown, like Madison, didn't connect to other streets, and he said Fulton Street was set up so that motorists had to take a big loop to get around.

Mr. Boss further discussed the 8 conditions outlined in the Existing Traffic Plan they created from their analyses. He noted the loud signalizations for pedestrians at traffic signals, the lack of biking facilities—important to Millennials—and the fact that many of the street trees either needed care or were missing in many spots.

Main Street's connections to the medical centers were discussed and Mr. Boss noted the great view coming down Main Street Hill. He said it had a nice street "wall," which he explained as all

those pieces of architecture that made up the walls, or canyons, of a street. He said there were some blank spots but some new businesses had been adding the connections.

Mr. Boss discussed the key sections that were reviewed. He said they looked at the direction and width of the traffic lanes. Typically, he said, the wider the lane the faster the car travels. He noted some brief conclusions of selected streets and discussed the Existing Roadway Sections slides:

- Perry, he said did not carry enough traffic for three full lanes.
- Monroe – is in transition right now.
- Madison – kind of dead ends through the city.
- Jefferson – lots of lanes and intermittent parking availability.
- Adams – the same way; a little wider than Jefferson.
- Fayette – interesting; on the freeway side, there's not a lot happening, but it has opportunity.
- Hamilton – same way; some vacancies; at the bottom of the hill, it widens up again.
- Main Street – great opportunity.
- Fulton – there were opportunities there; it's closed right now; some comments were to open it up; some said make it a park.
- Kumpf – interesting. Is two-way for a block; one-way for three, odd at Perry, then gets really big again until it goes over the bridge. It is dying to have a little clarity.

Mr. Boss said the team used the road section information and looked at the workshop comments, best practices and metrics, and balanced the art and the science to present the “first pass” tonight. He said there may be some surprises in the items to be discussed.

The Transportation Planning Methodologies slide was presented. He described the 15 methodologies as being guiding principles that required balance with other things like traffic signals and bike lanes, because they effect walkability. Regarding item #4, he said on-street parking was the single greatest item to help retail businesses. Regarding item #5, he said dedicated turn lanes made people a little less likely to stop. He said many cities were reducing traffic lanes, in order to balance those with the actual growth and development they had realized. Regarding item #13, Maintenance Strategies, he said durable materials were key. He said Peoria needed a great urban street tree canopy, which could be transforming to a city. Regarding item #15, he said a Clear Design Vision was needed, especially in the Central Business District (CBD) to make it identifiable.

Mr. Boss discussed the Proposed Traffic Circulation slide and suggestions for separating pedestrians and traffic. He briefly noted the following big ideas:

- Adams and Jefferson as two-way streets—scaled down a bit;
- Jefferson and Adams needed street diets; suggested taking them down to three lanes with one lane in each direction and a center turn lane;
- Adams – Jefferson: three lanes on Jefferson going west and three lanes on Adams going east and adding a bike lane. It keeps the one-way solution but one of those lanes is dropped; three lanes will still handle a lot of traffic. A center turn lane and lanes in each direction and a bike lane on each side of the street could be added with paint alone.
 - Jefferson seems a better vehicle connection.
- Glendale and Kumpf - He said the alignment should be re-worked, as there were high speeds and wide alignments, which scare pedestrians.

- Give Fayette a lane going north with a left onto Glendale; one lane going north and two lanes going south.
- Fulton Street – should go through because it connects a big piece of downtown with City Hall and the Civic Center. It would be great to connect the city with the entertainment to the south.
- Regarding Glendale at Fayette, he suggested slowing down some cars there for connectivity between the CBD and medical centers. He said the sidewalks were a little tight there for pedestrians.
- Perry – Reconfigure it to take away the curve and give it a connection from the east and west.
 - Like Main Street, Perry also has a nice street wall.

Mr. Boss discussed the Proposed Parking considerations. He said the parking diagram was reviewed with the steering committee. He said Monroe, Madison, Fulton, Liberty, Harrison, and some of the streets moving west in the Warehouse District had 100 feet of right-of-way, which could be narrowed for two lanes of traffic and angled parking on some streets. He said they had discussed angled parking with six different cities; some similar cities to Peoria; some larger. He said many cities used back-in angled parking because it worked better for cars to pull out without having blind spots and it minimized conflicts with bikes and cars.

Regarding accessible parking considerations for street parking, Mr. Boss said many cities were adding one handicapped accessible parking spot for each 25 stalls and placing them according to ADA and Best Practices standards. He pointed out that on-street parking provided a buffer for pedestrians and vehicles and made walkability safer.

Mr. Boss discussed the Bike Lane Considerations. Depending on a street's alignment, he said the ideas ranged from a dedicated bike lane to sharrow lanes. He said Perry Street was a key connection, which would be one of the first streets to transition from one-way to two-way for walkability, bikes and connectivity. Also, he said Jefferson and Adams were nice east-west connections. In their research, he said every city they talked with had seen success attracting cyclists by adding bike facilities. He displayed Google's Bike Peoria Travel Times to check for travel times and connections around the city of Peoria. He said the Federal Highway Administration guidelines stated that clearly defined facilities, 4-6' wide dedicated lanes, and great signage worked together to create good bike facilities.

In describing Bike Facility Types, Mr. Boss said bike lanes might be striped, only. In New York, he said, bike lanes were painted a really bright green, but in some cities they were defined only by a decal on the pavement. He explained bike boxes, which held back vehicles in an intersection. Sharrow lanes had clearly-defined special striping in both travel lanes, which he said reminded drivers and cyclists that they shared the lane. He described cycle track facilities, which he said weren't often used in smaller cities, but more in big cities with higher volumes of automobiles and lanes. He said those consisted of a parking lane and then the bike lane, with plantings separating automobiles and bike facilities.

Mr. Boss discussed Walkability and Open Space ideas. He suggested taking large parking areas where some of it may not be needed and adding green spaces. He said people would walk more and just walking 5 more minutes, one could cover a good distance in downtown Peoria. He said parking, street tree canopies, filled store fronts, and street pushcarts were desirable for a walkable community. A goal would be to have those same amenities in the full Central Business District.

Mr. Boss stated that a large park just north of the civic center would add green space, and green space could also retain some of the storm water that comes off the streets, to help with the combined sewer overflow (CSO) problem in the city. He suggested another place to capture green space was near the medical centers where some parking and sidewalk could be removed and replaced with a community garden, volleyball pits, and children's garden. He said green working spaces transformed impressions and brought people out of their vehicles to the common space, creating a walkable downtown.

Peoria's downtown street types were discussed. Mr. Boss said most streets had 11' lanes, and some which were 11 ½ feet had to be wider because of snow removal and different conditions here. He said there were mixed use developments and new urban developments, and some sidewalks were too wide and some sidewalks weren't wide enough. He said having a pedestrian zone was essential to building the city and the tax base.

Street Typologies were discussed by Mr. Boss. Regarding Perry Avenue, he discussed the existing three lanes versus having two lanes with a bike lane. He stated that Main Street, Monroe, and Fulton had already changed by the addition of back-in, angled parking, but they needed consistency of design with an urban canopy, places to sit and lots of parking. He said two travel lanes on Hamilton would be adequate, with the addition of a bike lane, on either the inside or outside lanes. Regarding Kumpf Boulevard, he said it was his opinion that two lanes in each direction would probably handle all the traffic there.

Mr. Boss discussed the city's challenge with CSOs. He said research showed really well drained soils in Peoria, so capturing water from the streets and transferring it to the planting areas with Biosystems, or storing it in a big gravel layer, could take 20% or 50% of the water off of the streets and into the ground.

4. Discussion and Next Steps.

Mr. Boss pointed out the Complete Streets diagrams on the tables and he asked the groups to make notes of their ideas and draw specific additional trees or street lights or other configurations on those diagrams. He said that new information would be utilized for the next workshop.

At 6:37 p.m., those in attendance broke into groups and worked on their notes from the information presented and the diagrams on the tables.

At 7:07 p.m. the groups gave their findings.

Group #1:

- Parking has to work for mass events
- Bike shares
- Streetscapes could and should recognize and celebrate the river
- Can we tie green spaces together to cause a sense of flow
- Liked the idea of bio-retention—should be maximized
- Maintenance is pivotal because items have to be kept nice for the long term
 - Don't put in poor plant items because they will fail and defeat the purpose

Group #2:

- Add pedestrian-level lights along light poles
- Bike racks; bike shares
- Trash receptacles/recycling receptacles
- Opening Fulton, but closing it for special events
- How to maintain this after it's installed
- Educating the public on native plants—that they are working plants that may not look beautiful but they are functional
- Growing native plants and using them ourselves; as a source of plant materials for infrastructure and as a business for someone
- Put protected bike lane down the middle of the road as an option for streets that are wide enough for it

Group #3:

- Sidewalk widths – there needs to be more uniformity
- Cement planters – need to make room for those (on Washington they are too close to passenger side for opening and closing doors); make sure they work for parking
- Ideally, some streets should have fewer bike lanes; in the discussion about the proposed bike routes we noted no discussion of where the buses go; ideally one street with less bike lanes but not with bus routes, because bikes don't interact well with buses
- This group perceived back-in, angled parking as not being popular
- We liked water filtration zones
- Were skeptical that a park at the north of the Civic Center may not get used; should be more in the center of everything
- One street with bike lanes each direction with an opportunity to add more, as needed, but one is good for now, for a connection
- Using a boulevard down the center of the block; could be a turn lane and a boulevard lane at the intersections
- We liked Perry as a bike lane through downtown, but look at it in the northeast for connectivity—it might require routing to Monroe or Madison, once one gets out of downtown area

Group #4:

- Supported and encouraged Complete Streets philosophies.
- Green techniques with storm water solutions being incorporated in all streetscape; with our experiences in the Warehouse District and at Main and University, where they have been implemented, it has been positive.
- Traffic flow and reconfiguring streets: we didn't have a negative but wanted to point out there are many terrible places where traffic doesn't work but we have grown used to it.
- Main Street - boulevard and gathering places are great.
- With the parking schemes—need to make sure CityLink stop locations are visible.

Group #5:

- When we are putting in trees, be sure we are not creating total blockade so businesses can't be found; we don't want it to interfere with the economy
- Regarding bikes, just adding a buffer or protected buffered bike lanes will take out a whole lot of risk; between bike lanes and automobiles or between bike lane and parking lane or both, would help reduce risk

- Adding bike facilities to Main Street Hill could help get cyclists up the hill. (Going down Main Street hill, going up is challenging and most people can't do it—they will walk; San Francisco has something called the Wiggle, utilizing a few streets to make the easiest way to get up the hills; it is easier here to use Hamilton to Crescent, then left on Crescent, which cuts the hill in half and it's actually a little descent but it helps bikers get up the hill.)

Group #6:

- We like two-way streets, especially on Adams and Jefferson
- We like opening up Fulton Plaza again
- Connectivity of all streets
- Considering some of the alleys and side streets—they are actually old streets, so make sure we pay attention to them
- Funding plants and getting the right type of plants for the area
- Snow stacking and plow speeds negatively affect old buildings due to salt
- Riverfront public spaces
- We liked the idea of the park, but at Kumpf and Perry; would help connect it
- Phasing in the planning; how will we phase all of this—short bursts or one big master plan
- We like a boulevard on Main—we think that would calm it
- It is very good that Caterpillar headquarters has a green space in their plan.

Group #7:

- Setting priorities—where's the biggest bang for the buck
- Look at funding that is available and what can we do to attract those types of funds
- Snow storage—these things that we put in would be buried
- Take into account Caterpillar's planning
- Cedar Street (bridge) access is tight; needs to be looked at
- Sight screenings in the Gateway into Peoria
- Buffered bike lanes
- Utilities – what will happen to some or all poles and wiring
- Federal funding restrictions (has to be repaid if we take back out the items put in using federal funding, i.e. recently "Upgrade 74"—20 year timeline)

5. Public Comment.

Transportation Commissioner Patrick McNamara requested that the final boards presented tonight be posted to the city's web site.

Mr. Boss said the information would be shared with and posted by the City, and he directed additional comments to be sent to peoriastreet@obj.com. He said his team would work with the city steering committee and continue to progress the plans and ideas in the next coming weeks. He said great comments had been received this evening and that the next public meeting (anticipated to be the last) to share findings and some of the recommendations would take place within four to six weeks.

There was a question about the creation of a master plan to be adopted by the City Council as a strategic plan, and Public Works Director Michael Rogers stated this process would provide needed direction and the techniques with solutions favored by the community for future planning.

In discussion with Downtown Advisory Commissioner Ray Lees regarding Caterpillar's response to this input, Mr. Boss said the City of Peoria would coordinate with Caterpillar to add these comments and layers to a plan. He introduced Don Mahannah, from Cat, who had been working with Assistant City Manager Chris Setti.

Assistant City Manager Christopher Setti asked those in attendance to send their closing comments at their earliest opportunity to the peoriastreet@obj.com email address. He thanked everyone for the feedback, and he said having a plan allowed improvements to be made to the system as funding became available. He thanked Caterpillar, OJB and all in attendance for being a part of the meeting.

6. Adjournment.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Nick Stoffer, Traffic Engineer

/rmb