

**City Stakeholders Meeting
Operation SAFEWALKS
Meeting Minutes
Friday, December 14, 2007
8 a.m.**

*Mid-Ohio Planning Commission
Buckeye Meeting Room
111 Liberty Street, Suite 100
Columbus, OH 43215*

Attendees:

Chris Gawronski – MORPC
Bernice Cage – MORPC
Dilip Karpoor – MORPC
Randy Bowman

Nick Popa
Kathleen Dussault
Dick Graham
Kevin Wheeler

Christine Godward
Robert Herr
Eric Brandon
Lelia Cady

1. Chris Gawronski opened the meeting with a background of the policy and procedure of sidewalk construction in Columbus, including who, in regards to construction, is responsible for what and in aiding the city in formulating new policy in regards to sidewalk construction. In addition, they are looking at the Capital Improvement Process in the city of Columbus to get a better understanding of all the aspects of that; who does what, and try to understand everything about it so that the city can better formulate some new policies and bring all of what is going on into better balance.
2. CIP (Capital Improvement Program) information review
 - Brief description of the handed out documents.
 - CIP Process Review
 - Interviews were done with the transportation department, and then some interviews in the department of utilities to get a better understanding of the process that each department uses to develop its capital improvement project listing.
 - The transportation department has a defined time-frame that it goes through every year starting early in the year, looking at neighboring jurisdictions through paving-the-way, websites, and meetings; identifying projects in neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate plans.
 - The prior year list of CIP projects is looked at; to see if anything needs to be changed, update if anything is moving ahead faster, or is going to need to be delayed.

- The section heads within the division get together and discuss the division's capital needs for the next several years.
 - Finally, meet with the public utilities department, annually, in order to make sure that both departments have an understanding as to what the other is doing.
 - The public service department operates from general revenue funds, along with bond funding within the projects that transportation and public service oversees, but the department itself runs on general revenue.
- In the utilities department, it is a significantly different process in that the utilities department operates on enterprise funds as opposed to the general fund. Rates are adjusted annually as needed to accommodate system needs and each division, two of the three divisions deal with capital projects and were interviewed; Power & Water and Sewer & Drainage. Those divisions do not have a defined timeframe for going through their capital improvement process. The two divisions have more of an ongoing project development process. They are developing projects throughout the year and then in July they meet internally in order to send an updated list to the department of finance for compilation of the rest of the city departments. The projects are developed on an as-needed basis.
 - There are a some coordination opportunities in the meetings; in speaking with sewage & drainage, they noted that the drainage issues, storm water in particular, is usually the best type of partnership for partnership because that usually involves digging. The sanitary sewers are often "cured in place" or in situ projects where there is not a lot of digging involved, so these sorts of projects do not lend themselves to partnership with the sort of projects that transportation division is doing.
 - The GIS component; the electronic component
 - In discussions, it was discovered that there was a Columbus Capital Projects map. This is an online, GIS tool that was accessible to all departments. Apparently this has not been maintained, so the information will need clarification.
 - Both utilities and transportation do maintain the GIS database's projects. The files are shared on an as-needed basis by request, but are not currently maintained on the shared system. However, the capacity does exist for the sharing. It is thought that this is something that may need to be explored further for re-establishment.

A discussion of the website and its meaning ensued. The website and database is maintained on the intranet as opposed to the internet. This is in the beginning stages, and everything will become more of an integrated and ongoing pattern of data. In the department of technology, the project manager is Dennis Laroche, he would be the contact person. Others offered information regarding

the beginnings of the website, and volunteered to update the committee on any changes that may occur.

It was asked if the basic structure for each department was correct, in terms of timeline and description process. One correction was noted; the service department operates with general revenue funds but transportation, and its operating costs are almost 100% either revenues from inspection fees and plan review fees, developer related fees or are motor fuel tax receipts, which is the largest share. These are funds coming from the state through the general fund.

It was asked of Chris, "When you say it is general fund, or now, another fund, are you referring to capital projects, because capital projects are funded from income tax receipts as opposed to operating funds for salaries, etc." Chris agreed that the distinction should be made in the future. There are operating and then there is capital funds in two different pots of money. Capital projects are funded from income tax receipts. It was stated that over the last few years and what is looked at in the future, the capital fund has been pretty constant. There was a period of time, 4-5 years ago; the fund was significantly less due to the economy in general.

It was asked, would it get to the point that whenever public utilities is going to enclose a ditch, will the question be asked, should we add a sidewalk to this. This is probably not something that will happen very frequently at this point because from an environmental standpoint that is something that is being discouraged in general. The closing of ditches is not looked at as an environmentally friendly practice.

3. Dilip Karpoor presented the flowchart and process documentation.

- The document identifies what the needs assessment processes are, and goes into the different types of sidewalk construction process. This comes out of the discussion with the transportation division.
 - There are 5 types of processes that are identified that help in the needs assessment process.
 - New community mobility planning – process in which the community and the stakeholders are interested in the quality of life and provide input into identifying what their issues are. They are considered the experts in the process as they are living in the area and are the most familiar with the issues they have. The city plays the role of facilitator in getting them the solutions that they need through an instructive process. Linden and Franklinton are examples of this.
 - Sidewalks to school – process in which there is a committee including Columbus schools that have identified sidewalk needs with the attempt of getting to schools safely. This has created an extensive list of projects which is already backlogged. There is no further needs assessment process going on in this process.
 - COTA Stops – not much information is available; but if there is more information available, it would be helpful in getting this process underway. It was thought to be a one-shot deal, identifying all of the

COTA stops needing sidewalks, that was the list. Federal funds were applied for, and a project was made. The stops identified were located throughout the city; it is unknown why the ones chosen were built. It was thought that there was a formula of sorts and it was understood that there was so much more need than money that criteria was never finalized. It was not completely haphazard, but at the same time it was not orderly.

- Public complaint process – calls taken through the 311 call center. The call center currently addresses a range of issues, including the sidewalk and pedestrian issues. Neighborhood traffic has come through the 311 call center. While it is a process, clarification is needed as to what is the follow-up procedure, how is the data maintained, It was noted that all 311 calls were able to be mapped, and put into order by traffic, traffic calming or sidewalk requests. DOT was asked to add the rest of the columns, ie; this is a dangerous intersection, this is a problem, etc. This aids in getting a lot more data to decide what to do in certain areas and how many citizens are concerned about the same issues. The 311 call data will be connected to the GIS map, the information can be queried and reports can be made regarding citizen issues. DOT is granting access to the database; the access includes when the call was made and what the major heading was. A log is now kept of all public complaint calls coming into the City Council office.
- Roadway Scoping Process – Complete Streets. The question was asked as to how this process could document sidewalk needs. Is it policy based or would it be project specific. It was decided that this is something that is currently being worked on.

It was pointed out that this endeavor tends to vary from area to area. Some of the areas delineate sidewalk needs specifically, while some others are more general. The public is able to view area plans online. Area plans & neighborhood plans are titled for the community that they correspond to. The city is attempting to establish a more consistent approach to doing them; the city is going to start 4 new plans in the next couple of months. It is certain that one thing that will emerge from the plans is a discussion about pedestrian facilities. The city tries to “walk a fine line” between not over representing our ability to do the transportation division’s job in working with these communities, but also reflecting certain fundamental needs that they have. Some of the plans are very specific; sidewalks are needed on XYZ road, it doesn’t talk about “here is the alignment”, it is more they “need to be there.” Those plans have benefited from public debate and discussion and have city council adoption, so that it is not a list that someone has made up. It was added that another qualitative level of data with the walkability assessments in the pride neighborhood was done. It is very qualitative as only a small number of neighborhoods were polled, but it would be easy to add another neighborhood perspective. So far, the assessments are only being done in the pride neighborhoods. The city is always open to options, but so far, these are the ones being used.

Bill Lewis brought up a couple points regarding funding programs. While they are funding programs, they are also a way of learning about sidewalk needs. This is through the Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund, where area commissions are allotted and can apply for so many dollars to be used for sidewalks, streetscapes or other minor infrastructural improvements. Sidewalk needs and projects can be typically identified through the community themselves through that funding program. The Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Program also is a way to identify infrastructure needs; sidewalks, curbs, streetscapes, etc. The NCR program is not started because of citizen activity; instead it is a federal designation allows it to be eligible so the city can set out these areas. In regards to sidewalks, the office is “afraid to ask” due to the amount of need and limited amount of dollars.

The next step is looking the different sidewalk construction processes steps that currently exist. A flow chart was referenced, which talked about the decision making process which leads to the selection of the appropriate construction process. The second item is a summary of what the processes are; from a distinction in what are the areas of overlap and how are the areas different from each other. Both were brought into the meeting as options.

The Network Flow chart – the items in gray are identified as parameters which help to decide which process each specific project would allow. The charts describe each item, such as what type of project, be it stand alone project, or if there are obstructions present. If there are minor obstructions, the project falls into Drawer A, if there are no obstructions, then it is a quick to construct. Based on these parameters and decisions they fall under these specific categories.

Overview of the three different processes –

- Quick to construct approach is the simplest process; it is a standalone project on a flat side with no right of way or utility relocation issues. The building process is more on an “on call” and a location to be determined in which the contractor is waiting for instructions as to where the project has to be built. There are no design processes involved, the sidewalk is being built to standards and the approval depends on the on-site approval between the project manager and the contractor. This is the simplest form process.
- If there is a slight change or obstruction or slight need to design, it would still fall under the quick to construct approach, but there is a small design process in which there is a sketch drawing, referred to light. The contractor then follows the same construction process as above. Minor obstructions refers to shrubbery, undergrowth, etc that needs to be easily removed along the side of the street.
- Drawer A approach – this is still up in the air as to whether or not this is a process by itself or is it a minor variation from the Quick to construct.

Based on initial discussions, three distinct processes were identified; QDC, Drawer A & Drawer E. But based upon subsequent follow up, there is reason to believe that Drawer A is also Quick to construct, but with minor variations. It was asked if we are to still view this as three distinct processes or do we want to identify them as two. It was suggested to formalize what Drawer A is or even change its name, because different things have been heard about it; no longer used, it was once this and now it's that. Some internal clarification is necessary. The significant distinction noted

was that the Drawer A process is slightly elaborate in the design issues; it is actually laid out on site and approved. Most importantly, it could do with the director's approval. You don't need to have more elaborate review process. It was noted that Drawer A was typically used for re-surfacing projects, where it is the same thing over and over. There is some level of engineering involved but not large scale. It is thought that the three distinctions still have merit, but more detail is needed.

In the Drawer E process, Dilip just wanted to touch on it, and noted that this is part of a larger project. It is a more complex site and there are issues of ecological location and right of way acquisition. In conclusion, there are significant obstructions and the review process is also extensive and is laid out in detail as to what each of the processes need to match the standards. As Dilip finished, the floor was opened for discussion; it was asked that if these are the process going to be part of the prioritization process of the sidewalk construction; if it is easy, do "we" do it, quickly, because easy means less dollars. Or is it still necessary to meet all requirements in Operation Safewalks dollar figures. As we want to show progress, the quick to construct projects are going to be the ones that will be able to get done and logging feet of sidewalk build.

Chris responded to the prioritization question saying that it made sense because cost is going to be a part of prioritization.

A response was that a sidewalk may be built that cost less, but did not have a high priority in regards to the other factors that the citizenry can question why it was completed first as opposed to another that is more necessary. It makes sense that cost would be a factor. It was noted that maybe it becomes a list based on all the factors that were originally talked about and then pull out the ones that are quick to construct to do first, even though there may be another one listed as high priority on the qualitative needs assessment. In this, the separation of needs vs. implementation would need to be done. It can be looked on as valid criteria.

Drawer E can also be used for standalone sidewalks; i.e., when developers are required to build sidewalks, it would require a Drawer E set of plans from them. Drawer E projects, if a site ramp, it is necessary to build a right of way. It is necessary to go through the Drawer E process to build right of way maps to get the acquisition process. Depending on the complexity of the sidewalk, if there is a lot of utility relocation, right away, it is necessary to go with Drawer E.

According to the flow chart, Drawer E does not necessarily include all of the factors, but if any one of these factors is present, it then goes to Drawer E. If the project is complex and if right of way is required or if it part of another project or it was questioned if several of the factors must be present to be considered a Drawer E process. Lilia noted that any one of the factors could force the project into Drawer E.

The bidding process was brought up; a question was raised as to how it is considered as an input for selection. Dilip responded explaining that in quick to construct and in Drawer A, the location is to be determined. The contractor is placed on an on-call basis, so they are identified as the contractor, but the location is specified when the project comes up. Chris clarified with the issue of whether that particular sidewalk project being bid out individually or is it the on-call contractor who is on retainer. Separating out the project to one contractor responsible for 20 feet and the next contractor being

responsible for the next 30 feet, questioned are the projects all individually bid on? It was noted that in both avenues, on-call and project specific, although it was questioned how that is a determinant versus that is what is done with whatever is done with the decision. It was suggested that all on-call be in Drawer E.

Dilip noted that as far as the details involved in Drawer E, such as standards, since the group is looking to document the processes which have not yet been documented, if there are standard references for either Drawer A or Drawer B, it would be easier to refer to those documents. He also stated that if there was any other information that needed to be included, that is something that needs to be addressed.

Chris referenced the two charts explaining that they are good tools for new staff or other members of the department who do not do this type of work all the time to understand how the process works.

Chris opened the floor to Lilia; city council added a project, on the road to complete streets which will be opened up to the public in future meetings. The city council's interest in sidewalks goes back many years, creating a budget in 1999. Council will not be able to meet all of the needs with public funds; those that can afford can, and should pay for the sidewalk in the front of their property. Council is opening up programs that can help those that want to pay for their walks will be able to by making them affordable and offering payment plans and help. Another component of this project is some benchmarking information; it will be discussed with the project team. One of the pieces of information that has been collected is maintenance and policies in other cities and ways that they are going about getting things done.

Chris ended by saying that information will be updated based on what was discussed at the meeting and what is obtained from outside sources afterwards. This is the internal component of the project, once the information is correct, the next step will be to develop a sidewalk prioritization mechanism. This has a more public face to it. There are two public meetings scheduled, one in January and one in February, the first meeting to "roll out" the concept and some initial ideas and get feedback, the February meeting will be a follow up on that, explaining what was done with the feedback and recommendations. It is suggested that individuals from Council and City administration be included in these meetings.

A discussion regarding the development of a public website ensued.