Item 24-0338: Approve the Complete Streets Documents: a. Complete Streets Policy b. Pedestrian Crossing Improvements Policy c. Priority Project Locations d. Complete Streets Design Guide

Municipal Services Committee
Mon, Mar 25, 2024 4:30PM

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 09:48
And we'll move to our next item 24-0338 to approve the Complete Streets documents, the (a) complete streets policy, (b) pedestrian cross improvements policy, (c) priority project locations, and (d) Complete Streets design guide. Do we have a motion?

Alderperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 10:08
Move to approve.

Alderperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 10:09
Second.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 10:09
We have a motion to approve and a second. Who would like to start us out? Okay, Director Block.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 10:18
Thank you, Chair. I'm really pleased to bring these documents forward to the committee tonight. This has been a labor of love, I would say, in working with our consultant, and our staff, and traffic, and community development have worked very hard on this document. And I think the engagement with the community has gone well. And we're pleased to present these.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 10:48
We kicked this off—geez—a few months back. Remember the big colorful timeline we shared with everybody. So, we're at the point now where the community engagement period is complete. So, we had our virtual listening session, and people were able to submit comments and feedback. We've worked with staff internally from different departments to solicit feedback as well.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 11:15
We've had a few discussions here on the point we're at now and what might be considered in the future, and we're cognizant of existing policies within DPW that may have to be discussed at a later date related to our complete streets—I think there's some older policies, but we can get to that at a later time as well. So, I'm really thankful for the input and review time by everyone—alders, community, staff. And tonight we are asking for consideration to approve those four documents.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 11:55
I would note that the complete street streets guide includes the traffic calming retrofit program. So, this program—it's important to remember that it would require further discussion and budget discussion regarding funding sources to actually implement that. But the framework is within the policy, or within the guide, I should say for us to consider tonight.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 12:20
We do have our consultant Alta, on Zoom tonight. The video feed is not connecting, but they are here via audio so they can hear us. Lisa Bender and Colin Harris from Alta are on the line, and I will kick it over to them to describe some of the community input themes we heard during the listening session and open it up for questions as well.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 12:46
Thank you.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 12:49
Thank you so much, everyone, this is Lisa Bender from Alta. I can see you, so I'll just be a voice I think in the air, but really excited to be at this point. And to just quickly update and remind about the stakeholder engagement that has happened so far. So back in July of 2023, we did stakeholder interviews with both external and internal partners. And then we've been providing regular updates to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee along with a staff working group, and then the periodic updates that we've provided to you. We also hosted an open house on February 29.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 13:28
And throughout all of those different events and meetings, we've heard a lot of consistency in the stakeholder themes. So really still that focus on safety for all ages and abilities. There's a lot of consensus around calming traffic and supporting multiple transportation options so that no matter how folks are trying to get around Appleton, they're able to do so safely and conveniently. A lot of strategic thinking about how to prioritize without—within budget constraints and to plan for maintenance. We had a lot of great engagement from all the different staff departments, fire, and maintenance staff right from the beginning. And I think the latest drafts continue to incorporate that commitment to really being practical in the implementation of these policies and guidelines.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 14:23
And so, a lot of that theme carried through the public meeting. We heard a lot of support there. And the comments really were, were really a lot of details about how this could happen in the future. So, there were comments about stormwater management, about the types of tree species and being sort of ecologically thoughtful about what kinds of tree species to use. There were comments about specific networks that folks wanted to see built out in the future. So, a lot of support and even some more detail beyond the scope of this project. And we are very happy to answer any further questions.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 15:05
Any questions from the committee or alders present? Alder Doran.

Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 15:13
Thank you. I think at the previous meeting, or one of the previous meetings, I had asked about just some—looking for some clarification for a couple of terms that were included in the policy. One of them that I see still present in the document is about "equity concerns", and the other one was about "priority populations". And I think at the time, I just sort of asked for clarification on what those things actually mean, because a lot of the other terms and definitions, I think, throughout the policy are pretty clear, standard language we use in in public works operations, in terms of our interactions with roads and things like that, but those I think are new terms that we haven't used before. And I'm just trying to see if I missed somewhere in the document where those are explained so that we're all on the same page of how those are, I guess, enforced as part of the policy.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 16:14
Go ahead.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 16:14
I can jump in to—thank you so much for the question and happy to address. One piece of that is our addition of a definition of "vulnerable road user". So, within the complete streets policy document, we originally had reference prioritizing safety, mobility for vulnerable road users. In the Complete Streets checklist, we offered a location where staff could document those different populations based on the specific context of the street. But based on this type of feedback, we did include examples of types of priority populations. As far as the equity— it's a great question about the equity piece. We did use specific data sets in the equity map that was included as part of the prioritization exercise. So that's documented in that methodology.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 17:23
Did you want to follow up Alder Doran?

Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 17:26
I guess I'll let perhaps engineer Lom go first.

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 17:28
I was just going to locate that specific language for you if you didn't find it. It's in the—under the second paragraph on the complete streets policy under the heading of scope toward the bottom of that paragraph,

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 17:42
I recalled seeing what—something like that but was unable to locate it using—okay, there we go.

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 17:49
So, the first paragraph under scope toward the bottom of that paragraph.

Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 17:54
Got it. Thank you. And then the other follow up question, I guess, I'm sure Director Lom's probably prepared for me to ask was about the cost question that I had raised last time. Has staff were able to do any sort of further analysis, if of what we'd be looking at for, you know, the rough cost of a, what we'll call now a complete street versus what we have been doing as far as treatments to our roads and streets in the past and how we will look to pay for those, assuming that cost is increased?

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 18:27
So generally, what we're looking at with this is really just trying to more efficiently use the resources that we have, not really expanding or adding any additional costs to the budget. A lot of times when we talk about Complete Streets people are visualizing what we did in the downtown last year, where it's colored concrete, and it's decorative streetlights, and all of those things. That can get to be quite a large incremental cost. But the vast majority of when we talk about Complete Streets, isn't really the finishings, the some of the things that you see in the downtown. It's things we're doing just on regular streets.

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 19:13
And what we've been finding on a few projects that we've already been attempting to—or to implement this is that there's there are intersection treatments, and that's what everybody tends to focus on, like traffic circles, curb extensions, things like that. And those can introduce a little bit of incremental cost. But what it usually—or what it very often also includes is narrowing of the street, and that comes with a lot of savings, not just savings

on the front end, but savings on all kinds of ancillary things and long-term costs because for every square foot of concrete we're not putting down it's less stormwater conveyance. It's less stormwater storage.

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 20:01
So, for instance, I believe when we—there are a couple of projects we brought through here in the last six months where there by narrowing, we were saving, I think $40,000 on one project, $80,000 on another project. So, we do think that overall that this could potentially save us construction costs in addition to the other benefits that we hope to get from it.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 20:28
Does that answer your question?

Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 20:29
Yes, thank you.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 20:30
I recall, I think about one of the last ones we had here was Linwood where we talked about that, that narrowing the street would provide a large amount of savings to the city. Any other questions? Comments? Discussion? Alder Schultz, which microphone do you have?

Alderperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 20:46
Thank you, Chair. Um, maybe Director Lom could answer these questions or the representatives of Alta. But I'm just wanting somebody to help me interpret the map just a little bit better. I guess I'm slightly confused by the sort of bold purple colorations in some of the more residential neighborhoods. Is the—is that...

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 21:11
Can you can you just go to the bottom and explain which map you're looking at please?

Alderperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 21:18
Crossing prioritization map. Sorry.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 21:19
Thank you.

Alderperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 21:21
Appreciate that question. And I'm just—like I said, I'm just trying to interpret the data a little bit because if I'm just, at a glance, looking at the map, the purple stuff is what draws my eye but it doesn't feel in my mind well distributed as those are priority areas, especially a neighborhood up by Northland Drive. So, I want to understand what that represents. I assume the more important data is the smaller long colorations of roads that represent the traffic incidents or accident ranking. Do those accidents—this is a secondary question—do those accidents include like vehicle and pedestrian accidents or is it all just vehicular collection, vehicular accidents?

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 22:06
I will take a swing at that, and then Lisa or Colin may want to fill in any gaps that I leave. So, what we're talking about for those in the room is (since we don't have video monitors) is this map. The purp—

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 22:26
It's page three on the "pedestrian crossing improvement policy with map" document.

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 22:31
Thank you. So, the purple represents what we're calling a Community Priorities score. And this was talked about in I believe both of the presentations that were given to this body a number of months ago. The—this score is a composite of a whole bunch of things, and really, it's—I'm going to say roughly half of it is and half. But roughly half of it is what we call the safety score, and the safety score comes from things like sidewalk availability, proximity to amenities, the speed limit, and then—that's what we call kind of the risk portion of it. And then we have the what we call the observed portion of it—crash rates, total crashes, crash severity, and in there are any pedestrian related crashes (to address that specific question.)

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 23:29
And then the other roughly 50% of the score is what we call our "equity focus score." And that is a composite of roughly a dozen demographic-type datasets ranging from eco—well, I can just kind of list them off—economic opportunity, zero vehicle households, air quality, canopy coverage, heart disease, race and ethnicity, poverty level, educational attainment. And then all of this all—the safety part and the equity part—is all sort of smashed together, and that is how we created the priority score. And so that purple represents the top 10% of that composite score for any given piece of centerline—any block of streets in the city. Anything I missed, Lisa?

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 24:30
That's all accurate, and then from there, we also included a few other additional factors. So, we had density of short trips, and then we also had proximity to specific locations that have been identified as important through the stakeholder engagement—so proximity to park and school, transit stops, commercial areas, trails, and major barriers such as the railroad or river.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 25:00
So those—as Eric said, we use safety as the base. So that's its own layer, that roadway layer with the different red colored lines. So, the darker, the red color, the more—the higher it ranks in terms of issues with safety, crash risk. And that that data is from the east central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the RPC.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 25:30
And then from there, it was the short trips density and the equity focus areas—those were 75% of the rest of the score or the mapping score. And then those destinations were each 5% for the additional 25%. So that's a lot of detail. But the high-level summary that Eric gave is, is probably what you need to know, which is we started with the crash data, and then we layered in those identified community priorities. And the reason you're seeing some distribution is partly because of the inclusion of those barriers, or those proximity to different types of destinations.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 26:15
Does that answer your question, Alder Schultz?

Alderperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 26:17
Yeah, that helps. I guess, and this is just a sort of a general question. Is it fair to assume that as a reference point, this map is will be used as a tool to sort of figure out where our priority is going to be when we start talking about adding or introducing traffic calming devices throughout the city? So, this is, this is kind of a reference point for those discussions, I assume?

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 26:40
Yeah, I would—that's a perfect way to say it is it's a tool for us to use. It's certainly not going to spit out all the answers. But it's a really good foundational piece for us to really be able to look at the data without any biases, and see where we think the needs are.

Lisa Bender (Alta Planning & Design) 27:05
And we provided all of those layers. So, for example, if in last month's PowerPoint presentation, the slides had all of the different layers laid out. So, you could go through and look, if you were curious, about each of those different factors separately to see how that different road segments popped up in those different layers of the map.

Alderperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 27:29
Thank you.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 27:30
Any other questions from committee or alders present? Alder Doran?

Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 27:35
Thank you. Just want to understand, I guess, looking at that map, the purple areas that you were talking about, Engineer Lom, is that is that going to then be used going forward as the criteria that we look at for when we're doing projects? Or is that in addition to, like, the—the way we have done it in the past, is we're looking at the roads' sort of rating, the PASER rating, right? Plus, the age of infrastructure and things like that. Is this now the new method for which we're going to determine when we're doing roads? Or is this sort of an additional consideration to that?

Eric Lom (City Traffic Engineer) 28:13
This would certainly not be the primary basis for determining when a road is going to be reconstructed. It's—I do think there will be—well let me back up a step. The main—we'll continue to use the most of the same criteria we have been using to determine when a street needs to be reconstructed—the condition of the underground utilities, the condition of the pavement, so on and so forth. This certainly becomes sort of another layer to that onion. I do think that there may be projects that spin off from this that would fall short of a reconstruction, perhaps a road diet or something like that, that could—you know, where this could yields specific individual projects, but not reconstruction projects.

Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 29:04
Okay. Thank you.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 29:07
Any other questions, comments? Alder Meltzer?

Alderperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 29:13
Thank you, I shared the documents with my constituents. I didn't get that much feedback, but some of the feedback I did get was very appreciative and in agreement with the prioritization—the priority locations. So, I just wanted to make a comment to say that we're grateful for all of the hard work and effort that went into this, and we—yeah, I appreciate that prioritization list. No one had any disagreements or anything that they wanted to add to that list.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 29:51
And I agree. My constituents were very happy to at least see on paper what they said was happening outside their houses. So that gives us some options to move forward. Any other questions or comments from alders? Alder Alfheim.

Alderperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 30:07
Thank you, chair. The only thing I would add is that, to me, the value of this tool is that the data validates the importance in the prioritization. In the end, sometimes we have voices that end up louder than others, and it isn't necessarily the most scientific method of working through the priority list. And so, all of us want to do our best to take care of our people in our neighborhoods, but there are sometimes priorities that push other things first. And so, this is a great tool to say "This as why." We're not—it's not that we like this alder or that alder, better, but this is why we're doing it. And so that alone is a great tool to add into who we are as a city. So, I appreciate that. Thank you.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 30:49
Anyone else? All right. I think then hearing none, I do not recall since we started, we did have a motion to approve and a second. So, any other discussion before we vote? All right, hearing none, all those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? That motion passes five zero. Thank you.