

**Ann Arbor Transportation Plan Update
Advisory Committee Meeting
Ann Arbor DDA Offices
November 13, 2007
7:30AM – 9:30AM**

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Advisory Committee

Kirk Westphal – A2 Planning Commission
Paul Cartman – A2 Commission on Disability Issues
Kris Talley – Washtenaw Biking & Walking Coalition
Nancy Shore – A2 Chamber of Commerce
John German – American Honda Motors
Peter Allen – Peter Allen & Associates
John Ballew – U of M Health System
Mike Garfield – The Ecology Center
Jim Rogers – Citizen at Large
Bob LaRiviere – AAA Michigan
Lia Stevens – Non-Profit Enterprise at Work
Roger Hewitt – A2 Downtown Development Authority
Dave Miller – U of M Transportation Services
Peter Pollack – Pollack Design Associates
Bill Fyfe – Con-Way
Oliver Page – UMTRI
Sean Reed – Clean Energy Coalition
Wayne Say – 208 Group
Kari Andrewes – MDOT, University Region
Dave Reid – Select Ride

Steering Committee

Eli Cooper – City of Ann Arbor
Jeff Kahan – City of Ann Arbor Planning
Terri Blackmore – WATS

Consultant Team

Barbara Arens – PB
Tim Rosenberger - PB
Brad Strader – LSL Planning
Sherrin Hood – LSL Planning

Discussion Topics:

1. Introductions

Eli Cooper called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. and gave a brief introduction to the project. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Presentation

Brad Strader and Barb Arens noted the project has proceeded based on the direction received from the Steering Committee and the previous Advisory Committee meeting. A PowerPoint presentation reviewed the process to-date, summarized goals and evaluation and described the four transportation/land use alternatives being considered. Basic points of the presentation included:

- ***Integrating Future Land Use and Transportation:*** Barb and Brad explained how changes in land use policy and regulation can affect transportation systems. Tools such as intelligent transportation systems, access management, newer road designs (road diets, roundabouts), and streetscape elements can help improve road safety and efficiency. However, the most significant discussion centered around future land use densities and how modified densities along major corridors can improve their viability for transit service. Potential densities to support transit were discussed, as well as the land use elements of each transportation/land use alternative.
- ***Summary of Various Transit Options:*** Tim explained the differences and benefits of various types of transit, including frequent bus service, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Streetcars, Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Commuter Rail. Tim explained how each functions relative to carrying capacity and speed.
- ***Review of Trends & Projections:*** Projected transportation impacts of a “do nothing” approach were reviewed, including the anticipated population and employees based on the City’s future land use plan. City staff has identified several locations that possess future development potential, or that may have the potential for density increases. Development options for these “opportunity areas” influence the performance of the transit elements of the four alternatives.
- ***Discussion of Four Transportation/Land Use Alternatives:*** The four alternatives discussed range from transportation management recommendations based on the current land use plan to a more comprehensive land use package and a more transit-oriented system. Benefits of transit-oriented development were discussed, including how it can lower energy consumption and improve health.

3. Advisory Committee Discussion

Advisory Committee members were provided a questionnaire/survey to help organize their reaction to the alternatives. A copy of the questionnaire will be posted to the project website (www.a2transportationplan.com) and may be completed by an individual or the group they represent. In addition, there were many comments and questions, as summarized below:

- Questions involved some of the data collected and how it was analyzed. The team explained that the City is currently considering revisions to their downtown zoning, which if implemented will be considered in this plan; that the assumptions made are conservative, as SEMCOG is currently re-calibrating their transportation model that will actually project more impact than what is shown; regional employment and migration (i.e. commuters from Ypsilanti or Chelsea) have been included in the models; and that the alternatives did consider ways to link the University of Michigan (UM) medical campus with employment centers.

- In response to questions regarding economic impact, Brad and Barb indicated that the concept of “signature corridors” is intended to be a catalyst for development.
- Roger Hewitt suggested an evaluation of the new parking spaces needed for the “do nothing” approach. He felt that would yield a need for more parking than can practically be constructed, which would support the concept of alternative transit options.
- Paul Cartman noted the “x” pattern of transit (suggested in alternatives 2, 3 and 4) is more desirable when trying to make Ann Arbor a destination rather than a perceived “suburb of Detroit.”
- Some noted that on a regional basis, there is a potential to transfer development rights from outlying areas into the City, especially those communities that have passed open space preservation efforts.
- Paul Cartman (Commission on Disability Issues), suggested that interconnectivity, and access for all are important consideration for all transportation modes. He also reminded the Steering Committee not to abandon considerations for automobile travel – the disabled community relies equally on auto and mass transportation options.
- In response to a comment about the approach of compatible cities, Tim Rosenberger suggested Portland OR, Columbus OP and others. John German, Oliver Page and others felt it would be helpful if some demographic data, such as population and tax base, could be presented that actually compares Ann Arbor with other cities with successful transit systems. The concern was that some of the transit options applicable to larger cities will not work in Ann Arbor. Roger Hewitt indicated that Portland was just developing their transit system 30 years ago, when their demographics were more similar to that of Ann Arbor.
- Peter Pollack encouraged the group to think long-term, and to consider strategies to phase in transit and land use changes. He felt that alternative options should not be eliminated just because they do not fit into the current profile of Ann Arbor.
- Eli Cooper noted that without encouragement of continued development downtown, and appropriate development/redevelopment elsewhere, the City may eventually fall prey to the trends of out-migration typical of many cities today.
- Peter Pollack and others expressed concern over potential public reaction to the proposed alternatives especially with the increase in density. Public support will be needed for any of the transit-oriented options.
- Several opinions were given related to gas and potential demand for transit in the future. Terri Blackmore noted that increases in gas prices tend to increase ridership, and that the UM unlimited bus passes have also increased ridership.
- Nancy Shore noted that demand for Go! Passes are up in 2007, with even more demand expected in 2008. However, based on her discussions with downtown businesses, the following are concerns: 1) frequency of service must be improved, 2) park and ride connectivity is needed, 3) improvements in the system are needed NOW, and that immediate, simple solutions should be implemented now to improve the system as much as possible, 4) the cost of these immediate improvements are less than that required to build a parking deck.
- Kirk Westphal wants Ann Arbor to be a leader in mass transit. He is concerned with downtown parking restrictions.
- Peter Allen feels alternative #4 is more a question of “when” than “if.” He thinks that a large component of implementation will be public education, and that the cultural, environmental and architectural benefits of this plan should be a focus. He is

- concerned that there will be a decline in economic value or disincentives caused by the status quo.
- Others agreed that the presentation of the alternatives should focus on the incentives and benefits rather than the potential perceived negatives like density increase.
 - Wayne Say said that the issue of unpredictable energy supplies needs to be addressed in the Plan. The Plan should identify how each of the alternatives can help to reduce CO2 emissions.
 - The project team responded that the issue of energy conservation could be revisited by the Steering Committee for inclusion as a plan goal. In addition, a possible hierarchy of goals was suggested.
 - Kris Talley noted a need for good levels of service for all modes, and the Plan should describe how each mode would be affected by each alternative.
 - John German informed the group that, while current perception is that gas prices are at an all-time-high, they are actually relatively low when inflation and increased costs of living are considered, and they are actually lower than costs prior to the first energy crisis. He suggested that continued implementation in the City SCOOT program is the best way to reduce fuel consumption and CO2 emissions since it reduces idling. Roundabouts were suggested as another option but others expressed concern for pedestrian crossings, especially for the disabled population who may not be able to determine when there is oncoming traffic.
 - Kirk Westphal noted that increased density can improve the environment by protecting outlying areas. He feels Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) are needed to implement this Plan.
 - Some also suggested that improved affordable housing will also help draw people into the city and that affordability and transit issues go hand-in-hand.

4. Conclusion

Eli Cooper thanked those present for their input. The meeting was adjourned. Members were encouraged to send any comments to Sherrin Hood at hood@lsplanning.com before the next Committee meeting December 11th. Members will be notified of the next Advisory Committee meeting.

The meeting concluded at approximately 9:40am

Sherrin S. Hood