

TWIN CITIES AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Minutes

Non-motorized Subcommittee Meeting

March 10, 2010

8:00 A.M.

Abonmarche, 95 W. Main St., Benton Harbor, MI 49022

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| TWINCATS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE S PRESENT: | Mickey Bennett, Sodus Township Chris Cook, City of Benton Harbor (Abonmarche Consultants) Willie Fryer, City of St. Joseph Larry Merritt, St. Joseph Charter Township / Merritt Engineering Kevin Reed, Berrien County Road Commission Sarah Woolcock, MDOT – Coloma TSC |
| SWMPC STAFF PRESENT: | Nickolas Musson Anna Rahtz Suzann Flowers |
| OTHERS PRESENT: | Mark Hesemann, Evergreen Management / Harbor Shores Mike Jones, Cycle and Fitness |

1. CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS:

- Subcommittee Chairman Cook called the meeting to order at 8:02 A.M.

2. NAME & MISSION STATEMENT:

- Rahtz gave a background explanation of the purpose for which the subcommittee was formed by the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS). She explained that TwinCATS has done some non-motorized planning but lacks a cohesive vision of what it wants to accomplish to make the area connected and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. The TwinCATS committees had considered the idea of passing a regional Complete Streets resolution to say that the region supports making streets safe and usable for all types of road users; but such a resolution would have no legal “teeth,” and TwinCATS wants a specific plan of what they want to accomplish with non-motorized planning and how it will happen.
- Rahtz suggested taking the first few minutes of the meeting to brainstorm a name and mission statement for the group, so that the subcommittee has a concise definition of what it does and a brand that it can advertise to get people involved.
- The Mission Statement decided on is:
 - *To identify and build a system or network for local and regional connectivity for safe transportation for all users*
 - *Including pedestrians, individuals with disabilities, novice cyclists, serious cyclists, and transit riders; and*
 - *Through the use of sidewalks, bike lanes, shared lanes, paved shoulders, and off-road pathways.*
- The name decided on is Walk & Roll TwinCATS.

3. PRIORITY CONNECTIONS FOR TWIN CITIES AREA:

- Rahtz suggested that the next step would be, keeping all the above-named user groups in mind, to identify priority connections that need to be made. Reed provided aerial maps, and SWMPC staff provided the maps from the nine-county non-motorized plan blown up to scale to show the Twin Cities area.

- Jones drew on the map a proposed alignment for a trail in an old rail bed connecting St. Joseph Township / Royalton Township to downtown St. Joseph. It would connect to the existing Howard Trail and end at the Lake Court pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks.
- Jones is going to do further research on where trailheads should be located. A comment was made that a highly connected non-motorized network is needed so that people do not need to drive to the trailhead to access the trail.
- Bennett and Reed drew on the map a proposed trail in an old rail bed to connect downtown Benton Harbor along Pipestone Street and out to Sodus Township.
- A discussion was held about how these two major trails could be connected from St. Joseph to Benton Harbor. It was mentioned that Napier Avenue is a major connection between the two cities, and that it may be feasible to restripe it to include bike lanes. It could then be connected into downtown Benton Harbor along Miami Road and Riverview Drive.
- It was mentioned that it is more feasible to cross the 94BL Bridge between St. Joseph and Benton Harbor than the M-63 Bridge, because the Blossomland part of the M-63 Bridge only has a narrow sidewalk and no right-of-way for bicycles. Main Street in downtown Benton Harbor already has bike lanes and wide sidewalks, and this could connect over to Harbor Shores via the newly built Momany Drive or Whitwam Drive.

4. NEXT STEPS:

- It was decided that even more zoomed-in, detailed maps are needed. Sidewalk details must be shown through aerial photos. It was mentioned that the next meeting will have to be scheduled around the SWMPC GIS Specialist's workload so that she can have the maps ready for the meeting.
- It was also decided that a report would be given at the next full TwinCATS meeting on March 15th. Rahtz and Flowers will prepare a summary to present to the TwinCATS members, with the name and mission statement of the group, along with what the group has done so far.
- Rahtz suggested that an outreach plan is needed, to establish who needs to be included in the discussion, how they will be reached, and when. Several subcommittee members felt that a "vision" needs to be more pinned down before asking for public input. Cook expressed concern about the amount of time that the subcommittee members will have to attend public meetings. Flowers clarified that the subcommittee members will not need to attend every meeting and that the public input could be headed up by SWMPC staff. She added that during April and May, Rahtz will be the only transportation planning staff at SWMPC.
- Flowers and Rahtz agreed to write up a Public Outreach Plan for the TwinCATS Walk & Roll Plan, that they would also present at the full TwinCATS meeting to get the members' input.

5. ADJOURNMENT: 10:00 a.m.

- Next meeting is April 28, 2010 at 8:00 A.M. at the Abonmarche Office.

Compiled by: SWMPC staff, 3/10/10