



MOBILITY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Council Conference Room
(248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Brian Smith (Chair), Justin Fischer, Ericka Thomas, Gary Becker, Joe Tolkacz, Jay Dooley

Absent: Ed Roney (excused)

Staff Present: Jeffrey Herczeg, Director, DPW
Aaron Staup, Construction Engineer, DPW
Lindsay Bell, Senior Planner, Community Development
Wesley Scallions, Public Works Management Intern, DPW

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded and passed 6-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was a motion to approve the minutes from September 5th, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed 6-0.

DISCUSSION

Director Herczeg provided a recap of what has gone on since the last Committee meeting. City staff worked to address any questions stemming from the presentation given at the last meeting as well as prepare recommendations for the group which are included in the memo. Herczeg continued, explaining that the budget for this program needs to be narrowed down and a policy needs to be established.

Mayor Fischer asked if the response he received in regards to his target numbers of \$650,000 or \$750,000 and the cycle length included the 20% 'back out' of engineering fees. Mngt. Intern Scallions clarified that the figures provided were not impacted by this and, at a funding level of \$650,000 annually, a ten-year cycle length is still realistic. Chair Smith verified that this would mean ten districts where 1-inch or greater deflections and panels with above 25% rubbilization are addressed.

Chair Smith stated that he likes the Hold Harmless language for trees; gives residents the option of trying to save a tree. Director Herczeg spoke on the Hold Harmless agreements, stating that they are better for City staff as further issues can be avoided and certain factors affecting liability can be controlled – the resident would be taking responsibility. Herczeg continued, stating that they are helpful and non-negotiable in executing a

program. Engineer Staup added that three of these agreements had been sent out already to residents requesting them and that all three opted against entering into the agreement. Mayor Fischer verified with Director Herczeg that the City Attorney's office was comfortable with this as a policy and procedure. Director Herczeg clarified that City staff isn't being reckless with tree removal – only trees that are a real problem are being removed. Member Becker asked if there were some trees where the City says there is no need for removal, only root disruption – Director Herczeg answered in the affirmative. Engineer Staup confirmed that majority of trees are that way. Member Becker verified with Director Herczeg that root removal would not trigger the hold harmless. Director Herczeg explained that we would decide when a hold harmless is needed. It would be in situations of wrong tree, wrong place, one with a massive root system doing more damage than just the sidewalk, and if we were to root prune, it might cause the tree to be one-sided, toppling or if health state is a problem.

Director Herczeg suggested consideration of the 3/4" or 1" deflection criteria. When the contractor is already mobilized, there isn't much difference between 3/4" and 1". More of the City may be covered but it might mean going back more often if 3/4" turns into 1" or greater. Mayor Fischer confirmed with Director Herczeg that we wouldn't be back when it hits 1", if a 3/4" or 7/8" deflection was skipped it's going to take a lot longer to get to 2". If it got to 2" someone could call and trigger the reactive program. Director Herczeg explained that where we got 3/4" when we started talking about the pilot program was from the ADA suggestion that 1/2" is tolerable, so we would start at 3/4". But what we found when we went out was that a 3/4" was next to panels that might not need replacement, and it can cause some doubt where people are asking why are you doing this one and not that one. Mayor Fischer stated he would hate to see where you have nearly perfect sidewalk in one location and there's just one panel that's 3/4", I would just leave that. Is there a way to have some leeway? If it's part of bigger chunk that's being fixed then address it. But if it's isolated, wait until the next cycle. Director Herczeg agreed that those could be called in the field during construction.

Chair Smith asked what's the cost of taking out a tree versus replacing panels if it's obviously a tree problem. Engineer Staup replied there are two different pay items setup for 8 – 18" and for 19" and greater. Regardless of root system, it's all one cost. The last bid was around \$600 dollars per tree for 8 – 18" and almost \$1000 for bigger which includes stump grinding. Chair Smith confirmed with Engineer Staup and Intern Scallions that cost per panel is \$247.50. Engineer Staup confirmed that root pruning cost is incidental to the sidewalk. Chair Smith asked how roots are handled. Engineer Staup replied that you have to make a clean cut on it because normally the contractor will come in with an excavator and start yanking while everything comes up with it, mailboxes, sprinkler lines, and it's not healthy for the tree, so they cut through it as they go. Chair Smith asked if that's something we can do independent of the panel. Engineer Staup replied no, a lot of times we can't see under the panel so we don't know what we have until it's removed.

Mayor Fischer confirmed the current budget is \$200,000 from general fund and \$200,000 from a road fund with Director Herczeg. Mayor Fischer stated it would have to go through the budget process and asked about funding; if a split is recommended and if the committee recommends support of the additional position, how would that be funded? Director Herczeg replied that it seems like it belongs in the local road fund, 204 Municipal, which we transfer between local and major. Director Herczeg continued, that there was

a tree fund discussion, because there's a lot of tree removal, that can be used too, but that's another discussion on whether that is a sustainable fund right now. This year we had a two-year \$800,000 budget and low bid came back about \$500,000, so we had a surplus. So right now we're trying to create a list of reactive locations and combine those to get the unit price. The two-year program is recommended for efficiency of bidding and program management. We could be doing \$500,000/year with a million-dollar budget and if we get a favorable bid, we could get a lot more done. So I wouldn't be too focused on the dollar amount. Once the program has momentum, reactive maintenance comes down, we make progress, people now understand the program. If we see we're not spending enough, we can up the budget and have that discussion with Finance and Council.

Mayor Fischer confirmed what he's asking is between the \$250,000 plus potentially another \$100,000 for staffing, that's \$350,000, if we approve it here am I going to here in April that it was a big burden and we have to offset other things, or do you think its containable in the grand scheme of things? Director Herczeg replied he doesn't think we'd have to cancel any projects, but the one question is about the additional staff. We need to look a little deeper on current staffing level. The team that does the in-house maintenance on non-motorized is 6 full time and 2 permanent part time, one of which is not filled and the other is a student who plans on leaving. This position isn't necessarily in that group, probably an Engineering or administrative position. So there's some shuffling that needs to happen and an option will be presented at budget time. Mayor Fischer confirmed with Director Herczeg that adjusting the budget is a possibility. Mayor Fischer stressed that he doesn't want any decisions made here to create problems and that Director Herczeg should let the committee or council know if there's any problems or potential budget issues as they come up. Director Herczeg replied that we can look at the CIP and what can be reduced or cut, but I don't see any large projects being cut. I also don't want to be dismissive of the boardwalks that are \$3M in the CIP, but I can provide an analysis for the next meeting.

Mayor Fischer said he likes the two-year bid package for cost savings and program management, and it seems like a good fit with the Neighborhood Road Program that's been implemented. The dollar amount over 10 years is reasonable. If staff is recommending this, and this can be implemented successfully, than I'm fully on board with it. Mayor Fischer asked what else is needed from the committee to be implemented successfully. Engineer Staup replied an issue came up recently with bad tree roots that extended beyond the sidewalk on private property of one homeowner. It was a tree we removed, we did the sidewalk work, we damaged some of the irrigation that was adjacent to the sidewalk and fixed that. But he has irrigation problems and large roots that go most of the way up to his porch and he's wanting us to care of those roots and take care of the irrigation system that was damaged. We're trying to maintain that no, we aren't going to do that, but they said it's a city tree that's causing this issue. The tree is gone but the roots remain. Not sure the species. Director Herczeg said when it happens with City utilities, it's a case-by-case scenario because if it is a right-of-way tree and it has gotten in your lead where it causes you to have to get a new sewer line then we'll take the tree down and we'll have a conversation about it. I don't know if we're going to pay for a \$30,000 basement back up. There's a lot of weird scenarios that can come of it. Chair Smith asked what the problem is with the roots just being there. Director Herczeg and Engineer Staup replied that the roots are wrapped around the homeowner's irrigation. We would have to go straight up the middle of this yard to get all these roots.

Mayor Fischer commented that this is more a conversation for Tom and Council than this committee, for a couple of reasons, but primarily precedent setting. We could get in a situation where if we start saying, yeah, we'll do this because of the tree, there's going to be people calling where we're not even touching their sidewalks and now we're fixing all the irrigation in the City. Mayor Fischer's recommendation is to ask Tom what he thinks on liability and take that up to Council level. Engineer Staup replied he planned on asking the City Forester, he may have ran into this situation before.

Director Herczeg commented that he thinks we are good with the parameters for the program. We'll address it with some kind of policy and ordinance change, if needed. I'd like to put the draft language for the website out now, since we're currently doing the program, to answer some of the questions. Mayor Fischer replied if you identify the two years, summer 2025 and summer 2026, if you can get the highlights of what areas we're hitting in that second year, so people even have the second year, and I assume this would go in the Better Road's Ahead emails, too, to give people a heads up, that might be good communication. Chair Smith added that he'd like to see something about the first two years of the pilot program, we covered X percentage of sidewalk in Novi, what has happened and what led to the new policy. Director Herczeg said there's a neighborhood or two that's doing their own program, which is great, that's helpful. Unless there's something significant that we want removed or don't agree with as a committee, I think we're in a position now to create a program, put some real numbers to it and report back. Engineer Staup reported there is one small sub left in this year's program, Yerkes Manor on 8 Mile Rd. All the other four subs are done, minus restoration. There are going to be some irrigation concerns in the spring because a lot of people have winterized their system, so we won't know if they're truly fixed or not until the spring. But construction wise, we're wrapping up probably by the end of next week. Director Herczeg commented that change order work would happen in the spring. Director Herczeg asked if in that case, would the new program not start until 2026. Engineer Staup replied that it depends, if we use the same contractor, it could run together at the same time.

Mayor Fischer confirmed with Director Herczeg that nothing further is needed at this time from the Committee to proceed with the program. Director Herczeg will bring an informal informational memo to the next meeting as part of the agenda. Committee members agreed with what had been discussed. Chair Smith made a motion for staff to go forward with the plan as presented and to provide feedback at the next meeting in the form of a memo.

Intern Scallions confirmed with the Committee that the meetings would be scheduled for the third Thursday of each month to coincide with the Parks and Rec meetings. Director Herczeg requested the Committee discuss the topic for the next meeting now so staff can prepare. Chair Smith recommended looking at the active mobility plan and making sure our priorities that we currently have in sidewalks matches up with that, how closely things are aligned in terms of the CIP. Chair Smith acknowledged that some of the high priority areas are very hard to implement, like 9 Mile between Novi and Taft for example, but maybe we can accomplish an innovative way around it or fit something there. Mayor Fischer asked if we have a placeholder in the CIP for some of those specific segments? Director Herczeg replied that if they are, they aren't in the 3-year plan, but we can do a quick look at the CIP and cross reference with what's in the active mobility plan. Chair Smith agreed to add it to the agenda.

Chair Smith mentioned he was approached by people in Northville regarding the potential Northville Riverwalk connection to Novi's Rotary Park. Member Hines said he was going to ask about that also because they came to a Walkable Novi Committee meeting about a year ago and a refresh of that would be good. Chair Smith agreed that maybe we can have Nancy Darga come in and give us an update. Planner Bell brought up the RCOC Novi Rd project between 8 Mile Rd to 9 Mile Rd and how that would be part of the Novi-Northville connection. The Rotary Park is complicated with the conservation easement. The RCOC Novi Rd project isn't doing much in terms of active mobility, aside from a HAWK crossing at Galway. Director Herczeg replied that it's a federal project so non-motorized would be non-participating, we can approach RCOC about it but it's a complicated project. Mayor Fischer asked Director Herczeg for clarification on that. Director Herczeg replied that it's federally funded, similar to 10 Mile Rd where we had non-participating cost for the sidewalk that we requested, and RCOC accommodated us, but we had to pay for it. Engineer Staup commented that the west side would be very difficult to build with the slope and trees would have to be cleared out and might need to build retaining wall. Engineer Staup clarified the segment gap is from Timber Ridge south to almost Guernsey. Director Herczeg confirmed RCOC is designing that project in house so we can reach out to the designer. Planner Bell commented that it seems like the time to do it. Chair Smith confirmed with Director Herczeg that no bike lanes are proposed. Director Herczeg commented that it's going to be a continuous 2-lane northbound because of the amounts of ingress/egress. Chair Smith commented that it would be good to have something through there but the Riverwalk is complicated with railroad tracks. Planner Bell mentioned that she thought Nancy Darga was also looking into one of the grants and she may need some participation from the Novi side. Chair Smith concurred and asked if committee members had any other topics for discussion. There were none and Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Thomas and Member Hines supported the motion.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Action items were not reviewed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 pm.