

Town of Needham
Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee
Minutes for Monday, November 27, 2023
Via ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89968969859>

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 12, 2024

5:30 p.m. Call to Order:
A meeting of the Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee was convened by Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works. Those present were Alex Clee, Assistant Town Planner, Justin McCullen, Transportation Safety Committee Representative, Moe Handel, resident, Timothy Bulger, resident at large, Paul Molta, resident at large, Shane Mark, Assistant Director of Public Works, and Rhain Hoyland, Highway Superintendent.

5:31 p.m. Introductions and Overview of Past and Current Projects
Carys Lustig gave an overview of the meeting agenda, including the current systems DPW has in place and the emphasis on standardization for this Committee to work towards. Ms. Lustig then introduced Rhain Hoyland, Highway Superintendent, who presented on the engineering, design, and construction of roads, as well as surface treatment of roads across the Town over past decades. After conducting cost and benefit analyses with specific regard to infrastructure, the Division started with main roads, subsequently accelerating the program and covering 80% (the industry standard) of the roads in Town and improving their road surface condition. Mr. Hoyland noted that the Division is currently in the last 5 to 7 years of the 20-year plan.

Sidewalk Plan

The sidewalk plan developed in the 1990s, also known as the School Walking Routes, was developed by the Safety Committee to increase walkability. This includes 55 miles of sidewalk that is plowed in the winter. Approximately ten years ago this shifted to be a Town-wide effort and was incorporated into the capital budget. Currently, School Walking Routes are 99% completed. Discussion ensued about the subsequent focus for the sidewalk plan, including residential streets and potential challenges to these efforts, including conducting pedestrian traffic counts, identifying trees that would need to be removed, and evaluating where it is necessary to build a sidewalk on both sides or one side of a street.

Mr. Hoyland then reviewed the current plan for completing sidewalks while ensuring that sidewalks are in compliance with the Architectural Access Board and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Mr. Hoyland added that sidewalk work per foot is more expensive than paving roadways, given the need to ensure ramps are compliant and that drain work is completed correctly as well, particularly at intersections. Discussion ensued about the methods of prioritization for sidewalk reconstruction, including analyzing traffic volumes and environmental considerations regarding runoff during rain events. Ms. Lustig expressed her hope that the Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee will be able to create policies

and standardization around these decision-making processes. Further topics discussed included the importance of equity, environmental considerations, pavement area and runoff, and constructing crosswalks and sidewalks according to the Complete Streets approach.

Bike Lanes

Mr. Hoyland gave an overview of Needham's policies focusing on multimodal transportation for all abilities, bicycles, walkers, pedestrians, and vehicles, taking into consideration that there is not as much of an emphasis on vehicles anymore. The Committee discussed how the Town can conduct outreach to residents, noting that successful methods of communication have included presenting at Select Board meetings and neighborhood meetings.

6:06 p.m.

Capital Plan

Ms. Lustig gave an overview of Chapter 90 funding, which is typically used for roads and sidewalk programs. Needham has chosen to fund those programs internally through its own infrastructure funding; however Chapter 90 may still be used for these projects if the funds internally are not sufficient in order to keep projects on track.

Mr. Hoyland presented an overview of the Capital Plan. Mr. Hoyland explained that work is planned in a clustered way to reduce costs and frustration for residents and staff. After reviewing the different materials used for different types of roads, Mr. Hoyland emphasized that this work is about using the right tools at the right time. One of the goals for this Committee will be to outline these specifications for future projects and prepare to use them at the appropriate and necessary times.

Ms. Lustig outlined a list of items that DPW is looking for clarity on from the Mobility Committee:

- Notifications to resident and planning
 - o Review funding sources and objectives to confirm they are still accurate
 - o How far in advance should we notice abutters?
 - o How do we handle variables in the season such as street openings from utilities, changes in products and priorities, and impacts of the winter season?
- Complete Street
 - o What should our standards be for lane width, sidewalk, bikes, speed, etc.?
 - o What are our standard traffic calming features that we should use and when should use them?
- Sidewalks
 - o How do we prioritize neighborhood sidewalks?
 - o How do we shrink our inventory to provide a maintainable length of miles?
 - o How do we fund and prioritize new sidewalk connections?
- Bikes

- When do we add them?
- Protected, on street, or raised?

Additional questions added to this list during this meeting included:

- School Zone Policy:
 - Standardization
- Safety Zone Policy
 - Standardization
- Signs/Marking
 - Standardization
- Large Projects
 - Highland Ave north of Great Plain Ave to Webster
 - Great Plain Ave from Linden to Warren

Ms. Lustig provided an update on a reboot of the downtown project. The current emphasis is on slowing down traffic down in the downtown area. Ms. Lustig identified the following as priorities during this phase: pedestrian use, parking, how traffic signals function, outdoor dining, pedestrian safety, and bicycle amenities. These priorities have been communicated to the five consultants working to develop conceptual plans with the expectation that these plans will be ready by early February 2024. It is to be determined how much of Phase I will change based on these proposed conceptual models. Mr. Handel emphasized the need to involve businesses and advocated for conducting any infrastructure work outside of peak business hours based on the experience of other towns.

6:39 p.m. Elections of Chair and Vice-Chair
 Ms. Lustig invited committee members to present their names for the Chair and Vice-Chair positions. Mr. McCullen demonstrated interest in serving as Chair. Mr. Handel nominated Mr. McCullen. This was seconded by Timothy Bulger. Mr. Bulger demonstrated interest in serving as Vice-Chair. Mr. Handel nominated. Mr. McCullen seconded.

6:40 p.m. Future Meetings
 It was established that Committee meetings would take place on the second Monday of each month from 7 – 8 p.m.

6:48 p.m. Adjourn:
Motion by Mr. Handel that the Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee vote to adjourn the meeting of Monday, November 27, 2023.
Second: Mr. Bulger. Unanimously approved 6-0.

The next Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 8, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.