

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 5, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Tanner Thompson, Chair; Manuel Salgado; Emily Burnaman; Christine Bisceglie; Jud Aley

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli; Transportation Planner, James Travers, Director, TMP; Carly Kramer, Redevelopment Agency; Jahliah Green, Health Department; Ben Hanpeter; Shari Brennan; Paul Chenard; Kristen Levesque, CTDOT; Audrey Cozzarin, Sarah Roy, CT Rides

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at <http://www.norwalkct.org/meetings>.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

At roll call there were three (3) committee members in attendance.

CT DOT SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

Ms. Pacelli said as the commission continues to work on the educational materials to share with the public, he thought it would be a good idea to bring in a guest to speak with the commission and provide some background on that CTDOT Safe Routes to School Program, and how the commission could use the available resources and links to external resources. He welcomed Ms. Levesque from the CTDOT and said she is with the Bureau of Policy and Planning and is the Safe Routes to School Coordinator on the active transportation unit. He said last year she ran a walk audit around Fox Run School, so she has some familiarity with Norwalk and is putting together quite a report from the walk audit which the city is excited to see, and she is here tonight to give a presentation on the Safe Routes to School Program

Ms. Levesque said the Safe Routes to School Program has been in place since 2005 but was recently reestablished under new legislation and revitalized in Connecticut and was expanded to include all schools' grades K-12, and Connecticut took advantage of hiring a new Safe Routes to School Coordinator with the intent of building up the non-infrastructure program.

Ms. Levesque presented and said the Safe Routes to School Program is comprised of the framework known as the six E's (equity, education, encouragement, evaluation, enforcement, and engineering). The non-infrastructure portion of the program is the equity, education, and encouragement piece which

includes the walk audits and looking at the site-specific observations and recommendations around the school site and/or districtwide, and the enforcement of and engineering are components are where recommendations can be made but that portion of the project has not been fully federally funded as in was in 2005. She said to date equity efforts include involving all schools across the state, and the education components include working directly with the schools to implement bicycle and pedestrian safety education curriculum and a Vision Zero Program distinction for schools, and the encouragement can be seen through outreach as well as events and would like to see that continue to grow and the next event date is May 8, 2024. Mr. Thompson asked if there is also an event in the fall. Ms. Levesque said “yes” and that she believes it is in on the first Wednesday in October. She said the non-infrastructure portions of the program provide free technical assistance with education and encouragement and the resources are free and available and can provide help to get that started, and the Vision Zero award is available and is on the website. She said the benefits to students are to improve health rating, academic performance, and attendance, and see improvements to air quality and congestion around schools as well as an increase in safety.

Mr. Thompson said to his knowledge the schools in Norwalk have no curriculum related to bicycle safety and have been working with the Director of Transportation for the schools and asked if there is typically a better point of contact. Ms. Levesque said she has been very helpful, and she has also been in communication with her to figure out the education components and how to get them implemented and encourage the commission to look at the curriculum links that are available.

Ms. Bisceglie said there is a school in Norwalk that has participated in a roll rock event and would like to expand that and would like to speak with Ms. Levesque about ways to engage students ever further. She also asked if the commission should participate in the Safe Routes to School Summit that is held annually. Ms. Levesque said she does not have a specific recommendation but would be happy to connect with her regarding the students and events.

Ms. Burnaman asked Ms. Levesque if should be willing to participate in any of the upcoming commission events and if there are educational materials available. Ms. Levesque encouraged the commission to register with the program.

Mr. Thompson asked Ms. Levesque if there were milestones that she would see Norwalk or any town in Connecticut working towards on the timeline of a year or less. Ms. Levesque recommended proposing the Vision Zero program distinction to the Board as the legislation was written that the Board of Education would be the one to apply, but if the commission would like to help advocate that is something they are looking for in terms of a timeline by May 1st. Ms. Bisceglie suggested that the next step should be the commission have an agenda item on the Board of Education meeting.

Mr. Salgado joined the meeting at 6:23PM

Ms. Bisceglie and Ms. Levesque left the meeting at 6:25PM

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Roy said that she has spoken at commission meeting in the past about CT Rides which is a free program of the State Department of Transportation and said the Annual Drive Less Climate Challenge will be coming up in May and if the commission would like CT Rides partnership and support in any

events or activities, she would be happy to talk offline. Mr. Thompson asked when the Annual Drive Less Climate Challenge will be held. Ms. Roy said it starts on April 22nd and goes through May 31st.

Ms. Cozzarin said that Norwalk's Earth Day on the green is coming up and will be held on April 27th and now has over 20 partners. She said that Ms. Burnaman has been representing the Bike/Walk Commission and sustainable streets at the meetings at is teaming up with Ms. Green and planning the walking and biking tours which will be featuring the elements and walking and biking fit into many of them. She said they are also looking for financial sponsorship to help support the event and would love to have any assistance and thanked Ms. Burnaman and Ms. Green for participating.

TMP CAPITAL BUDGET REQUESTS

Mr. Travers presented the TMP budget requests and said if anything strikes the commission's interest to let their elected officials know that they are important. He said the first request is for roadway design and reconstruction and is primarily used for safety related issues that come up. The next request is for traffic signal equipment and is a \$350,000 request and is for a signal that is associated with the new Norwalk High School to allow people to cross and also let cars out. The next request is for new sidewalk construction and is the single most requested item they receive and has a lengthy list of sidewalks but also allows us to work in combination with DPW. The next request is for traffic signal enhancements and said that we own 90 signals and although we will not be replacing them at all there are times when equipment is needed to keep the older signals functioning. The next request is Safe Routes to School and has increased the request to \$500,000 from \$250,000 as more sidewalks are being identified around schools. The next request is for the Wall Street coordinator improvements and will be a multi-year project and has been morphed into a \$27 million dollar project and will break ground on phase I in the spring. Mr. Thompson asked if phase I includes the entire intersection of Wall and Main Street. Mr. Travers said "yes". Mr. Thompson said assuming the capital request is granted when will the design work begin for phase II. Mr. Travers said that will continue as they have not stopped working on the design but indent to do a groundbreaking for the first phase in the spring and at that time announce a public meeting to keep everyone up to date. Mr. Travers said the next request is for pavement markings and signage and is ongoing. The next request is for the sidewalks on West Rocks Road in the amount of \$350,000 to bridge the gap for sidewalk installations that the grants did not cover and are working with the DOT to release the funds from the grant and go out to bid this year. The next request is for the East Avenue corridor improvements as last year the project was only partially funded. The next request is for streetlights which is a relatively small item and allows the installation of LED light fixtures for pedestrian signals which are dark sky compliant. He said the next request is for the sidewalks on George Avenue which were identified in the 2012 Transportation Master Plan and was listed as a priority as well as in the 2022 Transportation Master Plan. The next request is for traffic safety data and will be to continue to build out the traffic safety data. Mr. Thompson asked if that would include a street light license. Mr. Travers said "yes". Mr. Thompson asked if Mr. Benjamin could present his work and findings to the commission soon. Mr. Travers said we are still working on fine tuning some things but will be ready to present them soon. Mr. Travers said the next request is for protected crosswalks are is to largely look for funding for the RFB's. He said the next request is for pedestrian crosswalks to still be designed. He said lastly, they have identified some outyear projects as well as placeholders for outlying years.

Mr. Thompson said the biggest thing on his mind for 2024 is complete streets and asked once the allocations are in place what impact that will have on the ability to execute on projects that are included in

the capital budget request. He also said once the complete streets are lined up if the projects will begin to be lined up. Mr. Travers said his intent is that we would not break out the projects in the future as identifying them as complete streets but under the complete streets ordinance every project that is done will be a complete street unless it can be justified why it can't be and the avenue that they are taking is every project/design will be a complete street.

BIKE-WALK COMMISSION 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

Mr. Thompson said since the last commission meeting there was a special meeting held to discuss the Strategic Plan and is at what he calls a 90% design. He presented the Strategic Plan and set it is a set of smart goals. He said the Strategic Plan is in a state of being mostly completed and at the last special meeting all agreed it was a good set of goals and will be voted on at the next meeting and he will be following up with the commission members to fill in their plans.

Mr. Aley joined the meeting at 7:20PM

RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT STATUS

Mr. Thompson provided an update and said that he met with the First Selectman of Darien and presented the high-level concept, and he liked the idea and supported it in principal but wants to see more public support in Darien and he will be taking that on and look to organize and demonstrate public support. He said he also met with TMP staff and discussed more of the technical details of the grant application, and he learned in order for the city to apply for a grant in a competitive way the Common Council has to approve whatever local match that is required so that would have to happen soon in order to meet the March 11th deadline. He said it would first need to go to the Economic and Community Development Committee and would require a special meeting because they just met. He also said when Stamford and Greenwich applied, they engaged a consultant for cost estimates and TMP said they would need to do the same, which adds complexity and time to the process. He said although there may be something out there that the commission could apply for besides the Recreational Trails Grant so the conclusion that he came to is he we don't apply this year we would probably wait until next year but would like to keep the conversation going whether some version of this could be turned in by March 11th and maybe narrow the scope down to a routing study as opposed to planning and design and asked if TMP would be able to get an estimate from a consultant. Mr. Pacelli said the consultant would need to be supplied on what the commission is looking for and the tasks as part of the planning process even if it is just the routing but also, we don't have the match and would still require a special meeting and to find a date may be difficult. Mr. Thompson said he and Mr. Hanpeter put together a draft of the application but would need review and asked what if anything can be provided to TMP to make if feasible for the breakdown of the scope of work for a routing study. Mr. Pacelli said the turnaround time without not even knowing if the committee will vote in favor of the match and would rather not rush something with a lot of unknowns.

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Mr. Salgado provided an update and said that Ms. Bisceglie reached out to Nuvance Health and Norwalk Hospital to do a follow-up meeting and are looking to partner with them on events and getting connected with the school district. He said there is also a meeting scheduled next week with Johana Zanveter to build a connection between the school district and the commission. He said lastly, he created a script for a video and that he would greatly appreciate any feedback from TMP and as suggested he will run it by TMP staff prior to it going public. Mr. Thompson asked if it is reasonable to set a goal of having TMP review the script, shoot the video, and have TMP review the video before the next meeting. Mr. Salgado said that is a fair goal and will have a preliminary draft to give to TMP by the next meeting.

BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES APPLICATION STATUS

Mr. Thompson said we have received an honorable mention which is the lowest category that is given out but it is a recognition that active progress is being made towards bikeability and it is not given to communities that are not making progress. He said we did receive a report card which is on the League of American Bicyclists website, and he reviewed the report card and said there are five categories and education was scored the lowest, but he was pleased to see the score for encouragement was as high as it was, and the report card included feedback on ways to improve and he hopes the complete street design guide includes elements where possible to add concrete separated bike paths.

Mr. Thompson said the committee should use this opportunity to create a conversation about the report card and the League of American Bicyclists will be providing instructions on how to use the award to generate support and put political pressure on leaders to do more. He said it should be an opportunity to do a press release about the award and the progress that has been made as well as the in-progress projects and he will work with Ms. Woods on the press release. Mr. Pacelli requested that the press release be shared with TMP staff before it is released to the public.

Ms. Kramer said the Redevelopment Agency is putting in an application for Federal DOT Reize Program and took out the parking and some of the solar that was included last year so this year it is more concentrated on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard for just under 2 ¼ miles and will include a bike path along the entire corridor. She said the second bucket is for local street improvements which have already been approved under the Community Challenge grant, and the third bucket is wayfinding and accessibility at the South Norwalk Railroad Station. She requested a letter of support from the commission and said the deadline to apply for the grant is February 28, 2024.

**** MR. SALGADO MOVED TO APPROVE ISSUING A LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM THE COMMISSION ONCE MORE DETAILS ARE PROVIDED.**

**** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM JANUARY 8, 2024, MEETING

- ** MR. ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**
- ** MR. SALGADO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MR. SALGADO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd