



WALKABLE NOVI COMMITTEE

DISCUSSION NOTES

October 22, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting Platform
(248) 347-0475

In accordance with Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.261, et seq., as amended, this meeting was held remotely.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Julie Maday (Chair), Brent Ferrell, Justin Fischer, Andrew Mutch, Salene Riggins (joined late), Brian Smith

Absent: None

Staff Present: Lindsay Bell, Senior Planner, Community Development; Barbara McBeth, City Planner, Community Development; Madeleine Kopko, Planning Assistant, Community Development; Jeff Muck, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services; Rebecca Runkle, Plan Review Engineer

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Member Fischer made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Mutch seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

STAFF UPDATES

1. Planning Update
 - a. Recent segment completions

Planner Bell said one thing that was brought to our attention was the bicycle map that was posted on the Ride and Walk Novi Webpage. It hadn't been updated since 2013 so I worked with our GIS Department to update this. It now shows the ITC Trail, which was the major update, but then also we've indicated where the bike lanes were added along Taft Road.

We have seen some new sidewalk segments that have been added around Novi lately:

- Along Wixom Road at the Villas at Stonebrook.
- Along Nine Mile Road at the Woodbridge Park development.
- At Lakeview along Old Novi Road.
- Along Haggerty Road just south of the I-96 overpass which was part of the Toyota Service Center project and was a very long segment.

- At Thirteen Mile and Hagerty Road with the Hillside Office Development that also connected to Autoneum.
- Along Seeley Road that goes to the Novi Tech 6 & 7 project.
- The north side of Ten Mile Road where they added the remaining sidewalk through the Emerson Park PRO as part of their public benefit.
- Catholic Central is also doing a big frontage improvement where their sidewalk connection is nearly completed.

2. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Service Update

- ITC Trail Neighborhood Connector
- ITC to Villa Barr Connector
- Meadowbrook Road/ Village Wood Lake Park connector

Jeff Muck, Parks and Recreation Director, talked about three potential projects to get feedback on from the members:

- Trying to increase Novi's connectivity between parks and trails:
 - The ITC Community Sports Park to Villa Barr Art Park sidewalk connection.
 - It not only would connect the ITC Sports Park but also give access from the ITC Trail.
 - It will be three segments that would tie into an existing segment and cost about \$217,000.
 - Once ITC Sports Park opened, we knew we wanted to tie some neighborhoods in.
 - Resident recommended a connector on Sandpiper Court.
 - Small easement where we could put a spur and connect to the ITC Trail.
 - Dependent on a few things:
 - Mockingbird HOA would have to give approval as well as ITC.
 - No discussions with homeowners have started yet other than the one that called.
 - Village Wood Lake
 - This a neighborhood park and the only access is through Village Wood.
 - This could give us a crossing to tie into the existing aggregate pathway into that park.
 - We've been enhancing the park lately with invasive species removals.
 - This could open the park to more use.
 - Anticipate negative reaction from residents.

Member Fisher asked if the resident that inquired about Sandpiper Court would be impacted from the construction and Parks and Recreation Director Muck said no, they would not.

Chair Maday asked how much the last two projects would cost and Parks and Recreation Director Muck said Sandpiper Court would cost around \$123,000 and the Village Wood Project would cost about \$300,000.

Chair Maday said why would we anticipate negative reactions to the Village Wood Lake project?

Parks and Recreation Director Muck said it's more usage of the park and more traffic behind the homes, but it is a public park.

Chair Maday said I've never been there and that's probably because there's no good access points. From my perspective, the top of the list should be the connection to Villa Barr Park. It reaches two points, and it would get used a lot. The Sandpiper connector is good and the residents would have access to Ten Mile too. I like any access points we can get. I also think that more people would use Village Wood Lake if there was access.

Member Smith said there's access to Village Wood Lake, but it's a little bit longer of a walk than straight across Meadowbrook. Villa Barr has the advantage of getting people off Napier Road.

Chair Maday said to me, Villa Barr is number one. I'm leaning towards Sandpiper for number two just because more residents might be happier, and we wouldn't get complaints.

Member Smith said I agree. We can see who pushes back the most and that becomes priority three.

Member Fischer asked if there is any other pedestrian access to Village Wood Lake Park?

Parks and Recreation Director Muck said through the neighborhood there is.

Member Fischer said there's no other sidewalks in that neighborhood except by the schools. What I really like about this is that it opens a park up to all of those neighborhoods on the other side of Meadowbrook Road that is unknown. I actually think this would be an excellent use of money especially compared with the second option because I think there's so many other access points to ITC Park already. I agree Villa Barr should be number one, but my vote would be for Village Wood Lake to be a strong second.

Member Mutch said I would like to see Villa Barr up there and get a sidewalk connection up to the park. I want to echo what Member Fischer was saying about Village Wood Lake. It's a public park and the public should be able to access it. I think Member Fischer made a good point that there's no sidewalk connection to that park. If we open that connection from where the existing path ends out to Meadowbrook Road, the primary users of that will see that as an opportunity to get out to Meadowbrook Road. Looking at Sandpiper Court, Jeff mentioned an easement. It looks like there's a 10-12 foot-wide easement and it's not a part of anybody's yard.

Parks and Recreation Director Muck said it's about a 10-foot gap between those two homes, it's not part of their yard. The gentlemen who mentioned it said there was gate there at one point and people have maintained it.

Member Mutch said we've dealt with this similar situation in different locations. It's always challenging when you try to put a pathway in between people's houses especially if

they're not the ones requesting it. I'm open to discussing it, but I do think that's going to be our biggest hurdle. In terms of priorities, I would be more interested in seeing Village Wood Lake moved up, but again I think maybe to Brian's point, let's see which ones we can make the most progress on and then from that we can prioritize them.

Parks and Recreation Director Muck said I agree. I think it would be best to put all our energy in Villa Barr and Village Wood Lake.

Member Smith said I just wanted to say one more point in favor of Village Wood is that the parking there is limited so if we can increase the usage of the park without needing to park cars that would be a good thing.

3. Engineering Update

- a. Active Non-Motorized Public Projects
- b. Non-Motorized Maintenance Presentation

Staff Engineer Rebecca Runkel said so right now under construction is the 2020 Pathway Gap and ADA compliance program, which has been a few years in the making. We will be covering several areas which you may have seen around the City. It should be completed this year and there might be some restoration left over in the Spring. You probably have seen the work at Novi Road over I-96 that is just about complete. The sidewalk is totally done, they're just wrapping up servicing work on the bridge. The rest are sidewalks that are currently in design:

- Meadowbrook south of Eleven Mile
 - We are still working on acquiring easements.
 - There's one property owner that looks like we're going to have to take to court to get that easement.
 - Looking to combine this with some drain work at the Lee BeGole Road headwall that needs to be constructed.
 - Hoping to get out to bid soon and have the easement ready to go by the spring.
- Segment 51- along Ten Mile Road with ITC Access between Dinser and Woodham
 - Still working on acquiring easements.
 - Three properties are on City Council Agenda for Monday, two of which are settlement amounts, and one is assigned easement so after we move forward with those we will just have to get the ITC easement which should be this winter and one other property which the house just went up for sale so I'm not sure how that's going to go, but definitely in the spring we're looking to get that done.
- Safe Routes to School Project
 - Several small sidewalk and ADA improvements are going well.
 - About 70% complete on the plans.
 - We're looking at a February letting and will start construction sometime in the spring or summer depending on when the school district wants us to get started on that.
 - We also just started a design with AECOM on the ITC Trail Connection in-between Wildlife Woods and the ITC Trail
 - This will be a spring letting.
 - Mid to late summer construction.
- Ten Mile Road Project between Haggerty and Meadowbrook

- RCOG has been working on that and OHM just applied for a TAP Grant for that sidewalk.
 - Good shot at getting about half a million in funding for that because it's a major connector piece with other communities.
 - That should be starting construction around 2022.

Member Fischer said could you reiterate that point about Safe Routes to School?

Staff Engineer Rebecca Runkel said we need to coordinate with the schools on that because a lot of the improvements are on school campuses so we just need to figure out when they can allow us on campus to do work and if we can only do that in a certain timeframe or not.

Member Fischer said can the improvements only be done in the warmer months?

Staff Engineer Rebecca Runkel said yes, it's all going to be in the summer. There is a pretty large sidewalk segment going in on Tamara and Borchart Street in the Orchard Hills neighborhood which might extend outside of the summer, we are not sure yet.

Presentation on non-motorized maintenance in city: from DPW

Planner Bell said we have a presentation by our Field Operations Senior Manager Matt Wiktorowski and Work Leader in the Field Operation Division Dean Reid who are going to update us on non-motorized maintenance in the city.

Matt Wiktorowski, Field Operations Senior Manager, said I wanted to talk about non-motorized maintenance. Sometimes we don't think about the maintenance associated with all these assets we continue to add that brings people to our community. Our network has just over 200 miles of sidewalks in neighborhoods and about 50 miles along our major roads. We also have about 1.7 miles of boardwalks (36 separate structures) that we maintain as well.

Dean Reid, Field Operations Work Leader, said even though the ITC Trail is new, we've already had some problems with it. Just keep in mind that when you add these resources, they have to be maintained.

Matt Wiktorowski said our labor resources are Dean as a work leader, a full-time staff member, and a part-time individual. Most of those resources are allocated to boardwalks. Maintenance activities that are required on sidewalks are:

- removing and replacing concrete
- removing trees
- trimming vegetation to clear pathways
- panel removal and replacement
- crack sealing

Between 2013 and 2020 we've gotten about 626 requests. We're getting more and more concerns associated with the maintenance needs. Currently, we're removing and replacing 2-inch deflections and that's measured by a straight edge and a tape measure. That's important because sometimes if that straight edge isn't quite level we get an inch a half shown to us when it really should be higher or vice versa so we want to

go out there and get the best possible measurement. Sometimes just one slab in front of a home is reported and a resident asks if the city can come out and replace it. We go out there and check, but then find that there are more panels in front of the same address that need to be fixed.

Dean Reid said when I go out and measure some of these deflections, I have to make sure to not cause another trip hazard. So, if I have a panel deflection that's caused by roots, but the roots lifted one panel up and the other two down, I can't match that up so I have to take out multiple panels. Frequently we get called out on one panel and it turns out we have to do eleven panels, which changes the cost dramatically.

Matt Wiktorowski said we are starting to see more tree root damage. As our urban forest starts to mature, it brings us benefits, but at the same time, it also damages some of the other infrastructure that we have. You can see in a couple of examples, how the sidewalks are starting to heave. This example is from Meadowbrook Glens, but it's starting to become a delicate balance to make sure that we're maintaining our sidewalks properly in some of these older subdivisions. More residents that are walking the subdivisions and noting all the deflections that they feel are hazards and calling that in. So, our team is now walking those neighborhoods and trying to identify which ones meet our remove and replace criteria and which ones do not.

Dean Reid said and when you have multiples and must go and inspect them, you're actually being pulled off another non-motorized work, which leaves that crew short of people for quite a while because it does take a long time to measure every single one and put them in the system and make notes.

Matt Wiktorowski said some of the repairs that we make are:

- Deflections
- Sidewalk vegetation trimming
 - A side effect of trimming vegetation is that it grows back sometimes two or three times as fast as the branches try to divert that nutrient back to that smaller limb
- Concrete cutting
 - This is a good alternative to remove and replace that is cost effective.
- Tree root damage

Some additional field concerns we see out there are

- Poor construction that has taken place.
- Irrigation is a concern.
- Fencing.
- Bad concrete and compacted soil

We're currently fixing over 120 panels of sidewalk and bringing them up to date with ADA compliance.

Matt Wiktorowski continued to say so really what we need to do is think about where do we start our program and what we need to do to keep it basic. We should:

- Start out small and take baby steps. Then we can jump into a program that best suits the needs of our users as our network ages.
- Look at when the neighborhood was constructed.

- Several of these areas were constructed in the late 60's and early 70's. We know that the likelihood of there being failures in those neighborhoods are pretty great given that the construction started in 1969.
- Do an analysis about the forest and see what kind of impacts the trees might have in there. We know the trees are going to be mature so there going to have well developed root systems and what is the potential severity of sidewalk damage.
 - We look at Meadowbrook Glens and 44-45% of the species in that subdivision have a tendency to have surface roots.

We prepared some information a month or two ago about an inspection we did in Meadowbrook Glens and there were approximately 33,000 square feet of deflected, cracked and deteriorated concrete that was adjacent to about 440 homes and about 90% of households were impacted by that type of deterioration of the sidewalk. Our estimated repair costs were \$480,000 for one subdivision which was about 1,300 panels. That's a price of \$370 per panel, that's just an average cost, and that pricing can go up as much as 50% if there's extensive root damage. That is on a remove and replace program that has the criteria we sent out in that memo a month or two ago. It's a little bit more extensive but brings it up to a really nice standard.

An option we explored last season is to get into an average neighborhood and see what it would cost to bring the entire neighborhood up to compliance so we can bring some numbers to the table. We went into Green Wood Oaks, we figured that was somewhat average after walking a few neighborhoods, and at the end of the day we found out it would cost us \$6.36 per lineal foot to repair sidewalks city wide. If we used a method of cutting into concrete deflections between 3/8's of an inch to an 1.5 inches at the city's expense and then removing and replacing all deflections greater than two inches and then the homeowners with the understanding of HOA and homeowners working together will replace all the deflections that were 1.5 to 2 inches. The city paid about \$16,000 to remove and replace sidewalk flags and about \$53,000 for cutting compliance and that's how we came up with our total of \$6.36 per linear foot to repair sidewalks city wide. It would really help us out with budgeting if we chose to approach sidewalk maintenance that way.

Dead Reid said we did not do any cracks or deteriorating panels, that was up to the property owners.

Matt Wiktorowski said correct. We have actually cut our price in half by adding cutting into the picture and what's been nice to hear is that the HOA and the residents in that neighborhood have all been very happy with everything we've done. I haven't heard one complaint out of the HOA or any of the residents.

Our non-motorized network is such a great aspect to the community but finding the money and the proper way to maintain it is what's key and this was one that we found that appeared to make all the residents in that neighborhood happy. It just involves the cutting component and allows us to send some numbers to upper administration to see how they want to move forward with the program.

Some of the future concerns include:

- Our urban forest.

- Trees grow and root systems grow and any assets that are adjacent to those trees are going to be impacted one way or another.
- Available funding is dedicated to maintenance.
 - What funding we will have dedicated this year for maintenance is very important when developing a program or helping the development of a program.
- Tripping hazards.

We get multiple calls with how we're going to address sidewalks. We tell individuals right now that it is strictly a two-inch deflection. We want to make sure that we provide residents with the best possible service, but what that means is right away sticking straight to a rule and making sure that we enforce that city wide.

Dean Reid said I would like to add one thing, when you think about all the maintenance on the wooded boardwalks and all the sidewalks, I do that with me, a full-time staff member, and a part time staff member and to think we're thirty-two square miles and we maintain it all, so we're doing the best we can and trying to be proactive, but its not easy.

Matt Wiktorowski said so as we add sections of sidewalk, pathway, and boardwalks to our system we just ask that everyone considers the maintenance that's associated with that and we want to make sure that eventually we get this program in place that doesn't just consider additions and connectors in the network but also takes into consideration how we maintain those connectors and boardwalks.

Member Smith said I just wanted to comment on the vegetation clearing, that's not just an aesthetics issue, it's also a safety issue especially around intersections.

Matt Wiktorowski said we try to address those areas and we also give letters to the property owners asking if it's okay to trim down the vegetation and if they want to do it themselves, they can and we'll for sure show them how to do it if they prefer, but were working on that.

Chair Maday said this is very important topic. When you look at this presentation, it really does show the magnitude of how much work is done all the time by you guys. One thing that crossed my mind when you were talking about the shallow rooting system is that is there a way we can get with landscaping and not allow certain trees along those areas?

Planner Bell said I was having the same thoughts. I will raise that with the Landscape Architect to make sure.

Matt Wiktorowski said I think it's inevitable that planting a tree that close to the sidewalk is going to 100% fix it, it may prolong it five years, but you're still going to have that issue. In the maintenance aspect of it, its not going to go away, but it will help.

The meeting abruptly stopped at 7:00 pm. Another future date will be planned to continue the conversation and the rest of the agenda.