

# MEETING MINUTES

## WILLOW ROAD STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING (Meeting #11)

January 30, 2008

Attached are meeting minutes from the Steering Committee Team Meeting for the Willow Road Context-Sensitive Enhancement Plan held January 25, 2008 at the Village Hall in Northfield.

<b>Steering Committee Members</b>	<b><u>Absent</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
Ken Behles, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>
John Birkinbine, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Peter Fischer, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Fred Gougler, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Becky Hurley, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Mark Kurensky, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Ian Sherman, Village of Winnetka	<u>    X    </u>	_____
Scott Turban, Village of Northfield	<u>    X    </u>	_____
 <b>Alternates</b>		
Carolyn Kurtz, Village of Winnetka	<u>    X    </u>	_____
 <b>Staff Liaisons</b>		
Stacy Sigman, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Steve Saunders, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Doug Williams, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>
 <b>Consultants</b>		
Scott Freres, The Lakota Group	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Daniel Grove, The Lakota Group	<u>    X    </u>	_____
Kevin Clark, The Lakota Group	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Mike Kerr, Christopher Burke Engineering	_____	<u>    X    </u>
 <b>Additional Participants</b>		
Anne Kane, Northfield Dept. of Community Dev.	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Jeffery Liss, Resident, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Ervin Hobson, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Tom O'Donoghue, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>    X    </u>
Richard Kates, Resident, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>    X    </u>

### **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

- Lakota distributed meeting minutes for Steering Committee meeting #10. Ken Behles motioned to adopt with amendments as discussed, John Birkinbine seconded the motion. Vote was taken and motion passed.

## REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF NEXT STEPS

- Scott Freres distributed a working draft copy of Section 1 of the report for Committee review. He stated that Lakota would continue moving forward with the report and any comments, questions, or revisions should be forwarded to Lakota or discussed at the next meeting.
- Kevin Clark distributed a copy of the in-progress draft plan for the sections that had been discussed at the previous meeting.

## DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF ROAD CORRIDOR FROM THE EDENS OVERPASS TO PROVIDENT

- Scott Freres described the draft plan for the stretch from the Edens overpass to Provident. He explained that the plan memorializes the recommendations from the Committee as a graphic representation and it will be evolving as the Committee discusses areas further west along Willow Road.
- Scott Freres explained the “alternate” plan from Forestway to Hibbard for discussion by the Committee. The following options were discussed:
  - One option showed a 4-lane cross section tapering to 3 lanes west of Hibbard, with a dedicated left turn lane at Hibbard.
  - The alternate showed a continuous striped lane from Forestway to the west of the Winnetka Public Works building entrance drive and from the east of the Public Works entrance drive before becoming a left turn lane at Hibbard.
- Steve Saunders explained that there are multiple ways to achieve goals near the Hibbard/Willow intersection and, ultimately, a detailed engineering study will determine the best alignment. The feasibility of the “alternate” depends on east bound traffic; it would not make sense to only have one east-bound lane if it creates a back-up.
- Mark Kurensky commented that the tapers are the dangerous areas and where they happen is key, so there should not be too many. He questioned if it should happen at Forestway or Hibbard.
- Steve Saunders added that what drives the taper locations are where the traffic “peels off” to turn left; the engineers will look at that very closely.
- Mark Kurensky commented that the Committee needed to be careful how much striping is shown and where it is located, adding that too much striping does not look good and goes against context sensitive design.
- Becky Hurley expressed some concern about decreasing the number of lanes in the stretch from Forestway to Hibbard. She noted that if the daily traffic counts are on the cusp of requiring 4 lanes, the Committee needs to be cautious about decreasing capacity.
- **The Committee agrees that the 4 lane section, tapering to 3 lanes west of Hibbard should be the recommendation, not the “alternate” plan.**
- Mark Kurensky noted that seeing the recommendations graphically will help with many decisions. For instance, the staff at Crow Island School can see the pros and cons of moving the bus location to the west.
- Doug Williams stated that the “bump-out” for student crossings at Crow Island School is critical for visibility and should not be compromised.

- Ken Behles noted that showing a multi-use path in front of the new office building west of the Edens is misleading. The aerial image beneath the plan does not show the existing office building or its parking, which actually extends into the right-of-way. The bike path on the plan could not be located along Willow Road as shown. **The Committee agreed that this should be clarified by showing the bike path being diverted through the parking lot.**

## **DISCUSSION OF ROAD CORRIDOR FROM RIVER BRIDGE TO EDENS OVERPASS**

- Scott Freres discussed the issues pertaining to Northfield’s Downtown, as derived from the workshops and stakeholder interviews. These included:
  - The Edens on-ramp access from the west
  - Potential solutions for a bike/pedestrian connections at the Edens ramp
  - Cut-through traffic behind Village Hall/Police Station
  - Large number of curb cuts
  - Long pedestrian crossings
  - The potential Skokie Valley Trail
- John Birkinbine stressed that pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the Edens entrance ramp is a major issue and solutions should be studied.
- Stacy Sigman and Anne Kane from the Northfield Department of Community Development discussed goals and issues from the current Northfield Downtown Planning process. These include:
  - The Plan envisions pulling buildings closer to Willow Road for better pedestrian access
  - Adding on-street parking and parking decks instead of surface lots
  - The potential for a right-in/right-out access on Walnut and on the north drive accessing the Village parking lot
  - Possibly vacating Alice Lane
  - Pulling sidewalks away from Willow Road to increase pedestrian safety
  - Potentially narrowing some streets, including Happ Road, to create a “downtown feel”
  - Minimizing curb cuts
  - Median improvements/enhancements
- Scott Freres commented that many residents said the crossings on Willow Road are very long and disjointed in this area.
- Stacy Sigman noted the Happ median is used as a refuge, but it is not a “kid friendly” situation. Generally, the Willow Road crossings do not seem like they are timed for pedestrians.
- The Committee discussed the possibility of creating a bike/pedestrian connection below the Edens ramp on the east edge of downtown Northfield. The current vacant land to the west of the ramp south of Willow Road would be used as a transition to bring people directly into downtown Northfield. Many Committee members felt this would be beneficial, as most bikes are diverted to Winnetka Road now.

- Mark Kurensky questioned if it would be feasible to make the Edens southwest on-ramp more perpendicular to Willow Road to slow cars down and make the crossing safer for pedestrians/bikes.
- The Committee noted that the ramp needs to allow cars to pick up sufficient speed to safely merge into Edens traffic.
- John Birkinbine commented that instead of providing an underpass, a pedestrian/bike bridge could potentially work in this location because the ramp is sloping down toward the Edens.
- Mike Kerr noted that a connection should be shown on the plan, so it is recognized as an issue with potential solutions that can be studied in more detail.
- **The Committee agreed that an underpass or overpass/bridge should be recommended for making a safer pedestrian crossing at the Edens southwest ramp.**
- Mike Kerr noted that a combination of interconnecting the signals, eliminating push-buttons at crosswalks and providing an underpass tied into the Skokie Valley Trail would improve flow through downtown and make it safer for pedestrians.
- Becky Hurley asked about the Average Daily Traffic count in the downtown area of Willow and how many lanes were indicated by that count.
- Mike Kerr said the ADT is approximately 24,700 and although that indicates 6 lanes of through traffic, the impact on the downtown area would be so significant that IDOT would not suggest the road be expanded to 6 lanes.
- The Committee discussed whether or not the densities shown in the Northfield Master Plan will affect traffic capacity and lanes.
- Stacy Sigman noted that the densities in the Master Plan should not change the number of lanes needed because it will not generate significant additional traffic. Examples from Deerfield and Arlington Heights were cited.
- Doug Williams suggested that, because of the number of issues pertaining to Downtown Northfield, Lakota should meet separately with Village of Northfield staff to discuss the issues and goals of the Downtown Master Plan and layer the ideas with the Willow Road issues and goals. Lakota can then present a plan of this area to the Committee for review and discussion.
- **The Committee agreed that Village of Northfield staff and Lakota should meet to discuss the Downtown issues to help focus and guide the discussion at the next Steering Committee meeting.**

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### **DISCUSSION OF ROAD CORRIDOR AT THE RIVER BRIDGE AND BRISTOL**

- The Committee discussed the following issues pertaining to the River Bridge:
  - The need to make it safer for bikes/pedestrians
  - The potential to increase this to a 5-lane section with a dedicated east-bound left turn lane where Bess Hardware currently is located
  - Making the bridge more of a “gateway” feature for Northfield’s Downtown
- Mike Kerr noted that the 1999 Plan essentially had a 5-lane cross section from Bristol to Happ Road.

- Ken Behles questioned how the bridge would work with the extra width and if it would fit within the right-of-way, connecting to sidewalks/paths on both sides. Mike Kerr noted that the transitions will have to be studied, but it should be able to work.
- **The Committee agreed that the River Bridge should be rebuilt with ample room for pedestrians and bikes on the north and the south and it should be more of a gateway/architectural feature.**
- The Committee discussed the potential closing of Bristol Street on the north side of Willow Road and creating an alternate access for the condominiums/apartments in this area via Willowview Drive.
- Stacy Sigman noted how difficult it would be to acquire the right-of-way for closing Bristol Street because of the number of property owners who would have to agree.
- Doug Williams stated that the residents in this area would need to study the idea in order for this to work.
- Mike Kerr noted that the offset intersection is the main issue because the opposing left turn movements create problems.
- **The Committee determined that Bristol Street on the north should stay open, but reasonable turn movements should be studied and accommodated.**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Ervin Hobson of Northfield noted, in response to concerns about the aesthetics of too much striping, as an alternate to striping a lane, tinted/textured paving could be used.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- The Committee discussed that it would be very beneficial if the 1999 Christopher Burke Engineering Plan was brought to meetings for reference. Lakota will bring the large format boards.
- Becky Hurley pointed out the fax submitted by Richard Kates, Winnetka resident, and suggested Committee members read it before the next meeting if they haven't done so already.
- Lakota to meet with Village of Northfield staff to discuss goals and issues of their current Downtown Master Plan before the next Steering Committee meeting.

#### **NEW ITEMS/COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

- No new items.

These minutes represent our understanding and interpretation of the issues discussed at that meeting regarding the project. Please forward any additional comments or clarifications to Lakota.