

# MEETING MINUTES

## WILLOW ROAD STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING (Meeting #13)

February 26, 2008

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

### Steering Committee Members

	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Present</u>
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>

### Alternates

Carolyn Kurtz, Village of Winnetka	<u>X</u>	_____
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### Staff Liaisons

Stacy Sigman, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Steve Saunders, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Doug Williams, Village of Winnetka	<u>X</u>	_____

### Consultants

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>

### Additional Participants

Richard Kates, Resident, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Jeffery Liss, Resident, Village of Winnetka	_____	<u>X</u>
Ervin Hobson, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Margaret R. Parcels, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Tim Feldheim, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Joan Frazier, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Ted Greene, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
Terry Gottlieb, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>
John S. Kemper, Resident, Village of Northfield	_____	<u>X</u>

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

- Lakota distributed meeting minutes for Steering Committee meeting #12. John Birkinbine motioned to adopt, and Peter Fischer seconded the motion. Vote was taken and motion passed.

## **REVIEW OF WILLOW ROAD PLANNING PROCESS**

- Becky Hurley provided an introduction by reviewing the Willow Road planning process, including the project goals, the public workshops, the Steering Committee's role and overall timeline. She also reminded the Steering Committee about the goal of presenting a recommended plan to the respective Village Councils in mid-March (Northfield) and early April (Winnetka).
- John Birkinbine provided an overview of Northfield's history with Willow Road. He added that the Village is "caught in the middle" with pressure internally and externally on the future design of the road. He understands the results of this study will not please everyone and he will feel good with the recommendations as long as there is sound reasoning behind them.
- Fred Gougler suggested that the Committee list the Guiding Principles on the board to keep in mind throughout the discussion.
- Stacy Sigman provided an update on the schedule for resurfacing improvements for Willow Road.

## **DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF ROAD CORRIDOR FROM THE RIVER BRIDGE TO WAGNER**

- Daniel Grove described four potential intersection diagrams for Wagner Road as provided by Lakota. These included:
  - Option 1. A 3-lane cross-section (55'-0" wide as shown on the 1999 Christopher Burke Plan) with pedestrian crossings on the north and south of Willow Road and east of Wagner. In this diagram, the east side of Wagner has a dedicated left turn lane and a combined through/right turn lane, while the west side has a dedicated left turn lane, a through lane and a dedicated right turn lane. The lane widths vary from 13'-6" to 11'-0" in this concept.
  - Option 2. A 4-lane cross-section (52'-6" wide) with pedestrian crossings in all 4 directions.  
On both sides of Wagner, this diagram shows one through lane in each direction, a dedicated left turn lane, and a dedicated right turn lane; all lanes are 11' wide.
  - Option 3. A 5-lane cross-section (60'-5" wide) with pedestrian crossing in all 4 directions. In this diagram, on both sides of Wagner there are 2 through lanes in each direction and a dedicated left turn lane; all lanes are 11' wide.
  - Option 5. A 5-lane cross-section with a median (73'-6" wide) with pedestrian crossings in all 4 directions. In this diagram, on both sides of Wagner there are 2 through lanes in each direction and a dedicated left turn lane; all lanes are 11' wide. The 12' wide median created a pedestrian refuge to channelize pedestrians and break the crossings into two shorter crossings (27'-10" and 33'-6")
  - All diagrams show pedestrian enhancements such as bollards at the corners, countdown timers, ample pedestrian refuge space, clear painted crosswalk markings, and additional separation between stop bars and crosswalks.

- Scott Freres noted that these configurations all still need to address the conflict points, such as the 1999 Christopher Burke plan.
- Mike Kerr added that capacity actually goes down in Options 1 and 2 because the dedicated left turn signal stops traffic longer, and therefore cars take more time to get through the intersection. However, the left turn signals also increase vehicular safety.
- Scott Turban stated that the Committee cannot pick the desired intersection without picking the number of lanes.
- Peter Fischer expressed his concern with adding a dedicated right hand turn lane; he would feel better if right hand turns were not allowed during school hours. If right turns were controlled, he would not have a problem with 4 lanes at the intersection. In order to guide children to cross at the safest point, he stated that there is no need for a north/south crossing on the west side of Wagner. Finally, he stated that he would be concerned about the 5-lane cross-section because of the width of the crossing.
- Scott Turban stated that the majority of the feedback at the public workshops suggested that 2 or 3 lanes are acceptable and that there was not overwhelming support for 4 lanes. Becky Hurley responded that residents who sent emails as well as some stakeholders interviewed preferred 4 lanes and these people need to be taken into account, too.
- Fred Gougler added that he believed “road rage” would not go away if the road is widened because it is systematic with sprawl and road configurations. Widening Willow Road or reconfiguring intersections will not improve regional traffic flows. Mark Kurensky stated that he felt removing the “surprise factor” of short tapers or situations in which people can pass illegally on gravel shoulders would reduce “road rage”.
- Becky Hurley stated that the issues of mobility and capacity are getting muddled. She indicated that she did not think the Committee would solve all of the problems of the Corridor with this study, but the approach so far has been to chip away at the problems, with the goal of making it a better road.
- Fred Gougler stated that if he thought widening Willow Road would really improve traffic, he would have a different approach. Instead, he thinks that the Edens will continue to impact Willow Road through back-ups and delays, and he does not believe widening will have an effect.
- Becky Hurley asked what the Average Daily Traffic counts for this area are and what kind of road cross-section would that normally demand, according to IDOT. She added that it is important to keep this in mind and should be part of the discussion. Mike Kerr clarified that normally 24,700 cars/day would usually equal 6 lanes.
- Scott Turban disagreed with the argument that the traffic needs to drive the design of the road, that by the time the road improvements get built, the traffic will have increased, so there is no way to ever completely address capacity.
- Fred Gougler noted that there are 1 to 2 fatalities at Waukegan and Willow per year. He added he does not want the Committee to recommend a plan that creates an environment for fatalities at Wagner and Sunset Ridge intersections.
- Ken Behles stated he believes that Core Design Principles 2 through 5 can be addressed for the Corridor by the roadway enhancements being proposed; and that

the 1<sup>st</sup> Principle, Safety, is open for further examination and discussion. He indicated that if a safe intersection with 4 or 5 lanes can be created for Wagner and Sunset Ridge, then the Steering Committee should consider a 4-lane plan. If a safe 4 or 5 lane intersection cannot be designed, then the plan should be 2 or 3 lanes. Mr. Behles added that he feels a median may allow children to cross safely. The key is making the cycle of the light long enough for children to cross.

- Peter Fischer expressed concern about how the crossing guard would control an intersection with a median; the median may make the intersection too wide for the guard to stop all traffic. Additionally, when a crossing guard is not present, he did not want children being stranded in the median. Ken Behles agreed that he did not want kids trapped half-way.
- Mike Kerr indicated that the crossings will be timed to allow pedestrians time to cross in one cycle, but the refuge creates a safe zone if someone enters the cross-walk late in the cycle. He also added that the amount of time given to pedestrians can vary depending on the time of day and, therefore, can be longer during school hours. The crossing guard can have the control to override the traffic signal and the pedestrian push button can trigger the light at other times of day.
- Ian Sherman agreed with Ken Behles' statement about creating a 4-lane intersection, but the bottom-line is that safety cannot be decreased at the intersections.
- The Committee discussed the tapers that occur now and how they affect the functionality of Willow Road.
  - Mark Kurensky noted that the tapers happen too quickly and are the cause for frustration and reckless driving. Currently there are three tapers within the Corridor, one west of Sunset Ridge, one between Wagner and the River Bridge, and one between Forestway and Hibbard. So part of the lanes discussion is whether we reduce the number of tapers from three to one.
  - Mike Kerr clarified that the length of the taper is the key for how well it functions; the current tapers on Willow Road are inadequate according to standards. The standard for developing a properly engineered taper is the width of the lane multiplied by the design speed.
- Peter Fischer then asked if, according to the formula for tapers, it makes sense to taper west of Bristol, between the underpass and Wagner and then add another lane at the intersection or just keep it 4 lanes to the Wagner intersection. It was suggested that the right hand turn lane is striped throughout the zone in front of Willow Park as opposed to tapering.
- Mike Kerr responded that striping a right hand turn lane is not an ideal situation because drivers will still use this lane to pass people on the right.
- Scott Freres commented that in the interview with the Police and Fire Chiefs, emergency response times and access to Willow Road were critical issues and should be taken into account as part of the safety discussion.
- Stacy Sigman noted that the Police and Fire Chiefs were fine with the 1999 Christopher Burke Plan because of additional turn lane increased mobility.
- Mark Kurensky suggested that the Committee needs to begin narrowing down the intersection options based on the fundamental Guiding Principles. He noted that the 3-lane intersection (Option 1) should be eliminated from the discussion because it does not provide enough mobility and is actually wider than the 4-lane intersection

(Option 2). Likewise, the 5-lane intersection (Option 4) with median is very wide and creates a difficult situation for school crossings. He noted the conversation could be narrowed down to the 4-lane intersection (Option 2) and the 5-lane intersection (Option 3).

- Scott Turban stated that the Committee cannot make a decision about the intersection at Wagner without thinking about how it affects the whole corridor.
- Fred Gougler added that he felt the Committee was not addressing the other Guiding Principles while studying this intersection and instead focusing only on safety.
- Peter Fischer indicated that his concerns for a four-lane plan are that the additional through lane would allow drivers to accelerate to the Edens, and that the additional lanes would cause obstructed sight-lines at intersections, reducing pedestrian safety.
- Mike Kerr added that one additional through lane more likely allows a more “steady progression” toward the Edens. Because of the amount of traffic during rush hour, there will not be any speeding.
- Mark Kurensky wondered if Eaton, Dickens and Churchill were made right-in/right outs instead of cul-de-sacs, would this slow eastbound traffic going to the Edens. Stacy Sigman indicated that there are existing driveways onto Willow in this section, so there are other vehicular movements beyond the intersections.
- Mark Kurensky suggested that Lakota draw 2 options for the stretch of Willow Road between Bristol and Sunset Ridge so the Committee can visualize all of the issues. The 2 options would be based on connecting the new 4-lane underpass and include:
  - A 4-lane intersection (Option 2) at Wagner
  - A 5-lane intersection (Option 3) at Wagner
- **The Committee agreed to have Lakota prepare 2 plans for discussion at the next meeting.**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Richard Kates referred to the IDOT article that he previously distributed to the Committee. He specifically noted their ideas concerning safety of a 4-lane road versus a 2-lane road.
- Jeffery Liss had the following comments:
  - The 3-lane intersection does not work in his opinion because the right-turn lane blocks traffic.
  - He believes none of the intersection diagrams sacrifice safety and are actually safer than the existing conditions.
  - He suggested staggering the lights so westbound traffic would have a longer red than eastbound traffic to allow children to cross. He also thinks adding a few seconds in which all lights are red at the same time would make pedestrian crossings safer at intersections.
  - Cars slow naturally in the “S-Curve,” so making this section 4-lanes should not affect the speed of the cars. Additionally, this area should not have pedestrian crossings, so he felt this was an appropriate area for 4-lanes.
  - He stressed that Willow Road is 4 lanes everywhere else except for the stretch between Sunset to downtown Northfield.

- He believed that emergency vehicle access through the Corridor is very important, and should not be understated in discussing safety.
- He requested that Lakota provide new plans after every meeting and he did not see these plans on the website.
- Tim Feldheim, NSAG member, noted the reason for the current 2-lane configuration in Northfield is the community, schools and parks. He also questioned whether or not a dedicated right hand turn lane at Wagner is necessary.
- Joan Frazier noted that she believed medians are counterproductive in terms of safety.
- Ervin Hobson commented that the one-way access from Old Willow should be kept and in-bound traffic should not be allowed.

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

- The next meeting time for Feb. 28 was changed to 6:30 a.m. from 7:30 to allow enough time to finish the current discussion and finalize recommendations for the remainder of the Corridor.

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.