

Mr. Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Messrs. Bova, Metropulos, Sterling and Cohen

Absent: Mr. Steve Shebeck

Also Present: Ms. Lynn Muter, City Planner  
Maureen Stauffer, City Council representative  
Ted Yates, Mayor

The Board recited The Pledge of Allegiance.

|   |
|---|
| CITY OF TWINSBURG<br>PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION<br>FEBRUARY 5, 2018 |
|---|

1. CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PLANNING STUDY PRESENTATION

- Project Team Introductions, Larry Finch
  - AMATS - Curtis Baker and Heather Davis- Reidl
  - CITY ARCHITECTURE - Alex Pesta and Michelle Bandy-Zalatoris
  - WSP - Nancy Lyon-Stadler
- Connecting Communities Grant Program Overview
- PowerPoint – Twinsburg Project, ‘First Mile/Last Mile’ Study

Mr. Larry Finch, City of Twinsburg Director of Planning and Community Development presented the Connecting Communities planning study.

- May, 2016 The City applied for a Connecting Communities planning grant to AMATS, which is the transportation planning entity for Summit County. They administer funds for grants such as this.
  - The purpose of the grant was to identify viable, cost effective routes that strategically target transportation enhancement funds to achieve trail connections, extend trails to central Twinsburg and create multi-modal accessibility to various destinations.
  - The City is interested in taking advantage of the existing trail network, which is only partly recreational trail, making it more functional by connecting the ends and extending the end from Miktarian Parkway to central Twinsburg while connecting the library, school system and various destinations along Ravenna Rd.
  - The process began with receiving the grant and then selecting consultants for the project, interviews took place in June, 2017 and the consulting team of City Architecture and WSP were chosen.
  - The project was funded by \$23,000.00 in grant money from AMATS and \$10,000.00 from the City of Twinsburg.

Mr. Curtis Baker with AMATS (Akron Metropolitan Area Traffic Study) explained that Federal Law requires regions greater than 50,000 people have a Metropolitan Planning Organization. They represent Akron and the surrounding areas.

- They create long-range transportation plans and are given Federal dollars to build those plans.
- They work with local officials on long range planning and funding projects.
- This project has the potential to be 80% funded by federal money.
- The Connection Communities initiative was started in 2010 and was created to avoid ineffective combinations of transportation and land use planning while also promoting alternative modes of transportation.
- In Twinsburg, the focus of the study will be on improving accessibility to the Ravenna Rd. corridor, Center Valley Trail, library, schools, etc.
- From the regional perspective, there may be opportunities to connect Twinsburg to regional trails as well.

Mr. Alex Pesta with City Architecture explained that the study is in the “understanding phase” and they are here to meet with the stakeholders of the process and be sure they are heading in the right direction for the community.

- City Architecture is a relatively small Urban Design and Architectural firm; they work a lot with WSP.
- One of his personal interests is making bicycle areas safe for children to ride and making Northeast Ohio a desirable place for young people to make their homes and raise families.

Nancy Lyon-Stadler with WSP noted that her technical expertise is traffic engineering and she enjoys this type of project, which combines her professional life with her personal life and love of bicycling.

- This project has gone through the beginning phases of understanding the opportunities and challenges and identifying the key connections needed as well as the best types of path and configurations for the area.
  - The plan is now in the transformation stage, gathering information from the community, creating a strategy and developing the plan.
  - The next step, implementation, will be in the spring of 2018, identifying opportunities for funding, developing initiatives and presenting recommendations for feedback and finalizing of plan.

Mr. Pesta commented that they expect to come before Planning Commission in early April to present a draft version of final recommendations and then a final meeting and presentation of the plan in May.

- The study area surrounds the Ravenna Rd. corridor and considers the driver, pedestrian and bicyclist.
- The orange arrows identify possible crossing areas.
- He feels the Center Valley park trails are a world class amenity with the quality and standard of maintenance and amenities being very good but the rest of the local trails are not equal to that standard.
- The blue area is a high activity area; the civic campus area.
- There will also be a focus on tying in the eastern area, indicated with the yellow arrow.
- The desire is to connect those trails to Ravenna Rd. and to connect Ravenna Rd. back to the neighborhoods.

Ms. Michelle Bandy-Zalatoris with City Architecture stated that there is a solid initial trail network in place as an asset to the community but there are some gaps that are preventing the network from reaching its full potential.

- The plan is to fill in those gaps and make the trail system more visible to the greater community and to improve the connections between the destinations that people would like to access by walking or bicycle.
- The Eastside neighborhood connection; how to connect the neighborhoods to the east.
  - Parts of a series of trails or paths exist because of newer residential developments but there are gaps between the paths.
- The Northern Commercial and Neighborhood Node is near the Idlewood Dr. and Gettysburg Dr. intersection.
  - There are some paths in the neighborhoods and activity around the shopping center; that area could work well as part of the trail system but safety must be addressed.
- Town Square can be improved with better connections and movement around and through the square; there is a lot of traffic movement in this area but some of the lanes allow unpredictability.
- The Ravenna Rd. corridor can be used as a connector of these pieces; they will consider creative solutions for traffic calming and a path/bike lane.
- The Civic Campus area, with the library and schools should have a clear hub connection to the trail system.

Mr. Pesta outlined the next steps for the project.

- There are similarities between Twinsburg and a project that the team worked on in Barberton; some of which is included in the power point presentation.
- Mr. Baker has a distinct understanding of how Barberton's project was funded, he is able to share that information to assist Twinsburg with moving through that part of the process.
- There should be a name or "brand" for the trail system that would be used on the signage to make it easily identified by the public.

Mr. Cohen opened the meeting to comments from Planning Commission and the various organizations and committees represented in the audience.

Ms. Muter stated that the City Planners and Consultants have a clear picture of what they have to work with and the direction that City Staff would like to take, there is a concern that they may be missing a portion of the target population; families.

- They have not reached out to the typical family user in terms of receiving feedback.
- There was consideration given to setting up at a city event, which may help target that demographic.
  - The timing of contracts, etc. has not allowed that to happen.

Mr. Pesta stated that the Fitness Center would be a good place to do that with the current winter/ spring season.

Mr. Cohen suggested that connecting northern Twinsburg, the Ethan's Green and Meadowood areas, would be desirable to create safer conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- He feels the connection to Town Square should work with or guide the future development of that area.

Mr. Sterling commented that there is a small trail in the Twin Hills area that could be used to open up that neighborhood into the trail system and Civic Campus area.

Mr. Metropulos noted that the project area appears to stop at the town square and he would like to see some connections near the Post Office, Kent State University area as well as near Baldwin Park.

- The intersection of Ravenna/Gettysburg/ Idlewood has heavy traffic.

Mr. Pesta explained that people like to have destination markers with distances so they know they are on the right path and how far they have still to go.

Mr. Bova asked if pedestrian crossing bridges could be utilized.

Mr. Pesta replied that those bridges are expensive and tend to be underused.

- They can consider that in their research for this project.

Ms. Stauffer, City Councilwoman, commented that she would also like to see connections to the northern neighborhoods.

Mr. Pesta explained that they have been charged with creating the most connections possible and determining which connections have the most value.

Mayor Yates noted that he has been working with the group and he feels that this project is crucial to the downtown redevelopment area.

- He is a bicyclist and understands the need for a safe lane on Ravenna Rd. for bicycles while also balancing the maintenance cost.

Chuck Bonacci, Environmental Commissioner, pointed out that with the desire to bring people into Twinsburg, they could connect the path at the north end to the bus stop in Oakwood and, at the south end near the bus stop at Kent State, both of which have buses to Public Square. People could easily bike to the bus and take their bike downtown.

- Connecting to the Oakwood corner also creates a connection to the Glenwillow park trails.

David Kleinman, Parks and Recreation Committee, pointed out that a trail along Ravenna Rd. to the border of Twinsburg and Cuyahoga County would allow access through the Richmond Rd. trail to the Cuyahoga County Metroparks system.

- There is also a set of very lightly used train tracks that cross Twinsburg, we may be able to have a trail run alongside it.
  - This would connect Pettibone Rd. to Cannon Rd. and on to Tinkers' Creek and the Town Square.

Sam Taylor, Library Board Member, explained that the Library desires pedestrian connections to Twinsburg Township and Reminderville, neither of which can easily access the Library by foot at this time.

PENDING ITEMS – NONE

CITY OF TWINSBURG  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
FEBRUARY 5, 2018

COMMUNICATIONS-

Ms. Muter noted that there will likely be a large agenda for the March meeting.

EXCUSE ABSENT MEMBERS- Steve Shebeck

MOTION: TO EXCUSE MR. SHEBECK FROM THIS MEETING.

MR. STERLING MOVED, MR. BOVA SECONDED  
UPON ROLL CALL MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the meeting unanimously adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Cohen, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cynthia Bennardo, Secretary