

Appendix G: Focus Group Summaries

OVERVIEW

Throughout the community engagement process, the project team facilitated focus group discussions with small groups generally consisting of 8-12 people. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain a deeper perspective on the issues and challenges facing pedestrians in communities throughout the state. The focus groups were an opportunity to reach specific demographics or priority populations, such as persons with disabilities, small rural core residents, and older adults. These discussions were facilitated by members of the project team and typically lasted about one hour. Below is a summary of the focus group discussions and brief descriptions of the findings or key takeaways as well as the raw facilitator notes from each group in alphabetical order.

APA Minnesota Pre-Conference Health Session – Bemidji

The project team hosted a session at the Minnesota American Planning Association pre-conference health session in Bemidji on September 23, 2015. Participants were mainly planners and public health practitioners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Health equity and pedestrian advocacy need to be stronger in planning
- Peer-to-peer learning and sharing success stories are helpful
- There is a desire for better engagement to give people more of a voice in their communities
- People are interested in sample policies, better understanding of the decision-making process, identification of funding resources, and technical resources

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

How do you think about the pedestrian environment in the work that you do or in your day-to-day life?

- Health equity
- Engineering design to make it work
- Advocate for more use
- How do we connect sidewalks/paths to nowhere
- Bike standards less attractive for walkers, safety (use MnDOT standards, funds)
- Safety to walk in small towns/highways
- Small communities – sidewalks are a big expense. Also value SRTS
- Health, safety, accessibility, quality of life
- Pedestrian access/amenities as maintenance challenge – conflict with engineers
- Using sidewalks/trails for transportation – any unofficial route is viable
- Resource timing/availability for planning/implementation of pedestrian facilities
- Traffic speed, crossing signals, sidewalks, crosswalks – are they there and do they really work
- Grew up in carless household
- Challenging
- Lack of connections
- Need more trails
- Need more sidewalks to connect people to desired destinations
- Suburbs – try to look at sidewalks during road development and redevelopment

What could encourage more walking in your community?

- Seeing others walk
- Amenities close to center (schools in neighborhoods)
- Direct connection live-work
- Design of walking facility – comfortable – allow to read the scene
- Signage
- Grass roots – get people together to make it visible
- Points of orientation (don't need more parking – you can walk)
- Aesthetics – safe-feeling, lighting, benches and trash
- Showing economic impact of walking
- Wayfinding, infrastructure, culture, code enforcement, land use, “walkshed”
- Additional/better maintained sidewalks and trails
- Careful presentation of the purposes/benefits of pathways to counter opposition
- Good winter maintenance/snow clearing
- Making sure to reach out to high need users
- Informing motorists and peds on each other's right and responsibilities
- Money to re-do or complete existing sidewalks
- Kids shouldn't have to go into the street when walking to school
- Connecting parks and trails, include disparities
- New developments – build sidewalks and buffering
- Better infrastructure
- Someplace to go – destinations, safety from crime, perceptions don't always match reality
- Traffic calming measures
- Change the culture – park in one place and walk around
- Density, bike racks
- Surface improvement for some weather
- Crosswalk with long enough time or safe place in middle

How are you currently addressing equity in your work when it comes to Active Transportation?

- Engage with people experiencing health disparities
- Starting to raise the “volume”
- Work to change political
- Consider priority populations in active lignin plans, work with RDC
- Advocacy, education, multijurisdictional communication, community organization
- Prioritizing, dial a ride, funding received for ADA curb ramps
- Developing self-awareness for the important steps in outreach
- Attempting to be present to engage people who are
- Maps and GIS – to identify income inequalities, disparities, where there are parks/trails and where do we need more connections
- Focus more on neighborhoods vs. communities
- Identify neighborhood champions to help engage
- Focus on sp neighborhoods

- Complete streets – recognition of imbalance
- Dominated by engineers
- Ped planners = advocates
- Giving people a voice
- How do you “fix” a system that was designed to be car based?
- Target funding to areas with priority populations
- Community engagement during planning process

What tools or resources would you like to see in the pedestrian system plan to support safer, easier, and more desirable places for walking (at the local level)?

- Pictures
- Sample policies
- Knowing the right people to connect with
- Images and examples of successful engineering aspects; video too
- Funding resources and strategies at the large level (how to pay for sidewalks for example)
- Assessment policy – options related to funding
- Policy – you need to do x, y, z
- Examples of other communities to make it work
- How long how (help overcome fear)
- Who opportunities for funding
- How much step by step
- How to combine funding
- Easy to achieve steps – celebrate small wins
- Walkability assessments (create a human bump out and traffic slows down)
- Include people in wheelchairs or those who can't walk as well
- Sample projects, policies
- Before and after photos with stories from community members – how it affected their business or personal health
- Where do we start?
- Tools/tips for working with elected officials and decision makers for this type of work
- Training on how to be the “bridge” between the community and the engineers or decision makers
- Add on vs. part of the way of thinking
- Part of scope
- Money at city level always
- Plow sidewalks in winter

ARC Greater Twin Cities Self Advocacy Group – Saint Paul

The project team attended a meeting of the ARC Greater Twin Cities Advocacy Group in Saint Paul on October 13, 2015. The members of the group meet monthly to discuss public policy, systems change, elections, transportation, education, employment, housing, and safe relationships, and are open to individuals with disabilities – mainly intellectual and developmental.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Walking is good for physical and psychological health
- Distance, darkness, exhaustion, and being alone are barriers to walking more

- Consistently accessible facilities in all seasons are critical to being able to reach destinations like grocery store, crossing the street, and getting to work
- Winter maintenance was frustrating to report on and get addressed
- Push buttons to actuate the walk signal are a challenge for those with physical disabilities

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

Why do you walk?

- Walking is a learning experience – learn about your world – meet new people
- Can't drive – processing is a little different
- Slow reaction time for driving
- Haircut, dollar tree because it's not far away from work
- Lots of restaurants and shopping places nearby
- Walk with kids for exercise
- At a conference, walk to the restaurants nearby
- Exercise
- Disability – no choice
- Fresh air, see what's happening in neighborhood
- Check out things in the street
- Because I like to walk – for exercise – and get you voice heard
- Gets me around the neighborhood
- Go to the grocery store, and walk to metro transit for sporting events, family and friends
- Walk for active and fit, and challenge myself and walk a destination that is a mile or two away
- Enjoy being outdoors
- Exercise and being outside and getting to experiences
- Get rid of emotions and problems. Mental health. Walk to Caribou and people watch – two – none.
- It helps relieve stress and emotions
- Walk to a really nice park, and get out of sad environment, find new places to do things
- Walk as part of my job
- Walk to lose weight for diabetes – doctor told me I had to walk
- When we walk, it helps other parts of our body like our hearts and our minds

Why don't you walk?

- Lighting, safety – after dark
- Snow removal – who is responsible? It is all different – sometimes a private residence. Sometimes a highway.
- Too far to walk
- Too tired, long day
- Too dark early
- Prefer not to walk alone – prefer to walk with a friend. Worried that something will happen to me.
- My sister says not to walk around in the dark
- Work too long hours and get tired. Plus, I walk a lot during work.
- Working full time for Fed Government – using metro mobility. With them, I don't know when I'm getting home.
- After work – tired a lot of walking during the day

- Because I get tired, lazy
- Because there is heavy snowfall
- Raining, too
- When my destination is too far – Special Olympics events, or meetings in Riverdale, or meeting in Spring Lake Park, etc. More than 3 miles
- Wheelchair breaking down
- Fear of getting hit by a car
- Because of the time it takes from where I'm going
- Weather, too
- Tired from the rest of the day
- Destinations too far
- If there are processing challenges
- Want to get where you need to go safely
- How people process with their disabilities – can they get there? Can they also GET HOME?
- I can't press the buttons – precision for pushing
- If I don't have PCA 24-hours
- Planter fasciitis
- Walking alone

If you were in charge...

- Weekly walks – 2 hours long
- Coordination between agencies and who design, construct, and maintain
- Address Transit stations and Businesses, too
- Follow-up is critical – what is happening to our input?
- Like Saint Paul – it's a one-stop shop so you only have to call one number
- Walk-a-thon for people with disabilities
- Motion sensors – instead of the pedestrian buttons
- 15 minute break or 30 minute breaks – walking breaks – meet and greet
- Outdoor music for walking
- Places to walk in the malls – when it's cold outside
- Variety of things to look at on your walk
- More education on walking in Vadnais Heights – not enough people know that they can walk. People use cars or metro mobility. Letting people know that they could walk more in their communities. Mayor and City Council Members – could influence
- Walk-a-thon event
- Address safety concerns. Cracks in sidewalk
- Center islands
- Make sure the buttons are accessible – where wheel chair wheels can get stuck
- Pink motorcycle, get paid, make every day Friday because there is more time to walk
- Everyone should be responsible for sidewalks
- Notifying community members when there is construction coming up – what are the alternative safe routes?
- One single portion of sidewalk taken out – what is the detour? Is it accessible?
- Create a program where all sidewalks and alleyways are cleared of snow
- Everyone can make more bike trails – that also have places for walking, too

- Shoveling once or twice is not enough
- More charging stations for charging the chair
- “Hey, they can do that for cars, they can do that for wheelchairs?”
- Construction – there is nowhere to go – more accessible routes – provide alternatives
- Fix it stations
- Weather
- Cleaning up sidewalks – sweeping, trimming trees, lights, signs, buttons
- Covered sidewalks
- No places to sit at the transit station
- Apartment end-to-end is a mile
- Keep benches during road construction
- Temporary seating? Portable street furniture that folds
- When you call someone to clear something, make it easy to report and get cleared
- Expanding snow clearance programs

Heritage Community Center – Thief River Falls

The project team hosted a focus group at the Heritage Community Center in Thief River Falls on November 19th, 2015. The group discussed issues around walking and mobility, particularly for senior residents of Thief River Falls.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Benches and seating options are needed in the downtown area for seniors who get tired from walking and need to rest more often
- Highways that pass through town are difficult to cross especially for seniors: signal lengths, not enough marked crossings, fast car speeds, and lack of benches present challenge
- Participants suggested more sidewalks, better winter ice and snow clearance, and visual cues to motorists to increase visibility of pedestrians

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

- A lot of the elderly housing is being built in the downtown area so many of those people rely on walking
- There isn't anywhere for older folks to stop and sit downtown
- Businesses should see the space in front of their business as a place to promote their business - add benches!
- There used to be a bus stop in downtown but the business people fought with the city to get rid of the bus stop because the stop removed two parking spots. They used to bring tow benches out near the bus stop when it existed.
- They removed it and now the bus just stops in the street. That is fine in the summer but in the winter it is a big problem because seniors can't get from the bus to the sidewalks.
- I would shop in Thief River but it is not convenient, so instead I go to Grand Forks because they will pay for it
- Maintenance, clearing snow, is a problem in the winter because seniors can't move around easily.
- There is an attitude here, especially among the business community that they don't need to cater to the general population because there is nowhere else to go. Because of this business owners don't care about how the street looks or if the pedestrian environment is good.
- We lost the mom and pop shop mentality and the kids want to get rich quick, so they raised the prices and changed the feel of the businesses

- A lot of our older people are starting to walk more because they are getting their license revoked. We have a lot of bad drivers
- The apartments on the outside of town don't have pedestrian connections along the road into town or across the road. One example was an apartment complex across from a Walmart on a state road (around 40mph), but there aren't any crosswalks there. People still cross there and it causes a lot of accidents.
- Many of these apartments have no crossings, no pedestrian access, and no light
- The roads out by the hospital are very fast, and with lots of older drivers that probably shouldn't be driving it can be very dangerous
- We just are not equipped for pedestrians when it comes to signals
- Kids within a mile don't get bussed but they would have to cross a major highway so parents line up to pick them up in car
- My grocery store is a block and a half away and I don't walk there because it isn't conducive to walking
- Hardly any handicap parking for seniors that drive into town
- The lights take a long time to change on highways and there are no benches nearby. It is a long time for seniors to wait to cross so they should have some seating there.
- The lights are not green for long enough for seniors to get across comfortably
- DigiKey and Arctic Cat have some good employee wellness programs, i.e. make people park a little ways off and walk in, programs where you can earn points for healthy behavior
- I would like to see the City Council and Better Business Bureau get excited about these things and spark some interest in people like me. I don't notice what they're doing because they don't seem to be excited and that means they aren't getting others in the community excited either.
- Add in walkways on major roads. Along with that they need signs and other visuals to notify the drivers because there are none.
- Change the speed limit on the whole stretch of highway that goes out of town to the nearby Walmart area from 40mph to 30mph. People are crossing and cars are turning a lot and it is just very busy.
- A lot more people would walk into downtown if they have access
- In the summer we need benches, in the winter businesses should have chairs inside in case seniors need to come in and sit down
- What destinations is it important to walk to?
 - Gas station, grocery store, downtown businesses

Hutchinson Senior Center

On December 1st, 2015 the project team visited Hutchinson and facilitated a focus group at the Hutchinson Senior Center. Approximately ten seniors were present at the focus group, and discussed local issues around walking and pedestrian comfort and safety.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Issues around winter maintenance, speed management, sidewalks, lighting and safety education
- Many participants did not walk because of winter cold, ice, fear of falling, and destinations too far
- Participants suggested education and enforcement around distracted driving and walking
- Participants requested better visibility at intersections (trail crossings) and to require sidewalks in new developments

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

- Everyone in the room said they walk
- Some walk to buy groceries
- Walk through the parking lot and walk through it to the store
- When you walk, you walk on the left and drive on the right, but people don't know that
- You don't need an asphalt trail to walk on, gravel is fine
- It's easier on your feet and knees
- One thing they could do in town, when a trail crosses the road it should be solid white across the whole road so that people know there is a trail crossing
- Some walk treadmill in the winter because its hard on your feet and legs to walk in the mall
- It's nice to get fresh air and see the trees when you walk
- Would you walk from your house or drive then walk?
- A couple said they drive to places they could walk
- Growing up they used to walk to school, only got picked up in a snowstorm
- In the middle of town, old Hutchinson, there are sidewalks everywhere. In the new developments (meaning like 1980's and newer) there are no sidewalks and lots of parking lots
- The entire mall is drivable but not walkable
- People don't look where they're going when they're walking because they have their phones or other distractions
- They took out the lights in downtown (Winthrop and Gaylord) and raised the speed limit to 40mph for semi's even though there is a school on one side and kids will definitely need to cross
- He asked the police department and others why that happened and no one could give a good answer, some said the lights were too expensive to maintain
- The school is on the north side of the highway in Winthrop and the rest of town is on the south side, so there is no way for the kids to get to dairy queen, convenience store, and other destinations
- People don't think about slowing down near school zones so it would be nice to see some sort of flashing light because that will make people notice
- Also having an education piece is important so that people become more aware of the need to slow down in school zones
- People get their license and then don't take another written driver's test for 50 or 60 years
- Our laws are way behind the technology of having phones in the car
- Highway patrol says we can't do anything, talk to your legislators
- We should do something like put a 'T' on the license plate of people who are caught texting, so everyone knows
- There are ways to use the technology with cars and phones to limit distraction time but no one uses it
- I don't walk in Hutchinson, but the city is doing a good job
- They made wider sidewalks so they are trying to do things
- I think the bike lanes that exist helps pedestrians as well because people are paying a little more attention
- Norway has city gathering areas and all the people live right around there along with all the stores, but you don't see that at all in this country because we're all spaced out – land use
- Other countries build up instead of out

If you were in charge and could do anything to improve walking, what would you do? Make the speed limit in town lower

- Remove the stop signs and put up yield signs, because no one stops anyways
- Too many stop signs in this town
- Have children go through classes for bicycle riding and have enforcement for doing things wrong on a bike
- All my biking and walking is done in town and I don't really have an issue
- The trail goes right by my place, which is great. But, where the trail crosses the road it is hard to cross, and they should have a big white line across the road.
- Flashing lights on the road before the crossing would be really helpful
- I don't like the bike lanes out on the highway because people just drive on them all the time, it is just accidents waiting to happen
- There's a spot where the trail crosses the road and cars have the right of way, pedestrians on the trail have a stop sign. There is also a lot of vegetation so cars can't see the people on the trail. It would be nice to have cars stop there
- Signs on the trail that alert for the crossing
- There is a dashed line down the trail which is nice
- Ice and snow is the main reason for not walking in the winter
- The fear of falling increases as you get older
- Winter time you can't walk on the trail because it's for snowmobiles
- There have to be sidewalks in a business area, but you can't walk there because you're going to get run over
- New areas they don't put sidewalks in anymore
- You can't have a walking trail in this town to replace a sidewalk
- Who is going to maintain the sidewalks in front of foreclosed housing?
- Flashing stop signs and lights would really help, people think flashing is important and instinctively slow down
- Speed limit is a main thing in town too
- People biking on trails go fast and don't call out or ring a bell to let people know they are coming and that can be a big nuisance for people walking
- I had two kids and as soon as they got their license they drove everywhere, even two blocks away to the disc golf course
- I walk a mile to work often because it's cheaper to not spend the gas
- If you look at downtown Minneapolis, people want to live where they can walk to get places, but if you live outside of town here that just isn't possible
- Educating people is important, especially when they're young and in school
- We should have a light for crossing out here in the parking lot - so much foot traffic and car traffic trying to navigate and no rules
- When you see signs that say what your speed is it makes you more aware
- No one thinks about defensive driving these days, they assume that other people will do the right things and be safe
- Motion sensor flashing lights would be help notify drivers that pedestrians are around
- A car is not personal, but when people bike and walk you can see their face and it is more personal
- The flashing lights that let people know when a light is going to change from green to red helps to slow cars down

- Everyone is in such a big hurry to get nowhere
- People are taking drugs and not aware of what's going on around them on the road

Making it Better Regional Learning Meeting: Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) – Minneapolis

THE PROJECT TEAM PARTICIPATED IN KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Engaging priority populations in their communities and regions is a priority
- Health impacts should be integrated more into transportation and planning processes and better coordination among modes and across scales is needed
- Land use and street networks impact walking: short distances to destinations, grid networks, and frequent, safe crossing help with walkability

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

Attendees

- Julie Sieber – Ramsey County
- Betsy Christenson – St Paul Public Housing
- Sarah Reuben - Minneapolis Health Dept.
- Mary Montagne - Dakota County Health
- Kurt Chatfield – Dakota County planner
- Dan Patterson – Bike/Ped planner with Hennepin County
- Ellen Pillsbury – MDH, Active Transportation Coordinator

How do you look at the pedestrian environment (through your work)?

- A lot of room for improvement in pedestrian environment – incomplete networks. Networks may appear complete – but they're not, and some missing pieces can really mess up pedestrian movement.
- Absence of key sidewalks (in suburban area)
- Without grid network the only place you can walk are state highways, county roads etc.
- State highways are especially bad for people walking
- Even when sidewalk is in place, it may not be particularly inviting
- Car speeds
- Lighting
- Winter maintenance
- Absence of boulevard trees – especially along high speed roadways
- Ages of pedestrians range , many different destinations,
- Street crossings are key
- Important for places to be inviting
- Driver behavior is important
- Destinations being within walking distance is key
- Safety is key – intersection widths are too far and crossing time too short
- Right turn on red is terrible for pedestrians
- Signs with “State law - stop for pedestrians” are effective
- Raised crosswalks make it very obvious that there will be people walking

- Feeder roads do not have sidewalks so people forced to walk in street – and in the winter they are pushed further into the street
- Safe Routes to School is important – street crossings important
- Livability is key – pedestrian environment is more than interaction with cars, it's about being in a place that is attractive and people want to be there
- Priority populations – Latinos (walk a lot), Low Car ownership areas (some areas in Ramsey County with 20% or higher w/o cars)
- Obstructions along sidewalk – light posts, signs etc.
- Speeds need to be lowered – even at speed limit it is not comfortable to walk next to 30 mph street
- Disconnect between what is “comfortable” and what is allowed – it’s an issue of perception of safety

When you think about the design (as it impacts pedestrians) of the street, what are the top 5 things that you think about?

- Lane width (big factor for speeds – more than speed limit)
- Bump out crossings
- Presence of sidewalks!
- Landscaped median – major factor in slower vehicle traffic
- What is along the street – housing? Businesses? What do people do on the street?
- Shade
- Presence of other people – it is an effect of the design
- Safety and comfort
- Is it useful – does it take me where I want to go?
- Refuge island – place to stop halfway
- Space of sidewalk – accommodate multiple people and wheelchairs
- Buffer between sidewalk and road
- Intersection design – too many lanes. Lanes are overdesigned for motorists delay. Extra lanes are not needed for most parts of day.
- Distance between street crossings – often blocks are very long and crossing intervals very far
- Winter maintenance – snow plowed in curb cuts, icy, can't reach push button because of snow – sidewalk needs to be prioritized, not just roads
- Design of sidewalk – connect destinations
- ADA – accessibility
- Curb Ramps
- Proper slopes
- Zoning laws should be changed so that building can face the street and have minimal setbacks
- Many issues regarding walking are related to land use and zoning

How do you consider walking and the pedestrian environment in the planning or design of projects? What do you do? Who is responsible?

- Inter-agency conversations
- Edina – new requirement for sidewalks?
- Dakota County

- Identified areas lacking sidewalks and trails in GIS, scored them and ranked them. Have policies to ensure some of the projects are built
- If in a part of the county with sewer and water – sidewalks need to go in on both sides
- Hennepin County
- Pedestrian plan – identified projects are worked into the CIP
- If a plan is in place, it shines a spotlight on the need for sidewalks
- Ramsey County bike and pedestrian plan
- 18 municipalities – pulling together where bike and pedestrian facilities are around county and determining how to connect the gaps in the county system
- Bike and pedestrian counts
- Walking workshops to gather information, walking audits, listening sessions
- Comprehensive planning and how it can influence healthy living
- CDA (Community Development Agency) in Dakota County – evaluate ¼ or ½ mile around senior housing facilities – then identified sidewalk infrastructure and the missing gaps

What would make it easier for you to support walking projects?

- It can be challenging to get people to relate to plans, especially long term plans that are too distant in the future
- Need to be transparent about what the plan will mean to citizens, and the time
- 12' driving lane is standard – not necessarily for safety – 10-11' driving lane may be just as safe. One thing we can do is reduce the amount of space for vehicles. If 10' driving lane is as safe as 12' then we should reduce the standard lane widths – when lanes are wider the cars drive faster AND make crossing distances longer.
- New roadways/resurfacing projects need to consider all modes – meaning we should start building sidewalks on all new roads. Need more stringent standards that consider all modes.
- Need better coordination among agencies to improve all projects – city, county, state roadways
- Rethink about the way engagement is done – help people see the big picture and the benefits instead of just asking them what they want to see or what problems they see
- South Saint Paul bike and pedestrian plan – went to various events around state – youth events, high rises, etc. – West Saint Paul also went to low income high rise that had a lot of Latinos – brought in a language interpreter and gave away flashing lights, offering food or drinks can be attractive
- Questions can't be too specific
- We need to consider the betterment of society as a whole. We need to consider taking away driving space for betterment of pedestrian realm

What are your information gaps (for the work that you do)?

- We don't know how many people are walking or biking in the same way people are driving – need data in order to talk about it
- Quantify health benefits of walking! We don't know how many people are living longer because they walk more often. We should be able to come up with some estimates based on calories burned etc. – Elected officials want information to prove. We make maps about where people die in car crashes, but we don't talk about the amount of people who die due to lack of exercise because we don't know the numbers.
- What are the costs to maintain new infrastructure? Not always known.

- We know everything about roads – how many cracks, when they were built, when they were resurfaced etc. – none of those things exist for sidewalks

What can we encourage more walking?

- Better land use – creating vibrant spaces
- Less traffic
- Slower car speeds
- More transit so you can make trips practical
- Better integration between transit, bike share, car share etc.
- Do people realize the true cost of a car? Need better information to educate people
- Suburban perspective: More separation from cars (horizontal – buffer zones)
- Suburban perspective: With major county highways, it's better to go under or over them
- Suburban perspective: walking environment needs to be very attractive (park like) to lure people out of their cars
- Do health impact assessments around school – encourage more children to walk

Final Practitioner Comments

- Needs to be a lot of coordination among modal plans across the state and different regions
- Different agencies all have very different conversations and very different desired outcomes
- Frontage roads are another key issue – they almost never have sidewalks
- Engineers can be a very effective ally – if they are working with us, they can do so much more than we can ever do. If we want to be successful, we need to work together closely

Making it Better Regional Learning Meeting: Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) – Redwood Falls

The project team participated in the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) meeting at the Redwood Falls Public Library in Redwood Falls on August 13, 2015. The group was comprised mainly of public health practitioners who work on healthy eating and active living. The group discussed roadway design, speed management, confusion around responsibility, political support, frustration about communicating with transportation agencies.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Fast car speeds and overbuilt roads discourage walking
- Many are confused about who is responsible for sidewalks, crossings, and maintenance
- There is frustration around participating with transportation agencies and lack of political support for walking

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

How do you look at the pedestrian environment?

- Sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, paint on the road, ADA
- Separate users, barriers from traffic, trees and landscaping
- Mobility, see walking as a mode of transportation
- Provides access to things and services
- Community

Top 5 things you think of related to design of a street

- Traffic flow for all users, wide shoulders, Visibility, barriers, signage, safety
- Street material quality, (potholes)
- Accommodate all users, aesthetics, trees, flowers, Speed limit
- Re-worded question as "what should be on a street?" (answers below)
- Bike lanes (separated from traffic)/ separate spaces
- Access, ADA compliance, access management
- Good signage and crosswalks
- Driver behavior, respect for peds

Make it easier to support appropriate walking facilities...

- how to attract younger populations, make the case that pedestrian infrastructure fulfills the need
- Who is responsible for clearing the snow?
- Demonstrate community benefit, connectivity, i.e. schools
- Adding personal stories of how pedestrian infrastructure impacts people in the community
- How does pedestrian environment relate to economic development?
- Obstacles:
- Return on investment, cost analysis for new, better modifications
- Election year – controversy topics
- Budget meetings

Information gaps?

- Legal rights of pedestrians, Driver responsibility, education around bike lanes
- Support bike/pedestrians safety in schools
- Users/community members are unsure how to get involved in the process
- How to work with MnDOT and other officials
- Benefits of econ development and attracting new residents
- Health equity, Data on peds – pedestrian counts, need the facts
- Basics of road engineering, how to talk with engineers about projects

Encourage walking:

- SHIP funding, economic development, Funding SRTS, infrastructure grants
- Cultural change, Law enforcement
- Expose community to other national competition, draw in new talent
- Need a destination to walk to? Random sidewalks don't work

Q7. Tools or resources to support walking

- Reflectors for walking, pedometers, google maps
- Data, water bottles, competitions, Incentives for community use
- Raise awareness, Build personal relationships with users
- Need a community champion to support

Other topics not covered

- How to get MnDOT to put in crosswalks in streets
- Basics of communication with MnDOT – (lots of frustration here)
- Process for community need assessment

Making it Better Regional Learning Meeting: Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) – Rochester

The project team participated in the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) meeting at the MDH regional office in Rochester on August 13, 2015. The group was comprised mainly of public health practitioners who work on healthy eating and active living and there were about 17 people present.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It is important to work with priority populations – especially older adults
- There is an interest in integrating health into transportation decisions
- Participants saw opportunities to improve walking through
 - Implementing Safe Routes to School,
 - slowing traffic
 - improving quality and frequency of crossings
 - addressing winter maintenance

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

How do you look at the pedestrian environment?

- If there is lighting
- Cracks or uneven surfaces
- Disconnected sidewalk networks, discontinued sidewalk and a lawn that would have to get to road
- Curbs – are outdated
- Plowed – winter maintenance; businesses that don't clear sidewalks of snow
- Push buttons require to go out of way
- Busy streets (e.g., Broadway) are unpleasant, safety of buffers
- Related to winter and snow plow builds up on sidewalk and curbs
- Sidewalks deteriorating and not maintained
- Traffic speed – affects how it feels walking – can be walking in a ditch
- Unmarked crossings or crosswalks that are not maintained reflect lack of importance and priority
- Trunk highways have a lack of crossing across

When you think about the design of a street, what are the top five things you think about?

- Include a sidewalk
- Space between a road and sidewalk
- Sidewalk width to walk next to someone
- Trees and shade are important
- Shoulders in rural areas – need to have a wider shoulder space (> 4 feet)
- Need pedestrian level lighting (especially in winter)
- In an downtown want to be near retail and not surface parking, also feel safer in this
- Lighting helps with safety
- Businesses can provide eyes on the street

- People walking /running and biking to follow laws/rules (also assuming people driving don't follow rules all of the time)
- Dogs and having control of them along an area

How do you consider walking and the pedestrian environment in your area or work?

- Benches can come into play with >60 population, needing rest stops along the way
- Need access to public transportation and a safe network to get to transit
- People living in apartment (low-income housing) on edge of town are walking into town without sidewalks to get into town
- Continuing to make sure there is SRTS; schools have an interest in safer places for students even around the school
- Bump outs are great way to slow down traffic – makes it easier for people to cross street – as a walker you can be exposed (e.g., south Front St - Mankato) to slow down traffic and not speed
- Bump outs can be more aesthetically pleasing – and more welcoming
- Bump outs are great but can't solve all problems – there needs to be education along
- Landscaping can also slow cars downtown
- Infrastructure design bump outs are more comfortable for walkers than pedestrian islands;
- Newer developments have walking and bike trails, but not sidewalks – the path is kind of connecting doesn't seem adequate,
- What determines the time you get to cross the street? Having adequate cross time – can be scary – seem to be for fast, able-bodied people – then, the pedestrian beg buttons, can take a long time to change for people to cross streets
- Sure some pedestrian beg buttons are just to make people feel better
- Have accessible push buttons – not on the grass off the cement – beg buttons can be close to
- Engineers may not consider that people do walk in the winter and need safer places
- Sometimes people wonder why people are walking and if their car might not be working – there is not a particular culture
- With SRTS – if there is a road that isn't locally controlled, the process the school would go through to change the traffic speed – and county says it's the state and that state may say it's local to understand the process – a how-to recommend and change the speed limit within the school zone – schools end up hazard bussing students
- Larger issue – is understanding the various jurisdictions and how the levels work together to build a network
- What's the process to create a path on the side of a road and who has the ROW

What would make it easier for you to support walking and community projects?

- Clarify the jurisdiction and agreement with all levels that all trips begin and start and end with walking –
- Bring public health to the table and understand how they can support community engagement (then, transportation folks wouldn't have to be more compliant management)
- Help others understand how PH can support engagement – and emphasis PH role
- How welcome is LPH to the table? Clarify what LPH does. What is local public doing here?
- Value added: provide education and engagement. E.g., support
- Wanting to be a significant part of discussion. Ask how you can help, and acknowledge that it may not be about money.

- Do transportation folks see the connections to health and safe places to walking and biking
- Sometimes it could be about local politics – there are two different languages can compete with one another
- Is there a way we could demonstrate the prevalence of chronic conditions to influence local decision makers and elevate the importance of safe places for walking
- Part of this is educating and informing public to support and demand
- There is data that the public wants safer places to walk – is this enough
- There is data that there if there are transportation options (multimodal) there are more opportunities for a community to grow
- Sometimes city admin view people who move to community as a taxpayer and they can do more with the dollar

What would encourage more walking?

- If there was someone at the city/county within their organization that is working on walking and bicycling – establish co-workers who work on this
- Invite people on walk –
- Parent at school inviting neighbors to walk to school – has a bit of a ripple effect,
- The environment has to still be there to support walking
- All communities look different – dodge county has a lot of 50+ and younger people – trying to get different generations to agree on values and priorities can be challenging, and many of the county board/elected officials are 50+
- The state can provide guidance on what's important and emphasis this to local communities/counties

Rural areas

- Small communities (Eyota) is a sense of community – sidewalks can provide a sense of community. Policy was difficult to pass, and now people are asking for more
- In small communities some people just walk in the road – which becomes a different conversation
- County road near school that won't allow kids to walk because of traffic speeds – and there is no
- Some of the destinations cater to cars and not people walking there
- Cultural norms don't allow people to consider walking 2 blocks – LA campaign “walk instead” “bike instead”
- Sometimes walking is an unpleasant and you understand why people don't walk
- Walk your city campaign – encourage people to walk once they park in their downtown – in Winona and St. Charles and where signage will take down in late fall and put up in early spring
- Could remind people how long it will take to walk or bike to a particular destination
- Social norms have people programmed to think that driving is quicker – even if that is not the case.

What else would you like to share?

- How would you like LPH to get this out in our communities? Toolkits will be sent out. If you're already at a gathering, have information up and share it.
- When and who is responsible?
- What about bicyclists, since bicyclists will need to walk to and from their destinations?
- Discussion of how projects could happen outside of the scope – encourage local plans and projects -

Making it Better Regional Learning Meeting: Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) – Sauk Rapids

The project team participated in the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) meeting at Sauk Rapids City Hall in Sauk Rapids on August 17, 2015. The group was comprised mainly of public health practitioners who work on healthy eating and active living and there were about 15 people in attendance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Main barriers to walking are lack of infrastructure and lack of crossings
- Many are most concerned about safety of children and older adults as well as the man people who currently walk despite the poor conditions
- Ideas for increasing walking were templates for good designs or policies, maps of walking routes, and better access to funding for pedestrian infrastructure and programs

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

How do you look at the pedestrian environment?

Personal Life

- No way that kids are able to walk where I live, busy roads with no access make walking difficult
- Infrastructure concerns – Think about good wide sidewalks with buffers from the road to make walking safe
- Very poor where I live, major highway crossings make the pedestrian environment unsafe.
- Getting to places with walking infrastructure is difficult, lack of controlled intersections that help pedestrians to move around
- People don't seem to know about where the infrastructure is – gaps keep people from understanding how they can travel on the network
- In busy areas waiting to get across is difficult – timings as well. Sometimes there isn't adequate time to cross busy roads.
- Walking seems to be like taking your life into your own hands in some cases – not safe without better access

Professional Life

- Retrofitting communities that were not built for walking is very difficult – better if we could plan for active transportation proactively before infrastructure is built out
- Walking path in town is great, but there's no way for anyone to get there – housing is all on opposite side of major highway from housing developments
- Impressed by the number of people who walk despite a lack of connections. There are people out there who will walk when there is appropriate infrastructure – the key is finding ways to incorporate this into planning.

Design of street – what are a few things that you think about in terms of the pedestrian environment

- Live on a narrow curvy street with no sidewalks or shoulder to walk on, poor sightlines make it unsafe to walk
- Speed limits and signage help to keep people informed
- Shared spaces
- Pedestrian-scale lighting
- Buffer space between the road and the sidewalk

How do you consider walking as a public health professional?

- Bike rodeos and safety tips for youth – includes pedestrian safety
- City planner meetings for safe routes to school grant – active voice arguing for sidewalks and walking
- Promoting active living, but it's hard to do so when there aren't safe opportunities to do so
- Thinking about chronic conditions, better pedestrian access and higher rates of activity would help to mitigate those issues
- Thinking about older adults – how does infrastructure serve them? Need to design in an appropriate way.
- Curb cuts create dangerous situations for people when walking
- School bus and school-based transportation is a big part of work
- Mostly using bike pedestrian in conjunction

What are some of your information gaps around pedestrian issues? What do you need to know or wish you knew?

- Who the advocates in our community pushing for walking are
- Who the planners and engineers are that work on transportation projects
- How to encourage cities and counties to work together on projects so that they link and have the same goals
- How many people would walk or bike if the facilities for those activities existed
- What are other motivators besides physical activities?
- How does this relate to car-free households or those who cannot afford to drive?
- Seems to be a gap between hard-core enthusiasts and those who choose these modes based on necessity
- Interesting to know what other barriers are for walking or biking to work beyond just infrastructure and access (e.g. need to carry things to and from work)
- Not knowing when it's appropriate to know when a bike or pedestrian should be on the sidewalk? On the road? Seems to be an educational piece missing.

What would make it easier for you to support walking facilities?

- Being at the table (public health) when projects are being discussed
- Having a broader base of advocates so that the message comes from places that extend beyond LPH
- Where are the gaps in our network? How can we talk about them with other people?
- Better implementation of complete streets in projects – knowing that planners are looking through non-motorized lenses when they design projects
- Coordination between different groups of people to ensure that open lines of communication are occurring between different levels of government
- Connecting new development to existing infrastructure – leapfrog development that doesn't connect to anything seems bizarre
- Would be good to see reasons why planners did or did not include pedestrian infrastructure in a project when it's being designed
- What do you think could encourage more walking?
- Better weather in Minnesota!
- Buses not picking up kids within a short distance from schools
- Better infrastructure is the key
- Need a culture shift that sees walking as acceptable and the norm for transportation, someone pulling over and asking if I need a ride when I walk home from the grocery store
- Better design of the pedestrian infrastructure, good landscaping
- Make walking easy for people to do

- Building trust between drivers and pedestrians – making sure that pedestrians feel like they are going to be safe while walking
- Education and enforcement together to develop culture of safety

What tools or resources do you use now that support walking?

- Small area maps that show destinations like hotels offer on check-in, could be offered by businesses, chambers of commerce, cities? Distribution is the next question
- Maps and designated routes with mileages came up a lot during recent bike rodeo events. Locator maps at parks or workplaces could help people to identify places to walk.
- Schools have walk to school days once a year, holding these events more often could introduce more people to active transportation
- Pedometers, FitBits, challenges, etc. are interesting ways to encourage people to walk more often.
- Police in community give out rewards for safe behaviors by kids
- Organized recreational activities can serve as an entry point to walking for people who otherwise wouldn't walk

Anything else you want to talk about regarding your work and walking

- How do we conduct assessments? Walkability studies? What should we be looking for in communities as we plan? Easy to describe the tools and things that people should be looking for.
- Social connections are important. Really encompasses the holistic health perspective of walking.
- Strengthening the way that we support LPH professionals to become engaged in planning
- Advocacy and training in helping to develop community voices to argue on behalf of non-motorized transportation investments
- Funding is an issue – no interest in pedestrian work until local community had a grant to undergo an assessment
- How to stress the importance of walking within communities? Why are we asking what people want when there are things that we (the city) need first?
- Importance of long-term planning needs to be stressed – encouraging people to think beyond the immediate 3-year time horizon
- Specific templates for action based on different scenarios or case studies from communities around Minnesota that did implement improvements in pedestrian environment

MnDOT Internal Project Advisory Committee Meeting – Saint Paul

The project team participated in the MnDOT Internal Project Advisory Committee meeting at the MnDOT office in Saint Paul on August 24, 2015.

Participants discussed street design, debated who has the responsibility for various pedestrian accommodations, information gaps in design and decision-making, the existing network, cost participation policy, better design guides, and missed opportunities for community engagement in project types like mill and overlays.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Practitioners seek a clear understanding of what pedestrian needs are
- They are interested in tools for good design pedestrian design, safety analysis, and prioritization
- Certain project types (e.g. mill and overlays) do not require community engagement which could otherwise lead to addressing pedestrian issues

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

How do you think about the pedestrian environment through your work? In your personal life?

- For rural Minnesota: fragmented
- Inconsistent from a work perspective
- Inability to have the pedestrian safety need integrated – we chose poor design then, try to make it safe
- Work: ignored, after thought
- Locally, problematic there seem to be a lot of issues, conformity, design – when we get into ramps, etc. it's inconsistent and problematic
- Generally, among practitioners a lack of understanding of how pedestrian environments function well – even on private side with developments and getting from point A to B; doesn't work, thought about how someone might walk to somewhere, but weren't willing to make tradeoffs or didn't understand how people would truly get there.
- Not understanding how peds function and what doesn't get built –
- Pedestrians have same design impacts as planters and other street amenities
- NIMBY mentality, with St. Paul Grand Rounds example, undercurrent of not building for a small population and willingness to not connect certain areas
- Parking can become problematic
- Look for shady areas and comfort in the physical environment
- I think about how we can discuss need and how one can tell where “need” is
- Visual perceptions! How do pedestrian amenities draw people in?
- Importance of advocacy groups and how they push us forward
- Maintenance of the system is a key concern
- Navigation and how the network connects
- Health and the surrounding environment – air quality and other issues
- What is the crash potential of a given site?
- Noise and how it impacts my ability to enjoy facilities
- The condition of facilities, many are in poor condition
- Importance of clear communication and easy ways to make safe connections in communities
- Cultural and societal issues – walking is becoming criminalized due to a lack of good routes. Walking is not deviant, is a basic function of human life, not an “alternative” mode
- Walking is rooted in a history that extends far beyond the construction of infrastructure
- In profession:
- Think about the pedestrian environment through complete streets,
- Active living groups are putting pressure for MnDOT to make investments
- Safety and accessibility
- Ped infrastructure is a maintenance issue – who is responsible?

When you think about the design of a street from the perspective of a pedestrian, what are a few things you think about?

- Road being Narrower – smaller turning radii
- Number of lanes to cross: is there a midpoint island, will the light ever change
- Speed of the roadway, and whether or not it's consistent; speed differential of cars can be problematic
- People may cross mid-block and not go to an intersection
- Providing a boulevard or buffer – separation from cars is important

- You can have a facility, but that doesn't mean it's pleasant to walk on – consider traffic, speed, types of vehicles (buses, dump trucks) – there are competing interests to fit it all in
- People may avoid busy roads during the day and be drawn to more eyes at night
- As a pedestrian, think about streetscaping – lighting and trees are important to welcoming and inviting people to walk
- Ped bridges can make you feel exposed and isolated (same as tunnels)
- Scalability – even with big trunk highway where pedestrian elements need to be brought down to scale. E.g., interchange at Penn and 494 – sidewalk is 14' wide

How do you consider walking and the pedestrian environment as those topics apply to your professional work?

- We are...(MnDOT ADA) – seems
- MnDOT has stated responsibility, but defer on certain items that puts implementation at risk – for example, maintenance is deferred to local municipality and that
- Project designer and local agency should be responsible – along with a pedestrian person (if each district had a bike/ped person)
- When and who is responsible for the pedestrian environment

What are your information gaps in terms of providing support for walking?

- Appropriate design levels – there is a lack of information and pedestrian plan can inform – what's appropriate – what do we want to see – a toolbox with better solutions
- Goes into context – better understanding what's around project area
- When projects take peds into account: - need a systematic approach and that includes private – e.g., navigating through a mall parking lot – can get there from street
- How much of a buffer is needed between sidewalks and traffic?
- Width, we have a minimum, but what is the maximum? How wide do facilities need to be?
- Crossing enhancements – no warrant for treatments like traffic control, how do we know when to use?
- Perceptions of safety – what impact does lighting, design, and eyes on the street have?
- What are easily understood ways to talk about the benefits of walking?
- How do we account for crashes that go unreported?
- Need for educational outreach and training events that talk about compliance and ADA requirements
- Legal issues – who is at fault in crashes? What is taught in driver's education?
- Research – need some data on the return on investment of walking. What is the impact of walking on health and the return on improved health
- Need information on crash reports – what are unreported for bikes and peds
- Need information for MnDOT employees on ADA employees, PMG?

What would make it easier for you to support appropriate walking facilities in community projects?

- SRTS can help with increasing access – so specific funding
- Tools for prioritizing, when we will provide a facility and throw additional maintenance to a pedestrian facility – specifying higher priority areas
- Empower projects teams to plan for pedestrian – right now goal is to not do anything because of the cost – project managers need permission to make the right decision;
- Who gets to decide: there is a responsibility for locals and state – there are different attributes in different communities

- Who should be in charge: a person who is an expert and knows the gamut – to ask

What are the specific obstacles? (E.g. political, jurisdictional, financial and/or engineering?)

- Funding –makes everybody compete against
- Maintenance
- Generally there is an institutional bend to keep peds a lower priority –
- MnDOT is highway department and not the pedestrian department – pedestrian needs are local and do not have a state level function
- Integrating peds
- Metrics for reward (on time on budget) created a lot of vulnerability for peds and roadside safety, which require addressing complicated issues

What do you think could encourage more walking in your community?

- When a project is safe there is a seen increased
- There is a latent demand our facilities don't currently meet
- There is land-use issue that needs to be addressed, for example, people will drive to a trail head, but to consider walking for a purpose to get something is a shift
- Land use and connectivity
- Multiple land uses means that facility will be used throughout the day – for example, a CBD that dies at 6-7, now it's not somewhere people want to be. Highly segregated use has adverse safety risk
- Networks – build appropriate facilities a block off of a corridor – e.g., LRT on University, how do people get a block further (first and last mile)
- There still needs to be a health message
- What is it to have lifelong PA – from SRTS
- Could some of the community gathering tools be used to get project level input and encourage walking in the project
- Mill and overlays don't require a public engagement, and it's where pedestrian facilities are considered
- How can we reconsider public engagement?
- Is there an opportunity to identify gaps? Something that would make it easier for districts with scoping? How could that encourage project managers to better implement pedestrian facilities – could the ADA inventory be more accessible to project managers?
- Right now Metro has "existing" network, where is no data there is no facility – so it's not always clear of where and what to address – can MnDOT bring some of existing information to the community – so, if we don't do this, what do you have in your system that addresses need?
- More sidewalks
- Motorist politeness and allowing crossings
- Driving should be less convenient, walking should be made more convenient
- Parking lots need to be reduced in size and how they divide nearby stores
- More consistent winter maintenance needed
- Street and networks should be designed for connectivity
- Change modal hierarchy, focus on the most vulnerable users of the system first

What topics have we not covered today related to your work and improving the pedestrian environment?

- Bus stops at crosswalks are confusing for people (random comment)

- Minimum requirement for a bus stop on MnDOT trunk highway system, and access from the nearest sidewalk – safe refuge
- Intersection design - we lack an ability to prioritize usage at intersections – auto turn models and lanes for turning motions
- Review of the cost participation policy
- New word that's not 'pedestrian'

What tools or resources do you use that support walking?

- Google map directions
- Complete streets workshops within MnDOT for projects
- Signs that provide direction and walk times
- "Carry the orange flag across the street" tactics
- Countdown indicators
- Comprehensive plan updates and how they include pedestrian connections
- Research into yield and compliance rates based on design
- Ped bump outs for maintenance
- NACTO urban street design guide

MnDOT Planning Management Group Meeting – Arden Hills

The project team attended a Planning Management Group Meeting in Saint Paul on May 13, 2015. The group was comprised of planning leaders at MnDOT from a range of disciplines. This focus group centered on topics about who should be engaged in this process, what questions need to be answered in the overall plan.).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- People with a range of ages, professional backgrounds, and implementation abilities need to be involved during community engagement
- People are interested in clarifying funding and maintenance responsibilities and how to prioritize investments

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

Whose voices need to be heard?

- Youth
- College age
- Transit
- Community neighborhood groups
- MnDOT Employee Resource Groups
- Elected officials
- Emergency personnel
- School officials
- General populace
- Public safety
- Maintenance
- County/city
- Railroads

- Health groups
- People with money for pedestrian investments
- Advocacy groups
- Local government
- Implementation teams
 - Business leaders
 - Local business organizations
 - Community development groups
 - Tourism boards and officials

What questions do we need answered?

- Who should own? Who should manage?
- Transit connections, what amenities?
- Cost participation, where should money come from?
- Light pole location
- What does our future look like if we don't provide pedestrian facilities?
- Prioritize: ADA compliance, ability to capture largest number of users

Where are pedestrian-related decisions made?

- During scoping?
- Early notification
- Public involvement
- Pre and Final Design

What are the barriers to walking?

- Lack of accessible facilities or no facility
- Non-compliant facilities
- Impediments – rivers, highways, grade/slope
- How do you address conflicts between peds and vehicles at intersections?
- Weather
- Lack of facilities
- Chained trips i.e. work, shopping, daycare
- Maintenance Agreements: who and when?
- Who should be responsible for maintenance?
- I think we will be raising expectations for new facilities – how will we pay for this?
- How can we do more public/private partnerships?
- How should MnDOT prioritize?
 - Balance scope of project with fix and budget with greater emphasis on ADA accessibility vs. building new
- Minnesota's Complete Streets policy vis a vis local policies, achieving common ground and understanding roles and responsibilities for each
- Possibilities for addressing pedestrian safety beyond infrastructure
- What types of facilities do people want to see?
- Do we have good inventory? (thinking asset management)

- Identification of existing i.e. typical flaws in current system

Region 7W Transportation Policy Board Meeting – Saint Cloud

The project team attended a Region 7W Transportation Policy Board Meeting at MnDOT District 3B Headquarters in Saint Cloud on September 25, 2015. The participants were transportation planners and engineers from the region.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There is a need for partnerships and coordination
- There is interest in continued engagement.
- People are interested in ongoing funding with flexibility

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

How do you think about the pedestrian environment in the work that you do or in your day-to-day life?

- Doing the best with what we have
- Start a program
- Planning our communities
- Retrofitting after the fact is always more expensive
- I think it would help to be able to get info to community park committee
- Always looking to improve it and fill in the gaps

What could encourage more walking in your community?

- Our city is not in population areas don't support more infrastructure in existing development
- S/A
- More discussion, have to build awareness, "create the appetite"
- Funding is tied to public acceptance and priority
- Continue to engage and credit the plan for long term and pursue all funding opportunities

How are you currently addressing equity in your work when it comes to Active Transportation?

- Don't know
- Unknown
- Making headway on public governance attitudes and building active transportation into plans

What tools or resources would you like to see in the pedestrian system plan to support safer, easier, and more desirable places for walking (at the local level)?

- Funding
- Information
- Flexibility in funding to do what's locally needed
- *Money*, help with the planning at the staff level
- Help us to develop partnerships with other government agencies

Transit Advisory Committee – Marshall

The project team co-hosted a focus group with the Transit Advisory Committee at Wester Community Action in Marshall on October 15, 2015. Approximately 13 attendees represented a range of public agencies in the region and citizens.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Participants emphasized accessibility is critical and needs to be considered in detours, at parks, and at destinations
- Snow, ice, the cold, and the wind turn people away from walking – especially in this region
- Transit and pedestrian environments go hand in hand and participants had ideas for bust stop design and locations
- There is support from practitioners for more funding for ADA plans and implementations

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

Do you walk to get to your destinations?

- About six said yes
- I don't walk a lot myself because I don't remember where the curb cuts, where the streets are wide or narrow, are – as someone in a wheel chair I need to know that. I have two kids so I need to know that the three of us are going to be safe.

Why do you walk?

- Opportunity to save fuel, nice to be in the summer
- Because it's nice out
- For exercise

Why don't you walk?

- When it is cold, breezy I won't do it – weather factor – don't walk when the weather is bad because I don't want to and can't. Ice, snow, hard to walk on a sidewalk when not plowed or icy.
- Issue in this corner is the wind – you will end up in Kansas. Wind is not walking friendly – not necessarily just the cold but the wind here.
- Sidewalks – if they are not fixed I won't walk there. I fell on one.
- Construction on Main Street – not accessible or easy to deal with - there was mud
- Distance – if I have to carry a lot of packages, I won't walk if the distance is far
- City of Marshall does really well when reconstructing sidewalks – wider sidewalks when new, but the old ones are in disrepair
- Drivers don't understand that pedestrians have the right-of-way. Statewide focus on driver attitudes and informing pedestrians. Education.
- Signs do nothing
- Avoid intersections and crosswalks and find my own gap to cross because it safer than the intersections. Not sure if people are just going to plow through an intersection or make a turn.
- I don't trust intersections.
- If a pedestrian is standing on the sidewalk but isn't in the crosswalk, the cars do not need to stop.
- I'm afraid to step into the intersection or crosswalk because I don't know how the cars are going to react.
- We have created routes for our transit providers in areas where there aren't sidewalks – so we have to pull into driveways to serve our customers
- The new discussion is no right turn on red
- Feel like I need to have eyes in the back of my head
- I'm from an area where there is two lanes and there is no problem. We have ADA

- I don't walk for transportation purposes because of time and distances to destinations
- I do walk for exercise and I still have the expectation that everywhere there people should be able to walk

If you were the Walking Czar for Minnesota, what things would you address?

- Planting trees and evergreens here is important. Shade and wind breaks
- We are more interested in trees on private property vs boulevard (space between a curb and sidewalk) tree plantings. We do support the tree installation on private property because of underground utilities.
- We don't want a tree within 5' of a concrete surface
- Audible traffic signal at 6th and Main St (for vehicles and pedestrians). Huge need for people going to work (turkey farm), people on break taking a walk, families taking a walk.
- That intersection has caused the transit system to re-route its route
- Sidewalks on new developments – NO QUESTIONS ASKED
- There is a policy in place but people deviate from it
- Creating sidewalks and better crossings at busy intersections and key areas in the town
- I would ensure that every street have a useable way to walk (not necessarily sidewalks) on all the streets
- For Marshall, RBFB crossings would be great but EDUCATION FOR ALL MODES. If people don't know what to do and people are getting killed you've
- Transit – available rides when I can't walk. We have a lot of options but there are times that they are so busy...higher frequency service!
- Something that would melt the snow off the sidewalks
- Require ADA sidewalks on all projects and 80-20 cost share (with residents) on all projects in the 20 year plan
- Training – the benefits of walking the health and environment benefits
- Parks in Minnesota to have walking paths through them. Some parks have sidewalks at the edge but no paths through the parks. +1
- Direct access to play areas – can't get there but through grass
- Attitudes – change attitudes through education. Kids get their license at age 16 and then there is no further education about defensible driving, rules of the road, etc.... More levels of education (16 and then 55 for education) – but the in-between years. Even an issue at the law enforcement level. At the purchase of every new vehicle or some sort of periodic time (renewal of driver license). Transit drivers do test more frequently – could this be a model?
- Enforcement, too. Mobile devices.
- Universal symbols of sorts – doesn't matter what community you come from you can understand all transit, rail, walking, biking symbols

Positive experiences in walking – good examples

- Dog park walkway is great – good connections, great trees, other people walking – you don't have to walk on the crooked sidewalk and it is a change of scenery
- Having options of routes

What are some things that work really well with transit service?

- Passenger shelters/kiosks – at key locations (housing, institutions (churches), near college)

- Passenger shelters (small but they work for the users), a wind block – they are going to be rest stops for walkers, too, not just for transit
- Also working on the access to them from the sidewalks
- We are trying to find central location(s) for the shelters, but we are also wary of people leaving shopping carts – relocating shopping carts to transit shelters

Others Comments

- City does allocate some funds to ADA and works on curb cuts as they can
- My neighbors don't want sidewalks
- I don't necessarily want them either because it takes from my yard. But I do want them because I want to walk.
- Biking – city has done a great job with their bike trails. People can bike and walk on those. Connectivity is great
- Designated bike lanes in the road, trails

Questions from Don before people started writing thoughts on questions

- As a provider, I want to know where do you walk? Where don't you walk? And why??
- What are the most important things to ID in our surveys – (why people don't walk – cracks, no sidewalks, lack of connections, what are our priorities)

Metropolitan Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee

The project team attended a meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee at Council Chambers in Saint Paul on October 7, 2015.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pedestrian access at and around transit stops affect the ability to make a trip, especially pavers, slopes, snow, sand, and ice
- Maintenance issues affect trips significantly and there is a lot of frustration about how to report issues and get them resolved
- There needs to be a better understanding about who needs to use the pedestrian system: it's often not able-bodied people

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

What destinations do you walk to?

- I use pathways on a daily basis to go to a wide variety of destinations (i.e. beach, grocery store, bank, etc.)
- Community events

How does walking help or hinder your use of transit?

- Sidewalks are less accessible going up a hill and the level at which you exit a bus in a wheelchair matters – one member had her chair tip over because the level was so steep
- Biggest issue is sidewalks surface and infrastructure around the stop - pavers such as those used at Lake Street heave after one or two seasons – don't put aesthetics over functionality
- Conscious effort to plan sidewalks with bus stops

- Sidewalk surfaces need to be smooth, flat and level
- People in chairs go multiple blocks out of the way on Lake St to use better facilities
- She heard the people walking don't like bad sidewalk surfaces either
- Just use a basic, flat surface – no fancy pavers because they shift and powder paint crossing can be very slippery
- Level of which you access on regular Metro buses - surface when entering and exiting buses
- Bus driver behavior – sometimes not all bus drivers are happy to pick up someone in a wheel chair because it slows down their schedule
- Private sidewalks not as well maintained as local and state owned - need better enforcement
- Include bus stops into pedestrian ways – place to bus stop, natural ways to put walkways in around bus stops instead of making them inconvenient

Describe a positive walking environment – what makes it positive?

- Usability and functionality should be a top priority
- Describe a negative walking environment – what makes it negative?
- Can almost walk to get coffee 2 miles from home but can't because of one dangerous crossing on a former state highway (now county road) near schools and has to get rides
- Urban areas without sidewalks are not acceptable
- County highway is not safe to cross
- Take notice that sidewalks were at the top of list for what makes walking safe, convenient and desirable and what makes it unsafe, inconvenient and undesirable
- Sidewalk quality and upkeep needs to be a part of the recommendations or I would consider this plan a fail
- Consistent sidewalk plowing needed – big barrier to social interaction for people with disabilities especially

What prevents you from walking more?

- Sand is dangerous, ice is dangerous, and there are many more dangers I could tell you about
- Snow maintenance – can't go outside if it's not clear and winters are long

What would make walking easier for you?

- Include strong language on sidewalk ongoing year-round maintenance in the plan for local governments that manage and repair sidewalks to ensure they are accessible
- Engage park commissions and cities since park commissions also do sidewalks and trails
- Remove diagonal curb-cuts – forces people into the middle of an intersection, fix old and stop building new
- Address snow removal on curb-cuts
- Consider a vision zero approach
- Address crosswalk slipperiness
- Not clear how to make a compliant i.e. who owns the sidewalk
- Trimming up trees around sidewalks would make them easier to use, also cleaning up trash
- Work on crosswalk safety enforcement
- Work on snowplow operation
- Enforcement of people driving cars around pedestrian crosswalks and driver awareness needed

- Usability has to be a component of accessibility
- Need places to be open available and accessible – maintenance can make a huge difference
- Recommended that the state enforce cities and counties for ADA
- Having uniform pedestrian codes across the board that are enforced and followed
- Need social media campaign using a hashtag such as #howwerollmn to let others know how these conditions affect others
- Reinforce the message that every trip begins and ends with a walking trip and that walking is a way of life
- Strong language about entities managing and operating sidewalks
- Engage the League of MN Cities and counties in this process – need their participation to implement a state plan
- Consider how road construction changes sidewalks

Do you walk with a mobility device?

- There was a wide range of disability community at this meeting: from folks with assisted walkers, wheelchairs, visual impairment, and epilepsy
- Do you identify as a walker, as a pedestrian?
- Strong desire to include rolling, not just walking when talking about the pedestrian plan – walk AND roll
- Hearing 'walk walk walk' can shut down those who use wheelchairs – she feels 'walking' doesn't apply to her

Winona Friendship Center

The project team hosted a focus group at the Winona Friendship Center in Winona on December 3rd, 2015. Three older adults participated in the focus group, and discussed walking related issues in Winona.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Street crossings are significant barriers to safety and accessing destinations
- People are concerned about pedestrians not being considered in roadway design and poor drivers causing safety issues
- Enforcement of speeds and driver behavior – especially around school zones – is a strong desire

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

- Sharon Miller -came because she's at the age where she doesn't cross the streets that fast so it becomes more dangerous
- Mike - 40 year career in trucking, so I know what trucks have to do or need to do
- I try to ride my bike when the weather is nice
- I walk in my neighborhood quite a bit but it can be hard crossing the street
- We've had a number of crashes recently with pedestrians and bicyclists
- One of the big problems is when cars turn right on a red light without looking for people

Where do you walk?

- Alternate between walking and biking to the grocery stores
- Can't walk out to the HyVee anymore because there is no safe way to cross HWY 61 to get there

- Even though there is a brand new light with all the correct signals you still feel like you're life is on the line because people turn without looking
- Walk for transportation and for recreation
- If it's raining we don't even try to walk because we're afraid people won't see us
- The speeds are too fast, if the limit is 30mph then people go 35, if 40 then people go 45
- Speeding is definitely an issue
- People go 40 on the 4 lane road that should be 30
- Sharon lives in a mobile park so she has to drive everywhere she goes
- One of the problems is the people, not the cars
- Distracted while walking, don't even look
- The majority of us in town try to avoid the streets on campus when driving because students aren't looking and there are near misses all the time
- They need to understand that even though they have the right of way they still have a responsibility to look both ways and use common sense

Why do you stop walking to destinations?

- If I have had too many near misses I stop walking. I would like to keep walking but I just can't
- Crossing a major road to get to the path around the lake, or from lake to lake can be very hard
- "We don't think about pedestrians when we design our roads. It's the LAST thing we think about."
- In winter it is very hard to walk
- Not always maintained
- Or if they shovel and then the city comes by to plow it leaves a barrier that can be hard to get over
- Afraid of crossing, even with the light, when there is ice and snow because you could fall at any time
- Enda told her story about being hit by a young woman in college
- Hit by car and hung onto the car to help keep her balance
- Then she fell back into the snow bank

What are some solutions?

- A lot of the lights don't have a long enough walk signal for older people to get across. So it would be helpful to make those signals longer
- Right now we have parked cars all the way up to the corner. If we could move those cars back so that there is a better line of sight it could help a lot
- Signs that say watch for pedestrians
- Crosswalks get worn really quickly so it can be hard to see. High visibility sidewalks with more paint are better.
- It's obvious in Winona where we need to make changes but we still don't do it
- We can do a better job of education for pedestrians and drivers
- Speed control on fast roads that are in town
- More testing could help, instead of just passing an eye exam. Maybe some sort of cognitive test would help take elderly drivers off the road before they have a problem
- Sustained drivers education for young people
- Make the walk signs longer. And make them beep or something
- "We don't think about pedestrians in the design of most of our roadways. That's the last thing we think about." –Mike

- The plowing needs to improve by the signal lights. All of the garbage they pick up is right by the sidewalks and crosswalks
- "When I can't drive again I'm going to be just lost, I don't know what I'll do." –Shannon
- The timers are really helpful in the signaled intersections
- Distracted driving is a huge issue with youth, especially phones
- Educate pedestrians to wear brighter clothing
- As we get older our reactions are cut way back when driving and walking
- When I was younger I could look behind very quickly when driving but now I can't do that
- The refresher course through the AARP really helped a lot. They give techniques for driving safely as an older adult and teach you the new laws
- It was always really nice to have an island so that you could look one way, cross, and then wait and do the same for the next side of the street
- Winona has done a good job of updating all of the crosswalks to be accessible
- Education like AARP
- It's important to know your limits as you get older

Any last remarks?

- There are more of the signs that flash what your speed is, and I'd like to see more. I don't see any people getting ticketed on roads where there is always speeding
- Maybe they could put some more ghost cop cars around

The following notes were submitted via email from Margaret & Ray Kiihne on December 2, 2015:

- Here are a few notes from us "veterans" living on Broadway near Main. Thank you for taking them to the meeting today. We are very sorry we cannot be there. M&R
- We have lived on Broadway near Main since 1977. Unfortunately, we are seeing more and faster traffic with, seemingly, less enforcement of the laws. Also, less awareness of bikes and pedestrians by drivers, more bikes using sidewalks, and more impatient and competitive drivers-- with the results of too many near fatalities.
- There are our suggestions for safer walking, biking, and driving:
- More frequent daytime *enforcement* of all traffic and noise violations along Broadway and Main
- Mark the crosswalks at these intersections on Broadway with *lighted, flashing, yellow signs* (the size of stop signs): Washington, Johnson, and Center. Use these signs along Main at current crosswalks
- Create a "*school zone*" at *20 mph* from Johnson to Center, along Broadway AND from Broadway to the tracks along Main. Huff needs the same.
- Mark ALL streets surrounding schools (*K through college*) with a *20 mph speed limit*. This would be revolutionary for Winona, we know. But we see it enforced throughout New Mexico and it works. (Margaret knows: she got a ticket.) That state, it seems, is serious about protecting its youth. I honestly do not see that commitment in our community. Sad.
- Repave and mark *7th street* for bike traffic
- Create 2-lane with center turning lane and marked bike *lanes along Broadway*
- Please, *public service announcements about bikes: What about sidewalks? What side of the street?*
- *What direction should one ride?*
- Thank you very much for this opportunity

Leech Lake Tribal Meeting

The project team met with Leech Lake Tribal members at the Leech Lake Government Center on December 10th, 2015. Participants included HHS director, Tribal Health, Housing maintenance supervisor and safety officer.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Many people rely on walking to reach their destination as car ownership is low on Tribal land
- Street crossings and intersections are significant barriers to safety and when crossing state highways in rural areas
- There is a significant barrier to funding trails on Indian Reservations

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

What concerns, challenges or barriers there are to walking on the Reservation?

- Intersections – safety concerns when crossing
- Lighting on trails, shoulders and at intersections.
- Lot of people get hit by a car walking on shoulders.
- There are a lot of people walking during day, night, spring, summer, fall, winter and many pedestrians have been hit at night. Hard to see people at night especially when in all black clothing.
- There were many ped crashes near Palace Casino so the speed limit was lowered to 35MPH which seemed to have helped.
- Lots of logging trucks going by where people are walking and lots of tourist traffic speeding during the summer time unfamiliar with the number of people walking on shoulders.
- Housing is located outside of incorporated towns so many people walk to villages and between different communities – there are a total of 12 communities within this reservation.
- A lot of people do not own cars on the reservation – (around 45% do not drive).
- Lots of people hitch hike from town to town, one of main ways for people to get around.
- Crime rates are the largest problem on the reservation and a barrier to walking. Most women don't feel safe walking alone at night – possible solution provided: identify roads that people are using to walk in and have more patrol on those roads.
- 50% of population is concentrated in the Cass Lake area and the rest are in communities.
- Many people like to walk on trails, such as newly constructed Bena trail and Paul Banyon.
- People don't cross where the stop lights or stop signs are and cross mid-block – the stop signs are not located in convenient locations.
- People then cut holes into fences placed along roadways to get cross.
- Lights are not long enough for pedestrians to cross.
- There are no crosswalks and no lighting on Highway 2.
- Communities have pow-wows for 3 days which attracts a lot of people (around 4,000) and they all need to cross these busy highways.
- There are some people who have to use scooters since they can't walk.
- Lots of dirt roads, so it would be hard to get around for people in wheelchairs.
- Hard to get funding from DNR to build trails – DNR will not give funding to the tribes.
- Tribal Transportation Alternatives uses funds to pay for facilities where people walk.
- Tourist season bring in more people on highway 371 and 2.
- Lots of kids walking along roads – they did a Safe Routes to School plan.

- Ped traffic towards fox creek.
- Loose dogs are a barrier – many attacks by wild dogs who cluster together in packs.
- Distracted driving – especially the tourists who drive through.

What ideas and suggestions do you have for better walking environment?

- Education on walking at night and having visible clothing for pedestrians.
- The housing department on the reservation has some money in their crime and prevention unit for lighting.
- Identifying priority walking routes so that MnDOT knows where those are when a future projects comes through.

How do you see MnDOT and other partners working with the tribe to improve walking on projects?

- Leech Lake has been conducting counts at Cass Lake High school and Cass Lake Reservation Leech Lake Tribal College with the assistance of MnDOT District 2 portable counting equipment.
- There are 3 Districts in Leech Lake Nation and each one has their own set of community events – possible option is to meet with local Indian councils to get access to other tribe members and to talk to them for community input.
- The housing staff at the meeting mentioned they have a way to send out a survey to a lot of people if needed to collect input and information.
- There is also a tribal website where we can post surveys and engage the tribal population.

Next Steps

- Explore the possibility of sending a brief survey about walking and share with Angela, district representative, LL housing authority and on the band website. Jasna will connect with Angela on questions and possible questions to share with others this winter.
- Identify a couple of community events to gather input from people on what they'd like to see for walking improvements. Specifically, look for an event in Cass Lake to get input on upcoming MnDOT project and possible one in another area (Ball Club was mentioned) to gather more general input (that may inform an overall plan).
- Lastly, as we develop recommendations for the pedestrian plan, we'll work with the tribe for input and feedback about working with American Indian populations on creating safer walking environments. This will likely be late winter or early spring.

White Earth Tribal Meeting

The project team met with White Earth Tribal members on January 20th, 2016. Participants included representatives from planning, public health, public works and roads.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Limited trail network
- Lack of shoulder and lighting to safely walk along state highways
- There is a significant barrier to funding planning and construction

RAW FACILITATOR NOTES

What concerns, challenges or barriers there are to walking on the Reservation?

- Lack of shoulder, lighting, limited trail networks/funding
- Roads don't have jurisdiction
- New construction should include facility for walking/biking
- Safety – curvy roads/blindspots
- Dogs can keep people – regulations are not well enforced; conservation
- Animal control – FTE dedicated
- Litter – needles – need clean-up (cigarette butts are down so improving)
- Tribal nation and DOT meetings 2/year
- Planning can be difficult because of funding
- Identify destinations and identify community use of roads
- Is there housing near that could support facilities – BIA funds for planning may be available?

Next Steps

- Intro-mail – could be a survey to large employers in area
- Upcoming events
- Address seasonality
- FHWA – MN District Office
 - What is their role and responsibilities
- “Trust-responsibility”
- Trail plan – require maintenance, mowing