

## 12/5/23 Pedestrian Focus Group (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)

**Description:** AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on issues and opportunities for pedestrians and walkability throughout the MIC area.

### **Key Takeaways:**

After discussing this topic with members of the community, it became apparent that the main issues facing pedestrians in the area are safety and year-round access. Most of the region's roadways have been built primarily for automobiles and leave little space for pedestrians and bicyclists, and even less during winter months when snow and ice cover most of the right of way. Large barriers like Miller Trunk Highway and I-35 separate parts of the city from shopping and recreation but are unsafe for pedestrians to cross. Proposed solutions from participants for these issues included a codified complete streets policy, a snow removal utility, improved collaboration between the city and county on snow removal, and improved pedestrian and bike connections across dangerous roadways.

### **What We Heard – Comments:**

#### Transportation Issues

- There is a lack of pedestrian lighting throughout the city, it is particularly noticeable on the lakewalk.
- Individual neighborhoods are given power to deny bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- The city has been unwilling to consider rethinking the allocation of right of way width towards prioritizing non-motorized travel.
- Concerned about speeding on 6th Ave East; the wide right of way is difficult to cross to get to school.
- Walkable communities are thriving communities.
- If we had to choose only one pedestrian issue, snow is it. Duluth is terrible at snow management.
- Pedestrian safety in the 6th Ave East area is the most important issue for the Hillside neighborhood because of speeding and reckless driving.
- Left turns on red create a significant safety hazard.
- Crosswalk awareness and yielding protocol is an issue for all users, including cars and bikes.
- I-35 is a barrier between Downtown and Canal Park.
- Transit stops on Arrowhead Rd are far from nearby commercial destinations and lack sidewalk.
- The Miller Hill Mall area is a "deathtrap" for pedestrians.
- 6th Ave East is very unsafe for pedestrians.
- Woodland Ave, Central Entrance, the Lake St and Superior St intersection, and Rice Lake Rd near Marshall School are significant barriers for pedestrians.
- Sidewalk on 11 Ave East needs to be completed to the north of E 11th St.
- Several stops on the BRT route do not have sidewalks; there are also gaps in the sidewalk along Mall Drive.
- Sidewalk repair is not good in some places; people with mobility devices can't get through.
- There is sidewalk on one side only on Kenwood between Arrowhead and UMD and needs to be on both sides.
- The intersection at 21st Ave East and Woodland Ave is unsafe for pedestrians.
- The streetscape is not designed with garbage cans in mind. They often block bike lanes, forcing bicyclists into the car travel lane.
- 26th Ave East is missing sidewalk between Superior and E 1<sup>st</sup> St.
- There is no sidewalk on the west side of Hill Ave, north of N 28th St, in Superior, which forces apartment residents to walk in the street or over grass to get to the nearest transit stop.
- The City of Duluth has passed a resolution regarding complete streets but has not solidified this into policy. The lack of policy has made neighborhood solutions inconsistent.
- Hermantown prioritizes cars and does not provide bike, pedestrian, or public transit options.

- Central Entrance is under design now by MnDOT. There is concern over whether pedestrians will be represented.

### Solutions and Opportunities

- The city needs a complete streets commission, and to look to community expertise.
- A covered walkway up and down the hill based on the example in Thunder Bay would provide protection from the elements for pedestrians.
- Reallocate right of way width; autonomous vehicles need less width.
- Budgeting more for non-car infrastructure.
- Increased and enhanced bike parking.
- Follow Minneapolis's example of a Vision Zero approach to build roadway infrastructure focused on eliminating deaths from car accidents.
- All projects should be evaluated on their impact towards city and state climate goals.
- Flip the transportation project process, planning should come first and engineering second.
- Creating a better and more equitable transportation system; not just auto focused.
- Access to transit and access in general is critical.
- We walk as a part of every trip, improving pedestrian infrastructure benefits everyone.
- Pedestrian network needs to be seen as a legitimate transportation network and needs to be reliable all year round, not an afterthought.
- Pedestrian infrastructure can improve community health by giving people the opportunity to make more trips via active transportation.
- The streetscape should be designed for snow storage to keep snow piles out of pedestrian areas. Downtown setbacks are too close to the street, as a result snow must be hauled out. Snow plowing creates an equity issue when streets are plowed and sidewalks are not, sidewalks should be plowed first.
- Transit should be free for people with disabilities, seniors, people with low income, and youth. All could benefit from the health impacts of active transit.
- Pedestrian infrastructure should be programmed into planning and construction through a formal process.
- Slowing traffic on W Central Entrance would improve safety for pedestrians crossing to Cub Foods from the bus stops on Mall Drive.
- Superior is prioritizing sidewalk repair and snow removal.
- Tower Ave in Superior is a good example for providing pedestrian and bike infrastructure in the area.
- The City could establish a transportation commission.
- Look to the St Joseph, Missouri parkway as an example.
- Shift policy to put most vulnerable travelers at top of the pyramid of needs.
- West Superior Street design gives us hope.
- Improve the pedestrian plan – what is the full map of pedestrian movements? A full map of the pedestrian network would be helpful. Create a base level walking network that is reliable year around.
- A lit pedestrian bridge across I-35. There is a lack of pedestrian level lighting elsewhere.
- 6th Ave East crossing at 4th, 9th. 6th Ave East will be undergoing a road diet from 4 to 3 lanes.
- Remove I-35.
- Free transit for seniors.
- Create a connection between downtown and the mall for bikes and pedestrians.
- The City of Duluth should be responsible for snow removal on the sidewalk, like Toronto, Ontario, and St Paul, Minnesota.
- The City of Duluth and County could collaborate to minimize uncleared roadways and sidewalks. A Snow Removal Utility would eliminate the need for property owners to be responsible for clearing snow from in front of their property.