

12/6/23 Sustainability Focus Group (Targeted Stakeholder Consultation)

Description: AECOM staff facilitated a discussion centered on sustainable transportation issues and opportunities in the MIC area motorized and non-motorized transportation network.

Key Takeaways:

This discussion focused on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Interests represented ranged from personal to professional. Members of the group were concerned with the amount of greenhouse gas emissions emitted by gas powered automobiles, as well as a lack of greenspace within the right of way, and additional pollution from cars, like motor oil and solid debris, entering the regions lakes and waterways via stormwater runoff. Participants felt that the current system is not economically sustainable compared to a system that uses narrower roadways and prioritizes lighter vehicles like bicycles or no vehicles at all. It was also noted that single occupancy vehicles isolate us socially. Some solutions as proposed by participants were temporary road diets, the construction of a greenway system or bicycle and pedestrian thoroughfare, and a shift in planning to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure above single occupancy automobiles.

What We Heard – Comments:

Transportation Issues

- Transit systems overseas are much more comprehensive.
- It is time to bring in the future.
- In terms of economic sustainability, we can't afford to maintain existing infrastructure. Heavy vehicles damage roads more than bicycles and pedestrians.
- Our culture of isolation in single occupancy vehicles is not socially sustainable.
- Roads are very wide, but there are no barriers or space for snow storage.
- There is flooding due to wetland fills for transportation infrastructure.
- Too few trees on London Road, and generally in all rights of way.
- Life expectancy is significantly lower in some areas due to air pollution.
- Narrative around speed enforcement; drivers not yielding to pedestrians.
- Bike parking is lacking everywhere.
- The hill is an issue for biking and walking. Transit can fill this gap.
- Aging population will have 10 years before a larger portion are unable to drive.
- Sprawl is not sustainable, there is no need to expand infrastructure beyond existing limits.
- Needing neighborhood buy in for implementation of bike ways can be challenging. A small minority of property owners can kill a good idea in the design phase.

Solutions and Opportunities

- Systems redundancy. People need choices for how to get around no matter the mode.
- To meet MnDOT's climate goals, the number of vehicle miles traveled will need to be reduced.
- The Duluth Citizens Climate Action Plan focuses on reducing emissions and the health impacts of a more integrated transportation system.
- Roadways need snow storage and green space for bike safety.
- The public should be informed about cars' impact on Lake Superior.
- Policy could be established to always incorporate snow storage within the right of way.
- Responsibility for the maintenance of plantings in traffic circles should be decided. The city doesn't want to maintain them.

- There is no Transportation Management Organization in Duluth. Could use one around the arena area. The TMO at the St Paul, Minnesota soccer stadium could be used as an example to help organize traffic around Amsoil Arena and Bentleyville.
- Think long term about budget consideration, beyond the two year budget cycle. Narrow roads are cheaper to build and maintain.
- Cambridge MA is a good example: if it's in the plan, it gets built.
- Consider locating geothermal infrastructure within the right of way with each roadway project.
- The incoming mayor will possibly create a complete streets committee.
- U.S. Department of Energy RACER grants for solar power can reduce the cost of sustainable energy sources.