

Active Living Advisory Committee (ALAC)

Wednesday, December 19, 2018

3:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Planning Central Conference Room, 11th Floor

1819 Farnam Street

Present Voting Members: Mark Stursma, Andy Wessel, Ben Turner, Pell Duvall, Jason Rose, Tom Everson

City Reps: Carrie Murphy, Kevin Carder, Todd Pfitzer, Gayle Sturdivant, Dennis Bryers

Agenda:

1. Approval of November Minutes
 - a. Pell motion; Andy 2nd; Approved unanimously
2. Vision Zero Update:
 - a. 4 working groups within the Task Force (Education/Culture; Vulnerable Roadway Users; Roadway Design/High Injury Network; and Data/Reporting) drafted “one-pager” research takeaways. Will be putting together in a single brief document to present to the Mayor in March that outlines each set of recommendations along with its justification/supporting research.
 - i. The document will also include broader recommendations mostly focused around implementation that don’t fit into one of the 4 categories (such as staffing, drafting an action plan, a public engagement process, etc.)
 - ii. ALAC members to be invited to the presentation to the Mayor.
 - iii. After presenting to the Mayor and getting her feedback, Task Force will reconvene to create a more polished set of recommendations
 - iv. Task Force will need to figure out logistics of who’s responsible for pulling together the report, document formatting, etc.
 - b. Tom also got a call from OPS Safety Director
 - i. They should be a key stakeholder in developing/implementing an action plan.
3. Active Living Events
 - a. Discussion tabled to January
4. Greater Design Flexibility for Municipal Streets Follow-Up Discussion
 - a. Discussion on process and communication surrounding ALAC’s Recommendation to the Mayor (which recommended that she request that the State and the Nebraska Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards [NBCS] grant local

authority to use 10-foot lanes in some urban contexts without a formal Relaxation of Standards request):

- i. Based on earlier discussions with Todd, ALAC thought it had PW support. ALAC's recommendation went through several rounds of edits and it was an unfortunate coincidence that Todd P. was hospitalized as the final version came together. If Todd had been able to share the draft recommendation with his colleagues (Bob Stubbe, Gayle Sturdivant, Jeff Riesselman, other engineers?) before ALAC approval, they would have concluded that the recommendation is not something PW could support.
- ii. ALAC wants to be a partner with the City and did not intend to surprise Public Works with the recommendation. In hindsight, could have spent more time on it.
- b. Memo from Public Works (attached to Meeting Notes as Attachment A) outlines reasons PW does not support ALAC's recommendation
- c. Current state min. (generally speaking) is 11 feet for new and reconstructed streets over 400 ADT. State standards for all streets are found here: <https://dot.nebraska.gov/media/5593/nac-428-rules-regs-nbcs.pdf>
- d. Public Works position:
 - i. State min. is supported by 2015 Nebraska Transportation Study on urban streets in Nebraska, as well as other regional and national research;
 - ii. The current standards are appropriate for Omaha and if Omaha were granted ability to use 10 foot lanes where 11 is currently the min., it would only be appropriate in very few cases;
 - iii. The existing Relaxation of Standards process is sufficient to allow the City to deviate from the standards on the rare occasions when it feels it is necessary and can demonstrate that to the NBCS.
 - iv. The City's ongoing Complete Streets Design Guide effort examined lane widths and concluded min. of 11 feet was still most appropriate for Omaha. Some stakeholders disagreed, but technical advisors were in agreement.
- e. Why support 10 foot lane min. in urban contexts? ALAC:
 - i. In urban areas, right-of-way and/or curb-to-curb width are often constrained ("every foot counts"), and in making tradeoffs, the first things to get reduced or eliminated are typically things integral to supporting active transportation (sidewalk width, bike lanes, street trees/greenspace buffers between sidewalks and traffic).
 - ii. Having more cases where 10 foot lanes are "on the table" would allow more tradeoff discussions to take place.
 1. Past example: Maple St in Benson
 2. Papillion example: new development where 11 foot lane min. threatened feasibility of development.
 - iii. Research shows safety benefits to lanes narrower than 11 feet in some urban contexts (lower volume streets with little or no truck or bus traffic).

1. Per FHWA, narrower lanes can reduce speeding and shorten crossing distances for pedestrians.
- f. Next step:
 - i. ALAC will vote next meeting on whether to rescind the recommendation, since ALAC's memo mistakenly claims PW support.
 - ii. If recommendation is rescinded, ALAC will need to decide whether to move forward with voting on essentially the same recommendation without PW support, drafting a similar but revised recommendation, or dropping it entirely.
 1. In making that decision, ALAC would like to examine the research by FHWA and other studies in more detail.
 2. ALAC would also like to find out how many Relaxation of Standards requests are processed by NBCS each year (particularly on this issue).
5. Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge Wintertime Closures:
 - a. Bridge periodically closes in winter for safety reasons when there is ice on deck and cables
 - b. Maintenance crews don't salt the bridge because salting could damage it in the long-term
 - i. Even if they did, would still close when there is ice on the cables.
 - c. Parks has a general priority list for clearance in snow events. Will provide ALAC with that list (attached to Meeting Notes as Attachment B).
 - d. Some people depend on the bridge for commuting and daily trips. Knowing when the bridge is closed and what alternatives are available is critical for them:
 - i. Info on the closures could point out Metro's Blue and Yellow routes that provide service between CB and Downtown Omaha.
 - ii. Is there a way for people to find the date and time when bridge closes and know when it's reopened?
 1. The bridge's social media accounts on Twitter and Instagram (@BobTBridge) are pretty good about posting when the bridge closes and reopens.
6. Set January Agenda
 - a. Vision Zero Update
 - b. Discussion and Vote on Rescinding Recommendation on Greater Design Flexibility for Municipal Streets (Voting Item)
 - c. Active Living Events
 - d. Review and discuss revising ALAC by-laws
 - e. Ideas/Recommendations for replacing ALAC board member Chris Rolling (who is moving to Colorado)
7. Adjourned 4:24 pm

City of Omaha Public Works

Memorandum

To: Todd Pfitzer, City Engineer

From: Gayle Sturdivant, Design Division Manager
Jeff Riesselman, Traffic Division Manager

CC: Mike Kleffner, Construction Division Manager and Street Superintendent

Date: December 17, 2018

Re: Reduce Lane Width Consideration

Overview

The Public Works Design and Traffic Divisions are providing this memorandum in response to a request to consider reducing the minimum allowable lane width from 11 feet to 10 feet. The 11 foot minimum allowable lane width is set in accordance with the Nebraska Administrative Code Title 428 – Rules and Regulations of the Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards (NAC) and is considered the City’s standard. Currently, if lane width less than 11 feet were proposed it would require a NAC design exception application, consideration by the Board and subsequent approval for use on a project-by-project basis. The applications would require support from Public Works.

Discussion

Several documents, studies and research, along with practices in other metropolitan jurisdictions, were reviewed. The 2015 Report from the Nebraska Transportation Center titled “Safety and Operational Analysis of Lane Widths in Mid-block Segments and Intersection Approaches in the Urban Environment in Nebraska”, specifically Tables 2.3 and 2.4 succinctly summarizes the pros and cons for a range of lane widths. This table is consistent with other regional and federal studies and documents. The following bullets highlight some of the key points from the research:

- Narrower lanes result in reduced free-flow speeds and can have some desirable effects. However, several other design elements need to be considered and balanced, such as the roadway classification, interaction with other geometric elements, presences of shoulders, topography, land use, access, utilities, drainage, maintenance, snow removal, and operations.
- Data shows 10 feet wide lanes result in little increase to the crash potential on low-volume roadways with 400 vehicles per day or less. Crash potential increases linearly from 400 up to 2,000 vehicles per day. Once the vehicle volumes reach 2,000 vehicles per day, the crash potential plateaus; however, at this point there is a 30% greater crash

potential. These volume thresholds exclude truck and bus traffic and several documents indicate 10-foot wide lanes should never be considered where truck or bus traffic is anticipated.

- Narrowed lanes should never be considered on streets with a posted speed of 35 mph or greater.
- Narrowed lanes might force drivers to go off-track into adjacent lanes or sidewalk resulting in increased risks to other motorized and non-motorized right-of-way users. Increased crashes in the narrowed lanes may also result in crash related debris impeding other motorized and non-motorized right-of-way users.
- In addition to the increased likelihood of crashes, the potential for congestion also increases and negatively impacts reliable vehicular operations. Increased congestion leads to increased emissions, thus negatively impacting air quality.

It is the responsibility of a licensed professional Civil Engineer to consider the existing and proposed conditions, available data, research, studies and regulations to provide recommendations on lane widths and traffic configuration.

The City's recent efforts on the Complete Streets Design Guide examined lane widths while balancing safety for all modes of transportation within the right-of-way. This effort concluded that a minimum 11 feet lane width was still most appropriate for the Omaha metro area. Although not all stakeholders agreed with the conclusion, the technical advisors were in support of the recommended minimum standard. Streets that do not meet the City's minimum requirements should be considered private and would require an agreement for privately funded maintenance. As a relevant side note, the minimum allowable width for a public street is 25 feet from back of curb to back of curb to allow for emergency service access and disabled vehicles. The 11 feet minimum lane width is also a strategy consistent with Vision Zero goals to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries.

Recommendation

The Public Works Design and Traffic Divisions conclude the minimum lanes widths identified in the NAC are consistent with the minimum lane widths most applicable for Omaha's street network. The minimum 11 feet lane width will be documented in the pending Complete Streets Design Guide. Any exceptions to the 11feet minimum lane width on public streets, while infrequent, could be brought forward to the NAC Board for approval on a project-by-project basis along with the supporting documentation of the contextual considerations of a licensed Civil Engineering design professional and the support of Public Works.

References

- *Safety and Operational Analysis of Lane Widths in Mid-block Segments and Intersection Approaches in the Urban Environment in Nebraska*, Nebraska Transportation Center 2015
- *Nebraska Administrative Code Title 428 – Rules and Regulations of the Board of Public Roads Classifications and Standards*, Nebraska Department of Transportation (previously Roads), 2016
- *Roadway Widths for Low-Traffic Volume Roads, National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 362*, Transportation Research Board, 1994

Attachment A

- *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 7th Edition*, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*, AASHTO 2004
- *Roadside Design Guide, 4th Edition*, AASHTO 2011
- *Recommended Bicycle Lane Widths for Various Roadway Characteristics*, NCHRP Report 766, 2014
- *Effective Utilization of Street Width on Urban Arterials*, NCHRP Report 330, Transportation Research Board, 1990



SNOW REMOVAL PLAN for PARKS, TRAILS, WALKS and PLAZAS

December 2018

Standard Snow, 1” to 3” within 12 hours – Cleared in 2 – 3 days:

1. Schools-overpasses and crosswalks, and walks up to school property.
2. Facilities, Community Centers, downtown walks, plazas and riverfront property.
3. Major park roads – Elmwood, Zorinsky, Carter Lake, Hefflinger, Hitchcock, Tranquility, Walnut Grove, Benson and Dodge.
4. Trails and parking lots, with high traffic parks and trails first.

*Some of these happen simultaneously as snow removal staff often works in the areas where the equipment is.

Snow Emergency, 3” and up within 12 hours – Cleared in 3 – 7 days after major streets are cleared.

1. First Priority:
 - a. Heavy equipment crews work with Public Works to assist in road clearing.
 - b. Schools - overpasses and crosswalks, and walks up to school property.
2. Facilities, Community Centers, downtown walks, plazas and riverfront property.
3. Major park roads – Elmwood, Zorinsky, Carter Lake, Hefflinger, Hitchcock, Tranquility, Walnut Grove, Benson and Dodge.
4. Trails and parking lots, with high traffic parks and trails first.

**Delays are possible depending on the conditions, i.e., Back to back storms, heavier snows, ice conditions, etc.