**Active Living Advisory Committee (ALAC)**

Thursday, January 9, 2020
3:00 pm to 4:30 pm
Planning Central Conference Room, 11th Floor
1819 Farnam Street

**ALAC Member Attendees:** Mark Stursma, Andy Wessel, Tameshia Harris, Tom Everson, Ben Turner, Jason Rose, Pell Duvall

**City Reps:** Mayor Jean Stothert, Carrie Murphy (Mayor’s Office), Todd Pfitzer (Public Works), Mike Gaughan (Public Works), Kevin Carder (Planning), Derek Miller (Planning), Dave Fanslau (Planning), Eric Englund (Planning)

[All notes are paraphrased and not necessarily direct quotes of meeting attendees.]

**Agenda:**

1. Call to order 3:02pm

2. Approval of December minutes (Voting Item)
   
   a. Tameshia motion; Andy second; approved unanimously

3. Benson Bike Corral
   
   a. Mark: I requested this be placed on the agenda as there have been inquiries about it and public controversy
      
      i. ALAC focuses on public infrastructure that supports active living and this is related to that

   b. Purpose for putting it on agenda
      
      i. To hear from City staff and get their side of the story
      
      ii. Determine what ALAC’s role is, if any, in making recommendation

   c. Mark: ALAC is not a board of appeals or public decision making body, it is an advisory board

   d. Pell: I reached out to Todd and he said he will be able to give more information about it at this meeting so I look forward to that. Second, Mark’s point that ALAC is here to be supportive and helpful is important.

   e. Mayor Stothert: ALAC was created out of an executive order that I wrote, and to provide advice to me. If anyone on the committee has questions for me, please ask.
f. Todd: Should we start with how the decision was made to remove the corral?  
   i. I have a monthly parking meeting with our Traffic Engineer and Parking  
      Manager to discuss things like ADA parking, food trucks, loading zones  
   ii. City Traffic Engineer Jeff Riesselman noted that he was getting calls from  
       public requesting the bike corral be removed since the adjacent bike shop  
       had closed  
   iii. Knew there was a lot of vehicle parking demand and there is a large  
        supply of bike parking in Benson (sidewalk racks installed along with  
        streetscape and other racks installed over the years), so the decision was  
        made to replace the corral with a vehicle parking stall  
   iv. Decision to install corral was in 2013 as a pilot project  
   v. Question has been asked why there wasn’t outreach before removing the  
      corral; we don’t typically notify anyone when decisions are made about  
      use of parking spaces in the right of way. We view this the same as if, for  
      example, a handicap parking stall was put in or taken out.  

g. Mayor: There are about 84 vehicle parking stalls; Currently about 30 bike parking  
   racks (which hold two bikes each)  

h. Mayor: City support for bicycling and walking are strong  
   i. Have a Complete Streets Policy  
   ii. Bike parking program (549 bike racks since started)  
      1. Have a bike rack request form through Planning Department  
   iii. CIP funded streetscape projects (including Benson streetscape which  
        included bike parking)  
   iv. Purpose of a corral is typically to reduce clutter on the sidewalk  
   v. Bicycle Friendly Community Award (Bronze Level) was renewed by  
      League of American Bicyclists this year  

i. Todd: Another major question has been what needs to happen to get it back.  
   i. I’ve talked to the next tenant/business owner for the building next to the  
      bike corral location  
   ii. For bike corral to be installed - Should be clear need/demand for bike  
       parking (a demonstrated shortage) and should be sufficient automobile  
       parking  

j. Mayor: I would encourage ALAC to discuss or ask questions about this issue and  
   provide advice to the City  
   i. It is the responsibility of the Public Works Department to control what is  
      in the Public Right-of-Way, though there is coordination with Planning on  
      these issues.
k. Mark: At this point, there is no formal policy on bike corrals to my knowledge, but would a formal policy be helpful?
   i. Todd: I would like to have that so there is clear criteria and terms for removal
   ii. Dave Fanslau: We have found a draft Word document that was the original maintenance agreement
l. Mayor: bike rack request form is available currently
m. Pell: Does bike rack request form have an area to specify on-street vs sidewalk
   i. Kevin: No, we keep it sort of general so we can follow up with the property owner to figure out what the need is and determine the optimal location. We’ve not installed on-street corrals through the bike parking request program.
n. Todd: For me, it is a supply and demand issue. We have to balance the needs of users of the right of way. Right now there are over 70 bike parking stalls in a three block area of Benson, which is far more than demand
   i. It is the role of the Public Works Dept to make a decision that considers the needs of all users of the right of way
o. Andy: As an ALAC member, my disappointment was that this wasn’t run by the committee when it might have helped to discuss it on the front end (consulting with the BID, property owners, etc.)
p. Ben: It has been there for six years and there was a ribbon-cutting and excitement around its opening, so there should have been an expectation that there would be controversy when it was removed.
q. Andy: It is hard as a public servant to know what is going to be a controversial, but perhaps we can learn from this and figure out a process for the next time a decision/issue like this comes up.
r. Mayor: Planning/Public Works work together on a lot of issues and we have improved processes for a lot of things related to multimodal transportation
   i. Complete Streets Policy can always be amended
s. Mayor: I do want to stress that we are committed to adding bicycle parking every year.
t. Andy: Knowing the history with business owner and Mode Shift, it seems like this would be an issue that should have warranted some outreach.
u. Todd: If we had taken out two bike racks on the sidewalk, this likely wouldn’t have been an issue, why was it a much bigger controversy when it was a bike corral?
v. Andy: Agree the controversy would be much less if had been on sidewalk racks
w. Mayor: If people have a concern, rather than going straight to the media, prefer that people go to members of ALAC

x. Mark: And I would add to Andy’s comments, that we’re here to help, whether that’s being part of the creation of the policy or being consulted when a decision is going to be made that is tied to active living

y. Mark: One idea that might be explored is a temporary bike rack for special events when needed. Is there an application process?
   i. Todd, yes, there is an application process for special events and temporary uses in the right-of-way

z. Jason: How do you weigh parking/delivery needs vs mobility/transportation use of right-of-way
   i. Todd: it’s context-sensitive
   ii. We have a parking manager who has done a tremendous job of reforming the way curb space is managed (freight loading zones, etc.)
   iii. Jason: Do you anticipate Complete Streets Design Guide will change the way different transportation priorities are weighed
   iv. Todd: I think it already has; it has led to improvements to the design for our Crown Point project, 78th Street project, N 24th Street resurfacing project.
   v. Todd: We sat down with Derek and his team last year and went through resurfacing projects and opportunities for bike lanes and reconfiguration and developed cost estimates for viable opportunities

aa. Mayor: we want to put out a bond issue to catch up on resurfacing streets and get roads in good condition.
   i. Todd: Resurfacing budget has gone up significantly over the last few years and we’re catching up but the backlog from inadequate funding over previous decades is too big to fix with existing funding.

bb. Andy: Would it be helpful for us to have a policy of bringing these potentially controversial issues that aren’t time sensitive to ALAC ahead of time so we can weigh in?
   i. Mayor: Yes, on any issue you can
   ii. Andy: That’s what might be helpful, to get clarity on what constitutes a decision or issue that we should offer advice on

4. Sidewalk Closure Policy Proposal - Guest Presenter Crystal Edwards
   a. Crystal Edwards – Board member of Mode Shift Omaha
      i. Serve on Mode Shift’s walkability team
      ii. Goal of walkability team is to make Omaha more pedestrian friendly
iii. Started going out and taking photos and assessing various construction sites
iv. We found a lot of trouble with various sites
v. Mode Shift’s ask is to have City adopt a clear and strong policy for addressing pedestrian safety during construction
vi. We are at a critical point in the US for pedestrian safety – a 50% increase in pedestrian fatalities nationwide
   1. Over 6,000 people struck by vehicles in last year alone
   2. Over six times greater than average annual deaths of American soldiers in war zones
vii. In our research, frequently found construction projects where sidewalk on both sides of the same street were closed at the same time.
viii. Closures often lasted anywhere from four weeks to six months, often during times when little or no work was occurring in the area of the closure
ix. Often found barricades blown over by wind or placed in ways that unnecessarily limited accessibility
x. After observing the issues, we decided to look at policies in other cities
xi. Took care to compare policies in cities comparable to Omaha, for example
   1. Des Moines
   2. Kansas City
   3. Frisco, TX
xii. Made an amalgamation of what we felt were the best aspects of those policies, as well as issues that we felt were not being addressed by those cities that should be
xiii. Consider an app or way to regularly update public of sidewalk closures
xiv. We understand that construction closures are unavoidable but we feel that time and again, pedestrians were not considered in the existing closures
xv. It has been suggested that the policy should be within the Public Works Dept, which we feel is appropriate
xvi. We are all pedestrians at some point, and should not have to be fearful of both hitting pedestrians when we’re driving, or being hit as a pedestrian

b. Mark: when you looked at construction closures, was it both public and private projects?
   i. Crystal: Yes
c. Crystal: We really don’t have good numbers to see what safety impact of construction closures is on pedestrian safety, as police reports often just report whether they were in a marked crosswalk. No information if the pedestrian crossed due to closure.
d. Crystal: I hope you will take time to look over policy and consider it.
e. Tom: Role of Vision Zero Coordinator will be important in this, particularly with community engagement.
f. Todd: Jeff Riesselman and Ken Smith are both reviewing Mode Shift’s proposed policy, but there are some major issues.
  i. Not closing sidewalks for more than 15 days would be very expensive and challenging.
  ii. Jason: Where was the 15 day closure limitation idea taken from?
  iii. Crystal: Frisco and Kansas City
  iv. Crystal: This would only apply in cases where sidewalks are completely closed on both sides, in which case a temporary sidewalk detour would need to be provided.
g. Andy: What would be the procedure for making a change to the City’s policy? Is it an administrative thing where Public Works can update its internal policy or would it require formal adoption?
h. Crystal: major issue with construction on NW Radial with student safety
  i. Todd: that was not a City project
i. Todd: In past couple years, we’ve added sidewalk detour sign for closures on downtown sidewalks.
j. Todd: I would suggest we take our existing detour policy and Mode Shift’s proposal before ALAC and walk through them and allow ALAC to develop recommendations.
k. Andy: Is the background research Mode Shift did available for ALAC to look at?
  i. Crystal: yes
l. Todd: Sometimes there are issues where the closure does not conform to their permit (in terms of the area closed), and we are trying to address that ongoing issue.
m. Mark: It sounds like this is already being looked at by the City. Could this be on our next agenda and could the existing detour policy be sent out to ALAC to look at?
  i. Todd: Yes

5. Draft Complete Streets Design Guide – ALAC comments
a. One more opportunity for ALAC members to submit comments before finalizing comments in February
b. Todd: As an FYI on Vision Zero, we have recommended that the classification level of that position be increased to get more qualified applicants and to match the level of responsibility/duties that role would require.

6. Set February Agenda
   a. New ALAC Member Recommendations
   b. Sidewalk Closure Policy
   c. Complete Streets Design Guide – ALAC Comments
   d. Criteria for bringing an issue to ALAC

7. Adjourn
   a. Adjourned 4:28pm