

St. Paul Greenway Committee Meeting
December 9, 2009
Merriam Park Library
7:30pm

Present: Mike Madden, Andy Singer, Brian Longley, Paul Nelson, Laura Baum, Tracy Farr

Minutes from previous meeting

No changes made to the minutes from the previous meeting on November 13, 2009

District Council representatives update

Baum reported that we now have appointed representatives from Districts 11 (Annie Strupeck), 12 (Brian Longley), 14 (Brian McClellan), 15 (Tia Anderson) and 16 (Nadya Trytan). Mike Madden's appointment by District 13 will be voted on in January 2010. Baum sent a letter to District 9 staff on 12/1/09 asking their board to nominate a representative.

Updates on contact with city staff

After the last meeting Baum contacted Lisa Falk-Thompson, who is the engineer in charge of the Ayd Mill Road right-of-way acquisition for Public Works. Baum shared the list of questions compiled by the Greenway Committee over email. Falk-Thompson reported that she has been advised by the City Attorney not to discuss the case, but she did share several public documents in PDF format. The documents included (1) CP Rail's complaint, (2) the City's response to the complaint, (3) a court document outlining a timeline for the case and (4) the final order from the 9/2/09 City Council meeting authorizing staff to take actions to acquire land adjacent to Ayd Mill Road.

→ Action Item: Baum will send these documents to the committee via email for their review

The committee discussed whether they want to take any action related to the litigation. Madden and Nelson suggested the committee could potentially share suggestions and express its support. For example, Nelson would like to see the stated purpose for acquisition of the right-of-way (ROW) including the phrase "highway purpose" to represent and reaffirm "for a bicycle and pedestrian trail. Madden added that he believes acquiring ROW for a bicycle and pedestrian facility is a legitimate public purpose in itself.

Singer encouraged the committee to consider what other alternatives could be advocated for if the city does not prevail in the lawsuit, or if it continues on indefinitely. Singer would like to see an option that includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the city's existing ROW. Madden pointed out that the city would still need to acquire ROW for Phases I and II, in order to connect an Ayd Mill trail to the Midtown Greenway.

The committee discussed the potential for CP Rail to expand train traffic in the corridor and possibly add another set of tracks. The committee discussed whether the Ayd Mill corridor is still an option on the table for the Red Rock Commuter Rail (formerly known as the Central Corridor Commuter Rail). Madden stated that District 13 had previously submitted comments to the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority advocating for the Ayd Mill (or CP Rail) corridor alignment for the commuter rail. Nelson stated that he believes any new commuter rail corridor should have corresponding bike/ped facilities.

Madden discussed the potential alignment for the trail's connection from Victoria to the Sam Morgan Trail (Phase IV). Madden pointed out that in St. Paul Smart Trips' original call for participants in the committee, the stated goal was a trail from the Midtown Greenway on the west to the Sam Morgan Trail on the east. Madden stated that as the CP Rail corridor descends east into Downtown St. Paul, east of Western Avenue, the rails run along land that is cut out of the bluff, and it looks like there is very little space for a trail.

Vision discussion

Nelson shared the draft of the vision, which the committee agreed was very nearly complete. In response to discussion from the previous meeting, wording was added to include less air pollution, energy conservation, aerobic health and wellbeing, and environment. Madden pointed out that in the city's final order to pursue condemnation of the ROW, they only ask for 15 feet. He expressed some concern that the vision is asking for more than that. Nelson stated that he thought the language was okay for now and was clearly an ideal. Nelson stated his desire that the committee establish some standards for trail/greenway design that can be used on other projects and can be in line with, and possibly influence, future standards for other types of infrastructure, like bridges.

Inter-Neighborhood Summit

Madden suggested that at the neighborhood summit the committee should present a potential alignment for the greenway and get feedback. Singer suggested we present one recommended alignment and several alternatives. Longley stated a desire to have CP Rail be aware of the summit and its outcomes. Longley suggested in preparation for the summit, the committee invite a representative from the Midtown Greenway Coalition (MGC) to come speak to the committee about how MGC did public outreach.

→ Action Item: Nelson will contact the Tim Springer of the Midtown Greenway Coalition to invite a representative to a future meeting, perhaps the February meeting.

Next meeting

The committee discussed a date and time for the next meeting and future meetings.

→ Action Item: Baum will talk to committee members and determine if another meeting wizard is necessary. If not, Baum will set a meeting date/time based on best knowledge.