

## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

OCTOBER 19, 2021

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2021, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue. Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin were present. Council Member Amber Corrieri and *ex officio* Member Trevor Poundstone were absent.

**WORKSHOP ON BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN AMES:** Mayor Haila said staff will be giving an overview of bike infrastructure planning. He said Council will not be making decisions or referrals since a consultant will soon be on board for the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.

Traffic Engineer Damion Pregitzer introduced the staff team that created the report for Council. He reviewed the existing network of trail systems. He told Council that Ames had a Bike Headmaster Plan before Ames was part of the Ames Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO), and after the 2000 Census, it was absorbed into a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), now called Forward 45 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). He said planning Forward 45 MTP includes an issues and visions workshop, a consultant drafting projects to address issues and visions, and the Ames Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) hosting regional public meetings to allow a wide group of constituents to be a part. Mr. Pregitzer explained that the Forward 45 MTP must be fiscally constrained, so all projects are not included in the Plan. Mr. Pregitzer said the purpose of Forward 45 MTP is for federal aid, but it doesn't reflect an ideal network. Because of this, he said the City is looking to resurrect the Bike Headmaster Plan in the form of the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan so all planning can be seen together.

City Civil Engineer Mark Gansen showed the current Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) shared use path system expansion projects (2022-26). He said once the CIP is approved in the spring, design for projects can begin. He gave an update of the current projects. Mr. Gansen walked through projects by year to show how gaps are being filled in.

Parks and Recreation Director Keith Abraham said a bridge over the Ioway Creek will connect Moore Memorial Park on the west side of the Creek to the Park on the east side of the Creek and will eventually connect to Ontario Street. Council Member Gartin asked if the connections would go all the way from Moore Memorial Park to Reactor Woods. Mr. Abraham concurred.

Mr. Pregitzer said there are three intercity trail connections: to Nevada because of the trail on Lincoln Way; to Slater by the trail along South Dakota Avenue which connects to other trails; and to Gilbert when the connection is finished to Story County's trail north of 190<sup>th</sup> Street. He described the connection to the High Trestle Trail from University Boulevard near the ISU Research Park continuing through Iowa State University (ISU) property to R38, and then from Slater to the High Trestle Trail.

It was noted that the City of Ames has different purposes and uses for its trails than ISU. ISU Campus Planner Chris Strawhacker said the density of population on Campus includes many modes of transportation including pedestrians, bikes, motorcycles, skateboards, scooters, etc. He said shared use paths and shared streets accommodate everyone. He said expectations for certain modes are in place for certain areas. Mr. Strawhacker said they receive feedback from the Transportation Advisory Council and a bicycle advisory group at ISU, the Ames Bicycle Coalition, and the City of Ames. He showed a map of 109 bicycle parking areas and 3,900 bicycle racks on Campus. Mr. Strawhacker said the condition of paths is being looked at; a consultant assisted in identifying connections needing improved. He identified areas included in the ISU Five-Year Bicycle Infrastructure Plan, including Stange Road connecting to University Boulevard and Osborne Drive and bike parking improvements. Mr. Pregitzer said there is emphasis placed on planning multi-modal connections because of the importance of transitions for users going from one mode of transportation to another.

Mr. Pregitzer described the Complete Streets Plan, which includes all transportation modes, land use types, and street types. Mr. Pregitzer explained a volume and speed chart used that helps determine where modes must be separated (but still adjacent) and where there must be protection (curb, barrier, delineators). He said there are many cyclists not comfortable mixing with cars. Mr. Pregitzer said affected neighborhoods give critical feedback, national standards and guidelines are used, and the context of the street is considered for facility design. He said when constraints must be overcome, the Complete Streets Plan can provide guidance. Street types were reviewed.

Mr. Pregitzer explained the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan goals:

- Create a data-driven detailed network evaluation to be used for future implementation of expansion and infill projects.
- Establish a network-wide wayfinding plan which includes both City of Ames destinations and regional trail connections.
- Create a bike facility selection guide to establish the proper infrastructure level in each corridor.
- Create a bike infrastructure framework for growth areas.
- Use forecasted revenues and expenses to establish priority tiers for future network build-out.

Mr. Gansen said staff is currently preparing the Request for Proposals. He said they are referring to other cities that have already done this to guide them and hope a plan can be finalized in 2022 and the implementation of wayfinding improvements can be completed in 2023-24.

Council Member Gartin asked about signage needed now. Mr. Pregitzer said some things can be done soon, but some will need to be done later.

Operations Manager Justin Clausen said there are 30-36 weeks available each year for maintenance on the City's transportation system. He said with an increased emphasis on multi-modal transportation, they need ways to prioritize how they maintain. He said visual inspection, user input ("Ames on the Go" app) which has a category for trail maintenance, and Iowa Data Bike (part of Des Moines MPO, which allows surface images taken to report roughness), are all

used. He said the shared use path system doesn't dramatically change quickly. He said there is \$125,000 in the CIP Plan for shared use path maintenance. Mr. Clausen showed examples of how paths can be repaired using different methods, including concrete, asphalt, crack sealing, joint repair, asphalt seal coat, and asphalt overlay.

Mr. Gartin asked about snow removal on trails. Mr. Clausen said if a path is near the edge of a roadway, the clearing of the street can end up on the path and clearing the path ends up on the street. He said Parks and Recreation focuses on main arterials and then works out toward the residential areas. Mr. Gartin asked about the Vet Med trail that had more of a pea gravel surface, and wondered if that surface is planned for any trails. Mr. Pregitzer said that could be considered in the Plan. He said it couldn't be used for critical network trails, but could be used in more natural settings that are not part of the critical network.

Council Member Betcher asked how the data are being collected on cracks. Mr. Clausen said Iowa Data Bike rides down the center line to gather information, and it's just a piece of the puzzle. Ms. Betcher said it seems like \$125,000 may not go very far and wonders how long that has been the amount budgeted. Mr. Pregitzer said the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan has a big maintenance section focused on methods and costs. He said as the system expands the staffing, equipment, and who is responsible, and that will be looked at to be sure budgets reflect the system expansion. Public Works Director John Joiner said the budget and CIP are being prepared soon, and those numbers are being considered.

City Attorney Mark Lambert explained Eminent Domain as power of the government to take private property for a purpose and pay fairly for it. He said it is lawful for the City to take land for trails through Eminent Domain. He said it does not include authority to condemn agricultural property of ten or more acres.

Council Member David Martin asked if the paths need to be more than just recreational. Mr. Lambert said a shared use path is recreational.

Mayor Haila asked how input for bike infrastructure was received for the Forward 45 MTP. Mr. Pregitzer said two open houses including virtual options were held. He said something very similar will be done for the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan and a collection of all feedback will be created.

Mayor Haila asked about the \$1.2 million for shared use paths. Director Joiner said those funds are not all dedicated to path expansion. The \$1.2 million minimum to the program is over five years. He said they are spending \$1.6 million average right now, and it covers a wide range of programs. It was noted the \$125,000 is in addition for maintenance.

Mayor Haila opened public input.

A member from the public requested to be contacted individually for comments.

Steve Libbey, 708 Brookridge Avenue, Ames, said it's exciting to see many of the connections start to take place. He said intersections are important, and he is looking forward to the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.

Jake Hudson, 3612 South Duff Avenue, Ames, said it's exciting that many trails are being connected. He said the R38 on-street bike path is without a shoulder; the edges of pavement have deteriorated, and traffic is high.

Joel Whacker, 5244 Schubert, Ames, said he feels a focus on paths for children is often overlooked. He said freedom for children and transportation to school is important.

Michael Fellman, 1417 Mayfield, Ames, said he rides with riders of varied experience, and they use roads to get out of town because it's unsafe to use shared use trails when going the speed they travel. He said the Duff Avenue restriping was done to allow for a shared use path, but in certain areas the trail is so small, it's more of a shoulder. He encouraged looking at it from a bicyclist's perspective. He also mentioned the north end of Duff Avenue to 30<sup>th</sup> Street.

Jeri Neal, 916 Ridgewood Avenue, Ames, said she would like to see a bike and pedestrian coordinator position created. She said this would help increase education and outreach to the community on using and respecting modes of transportation.

Galen Golke, 1504 Golden Aspen Drive, Ames, said transportation modes are multiplying, and some intersections are dangerous.

Dan Conrad, 1531 Douglas Avenue, Ames, said he would like to suggest a path extending west out of town on Lincoln Way. He said there isn't even a paved shoulder so it's a dangerous place to ride or walk. He said he feels the path would be used by people living in the apartments and doing business there.

Kelly Welsh, 1117 Wilson Avenue, Ames, said connecting Skunk River trails to the Heart of Iowa Trail would be family-friendly, scenic, and a destination trail.

Jeff Thieleke, 926 Idaho Avenue, Ames, said the safety of intersections is very important, as he was recently hit by a golf cart near Coldwater Golf Links. He said he's hopeful gates or speed bumps could slow down the golf carts in that area.

Lauren Carroll, 2409 Tullamore Lane, Ames, asked how to request a bike or multi-use trail on Dayton Avenue.

Jeff White, 1421 Carroll, Ames, said he does as much as possible by bicycle and there are not very many good north/south trails on the east side of town. He said he hopes the Plan includes ways to shop and travel by bicycle as a way of life.

Nicole Rasmussen, 2808 Northridge Lane, Ames, said she loves the trail system, but many don't connect in a safe way. She said people are coming to Ames to enjoy biking, and that she travels

to run and bike. She encouraged Council think about ways to drive traffic to the downtown area with clear signage.

Dan Degeest, 1819 Bel Air, Ames said all plans and documents don't always work together holistically. He asked how the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan would coincide with the Climate Action Plan. He also asked if there has been any consideration for how bicyclists can get to the new aquatic center.

Mayor Haila closed public input.

Council Member Betcher asked how the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan will go with other plans. Mr. Pregitzer said he's part of the technical team for creation of the Climate Action Plan, and data on transportation is being considered. He said plans refer to other plans, and with 15 technical staff involved, in the Climate Action Plan the pieces can be put together.

Mayor Haila asked how the School District is involved. Mr. Pregitzer said all areas are considered differently, but as an example an elementary school has an intense mix of bikes, pedestrians, and vehicles. He said the schools and the City coordinate needs to be considered and a range of what is acceptable. Mr. Pregitzer said with an ideal bike facility in mind, there are always constraints such as right-of-way, funding, trees, etc., but discussions can take place about how to make the best facility with what is available. He said giving up on the network because of constraints isn't ideal, but the perfect ideal sometimes has to be given up to make sure connections are made that can work for every skill level.

Council Member Gartin commented on the amazing turnout to this Workshop. He said there is a growing interest for mountain biking and asked if any amenities have been considered. Mr. Pregitzer said Parks and Recreation could speak to that during planning of the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan. Mr. Gartin said Ada Hayden has a conflict between walkers and bikers and wondered about having two lanes, one for bikes and one for pedestrians. He said it would be great to have an off-road trail from S. 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Ada Hayden. He said the East River Valley trail is undervalued, but ends at Lincoln Way. Mr. Gartin said the sidewalk going west on Lincoln Way is not safe, and it would be great if the trail on Lincoln Way could be extended all the way downtown. He said having a circuit of trails all the way around Ames would be beneficial, and being able to walk or bike from East River Valley Park all the way to Ada Hayden would be a good feature. He said working with ISU and Story County to consider some dirt trails on the east side of the river is an idea. Mr. Gartin said the High Trestle Trail is a great resource, but riding on R38 doesn't feel safe.

Council Member Beatty-Hansen said it's time to bump up the required minimum of what should be spent annually. She also asked if there's any way to get ahead of project delays. Mr. Pregitzer said a downfall of a LRTP is the federal aid does not allow preliminary engineering. To be able to work on a project, it needs to be programmed in some way prior to the project and that cannot be done in a LRTP project. Mr. Pregitzer said some of those things could be looked at earlier in the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan so that when projects are in construction, it doesn't feel like a false promise.

Mr. Pregitzer said during plan development things like the High Trestle Trail connection and other trails can be considered. He said some connections are not perfect, but they are a connection.

Mayor Haila said the condition of the R38 trail can be noted by Story County. He asked about the Dayton Avenue area. Mr. Pregitzer said the growth areas are included and the projects that are development-driven and in collaboration with others can be defined. He said the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan allows discussion and direction change when needed.

Critical crossings of intersections were discussed. Mr. Pregitzer said the Vet Med trails will be clearly marked with signage soon.

**DISPOSITION OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:** None.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:** Ms. Betcher said more bike racks may be needed at City Hall.

Council Member Gartin said this meeting was very exciting and said the bike trails are not solely recreational amenities since many people make lifestyle decisions to make bicycling their main mode of transportation. He said if that is going to be encouraged it needs to be possible. He appreciated the staff work to get to this point.

Council Member Junck said this Master Plan will be great for Ames and encouraged cyclists to reach out if they find themselves avoiding certain trails.

Mr. Pregitzer explained once the consultant is on board that the public communications plan will be posted on the website as well as an opportunity to sign up to stay informed. He said they hope to have a consultant on board early in 2022 so staff can prepare for public outreach and start the process in the spring.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

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Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

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John A. Haila, Mayor

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary