

24TH STREET PROJECTS STAKEHOLDER MEETING

HSIP-ENH-5083(7) 24th St Complete Street Project, Omaha; C.N. 22506

HSIP-NH-275-7(198) US-275, 25th - 23rd St, Omaha; C.N. 22630

NH-80-9(95) 24th Street Bridge, Omaha; C.N. 22635



Thursday, July 27, 2017

Omaha Police Department | Southeast Precinct Community Room | 2475 Deer Park Blvd

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Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the July 27th stakeholder meeting was to gain insight and hear concerns from South Omaha's organizational representatives. The Project Team's goal was to give a brief overview of the proposed project, and listen to the stakeholder's initial thoughts on anticipated areas of concern and opportunity. By selectively targeting identified leaders in South Omaha, we were able to hear the potential concerns of a larger constituent-base through its leadership. This allowed the team to consider changes in the plan prior to releasing the information at the Public Open House, to be held in the following months. We also looked to the invited representatives to advocate and assist in dispensing information prior to the Public Meeting and manage expectations of the proposed project. The invited representatives of these meetings will be invited to a second stakeholder meeting, following the Public Open House, to reconvene on what was heard at the Public Open House in addition to the stakeholder meetings, and how these comments have changed or improved the proposed plans.

Invitees:

David Catalan, Val McPherson, Madeline Moyer | South Omaha Business Administration
Louie Marcuzzo | Vinton Street Merchants Association
Kenneth Stoysich | Stoysich House of Sausage
Ed Dale, Tim Queen | Ed Dale Properties
David Brown | Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Courtney Dentlinger | Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Magdalena Garcia | El Museo Latino
Julie Smith | One Omaha
Angie Eikenberry | Modeshift Omaha
Pell Duval, Ben Swan | Omaha Bikes
Julie Harris | Nebraska Bicycling Alliance
Sarah Sjolie | Live Well Omaha
Jamie Grayson Berglund | Omaha by Design
Mike Hornacek, Jeff Senn | Together Omaha
Carolina Quezada, Albert Vares | Latino Center of the Midlands
Susan Mayberger, Yesenia Valenzuela | South Omaha Community Care Council



Invitations

Stakeholders identified by Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the City of Omaha were each invited to one of five meetings held on Thursday, July 27th held in the Omaha Southeast Police Precinct Community Room. Meeting times were spaced throughout the day, and attendees could attend their assigned meeting time, or another time that worked well for them.

Spanish and Arabic translators were offered, but not needed by attendees at this meeting.

Names in **bold** attended the meeting.

Mark Bulger | Omaha Association of the Blind
 Michael Masker, Wendy Hamilton | Mayor's Commission on Citizen's Disabilities
 Justin Potts | Spring Lake Neighborhood Association
 Frank Nanfite | Columbus Park Neighborhood Association
 Scott Sheehan | Lynch Park-Dahlman Neighborhood Association
 Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado | Highland Park Neighborhood Association
Janet Bonet | Spring Lake Park Team
 Dr. Antoinette Turnquist, **Mark Warneke**, **Anthony D'Esposito**, **Traci Shobe**, Jeremy Madson, Trevis Sallis | Omaha Public Schools
 Ruben Cano | Omaha South High Magnet School
 Susan Aguilera-Robles | Spring Lake Elementary School
 Mr. David Milan | Bancroft Elementary School
 Adriana Vargas | Castelar Elementary School
 Ilka Oberst | Liberty Elementary School
 Dr. David K. Alati | Norris Middle School
 Mr. Bryan Dunne | R.M. Marrs Magnet Middle School
Stan Horrell, **Patrick Boyle** | MCC Express at Vinton Square (MXS)
Vicar Kim E. Roberts, **Beth Mincer** | St Martin of Tours Episcopal Church
 Trinidad Sotelo | Centros Rios De Alabanza
 Empty Tomb Ministries
Fr. John Rickert | Immaculate Conception Church & School
 Michael Romero | Set Free Church
Kathy Gonzalez | Omaha Police Southeast Precinct
 Fire Chief Dan Olsen, **Lloyd Rupp** | Omaha Fire Department
 Rev. Dr. **Damon D. Laaker** | Saint Luke's Lutheran Church
Vinny Palermo, **Chris Jerram** | Omaha City Council
Garry Gernandt

Athena Ramos, **Don Preister**, Mary Ann Krzemien | South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance
 Mike McGuire, **Connie Martin** | Deer Park Neighborhood Association
Tony Vargas | State Senator
Joel Cota | Mayor's Office
Andy Wessel | Douglas County Health Department
Mike Boyle | Douglas County Board of Commissioners
 Kent E. Holm | Douglas County Environmental Services
 Kathy Aultz | Douglas County Historical Society
 Jed D.Moulton, **Todd Swirzcek** | Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission
 Mexican American Historical Society of the Midlands
 EJ Millitti Jr | NDOT Highway Commissioner
Maria Feijoo | Midlands Latino Community Development Corp
 Mark Stursma | Mayor's Active Living Advisory Committee
Evan Schweitz | Metro Transit
Mike Helgerson | MAPA
Joel Dougherty | OneWorld Omaha
Murthy Koti, Jon Meyer, **Chris Faulk**, Heather Tippey Pierce, **Gayle Sturdivant** | City of Omaha, Public Works
Derek Miller, **Stephen Osberg**, **Kevin Carder** | City of Omaha, Planning Department
 Sarah Soula, Taylor Eman, **Tim Weander** | Nebraska Department of Transportation
 Scott Stapp | Federal Highway Administration
Pat Kastl, **Craig Mielke**, **Emily Molloy** | Alfred Benesch & Company
 Shane Swope | Schemmer

* Names in **bold** attended the meeting

Meeting Outline

Although five separate meetings were held throughout the day (8am, 10am, 1pm, 3pm, & 5pm), each meeting followed the same agenda.

1. Introductions

- **Craig Mielke** or **Murthy Koti** introduced the project team, followed by self-introductions of the meeting attendees.

2. Introduction of the Project

- **Craig Mielke** or **Murthy Koti** introduced the project. This brief introduction included:
 - i. The general explanation of the 3 projects and their relation to one another.
 1. 24th Street Complete Street Safety Project
 2. 24th Street Bridge over Interstate 80 Rehabilitation Project
 3. US 275 Turn Lanes at 24th Street
 - ii. Safety Project explanation, including the mention of the previous Health Impact Assessment, Intersection Studies, etc.

- iii. A general description of Omaha’s Complete Streets Policy, and what is/is not included in this project (related to funding, project purpose and physical constraints).
 - iv. Funding:
 1. 24th Street Safety Project | 90% Federal, 10% City funding
 2. Interstate 80 (I-80) Bridge Repairs | Bridge Repairs are 10% State funded and 90% Federally funded. Sidewalk repairs on and off the bridge area are 100 % City Funding
 3. Dual left-turns lanes on L Street at 24th Street | 90% Federal, 10% City funding
 - v. Timeline of the project, expected to be 2019, based on the need to keep 24th Street open during the 2017 and 2018 for access during construction on I-80 and US-75.
3. Table Discussion at the Scroll Maps
 - Table discussions included one-on-one conversations with project team personnel, discussing details of the proposed plans and closer looks at the attendee’s area(s) of interest.
 4. Group Discussion
 - Following table discussions, each group was asked to reconvene for group discussion of the proposed projects. In specific, each group was asked to identify what they believe is the top concern and what opportunities they believe exist within the project limits.

Group Discussion Summary

The following is a summary of discussions that took place throughout the day. In general, the concerns raised during the meetings included stakeholder representation, parking, emergency services, safety, bike lanes and construction. Opportunities highlighted school safety improvement, neighborhood feel, signal synchronization, transit services, public education and connectivity.

Concerns



- Stakeholder Representation
- Parking
- Emergency Vehicles
- Safety
- Truck Loading
- Bike Lanes
- Construction

Project Concerns

Who was invited to this meeting?

There were some questions about who was invited to the Stakeholder Meetings, and also about who should have been invited. The Nebraska Department of Transportation, City of Omaha and Alfred Benesch & Company, along with partnering agencies, worked to build an invite list that represented the many facets and unique representation of the project area in South Omaha. A few names and organizations were mentioned that were not on the original list, and will be invited to participate moving forward. Further, the names and organizations of invitees are shared so individuals who were invited but did not attend can see who were invited and discuss the project with those who were able to attend.

Organizations added to ongoing communications include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Spring Lake Park Team | Park East Neighborhood Association |
| Nebraska Trucking Organizations | Good Shepherd Funeral Home |

What is the purpose for these projects?

The project is needed due to crash data and the results of a Health Impact Assessment, as well as bridge maintenance records. Reconfiguring lanes on 24th Street would enhance safety and bring a more “neighborhood” feel to this area of South Omaha. Dual left-turn lanes L Street eastbound onto 24th Street northbound would reduce the frequency and severity of crashes. The 24th Street bridge repairs would preserve the transportation asset. The three projects together would improve safety and multimodal connectivity throughout the area.

How will parking be affected along the project?

Most parking along the corridor will remain untouched and will continue as parallel parking along the curb. Parking on the north end of the project between Hickory Street and Mason Street will be eliminated to accommodate the repurposed lanes. In this area, studies have found that while there are a number of on-street parking spaces in this segment of the roadway, they are often not used, and there are alternative parking opportunities for those affected by this change.

Will eastbound on/off-ramps be added to the I-80 bridge?

There is no plan to incorporate additional ramps on the I-80 bridge. There is also no plan to remove the existing ramps on the bridge.

Will the proposed lane changes be less efficient for emergency vehicles to navigate?

The proposed two-lane with center-turn lane configuration works nicely for emergency vehicles. When traffic is not able to pull over close enough to the curb for emergency vehicles to pass, the emergency vehicle can use the center-turn lane as a driving lane to efficiently travel through the corridor. In emergency situations, if the center-turn lane is blocked, vehicles and emergency vehicles could also use unoccupied parking space and clear bike lanes to move through the corridor. Lloyd Rupp, Acting Assistant Chief with the Omaha Fire Department, and meeting attendee, said in his opinion four driving lanes can be difficult to travel with cars sometimes blocking all four lanes. In his experience, two travel lanes with a center-turn lane is typically easier and safer to navigate emergency vehicles through.

How are the proposed improvements safer than current conditions?

This area has documented high-crash rates, particularly in left-turning movements. The proposed improvements would improve sight distance turning movement distance to improve safety. This can result in a 25-30% projected reduction of crashes.

What if a crash or loading/unloading truck blocks the travel lane?

The center-turn lane can be used in emergency situations, and for loading/unloading delivery trucks.

Why are bike lanes being incorporated into this project?

While the addition of bike lanes was not a primary reason for this project, they are considered a cost-effective way to repurpose the available roadway surface, instead of re-constructing a narrower roadway. The bike lanes provide enhanced connectivity and mobility throughout the corridor and southeast Omaha. Less vehicle lanes and added bike lanes will also create a driving atmosphere that naturally reduces speeding. The bike lanes would connect with existing bike lanes on Leavenworth Street (that further connect to the downtown loop and other metro trails) and also to the Railroad Avenue bike lanes (that further connect to Fort Crook Road in Bellevue, and ultimately to Offutt Air Force Base).

How will construction be handled, and when will these projects be constructed?

This project is in the preliminary design stage. The improvements will likely be completed under traffic and phased. More details will be planned further into design and when a contractor is selected. Omaha Public Schools and Omaha Fire expressed appreciation for continued communication around lane or roadway closures.

Opportunities



School Safety

Neighborhood
Atmosphere

Signal
Synchronization

Transit
Improvements

Public Education
& Managing
Expectations

Connectivity

Due to their proximity and timing, these three projects have been combined under one Environmental Review, but would be constructed as individual projects. Construction would begin in 2019 (following repairs to I-80 and US-75 in 2017 and 2018), and may extend into 2020. All three projects may or may not be constructed at exactly the same time.

Project Opportunities

Attendees were also asked what opportunities they believe exist within the project limits, either from a physical or community involvement perspective. There was a general excitement for roadway improvements to 24th Street and community outreach and education opportunities adjoining the project.

What can be done to improve school safety for students and buses?

Through partnership with Omaha Public Schools (OPS), there are opportunities to look at where students are crossing 24th Street to and from school. By identifying commonly used routes, we can establish safe crosswalk areas where they would be most accommodating. OPS members in attendance also discussed opportunities for an after-school bus staging zone located off of 24th Street in front of Omaha South Magnet High School.

How can we make this roadway feel more like a neighborhood and less like a highway?

24th Street was at one time, US-75, and retains the “highway” configuration with four lanes, and on-street parking. However, with the construction of the Kennedy Freeway (US-75) as a parallel restricted access freeway, and with the expansion of a growing and thriving commercial area in South Omaha, the proposed concept will give a better “neighborhood” feel, encouraging vehicles to slow down, provide safer bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and create a more aesthetic layout instead of the current highway, pass-through atmosphere.

Is there a way to synchronize the traffic signals along this corridor to improve traffic flow?

Upgrades to accompany the repurposed road include signal synchronization. This signal progression will reduce the amount of stop/go, with less ‘kinks’ in traffic, less bottlenecking at intersections and shorten waits for left-turns. This upgrade also allows the potential for flashing yellow arrows (instead of permissive green turn lights) and other upgraded technology, which improve safety.

Are there ways to improve transit services for all users?

Metro Transit has been involved in the process, evaluating their current bus stop locations and opportunities to find more efficient locations. Their input will be considered for the locations of bus stops (i.e. prior to or after intersections, mid-block, in traffic or in dedicated pull-off areas). Other improvements may include ADA upgrades, cross walk locations, and better bus loading/unloading zones.

What opportunities exist to increase awareness and educate the public about this project?

There will be several concepts included in this project that may be new to residents of this area. Stakeholders suggested that the project team should use many graphics, illustrations, and easy-to-understand materials be used with the public. Visuals showing the use of bike lanes and turn lanes should be clearly depicted and discussed in anticipation of this project.

There is also an element of managing expectations that will be required throughout the project. While this project will be a pilot project for the City of Omaha’s Complete Streets Policy, the term “complete streets” may have suggested a project more expansive than planned. Managing public expectations of project features will be critical throughout the project.

How will this project improve connectivity and improve healthy transportation options?

There was a general excitement for improved connectivity and multimodal opportunities, particularly from the attendees who represented bike advocacy groups and health agencies.

Next Steps

A Public Open House is planned for September 19, 2017. The meeting will be held at the Columbus Park Community Center, 1515 S 24th Street, Omaha, NE. As meeting details and materials become available, the project team will communicate with project stakeholders so they can release meeting information to their constituents, encouraging public participation. Several stakeholders offered the project team the opportunity to attend their respective meetings to present the project in a more direct manner and discuss specific concerns related to their interests. The City will consider these invitations, and within the limits of the federal and state processes, will attempt to attend some of these meetings.

Following the public open house, the stakeholder groups will be invited to a second stakeholder meeting. At this meeting, the project team will summarize the discussions of the initial stakeholder meeting, comments from the public open house and share adjustments to the project plan.

Next Steps



Public Meeting

Sept 19, 2017
Columbus Park Community
Center

Stakeholder Meeting

Fall 2017, TBD

Meeting Photos





