

Northside STEAM Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Gap Project

Date: Tuesday June 26, 2018

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Location: Council Chambers on the 2nd Floor of the Guy C. Larcom Jr. City Hall Building, 301 E Huron St.

Attendees:

Summary

Note: The following is not a direct transcript of the meeting discussion. This summary has been developed from notes taken during the meeting; comments are paraphrased. Questions and comments from residents are marked with a 'Q,' answers/responses from Staff are marked with an 'A.' Where clarifications or responses have been added after the meeting, these are denoted as "post-meeting notes."

Questions, Comments, Concerns, and Answers:

Q: I am concerned about frequent crashes in front of 823 Starwick Dr because of frequent crashes. How will this be addressed?

A: *Post-meeting notes: City of Ann Arbor Traffic Engineer is doing an analysis of this area and this document will be updated when the results are in.*

Q: What is the width of the sidewalk at 719 Brookside Dr?

A: *The existing sidewalk is 5 feet wide.*

Q: How was the placement of the sidewalk at 701 Brookside Dr decided?

A: *The typical location of sidewalk within the City Right-of-Way (ROW) is 0.5 feet from the property line, but we would match the alignment of the existing sidewalk at 719 Brookside.* **Q:** Why is there no planned sidewalk at 2110 and 2140 Delafield Dr?

A: *This area was not identified as a priority location from the SRTS Committee.*

Q: Why was I not notified of previous meetings?

A: *Northside STEAM and SRTS Committee held the previous meetings about the Grant Submission. The property owners affected by the Special Assessment would not have been identified at the beginning of the Analysis.*

Q: Will school traffic be relocated?

A: *There is no current plan to move the drop-off locations established by Northside STEAM.*

Q: Why was the number one option for installing another road rejected by the City?

A: *There has been no other access to Northside STEAM formally proposed to the City.*

Northside STEAM Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Gap Project

Q: What is the data on accidents, pedestrian use of roadways in the area, etc.?

A: *Post-meeting notes: City of Ann Arbor Traffic Engineer is doing an analysis of this and this document will be updated when the results are in.*

Q: The data on pedestrians has changed in the last four years. Is this project based on outdated data?

A: *The polling for the Grant was done in 2016. We believe that the pedestrian volume data would increase based on the housing demand in the area because of the success of Northside STEAM if the polling was taken today.*

Q: 5-foot sidewalks may require removal of trees and/or impact root integrity. Is it possible to put sidewalks on one side of the road only?

A: *Yes, but the Grant requires sidewalks on both sides of the road to be installed. The SRTS grant funding for Michigan follows a complete streets policy. Applying for sidewalk on one side of the street would make the application less competitive for funding. Applications that do propose sidewalk on only one side of the street are carefully reviewed throughout SRTS Grant process for the context specific reasons for a scope of work, which is outside what we generally consider eligible. Proposals where SRTS awarded funding to put in sidewalk on one side were zoned as either industrial or agricultural. Further, putting sidewalk in on both sides of these projects did not increase connectivity or was not feasible give topographic constraints. None of these situations would apply to the residential context of the A2STEAM project, thereby making sidewalks on both sides of a street a requirement to remain competitive for funding.*

Q: The addition of sidewalks is only part of creating pedestrian safety. What else will be done?

A: *Improved signage, pavement markings, ADA Accessibility, new crosswalks, and public education.*

Q: Vehicles are frequently involved in accidents near Barton Dr. This project encourages pedestrians to walk in unsafe areas.

A: *Improved delineation of the pavement markings in this area to improve night visibility will be implemented.*

Q: Will crossing guards be implemented.

A: *Ann Arbor Police Department and Ann Arbor Public School will have to make this decision.*

Q: What is the breakdown of total costs in doing the area assessment and project?

A: *Sidewalk installation items (Sidewalk grading, Sidewalk Concrete, Aggregate or Sand Bedding, Restoration, and Mobilization) amounted to about 30% of the Project Construction Costs which were estimated at 1.46M. This assessable construction cost, \$430,000.00, was reduced by 30% of the Grant Funding (up to \$400K of Construction Costs), and then a design, inspection, and testing multiplier was applied, and the whole amount was divided by the length of proposed sidewalk to get a cost per linear foot. This was estimated at \$89.00/ft.*

Q: Will residents' taxes increase as a result of this project?

Northside STEAM Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Gap Project

A: *There will be no increase in taxes attributable to the installation of the new sidewalks included in the special assessment.*

Q: Please explain the assessment in detail with all of the math involved.

A: *Please see the breakdown of total costs above.*

Q: Is this assessment a choice?

A: *If the project moves forward, those property owners in the Special Assessment District will not have the option to opt out. However, a formal public hearing will be scheduled at a regular City Council meeting. Notices of the public hearing are sent by mail to each owner of the property subject to assessment at least 10 days prior to the hearing. Any member of the public is welcome to speak about the project to City Council at this hearing. Any person aggrieved by the special assessment roll or the necessity of the improvement may file objections to the roll in writing with the Clerk prior to the close of the public hearing. The written objections shall specify in what respect the person believes they are aggrieved. No original assessment roll shall be confirmed except by the affirmative vote of the Council if prior to the confirmation written objections to the proposed improvement have been filed by the owners of property, which will be required to bear over 50% of the amount of the special assessment. In addition, a protest at the Public Hearing, a special assessment can be appealed to the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 35 days of the confirmation of the special assessment roll if the assessment was protested at the public hearing held for the purpose of confirming the roll.*

Q: Can the grant come off of the homeowners' assessed cost?

A: *Distribution of the SRTS Grant over the construction costs of the project will be discussed further. Currently, 30% of the SRTS Grant funds have been allocated to the owner's assessed cost, as only 30% of the construction costs of the entire project will be assessed to the property owners.*

Q: Is interest charged to the amount assessed?

A: *The due date of the first installment for the special assessment is typically the first July (Summer) bill after the Council's resolution confirming the special assessment roll. If the special assessment is paid off prior to the due date of the first bill, the special assessment will not include interest. However, if the special assessment is divided into more than one installment, the second and subsequent installments are transferred, due and payable on the July (Summer) tax bill in each succeeding year following the year in which the first installment was due and payable, which are subject to interest provisions (monthly). The interest on the unpaid balance of the special assessment shall not exceed "1% per annum above the average interest rate of any bonds issued to finance the improvements" per City Code.*

Q: Can we see the 821 Barton Dr crash reports?

A: *Post-meeting notes: City of Ann Arbor Traffic Engineer is looking into this area and this document will be updated when the results are in.*

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Northside STEAM Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Gap Project

Q: What is the maximum slope?

A: *The maximum cross slope from the sidewalk to the grass area or to the back of curb is 1:3 (vertical to horizontal).*

Q: What is the minimum slope?

A: *The minimum cross slope of the sidewalk is 1%, to allow water to flow off the sidewalk, run towards the back of curb and enter the City's storm system.*

Q: Is the City going to plant new trees as part of this project?

A: *Yes.*

Q: Is any tree removal going to happen? If so, when?

A: *Unfortunately, Yes. Due to seasonal tree clearing restrictions, trees need to be removed in the winter months before March 31. In order to start this project in the spring of 2019, trees selected for removal will be removed in January or February of 2019.*

Questions Asked After the Meeting

Q: How much might property values change when trees are removed and sidewalks installed?

A: *Post-meeting notes: The installation of new sidewalks and or removal of trees will likely have no effect on property value. It is highly unlikely that paired-sales analysis or market data would indicate any contributory value of the new sidewalks to the overall property value.*

Q: Do we have a way to measure the value of a tree in terms of clean air and keeping our houses shaded and cooler?

A: *Post-meeting notes: There is a tree benefits calculator on the City's website where you can put in tree information and it will calculate the value that the trees provide – a2gov.org/urbanforestry - click on "The Urban Forest." Also, with the removal of trees proposed in the project, we plan to mitigate their loss by planting new trees.*

Q: How was Pear Street selected for sidewalks?

A: *Post-meeting notes: Pear Street, Apple to John A. Woods was the #3 priority location for sidewalks selected by SRTS Committee. City of Ann Arbor engineers made the decision to include the length of Pear St, Traver to Apple, to the overall project when the SRTS Grant was submitted.*

Q: Would this money provide greater pedestrian/bike safety if we spent it on pedestrian activated crosswalks on Pontiac Trail?

A: *Post-meeting notes: The results of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Committee analysis for improvements in the area indicated new sidewalks were the priority, and that is what the SRTS Grant will fund.*

Northside STEAM Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Gap Project

Q: What is the City policy on removing legacy trees? We have maples, one over 60' tall, that have shaded our house since we moved in almost 30 years ago. Can the group be required to compensate for increased utility costs to cool our house in the summer?

A: *Post-meeting notes: The special assessment to property owners and the SRTS grant would not pay individuals for increased utility costs.*

Q: Could City council offer a partial credit or partial rollback in assessed taxes while this special assessment is active?

A: *Post-meeting notes: The Finance Department does not know of any provision in the law that would allow for a credit or rollback of taxes to ease the burden of paying the special assessment.*

Q: Have the parents at Northside offered to pay any of this? Not the school, because that just comes out of our pockets. Have the parents considered any way to help residents for solving a problem that for the most part only affects the parents?

A: *Post-meeting notes: In accordance with City Code, construction of new sidewalk will be specially assessed to the adjacent property owners. However, if school parents were to voluntarily contribute to the project, it could help offset the cost of the assessments. There have been instances where a builder, homeowner's association, or other neighborhood group contributed funds to offset some of a special assessment. However, the contribution made by the neighborhood group was done privately without the City's involvement.*

Q: What caused the price per foot cost to double from \$45 to \$90? It would be interesting to have a history of how the rate changed as different groups entered into the conversation. What was the cost for the plan when first submitted? What effect did applying for a grant from a group that encourages sidewalks on both sides of the road have? Is it a requirement or a strong suggestion? Are waivers possible? What increases came from City engineers? Why?

A: *Post-meeting notes: Sidewalks on both sides of the street is in the City's Standard Specifications. Also, the SRTS grant funding for Michigan follows a complete streets policy. Applying for sidewalk on one side of the street would make the application less competitive for funding. Applications that do propose sidewalk on only one side of the street are carefully reviewed throughout our process for the context specific reasons for a scope of work, which is outside what they generally consider eligible. Proposals where they awarded funding to put in sidewalk on one side were zoned as either industrial or agricultural, and putting sidewalk in on both sides did not increase connectivity or was not feasible given the topographic constraints. None of these situations would apply to the residential context of the A2STEAM project, thereby making sidewalks on both sides of a street a requirement to remain competitive for funding*

Q: What long-term empirical data does the group have that pedestrian injuries are on the rise, requiring this solution?

A: *Post-meeting notes: The Sidewalk Gap Project was not created as a result of rising pedestrian injuries. It resulted from the Michigan State University report as part of a technical assistance agreement with the local Safe Routes to School (SRTS) committee for Ann Arbor STEAM at Northside.*

Northside STEAM Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Gap Project

Michigan SRTS have dedicated dollars to help with infrastructure improvements and non-infrastructure activities to encourage and enable students to safely roll, walk, and bicycle to school.

Q: Who suggested 5' wide sidewalks? None of the current sidewalks surrounding the school are this wide. Again, was this in the original submission, did it come from the granting group, did City engineers suggest this? What evidence is there that 5' wide sidewalks are beneficial?

A: *Post-meeting notes: Five-foot (5') sidewalks are the standard width of sidewalks in the City of Ann Arbor.*

Q: Can I see both the Grant Application and the Grant Award for this project.

A: *Post-meeting notes: The City of Ann Arbor had submitted all necessary data in order to get the Conditional Commitment from the SRTS Grant, but waited until the Administrative Hearing and Public Feedback to push the button. City Staff is meeting with the SRTS Committee to introduce revised route selections for the Grant Submission to reduce the cost of the project, reduce the individual special assessment, and utilize the Grant most effectively. The Grant Application will change based on that meeting. There has not been a Grant Award yet.*

Q: I am interested in seeing the most detailed cost workup that you have for this order of magnitude cost estimate.

A: *Post-meeting notes: A new cost estimate will be created after we work out how we want to revise the project.*

Q: I would like to know what other homeowners paid for sidewalk gap projects that have occurred in Ann Arbor. Please provide at least several costs from recent years.

A: *Post-meeting notes: Using Federal Grants to help fund sidewalk gap projects on major roads, which contribute 80% of the construction costs, recent years linear foot costs were as follows: Stone School \$31.12 /ft, Maple/Miller \$16.81/ft, Federal/Commerce/Green \$31.30/ft.*

Q: Please point me to the City of Ann Arbor Code, which specifies that the homeowner is responsible for the cost of installing sidewalks.

A: *Post-meeting notes: The construction, rebuilding, or repair of sidewalks is provided in Chapter 49 of City Code and assessing such improvements is provided in Chapter 13 of this Code.*

https://library.municode.com/mi/ann_arbor/codes/code_of_ordinances

Q: The document which was passed out the other night states that a City Council hearing will be held to allow for public comments on the project. Do you know when that will be?

A: *Post-meeting notes: If the project goes as planned, it is expected that Council would be presented preliminary special assessments in November of 2018, and then set the Public Hearing date and mail out notices to affected residents in February of 2019, and the Public Hearing would held at a City Council meeting in March 2019. Note, that this is still a tentative schedule.*

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