

Complete Streets Committee – Kick Off Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2015 @ 10:00 a.m. in the Sheridan-Parkside Community Center

Attendees:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Joseph Emminger	Town Board – Deputy Supervisor
Justin Booth	GoBike Buffalo
David Stinner	USitek – Resident
Jim Jones	Technical Support - Town Engineer
Angie Robinson	National Federation of the Blind – NY
Fred Frank	Planning Board – Vice Chair
Tom Jones	Town Highway Dept.
Bill Swanson	Town Highway Dept.
Wayne Scibor	Erie County DPW-Highways
Jim Cuzzo	NYSDOT
Gregory Szewczyk	NYSDOT
Mike Kaiser	Technical Support – Director
Peter de Pagter	Handlebars Cycle Company
Shelby Philips	Handlebars Cycle Company
Ken Swanekamp	Erie County DEP – Town Planning Board Chair
Nicholas Bado	Town Police Department
John Brucato	Ken-Ton UFSD – Assistant Superintendent
Kathleen Johnson	Village of Kenmore
Jim Hartz	Town Planning and Development

After a welcome and introductions, Jim Hartz, Director of Planning and Development, gave a brief presentation on the origin of the Town’s Complete Streets effort and what can be expected of the Committee representatives.

Fred Frank said that we will be looking to work within the existing R-O-W areas of the road. The Town would not have to acquire additional land in order to re-program the roadways for a complete street design. The Town also does not have to do this on all of its roadways, you can have parallel pathways for both pedestrian-friendly and transit-friendly users. He thinks the next generation of homebuyers is looking for this type of network.

Justin Booth, from GoBike Buffalo, said that in the City of Buffalo, since 2008 one of the largest challenges has been coordinating with the City and public on which streets to choose for accommodating complete streets design. He mentioned that the City’s traffic engineers have taken the opportunity to travel to other cities that have implemented complete streets designs to see what has worked. It’s important to study how these design changes have impacted different users in terms of traffic volume and safety. One example of how things can change is Delaware Avenue in Buffalo. Buffalo has the 7th largest increase in population across the nation in terms of those choosing to commute by bike. Buffalo has a bronze-level bike-friendly designation from the League of American Cyclists. He suggested that Town officials look at the League of American Cyclist criteria to see where you are now

and gauge where you want to be in the future. He also suggested engaging the University at Buffalo and the NYS DOT officials. He offered his assistance in forming a policy moving forward.

Fred Frank mentioned that in the City of Buffalo, they have control of all of their roadways, but in the suburbs there are a variety of jurisdictions involved with the roadways.

Wayne Scibor, E.C. Supervisor of Engineering, said that there is the 1991 County Policy for bicycle facilities and the Mark Poloncarz recently stated that the County will be working toward adopting a County-wide policy. They recently worked with Town Engineer, Jim Jones, on the redesign of Brighton Road to re-do the striping there to something between a Complete Street and what was there before. He understands that most of the County Roads in the Town are somewhere around 40' curb to curb, and that some alternative designs have been discussed.

Greg Szewczyk from NYSDOT said that they are seeking \$100,000 to do a study along Sheridan Drive from East Park Drive to Belmont Avenue. They are looking to have that study completed sometime in 2016. Jim Cuzzo, from NYSDOT, said that they have been looking at all of the roads that they are re-constructing to see if they can incorporate Complete Streets design under state-wide policy. Jim suggested that the Town work with the Region's MPO (GBNRTC) to find surface transportation funding for a Complete Street Design Implementation. CHIPS money can also be used for these types of improvements although there is not much funding available now.

Angie Robinson, from the National Association of the Blind – NY said that her organization is made up of volunteers looking to improve their quality of life through equality, opportunity, and security, like every other person. She said that they are here to make sure that the reconstruction projects are both accessible to the blind and physically handicapped.

David Stinner said that the way the roadways are designed now, he hesitates to take his family down many of the streets. He said a Complete Street Design could slow vehicles down to the posted speed limit of 30 mph, instead of the 40-45 they travel now. He also said that he moved his business to Niagara Falls Blvd. about 2.5 years ago and that there is a lot of pedestrian traffic. He does have a sidewalk, but his neighbors do not. Snow plowing often blocks these corridors. If there were a consistent sidewalk path and maintenance during the winter, then it would be a much safer and business-friendly place.

Fred Frank said that we are used to measuring roadway's level of service for vehicles instead of pedestrians and that needs to change. Also, sidewalk maintenance is going to be a bigger issue in the future and needs to be addressed.

Bill Swanson said that the biggest issue that the Town is going to have to deal with is having no sidewalks on Niagara Falls Blvd. from Sheridan Drive to the Youngmann. There seems to be more sidewalks on the Amherst side of the Blvd., but this is a huge issue.

Peter De Pagter, from Handlebars, said that he always wondered why there weren't more bicycle lanes along the major roadways like Elmwood and Delaware. He said that it seems to be getting better. Jim Hartz added that the major collector lanes such as Colvin, Elmwood, Delaware, Eggert, and Englewood

were all mentioned in the update to the Town's Comprehensive Planned as needing to accommodate more bicyclists. The lower volume local roads seem to be more navigable by bike and pedestrians.

Jim Jones, said that the Complete Streets effort is more than just accommodating all users, bicyclists and pedestrians have a legal right to be there. There needs to be a context sensitive design that accommodates those users, it's not just automobiles anymore, it should be considered public space. You also have to consider the land use along the corridor. You can't plan a street without taking into account the land use around it. We have to bridge all of the different jurisdictions roles and responsibilities into one cohesive policy that serves the public.

Jim said that the Town's streets have sidewalks along 80% of the network, but they were all built during the post WWII period. Most of those have been replaced piecemeal through a Community Development Block Grant project or the Highway Department's Forestry Program where there was tree root damage. Between the aged roads, curbs, sidewalks, and the pipes beneath them, the Town has a huge challenge in front of it. We need to go into these neighborhoods and make the smartest investment possible, not just plan for the surface.

The off-street trails are moving forward. The Sherwood Greenway was completed a couple of years ago that connects the Riverwalk to the interior of the Town. The 2-Mile Creek Greenway was built in the late 90's by the County and now the Rails to Trails Corridor is almost complete. That project will be completed in the Spring. The City of Buffalo is wrapping up their sister project that takes the trail from Kenmore Ave to Lasalle Station on Main Street. The trail goes to State Street in the City of Tonawanda and the City will be starting their project to take the trail to the Riverwalk in 2017. The use of the Erie Canalway Trail is becoming more and more popular. There will be more than just Town residents on these trails.

Other communities that have embraced smart growth principles are benefitting from more private investment in homes and businesses as they are sought out by the newer generation. We have to capitalize on these investments.

Kathleen Johnson said that the Elmwood Avenue Sidewalk project is under design at the County and they realize the need to accommodate more bicyclists. The Delaware Ave project in the City of Buffalo has more width than the corridor within the Village. The Elmwood Avenue project will allow them to better meet that goal.

Nicholas Bado, Police Dept., said that he is not seeing an increased rate of pedestrian-vehicle crash incidents. From a Law enforcement perspective they are aware of the wider roadways that encourage driver's to go faster. They write between 12,000 -14,000 tickets per year trying to curb that behavior. It has limited effect on future behavior. Traffic engineers need to change the design of the roadways to best address vehicle speed. The design of the roadways shape the driving behaviors of the public. The redesign of Brighton Road is a good example of that. He said that there needs to be an educational component to show people why these redesigns are necessary.

Justin Booth mentioned that the City of Buffalo was able to use a NYSERDA grant for an educational program to teach people about the benefits of Complete Streets. GoBike also has some public domain materials on their website for educational outreach.

Dave Stinner mentioned that with the school consolidation project there will be many middle schoolers who reside south of Sheridan Drive trying to cross Sheridan Drive to get to Hoover Middle. John Brucato, Asst. Superintendent Ken-Ton UFSD, said that they will support anything that can improve the safety of children commuting to school. They will also be seeing more kids walking to school after the consolidation due to the recent transportation policy revisions.

Ken Swanekamp said that many of the County's business parks do not provide pedestrian friendly amenities. They have to do a better job of providing for options for people to get to work. Dave Stinner mentioned that many of the millennials want to bike to work along Niagara Falls Blvd.

Justin Booth mentioned that there are many things that a municipality can do to promote biking that do not necessarily have to be expensive, like providing bicycle parking facilities. The City of Buffalo has included some provisions in their new "Green Code" that requires bicycle parking facilities to be installed at certain businesses. Also, many businesses are putting the facilities in on their own because they recognize the economic benefits of providing bike-friendly amenities.

Shelby Philips, from Handlebars, said that they are seeing more people interested in commuting and the comfort level is not necessarily there yet, but that will come from riding with those that are comfortable.

Deputy Supervisor Joseph Emminger mentioned that his generation is not familiar with commuting by bicycle, but he sees it with the newer generation including his children, the millennials. They want to get around using bikes or transit. The Town has to plan for the future. What are we going to look like in 5 or 10 years from now? We have to accommodate the newer families looking for these options.

The next Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 17th. An email with details will be forthcoming.