

Attachment 1:

Steering Committee Meeting Summary (6/6/12)

MEETING SUMMARY

Wadena Transportation and Comprehensive Plan

Study Review Committee Meeting #3

Wednesday, June 6, 2012

3:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

Wadena Commission Chambers

Members in Attendance:

Tom Angier
Jeanette Baymler
Terry Lynk
Bridget Miller
Ryan Odden
Ann Pate
Brad Swenson
Dean Uselman
Wayne Wolden
Craig Vaughn
Cindy Gray
Stephanie Falkers

Representing:

Park Board
Councilwoman, City of Wadena
Development Authority Board
MnDOT – District 4
Wadena County Engineer
WDC ISD 2155
City Administrator, City of Wadena
Wadena Development Director, Wadena Planning and Zoning
Mayor, City of Wadena
SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cindy Gray thanked the Study Review Committee (SRC) Members for their attendance and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

○ **Study Review Committee Meeting Summary**

Cindy Gray reviewed the summary from the last SRC Meeting, and asked if there were any comments. There were none.

○ **Planning Commission Meeting Summary**

Cindy Gray discussed the Planning Commission meeting, including attendance, agenda, and the meeting summary. She noted that the marked up land use plan has been sent to Dean Uselman if anyone would like to review it.

○ **Review Updated Survey Results**

Cindy Gray presented an overview of the overall survey process and the follow-up survey. She reviewed the results of the survey monkey combined with the public meeting results. There was conversation surrounding specific survey results. These conversations are noted according to the corresponding survey question.

Survey Question 3: I would support city and county regulations to improve the appearance of development along the gateways to Wadena.

Cindy noted that a majority of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and added that elements in this survey could turn into implementation measures of the plan. An example would be the creation of gateway overlay districts that place additional standards on the developments along the gateways to Wadena.

Brad Swenson stated that a four-lane highway would solve corridor aesthetics. At a recent MnDOT meeting, staff from the City of Staples commented that the construction of a four-lane highway through their city has improved the corridor aesthetics.

Cindy Gray commented that SRF recognizes the importance of a four-lane roadway to the City of Wadena staff.

Terry Lynk noted that the Economic Development Council has discussed improvements to various developments along Highway 10. Brad Swenson added that it is hard to get people to invest in the area when no one is sure what is going to happen.

Question 12: Downtown Wadena meets at least 50% of my need for goods and services.

Mayor Wolden noted that the closure of the downtown grocery store has left a big gap in commerce in Downtown Wadena. Jeanette Baymler added that there are no clothing stores downtown.

Question 14: I believe the costs of expanding streets and utilities to accommodate city growth should be primarily paid by developers, new property owners, or city tax payers.

Brad Swenson noted that residents tend to have the perception that they should not have to pay exclusively for the street in front of their house when everyone uses it as a community. Terry Lynk discussed the recent Miracle Addition. He stated that there is no way that the property owners could pay for the installation of all services within that development. Wadena has historically “spread the burden” between residents. He noted that major improvements have been specifically planned years apart to reduce the costs.

Bridget Miller asked if the city has used special assessments to pay for infrastructure and street work. Terry Lynk responded that the city has used special assessments, but the total does not cover all project costs. Brad Swenson further explained the city’s special assessment policy. For new developments 100% of the cost is specially assessed to the property owner. For work in existing areas 20% is specially assessed to the property owner and 80% is assessed city wide.

Terry Lynk stated that when subdivisions are designed, the city tries to consider how things will be developed in the future, i.e. allowing for future growth beyond the current subdivision.

Question 25: Construction and maintenance of sidewalks and bike trails should be a higher priority than they are now.

Mayor Wolden noted that if this question separated sidewalks and bike trails you might get a different answer. The city understands the need for these facilities in order to be a healthy community.

Bridget Miller asked who was responsible for shoveling the sidewalks. Mayor Wolden responded that it is the responsibility of the property owner.

Question 26: There are destinations within Wadena where I would like to walk or bike, but I don't feel safe doing so.

Bridget Miller noted the contrast of responses between questions 25 and 26, they do not feel safe when walking or biking, but they also do not feel it should be a higher priority.

Brad Swenson commented that Blacks Grove Park is an underutilized, rustic park that serves as a better destination than the golf course. It is a safe place to bike. Mayor Wolden added that he was in support of a wider shoulder on Highway 29 from Wadena to Deer Creek, but MnDOT stated it was not in their budget.

Dean Uselman discussed the Regional Trail Coalition. He added that there has been discussion of utilizing the old rail line that goes to Deer Creek to create a trail between Wadena and Fergus Falls. The entire trail would be in Otter Tail County.

Terry Lynk questioned if records exist stating the usage of Blacks Grove Park. Brad Swenson responded that no records exist.

Terry Lynk stated that Blacks Grove Park is a family friendly park. Jeanette Baymler added that the park has a nice shelter.

Stephanie Falkers presented the results for one of the two new questions asked on Survey Monkey and the Physical Survey. This question asked respondents to rank the reasons why they would like Highway 10 through Wadena to be a four-lane roadway rather than a two-lane.

Brad Swenson noted that more people responded to the physical survey than the survey monkey option and those results should be weighted heavier. Craig Vaughn agreed that the physical survey results are where we should be looking due to the weighted average aspect.

Brad Swenson commented that he believes a different class of people answered the survey. Many respondents walked the survey into city hall with their water bill. Typically, an older group of residents respond to this type of survey and bring them in with their water bill payments. The survey monkey respondents may have been younger people.

Bridget Miller added that when you compare the answers of the two groups that thought process is probably true.

Cindy Gray presented the final question of the survey and summarized the responses. This question asked respondents, which services are important to you and are you willing to help pay for improvements to these services as tax payers.

Jeanette Baymler commented that people are willing to pay for street improvements.

Cindy Gray noted that as the age of respondents increase the willingness to pay for some items (parks and trails) tends to decrease.

Cindy Gray stated the written comments received from the physical survey have been separated into categories and are all listed in the packet. Brad Swenson asked the SRC members to read through the comments when they can. Cindy Gray added that it gives us an understanding of what the towns people are thinking.

2. Review Preferred Future Land Use Alternative

Cindy Gray explained the evolution of the land use plan. The plan began as three scenarios that were presented to the SRC. From that meeting a single preferred alternative was presented to the Wadena Planning Commission. At that meeting, the preferred alternative was modified to create the future land use plan we see today. Cindy gave an overview of the changes made during the Planning Commission meeting.

Jeanette Baymler noted that it was very helpful to have the Planning Commissioners look at it because they all have different insights.

Brad Swenson questioned if there would be another session with the Planning Commission. Cindy Gray responded that there will be an 'interim workshop' with the commission when we have a draft comprehensive plan.

o Discuss Household and Employment Forecasts for Travel Demand Model

Cindy Gray presented the 5% and 10% growth scenarios as agreed upon by the SRC. The amount of each land use required to support the growth of both scenarios was calculated and equated to 94 to 190 acres. The next step was to begin looking at where this growth was most likely to occur. There is greater than 190 acres of growth area shown on the plan. This would allow the city to be flexible with development design and allow for a variety of housing styles. This information will be used to create future traffic volumes.

Craig Vaughn noted that it is population and households that feed into the travel demand model. The purpose of this information is to understand how many people we can expect on the roadways as a result.

Cindy Gray added that you cannot guess where people are going to develop, but you need to plan for it. For the travel demand model it is important to be as specific as possible. We will translate the residential areas to population growth and industrial/commercial areas to job growth, which translates into the Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs).

Brad Swenson commented that there are areas that could be shown in the Phase 1 Low Density Residential growth.

Ann Pate stated that the city should be considered well west of the school. The MN Design Team said to respect this area, and the growth could be pushed further to the west.

Brad Swenson noted that a developer platted lots and put in the utilities, but has not sold the lots yet. They asked for a deferment, and were granted a 5-year deferment. The 5 years is now over. There are many areas that are already platted, but not selling. Brad questioned the point of doing this exercise if this is the case (that they already have platted undeveloped land that still needs to fill up).

Craig Vaughn responded that the exercise we are discussing is more guidance than anything for future planning/visioning for the City of Wadena. Without having conducted this process the City would not have an outline for future plats should the current ones fill and so on so forth.

Cindy Gray stated that there were not a lot of limitations with cost feasible utilities extension. We do not want to underestimate the growth when doing this work. The city may grow by 5% to 10% in 20 years or maybe 30 years. We want to focus on where the growth will occur, not necessarily when it will occur.

Craig Vaughn presented the growth projection tables for population and jobs, and how this growth may affect land use.

Brad Swenson again commented that the city has several areas that are platted and undeveloped. He would much rather see these areas have investments considered as part of this growth scenario(s). Mayor Wolden added that we are looking at the future, beyond what is already platted.

Craig Vaughn noted that we will start with the vacant areas first. It was noted that a map was created displaying the vacant lots in Wadena. The SRC members asked to review this figure. City will provide.

Mayor Wolden stated that the City of Wadena could grow by as much as 25% given the right conditions.

Terry Lynk asked how the school is currently projecting growth. Ann Pate responded that the school wants to see growth. It has been discussed for years that the smaller schools will be closed and combined, but that is five to ten years down the road. It is hard for the school to quantify its growth.

Terry Lynk then questioned what demographics we are considering for growth. Craig Vaughn responded that when you look at school closings, it is an opportunity for people to move closer to the current open schools.

Ann Pate commented on open enrollment. Wadena is a large school district and some students choose a different school because they are geographically closer to that school.

Terry Lynk noted that biking has gone down; even bike sales have dropped around town he says. He noted that kids do not bike to school much anymore; most are dropped off by their parents.

Bridget Miller commented that her office receives many letters from rural bikers and the lack of accommodations.

Craig Vaughn stated that we are looking for the SRCs agreement on the growth areas to move forward with the travel demand model. We will start with infill of vacant properties and then the new areas. He asked if the 5% and 10% growth scenarios were ok.

Mayor Wolden responded that 5% and 10% is not the trend they have experienced lately but it is where they would like to be. Cindy Gray added that demographers will use historic trends to assess future population. We need to focus on the future, so we need to work with growth rather than considering regressing. Brad Swenson stated 5% growth is realistic, 10% growth is optimistic. That would imply that 25% growth would be extraordinary.

Jeanette Baymler stated that Wadena needs to get broadband access if we want to attract technical businesses. Mayor Wolden noted that businesses that need access to broadband already have it. Ann Pate added that the school and hospital are currently using broadband.

Mayor Wolden commented that Wadena serves as a regional hub. Many smaller surrounding towns are losing commerce, and the residents are choosing Wadena as a place to do commerce. The presence of the school is significant for Wadena. The Mayor added that he is proposing an initiative to move lots in town that the Council will soon consider. There are lots that were cleared by the tornado that are not selling. This new initiative would allow the owners to donate the vacant lots to the city for a tax write-off. The city could then market "Free Lots in Wadena", and create a marketing campaign. These lots would then be donated from the city to the future

homeowner. This initiative could expand beyond tornado lots. This initiative is being brought in front of the City Council next week (week of 6/11).

3. Review Updated Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Objectives

Cindy Gray presented an overview of the goals and objectives. She asked that the SRC members read over them and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting. SRF will remind SRC members to review goals and objectives as part of the next SRC meeting reminder/invitation. **ACTION**

4. Discuss Multi-Modal Component of Transportation Plan

o Bike, Pedestrian, and Transit Elements

Craig Vaughn noted that the survey results discuss sidewalks and trails. It is important to identify existing services and facilities in the City of Wadena. Craig discussed the existing services/facilities and existing plans. It is important to review the results of these plans as we continue. He also presented a graphic displaying the existing trails, sidewalks, and city parks. It was noted that Leaf River Trail should be added to the figure. **ACTION**

Craig Vaughn noted that the existing sidewalk network is relatively complete south of Highway 10, and begins to break up as you move north. Brad Swenson added that when the north side was redone, a lot of the sidewalks were eliminated. The sidewalks were sporadic, and no one wanted to maintain them. The city tries to put sidewalks where people will use them, in areas with pedestrian traffic. Historically the city has tended to remove sidewalks rather than to construct new ones. The thought has been to have a sidewalk on one side of the street rather than both.

Craig Vaughn asked what the general feeling was towards the use of on-street facilities for bicyclists rather than sidewalks. Brad Swenson responded that people know to ride their bikes on the street. Jeanette Baymler added that there have been problems in the past with bikers riding on the sidewalks. Brad added that on-street striping of bike lanes should be encouraged.

Terry Lynk asked if there are bike parking locations. Brad Swenson responded that there are locations in the City of Wadena.

Craig Vaughn moved to agenda item 7, the Complete Streets Study, as it applies to this discussion. He stated that SRF has been working on a grant that focuses on complete streets for Wadena County. This grants goal is to develop a template for complete streets, and the application is being applied to 2nd Street in Wadena.

Tom Angier asked if the bike lanes would be on one side, and if they would displace parking. Craig Vaughn responded that there are many applications, and it is about what fits with the roadway. Terry added that 2nd street is currently designated as a bike route. Craig added that this signage continues to Tapple Park.

Brad Swenson commented that the Leaf River Trail is the only truly designated route in Wadena. Ryan Odden noted that it does not have designated trail space, but it does have paved shoulders on the roadway with appropriate signage. Craig Vaughn added that it is being considered a route.

Jeanette Baymler noted the paved bicycle trail near Sunnybrook Road/CR 4, which is south of the road, extends to the Sunnybrook Park and Campground. Ryan Odden added that there are federal funds for a portion of CR 4 to have curb and gutter installed, but the trail will still remain a separate facility.

5. Discuss Summer Crash Information

Craig Vaughn presented crash data broken down by the month in which it occurred. When looking at the profile of the chart, the months of February, November, and December have the highest crash frequencies. The crash rates fluctuated by year, but overall there is a downward trend over the summer months. Contributing factors were not included in this data such as weather, street conditions, sun, etc. Summer traffic volumes increase while the crash rate goes down. It was noted that there is a spike in the crash totals in August.

Craig Vaughn provided another set of data that broke down crash data for Highway 10 and Highway 71. He noted that overall there is not a trend that crashes are higher in the summer months.

Terry Lynk stated that the increases in August and September may be related to the start of the school year. Craig Vaughn added that it may be more of a human factor than roadway conditions/geometric deficiencies.

Cindy Gray commented that with increased traffic volumes in the summer, drivers' attention may increase due to higher traffic volumes which in turn results in fewer crashes.

Bridget Miller noted that it is interesting that Highway 71 has more crashes than Highway 10 in the summer months.

Brad Swenson asked the location of this data. Craig Vaughn responded that data was collected for all locations within the study area of this project (2 miles beyond city limits).

Brad Swenson asked if there is a correlation between crashes and access points. Craig Vaughn responded that yes, there is a direct correlation between accesses and safety (referencing the FHWA access/crash relationship chart presented at previous SRC meeting #2).

6. Discuss Sensitivity Analysis of Summer Recreational Traffic

Craig Vaughn asked the committee what they would like to see for analysis. There are concerns with the activities that generate traffic through Wadena. If we identify those activities we can work with MnDOT to create a seasonal factor.

Jeanette Baymler suggested the time between fishing opener and the end of deer hunting season. Terry Lynk added the consideration of between 3pm and 10pm.

Craig Vaughn stated that the data will look like a bell curve, with a rise in the summer. If we go through the growth with the seasonal factor, we will need to define segments/areas to hone in the model for analysis. Craig suggested coordinating with Bridget Miller and MnDOT to obtain seasonal data or deciding on a seasonal factor to apply, then conduct an abbreviated analysis of the area to understand how TH 10 and TH 71 responds. The committee agreed on the dates to consider for the seasonal factor and the locations as discussed (May – September, and TH 10 from 2nd Avenue to CR 4 and TH 71 to 29).

7. Discuss Complete Streets Study

Following the complete streets study discussion early in the meeting, Brad Swenson asked if there has been discussion of expanding the complete streets project. Craig Vaughn answered that there is a tangent project being completed, which the Wadena County project will be folded into. This will enhance the work that is currently being done for Wadena County.

8. Next Steps

o **Decision on Date for Next Steering Committee Meeting**

Craig Vaughn noted that the next step is to begin work on the travel demand model. Cindy Gray added that Fargo staff will work with Minneapolis staff to set up the model using the growth areas discussed earlier. This work will start before the next meeting.

Brad Swenson noted that he is worried the Planning Commission will not be able to see the growth areas, and they should be involved. Cindy Gray responded that a packet can be put together for them to review. Over the next couple of week we can begin to tie households and jobs to the defined areas to present to the Planning Commission.

Brad Swenson stated the Planning Commission meets on a specific date, but they do not meet all the time. Cindy Gray noted that they meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month, which would be June 21st. Brad suggested Cindy work with Dean Uselman to set up a Planning Commission meeting to review the growth areas. **ACTION**

Craig Vaughn suggest the SRC get together again in early August. This would provide time for the Planning Commission to review the growth scenarios and allow work to be done on the travel demand model. Bridget Miller noted that this information will have to run through the central office for approval. **ACTION**

Craig Vaughn noted that the next SRC meeting will tentatively be planned for between July 30th and August 10th, and an e-mail will be sent out in late July with a date. **ACTION**

The committee agreed.

9. Adjourn