



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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DATE: May 10, 2019
TO: Mayor Melvin Carver
Members of the Saint Paul City Council
FROM: Elizabeth Reveal, Chair, Saint Paul Planning Commission *ER*
SUBJECT: Transmittal of the *Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan* for Adoption

BACKGROUND

The Department of Public Works initiated the *Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan* in January 2018. The plan sets forward the vision that "*Saint Paul is a walking city. We are more healthy, resilient and connected when walking is safe and appealing to all.*" A 26-member steering committee and input from 4,000 community members guided the priorities, goals, and actions presented in the plan. This transmittal summarizes the planning process and highlights key outcomes of the plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the planning process, city staff attended community events to share plan progress and hear from community members about walking in Saint Paul.

Staff reached over 4,000 community members using a variety of methods. These included attending community events like Safe Summer Nights; holding two open houses; hosting an on-line survey, posting kiosks at all Saint Paul libraries; attending listening sessions with targeted groups including new immigrants, teens, and public housing residents; and presenting to District Councils. City staff shared updates about the planning process on the city's social media accounts and on the city's webpage, www.stpaul.gov/walking.

A 26-member steering committee guided decision-making throughout the plan. Members included city staff from multiple departments, Ramsey County, MnDOT, Saint Paul legislative aides, citizen representatives from the Stop for Me campaign and the Transportation Committee, and others.

City staff regularly updated the Transportation Committee throughout the process. Following the Transportation Committee's recommendation, the Planning Commission released the draft *Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan* for public testimony on December 14, 2018 and held a public hearing on February 8, 2019. Two people spoke at the hearing. Before the public record closed on February 11, 2019, six organizations submitted letters to the City and approximately 65 individuals commented via the City's website.



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Based on feedback on the draft plan, staff identified recommended revisions to the draft and shared these with the Transportation Committee and Planning Commission. The Transportation Committee and the Planning Commission approved staff's recommended revisions to the draft plan without amendments and the Planning Commission voted on April 5th to forward the revised plan to the Mayor and City Council for adoption.

WHAT WE HEARD

Staff asked two key questions during the community engagement process:

1. What would make walking in Saint Paul safer and easier for you?
2. Where is it most important to improve walking?

Responses to these questions shaped the priorities of the plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

What Would Make Walking Safe and Easier for You?

Community members' top three priorities for making walking safer and easier in Saint Paul are:

- Improving ways to cross busy streets
- Adding sidewalks to streets without sidewalks
- Improving snow and ice removal on sidewalks

The *Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan* identifies action items specific to these three areas. Key action items are highlighted below.

Improving ways to cross busy streets

- Plan, design, build and maintain the city's transportation system in a way that prioritizes walking first, followed by bicycling and transit use and lastly other vehicles.
- Establish a consistent process for reviewing, improving and prioritizing pedestrian crossings.
- Provide regular crossing opportunities on collector and arterial streets, prioritizing High Priority Areas for Walking Investments.
- Pursue opportunities to install and maintain interim pedestrian crossing improvements using low-cost materials.
- Advocate for a statewide reduction in urban speed limits as part of the city's legislative agenda.

Adding sidewalks to streets without sidewalks

- Construct sidewalks on both sides of every street as part of street reconstruction projects, in accordance with Saint Paul City Council Resolution 17-65.
- Require sidewalk on all sides of parcels undergoing site redevelopment.
- Use High Priority Areas for Walking Investments to select areas for grant funding opportunities, such as Safe Routes to School, Metropolitan Council Regional Solicitation and Ramsey County partnerships.
- Study alternative funding structures to construct new sidewalk that equitably distribute property assessment burdens.

Improving snow and ice removal on sidewalks

- Develop a public awareness campaign to educate residents and businesses about the city snow removal ordinance and encourage people to report violations.
- Explore a proactive system to address non-compliance with sidewalk shoveling ordinance. Empower inspectors to uphold high standards for snow and ice clearance.
- Explore ways to accelerate corner clearing after snowfalls, especially in High Priority Areas for Walking Investments.

Where is it most important to improve walking?

We asked community members to tell us where walking improvements are most important. The top three responses were:

- Along and across busy streets (e.g. four-lane roads)
- Areas of the city that lack sidewalks
- Neighborhoods whose residents rely on walking the most

Staff translated these criteria into measures and mapped them using GIS software. Each Census tract in Saint Paul was scored according to measures of safety, equity, connectivity, health, density, destinations, and transit. Measures of safety, connectivity, and equity were most heavily weighted in the scoring, because they correlate most highly with priorities identified through community engagement. The resulting map identifies whether Census tracts that are high, medium, or low priority areas for walking investment.

The City of Saint Paul will prioritize future walking investments in High Priority Areas for Walking Investments. This will guide the location of capital investments like sidewalk infill, sidewalk repair and crossing improvements. This prioritization does not mean that the city will not work to address walking needs in low and medium priority areas. Pedestrian improvements will be considered in all areas of the city in conjunction with street projects and site redevelopment projects, or in response to measured use by pedestrians. Should additional funding become available through external grants or budget increases, the map provides a framework for identifying where walking investments are likely to have the greatest impact on advancing equity and safety goals.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

In addition to infrastructure guidance, the plan identifies priorities to support and sustain core programs in Saint Paul that provide education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation of our progress toward the plan's goals.

Stop for Me – this is a partnership with Saint Paul Police Department to enforce the state's crosswalk law requiring motorists to stop for crossing pedestrians.

Safe Routes to School – this is a partnership to educate students about safe walking and bicycling behaviors and encourage more students to walk or bike to school.

Paint the Pavement – this program encourages neighborhoods to discuss street safety and come together to paint a mural in their street.

Pedestrian Counting – this program collects data every year to measure the number of pedestrians who travel through specific intersections. This provides important baseline data to evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to increase walking.

Public Comments

Between October 2018 and February 2019, staff met with District Councils and interested stakeholders, held a public open house, and held a formal public hearing on the draft plan. Throughout this feedback period, we generally heard support and enthusiasm for the draft plan. We heard:

1. A pedestrian plan is an important first step in making walking safer and easier in Saint Paul
2. The plan reflects the right vision, goals, and key priorities for Saint Paul
3. Objective prioritization is important to ensuring that resources for pedestrian infrastructure and programming are distributed equitably

We also heard that there are a few things the plan should address further:

1. The role of trees and the urban forest in making a comfortable walking environment
2. The importance of “non-sidewalk” infrastructure in supporting walking, including stairs, cut-throughs, parking lot design, and driveway openings
3. The importance of personal security to people’s comfort while walking
4. The importance of lighting in making pedestrians visible, especially at crossings
5. The need to address pedestrian needs at specific locations outside of High Priority Areas for Walking Investments.
6. The importance of educating pedestrians about safe crossing behaviors

Staff added four new action items to the draft plan in response to public testimony. They are highlighted here:

- *Request that Ramsey County and MnDOT review local cost participation policies for consistency with their adopted multimodal policy goals.*
- *Work with State agency partners to identify needs and strategies for increased education about safe walking behaviors.*
- *Increase opportunities for community collaboration on street design and implementation in partnership with Saint Paul District Councils and other interested organizations.*
- *Pursue opportunities to enhance pedestrian connectivity in places where streets do not connect across natural features or major pedestrian barriers.*

Staff also revised three action items. Revised language is *italicized* below:

- Action 1-11: ~~Support access to transit stops by supporting safe crossings and waiting environments.~~ *Work with partners to support safe walking environments through initiatives such as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, lighting improvements, neighborhood walks, and litter pickup.*
- Action 1-4: Ensure visibility of pedestrian crossings. Review *street lighting*, sign placement, street furniture, bus shelters, foliage growth and parking restrictions at intersections as part of all reconstruction projects and requests for crossing improvements.
- Action 2-8: Develop a public awareness campaign to educate residents, businesses, *and other property owners* about the City snow removal ordinance and encourage people to report violations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Mayor and City Council adopt the Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan.