

# Norwalk Bike/Walk Commission

Agenda for the July 11th, 2022 meeting

- **6:00pm:** Welcome / introductions (5m)
- **6:05pm:** Public comment (10m)
- **6:15pm:** TMP updates (Greg Pacelli, 20m)
  - Highland Avenue SRTS Sidewalk project update
  - CT Connectivity Grant Update
  - Artistic Bike Racks
  - Roundabout at Gregory Blvd at Fifth St
  - Intersection Improvements Soundview at Cliff
  - Complete Streets Design Guidance
- **6:35pm:** Report on Scavenger Hunt & Poetry Event (5m)
- **6:40pm:** Bicycle Friendly Communities application (30m)
- **7:10pm:** Decide whether to meet in August (5m)
- **7:15pm:** Approve minutes from June meetings (5m)
  - [link](#) for June 6 minutes
  - see attached for June 27 minutes

Next scheduled meeting: August 1st, 6pm

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
JUNE 27, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Tanner Thompson, Chair; Christine Bisceglie; Colin Grotheer; Jud Aley; Emily Buraman

OTHERS: James Travers, Director, Garrett Bolella, Asst. Director, TMP; Kyle Benjamin, Traffic Analyst, Vanessa Valadares, Principal Engineer, DPW Shari Brennan; Michael Matthews, Peter Franz; Brian Boland; Philip Chiaia; Joanie Taylor

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at <http://www.norwalkct.org/meetings>.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

**2. REPORT ON WALKABLE CITY SEMINAR**

o Vanessa Valadares, Principal Engineer, DPW

o Tanner Thompson, Chair

Ms. Valadares thanked the commission for giving her the opportunity to attend the The Walkable City seminar.

Mr. Thompson and Ms. Valadares provided a summary of what they had learned and said the arguments to improve walkability are economic, environmental, epidemiological, equity and community. She said what a walkable city brings as far as economic impacts are increase property values especially by having sidewalks, attracts talent, creates jobs and car dependence is expensive. Mr. Thompson said the environmental argument for walkability is if you can give people a place to live where they don't have to go in a car to go everywhere then the carbon footprint will be much lower. He said there is a huge public health impact for places that are built around cars opposed to places that are built that enable people to walk.

Mr. Thompson said the second part of the course focused on how to build a city that is more walkable, and the answer was in order to walk, people need their walk to be useful, safe, comfortable and interesting. He said the steps to enable useful walks are mix the uses, put cars in their place, get the parking right and let transit work.

Ms. Valadares explained that the safe walk protects the pedestrian by focusing on speeding, the use of parallel parking and curb extensions or bump outs. She also said that bikes are welcome, but that investment is necessary, bike lanes need to be protected or be a two-way bike lane and sharrows should be avoided.

Mr. Thompson said the comfortable and interesting walk consist of shaping the spaces, planting trees which has numerous benefits including offering protection, and making unique and friendly faces

Ms. Valadares said the downtown area should be the first focus for walkability and then continue onto the other zones in the city.

Mr. Grotheer asked about the safety and useful portion of the walk because the public's definition of things and the engineering's definition of things are different and asked following the seminar how that is interpreted. Ms. Valadares said the mentality has changed and engineers listen to what is needed and DPW staff are working with TMP staff and meet on a weekly basis to discuss how to make Norwalk more walkable, and although the public does not see that being done quickly it has to be designed and funded before the project can begin so there is an elapse of time before results are seen, but the current administration is investing a lot of money on these improvements.

Mr. Boella said the city has committed the funding to do a comprehensive complete streets plan and there is also ARPA money that has been dedicated to frame an ordinance for the city and create policies to utilize and create a design guide for the city to adopt as part of a formal process. He went on to say the reason that vision zero is so successful is because it brings all of the stakeholders together so as part of this process it will bring all the city's departments together, and there will be an extensive outreach and planning effort with the city's citizens and is something that TMP is in the process of undertaking and have put out a RFP and have found two qualified responses and are in the process of interviewing them within the coming weeks, and will then put a recommendation before the Common Council for a consultant to move forward and pursue the process.

Mr. Travers said they have been working on filling in the tree belt on Wilton Avenue with trees and has dramatically changed the area and want to see the continuation of street trees and the ability to have an amenity zone that is separate from the edge of the roadway. He said that TMP had also hosted an outreach event at the Wall Street Theatre which was a unique opportunity to work together forming what it will look like by using some of the existing right of way and put it into the sidewalk network that will a create an environment that we want to see. He said they are just completing a sidewalk inventory that will let them know where the existing sidewalks are as well as looking at the accident data. He also said the funding is a challenge with a limited budget and need groups such as the bike/walk commission help to advocate for the funding.

Mr. Benjamin said one of his main projects is for safety is to equalize all the roads to create a dataset to allow them to prioritize projects.

Mr. Thompson thanked the staff at TMP for the sidewalk projects and is something that he has been raising as an issue before the current TMP staff was hired and he is looking forward to the data from the sidewalk audit.

### **3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWER/ DISCUSSION**

Mr. Chiaia said there are some good ideas as far as the connectivity and said he rides through South Norwalk from East Norwalk often and finds the sharrows to be incredibly dangerous especially in front of Veterans Park. He also said that connecting the attractions of the city and the beach is a massive attraction to a lot of people. Mr. Travers said they are in final design with the CTDOT for a bike lane for the section he was discussing off RT. 136 and there is also a planned money for Seaview Avenue.

Mr. Thompson said they had also learned that protecting the sidewalk with parallel parking is an effective strategy for bike lanes as well and recommended, when possible, to have the bike lane installed between the parked cars and the sidewalk because it will increase safety and there is an opportunity by removing the striping on Strawberry Hill Avenue and flipping the parking and the bike lane.

Mr. Frantz said that there is not only investment and expenses related to these projects but there are also savings because with less cars on the road there is less wear on the road as well as a huge health benefit. He said there will always be people that have to be sold on the idea and one way to do that is part of these initiatives will reduce speeding on the roads.

Ms. Valadares said that a lot of the work is being done behind the scenes to get to where we all want to be and are working with both the local and state agencies for funding/grants.

Ms. Bisceglie said there is a sharrow on Strawberry Hill Avenue but when turning onto Westport Avenue there are no sharrows or bike lanes and she is an experienced biker and will do it, but most would not.

Ms. Brennan asked if there are any plans around Cemetery Street and if the area is being looked at to be more walkable/bikeable. Ms. Valadares said they are working on the connectivity on Gregory Blvd. And Van Zant Street as well as make some changes while doing the project on East Avenue to complete the connectivity and will also be including some ideas to the developer to include in the design but there is not a final design approved at this time.

Mr. Bolella said the public design kickoff meeting was held at the Wall Street Theater for the Wall Street corridor improvements and at that meeting had a survey which has been put on the TMP website and he would love to get the feedback from the group and will be on the website until July 31, 2022.

Ms. Taylor said the house bill that passed that gives towns the opportunity to lower speeds on state roads if a pedestrian safety zone is created on state roads and asked if that is being looked at in Norwalk and where she could get some information on what that would look like. Mr. Travers said there are a few challenges with it, and he spoke against the bill because he does not believe in putting up a sign of a lower speed limit as an impact on speed and that it has to do with how it is designed so he challenged the legislation is to come up with dollars that allows us to fix the roads to get slower speeds. He said that TMP staff continues to work collaboratively, and Mr. Benjamin is looking at the data so that it can be used in support of grants as well as city investments.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. GROTHEER MOVED TO ADJOURN.  
\*\* MR. ALEY SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:25P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd