

Monroe Street Engagement Resource Team Meeting Notes

Date: November 11, 2016	Time: 5:00-6:30pm
Location: Barriques, Monroe Street	Recorder: Katie Fadelli
Attendees: Christy Bachmann, Robbie Webber, Hiam Garner, Peter Armstrong, Zia Brucaya, Sara Eskrich, John Imes, Susan VanderSanden, Mary Campbell	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Follow-up
<p>Cross Section Open House Debrief</p>	<p>Zia asked the group to share what they have been hearing from the community since the Cross Section Open House. Robbie noted that many she has talked to are frustrated by the fact that no changes are reflected in the cross section despite the whole public input process. Many say they would not have come to the meetings if they knew that no changes would be made. Hiam noted that some had shared that they could not attend the public meetings at the times they were hosted.</p> <p>Sara has heard some of the same and knows that this concern needs to be addressed. She emphasized that although the cross section will be the same in structure as the current roadway, the changes that <i>will</i> come with this cross section wouldn't have been incorporated without the engagement process. We learned that the top priorities for the project, when weighed against all others, were reducing speed and improving pedestrian crossings. She understands that bike advocates are upset that bike lanes are not included in the proposed cross section, but that did not emerge as a top priority for the community overall. She has also heard from community members who are very happy with what engineering has proposed.</p> <p>Robbie emphasized that her biggest concern is regarding the rush hour travel lanes. She feels that most interest groups (including businesses who want more parking) see that trying to cross the street with two travel lanes in each direction is risky for pedestrians. Peter agreed. He understands that Monroe Street has a unique geography in regards to vehicle flow through the area, but that the rush hour lanes are what make walking scary for people. Pedestrians want to walk and shop during commuting times and the priority for pedestrian safety on this street should supersede the rush hour lanes.</p> <p>Peter addressed the issue of the raised intersections, having heard that emergency services don't like that they would be included on this travel corridor. He hopes that these were not included in the plan for the cross section only to be removed later on. Sara assured the group that she has heard directly that these would be designed to be acceptable for emergency services and will ensure they are included. Peter also raised concerns about the proposed locations of these raised intersections, feeling especially that the Edgewood campus intersection should warrant an additional intersection to improve speeding that occurs between Harrison and Commonwealth. Despite the pedestrian activity that happens around that intersection, he feels that when the traffic signal is green, it is all about the automobile. Sara said she would bring the concern about this specific location to city staff.</p>	

Robbie raised the idea of completing an origin and destination study. This would help to inform the city and the public about just how inconvenient it would be to have a reduced number of lanes on Monroe, and whether people using Monroe during rush hour could be taking alternate routes or other modes. She thought that it was likely that, other than Wingra and Edgewood, many drivers are not going to destinations on Monroe itself. Susan noted that Edgewood already heavily promotes alternative methods of travel, including providing free bus passes and shuttles from AMC Fitchburg and another location, but that their campus is largely commuter based.

Zia emphasized that the input collected from all sources was factored into the community goals that ultimately shaped the cross section. In addition to those who showed up at the public meetings, the City had to weigh the needs of major institutions, businesses, and those who participated in the survey. The needs of commuters were important to consider as well as the needs of transit riders. She hoped the group and larger public can recognize that this has been a balancing process and that the City is addressing the need for more visible crossings and reduced speeds which were by far the top priorities as a whole.

Hiam noted that many city engineers came to public meeting but felt that other disciplines/agencies were not represented. Sara assured the group that the Economic Development and Planning departments have been involved in internal meetings throughout the process. The health department has not been interested in participating.

Sara added that the argument that the public engagement process has not been complete enough is unfair. She hopes that the ERT can speak to the fact that the process they helped to inform has been robust. It does not make sense, therefore, to try to take the project out of the City budget to do more process. Robbie noted that some are hoping to delay it to get more time to change the minds of traffic engineering. She thought that if someone had said from the beginning that removing the rush hour lanes was not possible, that people would not feel they had been simply indulged by the process. Christy noted that before modeling, the City was open to the TWLTL and hopes the community does not feel that this was all decided from the beginning. Zia emphasized that just because one's vision for the street was not what was chosen, does not mean they were not listened to. All ideas gathered from the community have been seriously considered and she hopes that the ERT will help those who did participate to understand that the process has been done in good faith.

Peter noted that the engagement process has been very strong but only if staff looks at Monroe as a contiguous corridor through which to promote pedestrian safety, block by block, and if traffic speeds are truly slowed as a result of the reconstruction.

Robbie argued that an origin and destination study would help to make people feel more listened to and show that the City is considering every option to get people through the corridor (Sara wondered if DMNA would consider funding what Robbie estimated to be a \$5,000 study). Robbie mentioned that at the open house she asked about changes in driving behavior and felt staff had not considered it. We don't know how long the delay might be, but we know that people change their behavior for many reasons, including delays. Knowing that drivers will be forced to find new ways to bypass Monroe during the reconstruction, a post-reconstruction pilot to test designated parking lanes on the street would be a good opportunity.

	<p>Peter suggested that the City of Madison should think about infrastructure and its goals for future use as the UW has. Out of 40,000 students, only 300 students are allowed to have cars on campus which means many people have to figure out how to get to campus other than by car. Monroe Street has been a corridor for a long time, but if society is changing to prioritize pedestrians, then infrastructure should reflect that. Also considering projected population growth in the area, the city needs to shape the infrastructure it wants for the future. We could not physically accommodate people all coming in by individual vehicles.</p> <p>Zia agreed but emphasized the role that transit plays in this issue. We can't have a cross section that results in a lower functioning transit system if we are asking people to take transit more frequently. Robbie called for more data on what the delays would be for the bus routes on this road during peak travel periods, and traffic impacts of stopping buses, including how many times a lane would be blocked entirely by a bus stopping.</p>	
<p>Next Steps in Review Process</p>	<p>The group then discussed the project schedule going forward and what elements are still yet to be decided. Sara reminded the group that we are only halfway through the process. The decision for the cross section had to be made so we can move onto others regarding stormwater, placemaking, and green infrastructure. Projects can get mired in early decisions like the cross section, leaving little time to think through other details. There are many more ways to additionally slow traffic speeds within the context of the decided cross section.</p> <p>John was excited by the opportunities that still remain to give this project a unique green signature. He asked that the group keep emphasizing that there is still a chance to do something really special and plenty of time to get it done right. We need to keep building on the momentum created with this process so far. Zia mentioned that she will work with Phil to organize a Green Infrastructure focus group in early 2017 to prepare for the later workshops; they drill down to technical details with a core group of interested and experienced community members. She will also see if the UW Landscape Architecture or Urban Planning programs are interested in developing a spring semester project to help with placemaking and green infrastructure ideas for the Monroe Street Reconstruction. Unfortunately the Edgewood Sustainability program doesn't have a suitable spring class. .</p> <p>Zia reminded the group that the workshops in the spring will drill down the design details. The cross section is just the starting point to make further changes. Sara noted that people aren't clear on what exactly will be decided with the resolution on January 3rd. Robbie asked that staff mention the possibility of testing designated parking lanes on the street just after reconstruction as this would help people feel that it's not over and decided when the cross section is adopted. Sara was in favor of this idea because the test would not require any change in the cross section. She acknowledged that the modeling data was not able to show what this would really be like for the street and thought it would make more sense to physically try it out after reconstruction, when drivers have already adjusted their behavior.</p> <p>Christy was wary of the approach of some community members to try and delay the project as it might result in being taken out of the budget completely. In this scenario, Monroe Street could end up getting just a quick top-coat and being otherwise left alone for many more years.</p>	

	<p>Peter suggested creating another one-pager that includes a summary of the proposed cross section, the process to date, what is going to happen next, and a list of steps for the process going forward. For example, incorporating an additional raised intersection would not be precluded by this adopted cross section. This needs to be communicated to the public sooner rather than later.</p> <p>Next steps in the cross section resolution process include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11/22: Introduce to Common Council by title only for referral - 11/29: Ped/Bike/Motor Vehicle Commission - 12/14: Board of Public Works (lead agency) - 1/3: Common Council for final approval 	
<p>Public Engagement Next Steps – 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - February: green infrastructure focus group at the city - April and May: two placemaking and green infrastructure workshops (east end and west end) - July: full design open house 	
<p>Other & Wrap Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The next ERT meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 13, 5:00-6:30PM at Barriques. 	