



Meeting Notes

Date: July 27, 2023

Notes Taken By: VHB

Place: CCRPC Office

Re: Battery Street Planning Study
Advisory Committee Meeting #2

Project No.: 58644.11

ATTENDEES:

VHB Staff: Drew Gingras, Karen Sentoff, Elisabeth Sundberg

CCRPC Staff: Jason Charest, Eleni Churchill

City of Burlington DPW Staff: Ravi Venkataraman

Advisory Committee Members: Phet Keomanyvanh (City of Burlington REIB), Peggy O'Neill (DPW Commission), Sophie Sauve (BPRW), Jonathon Weber (Local Motion)

Meeting Notes:

Jason Charest introduced the project and group.

Meeting Purpose: Summary of public input to date, discussion of key takeaways and Draft Purpose & Need Statement, mini design charrette to start answering the question – What do we want to conceptualize for the corridor?

Introductions

All present attendees introduced themselves and their affiliation.

Public Comment Period

No members of the general public were present.

Public Involvement Plan (PIP) Update

Karen Sentoff provided an update on the PIP –

We're continually building out an evolving document. Plan on paper on how to engage the public. Intended to be a document that is landing place for the collective thoughts from the team on how the public outreach is going as it progresses. Have updated the document with some of things that have happened since the last time we met. Coordination with REIB occurred, evolved into reaching out to other community entities (Trusted Community Voices). Incorporated REIB's comments to improve how we are engaging with the numerous communities that live near and engage with Battery Street.

Reflections on public meeting #1 –

Are we reaching the intended audience? Used reflection to guide some of other targeted engagement styles. Pop up events.

Targeted engagement conversations with different community groups, survey during local concerns. Translation services. Reflections and review of how we are doing to inform the next phase of the project.

Sophie asked to see the document. VHB will make it sharable for the group.

Project StoryMap

Drew shared the story map. This is a tool to create a more accessible project information 'site'. It includes existing conditions, community engagement summary with key takeaways, and a draft purpose and needs statement. It is not currently publicly available but will be in the future. A working version was put together for this meeting.

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Public Input Summary Map

The public input map was discussed. Online survey, online public map, focus group community engagement were discussed. The tool summarizes all the comments. Some comments were duplicates so they were combined into one comment (noted as multiple entries).

Key themes from public input to date:

- Improved corridor and intersection safety top to bottom
- Enhanced pedestrian accommodations
- Dedicated bicycle facilities
- And more... Better Community Connectivity

Jason added that the severe rutting northbound on Battery Street was recently fixed via repaving.

It was added that the sidewalks are very steep along Battery Street.

Enhanced pedestrian accommodations:

- Consider how to improve crossings and safety.
- People want better crossings.
- People do not feel safe in the crosswalks.

Pearl Street bump out to shorten crossing was installed four years ago.

Desire for better connections across Battery Street between Downtown and the Waterfront.

Better wayfinding, intersection geometry improvements.

Need to better prioritize pedestrians at signalized intersections:

- Unreasonable wait times
- Pedestrians are coming second to motorists

Dedicated bike facilities

- Temporary two-way bike lanes on Battery Street (for Bike Path detour) were popular among walkers and bikers
- Spoke to public input around that people want facilities like this along the corridor
- Connections to bike path, new north end, south end, etc.
- Safe bicycle accommodations at intersections
 - o Bike boxes
 - o Protected intersections
- Main St and Maple St intersections
 - o Major projects happening at those intersections
 - o Railyard enterprises
 - o Main street great streets

Other takeaways from public engagement:

- Better community connectivity
 - o Need to consider the neighborhoods that Battery Street connects
 - o Not just an arterial for commuters, but it's a neighborhood connector
- Improved transit accommodations
 - o Bus stop shelters
 - o Need to continually engage with GMT and other transit agencies
- Improve streetscape elements of Battery Street
 - o Character
 - o Sustainable stormwater practices
 - o Recommendations for sustainable and resilient practices

Jonathon – Consider other intersection types, not just improving signals/operations

Peggy shared that some of that outreach include more information to educate the general public about what possibilities could be. Recognizing that the public may not know what something like a bike box is.

Phet added that we need to be sure we're always considering accessibility features for all users – Mobility aid device access, accessible signing and infrastructure for hearing and visually impaired communities. Consider longer street crossing times.

Drew responded with APS signals, growing innovation for improving signalized. Mobility aid devices, those details in engineering. Ample standards. Includes making sure there are pedestrians considered in all aspects of design. Auditory, count down phases, detectable warning surfaces. Those elements engineering design mandated and required along the road.

Jason shared that the people from trusted community voices meeting, reminded how confusing the corridor can be for someone not local. Sherman Street intersection is confusing for most people. Island for pedestrians is difficult to navigate.

Phet shared that during Main Street planning focus group newer communities don't go downtown or waterfront.

Routing to local neighbor use and accessibility, discussion for battery street.

Sophie asked if there was a request for dedicated bicycle signalization. Advancing bikes before cars.

Drew shared no mentions of bicycle signalization, but it will be considered in alternatives development.

Peggy asked if there was any work at all with Burlington school district or semester program – Thinking about how they travel before they have driver's license. These (youth) perspectives are incredibly important. Net Zero Walk Bike Master Plan.

Jason shared that the project team directly tried to meet with BHS, but the principal was in transition. Engaged with some students during Battery St & Cherry St tabling event. Will continue to engage with BHS when school year resumes.

Drew added that during the alternatives process it would be great to show high school students something to react to.

Draft Purpose and Need Statement

Drew went over the draft purpose and needs statement and how it drives the development of alternatives and overall vision for the project. He added that we want to make sure we are creating alternatives that keep the purpose and needs in mind.

Draft Project Purpose: The purpose of the Battery Street Corridor Scoping Study is to identify and prioritize short- and long-term improvements that provide equitable, safe, and accessible transportation for all, regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel, while enhancing resilience and connection along Battery Street and between downtown Burlington and the Waterfront.

Draft Project Need

- Improve corridor & intersection safety for all users.
- Enhance comfort and accessibility for walkers along Battery Street.
- Provide end-to-end separated bicycle facilities and connections.
- Identify streetscape improvements that:
 - Establish Battery Street as an attractive gateway between the waterfront and downtown.
 - Focus on sustainability and resiliency to keep Battery Street functional for years to come.

Drew added that the team can circulate this for review after the meeting to think about it and respond.

Phet shared that the battery street corridor is a major throughfare for living/working on North Ave. Too much emphasis “downtown”. Important to think about Battery Street as everyday connectivity.

Eleni added that across vs along in purpose needs should be looked at more closely since it is a major connector to the people that live on North Ave.

Drew added that it works for driving commuters currently but doesn’t serve walkers and bikers.

Jason added that this isn’t the full expanded version of the purpose and needs. Each bullets have more comments to bolster the need.

Sophie added that “separated bike lanes” sounds like a next step, rather than a need. Doesn’t fit with the other “needs”. Also noted that the word separated is too prescriptive.

Mini Design Charrette

Drew went over the intent of the design charette.

Karen shared that the graphics include the right-of-way (ROW) lines which are almost up to the building faces, in most cases. The other line work is existing sidewalk and is generally to scale.

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Jonathon shared that space wise; bike facilities will likely be the widest feature. Also noted the new infrastructure coming as part of the Main Street and Railyard Enterprise (REP) projects. Noted that REP will include a shared-use path on the east side of the roadway and mentioned – We'll need to consider these facilities and how best to either continue them or transition them.

Eleni shared that Main Street will be constructed before REP.

Phet suggested diagonal crossings for pedestrians at intersections. Phet asked if cuts down time for pedestrians? And shared the idea of a median in middle of Battery Street.

Drew responded that a median island is an interesting thought with lane reduction. He explained that exclusive pedestrian crossing, all vehicular movements stop allows pedestrians to cross. College Street comes to mind as potential candidate for that.

Jason shared that currently the crossing Battery Street at College Street there is a 7 second to cross for just pedestrians then cars get green light.

Sophie added that the median in the in the middle would be positive from the climate perspective. Width of the road give break pedestrians if they needed it. Slows turning movements down.

Drew added that it could accommodate turn lane at intersections.

Peggy added that she loves the island median concept. Thinking about Latin America where there are a lot of wide avenues that have big shade trees. Need to be wide enough to be welcoming. Would hope it's not too wide to avoid pedestrians crossing getting stuck in the middle.

Sophie added that a scramble is often confusing for motorists.

Pearl Street and South Winooski Ave intersection is an example of this (exclusive pedestrian phase).

Jason agreed that exclusive pedestrian phasing (including possibly bike phasing) is something we'll consider in the alternatives.

Phet asked if we are going to prioritize pedestrian and bikers. Have hard time changing our model to not focus on cars. Other places have surpassed that and share the road more.

Karen prompted consideration of more/expanded alternatives – If we have a 12 ft median, then what?

Eleni noted that we could do pocket turn lanes.

Drew posed the question – Would the median option preclude acceptable bike facilities? If that's a compromise, will it be worth it?

Eleni asked about the parking need.

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Sophie shared that businesses believe there needs to be parking. Accessible parking problem. Sophie shared background information regarding parking from the temporary bike lanes installation in the southern portion of Battery Street.

Jonathon shared that he believes having continuous bike infrastructure is key. Believe reallocation of space – even if parking – should be considered necessary.

Karen asked the group what sort of bike facility should be considered? Jonathon noted separated bike lanes on each side of the road would likely be preferred.

Drew noted that there are best design practices to transition from two-way travel on one side of the way to one way travel on both sides. Of the road.

Phet asked about one lane of parking (instead of both sides). Encourage transit stops and bike lanes on the other side. Different option of transportation modes is a positive.

Jonathon mentioned that accessible parking is important in those spots on the south end of Battery.

Peggy added accessible parking/parking on that street thinking more about prioritizing spots. Loading and unloading zones. Wayfinding for surface parking lots. A lot more movement with uber.

Drew added that it is viable use to implement flexible curbside spaces.

Peggy added what the real needs vs perceived needs are would need to be addressed.

Phet added those parking spaces are essential for business owners, loading and unloading for people and supplies. City should promote parking garages.

Drew pivoted the conversation to the northern end of the corridor (Cherry Street to Sherman Street). How to improve walking comfort and safety. Walking along corridor from key neighborhoods. Infrastructure sufficient?

Drew shared that sidewalk is higher than the road in some areas on the north end of the corridor.

Karen shared that it's the narrowest section of the corridor. Sidewalk is in the park ROW.

Phet added that oftentimes, residents "take ownership" of the greenbelt in front of their homes, and that the City may get push back if they seek to change it. She added she would like to see seating areas, rain gardens, from pearl south. More trees.

Jonathon added that volume of walking necessitates a wider sidewalk. Calming traffic, noise, shade. Get rid of Sherman Street intersection island.

Eleni added that we are not looking at the intersection too closely.

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Peggy and Jonathon made a comment about the “need” for three lanes in this section.

Jason added that if the island was moved into corner, would help the comfort and safety for walkers. Look into the history of the island and why it is there.

The design charrette concluded, and the project team briefly summarized Next Steps:

- Finalize Purpose and Need Statement.
- Develop and evaluate conceptual alternatives.
- Public meeting #2 and continued engagement involving conceptual alternatives.