MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Tom Crawford, Interim City Administrator

DATE: May 18, 2020

SUBJECT: "Healthy Streets" - Transportation opportunities for social distancing amid COVID-19

This memorandum is provided to outline transportation measures that are being done in the public rights-of-way to allow for social distancing amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This memo builds off of an internal memo dated 4/14/20 and includes new considerations related to City Council resolution R-20-158. Note: photos provided below* are for illustrative purposes and may not necessarily represent what a deployment in Ann Arbor would look like.

Public Engagement

The City developed an input tool which allows the public to suggest locations where transportation system modifications could be made to support public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The tool can be found online at: www.a2gov.org/healthystreets.

The map-based tool will serve three functions: 1) It will allow residents to identify which local neighborhood streets could be closed to thru traffic; 2) It will allow respondents to identify other arterials/major streets that could be modified (e.g. lane closures); and 3) It will allow respondents to suggest other transportation measures for health and safety amid COVID-19 (e.g. pedestrian recalls). These concepts and their considerations are discussed in more detail below. Staff will carefully review citizen input and factor it alongside other considerations into an action plan for implementation or recommendations for City Council's consideration.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals

Description

A leading pedestrian interval (LPI) gives pedestrians the opportunity to enter an intersection 3 seconds before vehicles are given a green light. LPIs are one of FHWA's proven safety countermeasures because they offer: increased visibility of crossing pedestrians; reduced conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles; increased likelihood of motorists yielding to pedestrians; and enhanced safety for pedestrians who may be slower to start into the intersection. More information on LPIs can be found here: https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/lead_ped_int/

What is being done amid COVID-19?
LPIs were used at many locations throughout the City prior to COVID-19 and had been under consideration elsewhere. Given the increased levels of people walking and riding bicycles as well as concerns about increased speeds from driving vehicles, LPIs have been installed, throughout the entirety of the City at City-controlled signalized intersections. Because LPIs help achieve "Vision Zero" goals related to pedestrian safety, staff does not anticipate a need to undo these changes after things return to normal post COVID-19.

Estimated Cost
LPIs were installed with existing City resources and no additional costs are expected.

Pedestrian Recalls in lieu of Pedestrian Pushbuttons

Description
A pedestrian "recall" is a setting in a traffic signal controller that requires a pedestrian "walk" phase to be serviced every cycle of the traffic signal's defined sequence of operations. Some signalized intersections, such as those in the DDA, always operate with permanent pedestrian recalls. Other intersections, such as those on Plymouth Road, only service pedestrians when the pedestrian pushbutton is pushed.

What is being done amid COVID-19?
To minimize exposure of touching common surfaces (such as the pushbutton) and allow social distancing, pedestrian recalls have been installed at:

- Signalized intersections surrounding the University of Michigan's medical campus
- Signalized intersections where requests have been made by community members through direct contact to staff or will be made through the public engagement tool identified above.
- Signage is posted on signals that have pedestrian recalls in effect. The signage informs pedestrians they do not need to push the button for the walk signal.

Estimated Cost
The cost to install pedestrian recalls to date have been done with existing resources. The cost to program and sign the intersection is estimated to cost between $100-$200 per intersection.

Neighborhood Slow Streets

Description
Install 'local traffic only/no thru traffic' signs on local neighborhood streets. This would allow pedestrians and bicyclists to safely use the street where no sidewalks exist or where a neighborhood desires to limit traffic for purposes of safer social distancing.

What is being done amid COVID-19?
Recommendations identified via the engagement tool described above will be considered for this treatment. When 1/3 of residents on the street have requested the street for a 'local traffic only/no thru traffic' treatment, staff will deploy the appropriate barricades and signage. Equity, emergency response, service delivery, and other factors may also affect the implementation of 'neighborhood slow streets.'

The engagement tool described above will be used to gauge support in lieu of traditional paper petition/signature processes to minimize exposure among citizens. Social media (e.g. NextDoor), distribution lists, and a website will provide information to citizens so they understand how to have their street considered and garner support.

Estimated Costs
Two barricades and signs to announce a "local traffic only/no thru traffic" street will likely cost $200 - $300.

Repurposing On-Street Parking

Description
The changes in travel patterns and modes have altered the demand for on-street parking, especially downtown. Because many businesses and the University are closed, much of the demand for parking has shifted from all day parking to shorter term pick-up/drop-off parking. Social distancing measures in the downtown area are key as this is the location with the highest concentration of pedestrian oriented land-use with large numbers of pedestrians and businesses attempting to serve customers.

As shelter-in-place orders are lifted and businesses reopen, needs may shift. Retailers and restaurants may look for opportunities to use the public rights-of-way for dining and retail

activities while still allowing for social distancing. Use of on-street parking spaces as pick-up/drop-off for meals and "items to go," as well as expanded outdoor dining areas are seen as a possible solution for our downtown businesses.

Outside of downtown, there are some non-residential streets that have on-street parking which can be also be considered for repurposing. In areas of high pedestrian activity and narrow sidewalks, on-street parking can be blocked-off to allow for 'pedestrian passing zones.'

What is being done amid COVID-19?

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has expressed they are a committed partner to solve social distancing needs and provide safe access. City staff is supporting the DDA in the determination of the best use of on-street parking to serve business needs in downtown. The DDA is in regular communication with the downtown business community and is making changes to on-street parking based on the feedback and direct requests received from businesses as well as the downtown merchant associations.

To date, the DDA initiated the following measures:

- Implemented a free temporary 15-minute pick-up/drop-off Zone program for restaurants and businesses to support take out services (143 locations). Meters were bagged and signs installed beginning in mid-March. It is anticipated that these locations will remain in place for the near future and the DDA will respond as business needs and requests evolve.
- Temporarily waived penalties for late payment of monthly parking permits.
- DDA grant to pay the city fee for annual sidewalk permits for downtown businesses

Additionally, the DDA is coordinating with City Planning and City Engineering as well as downtown businesses and merchant associations to use on-street parking for outdoor dining and/or outdoor

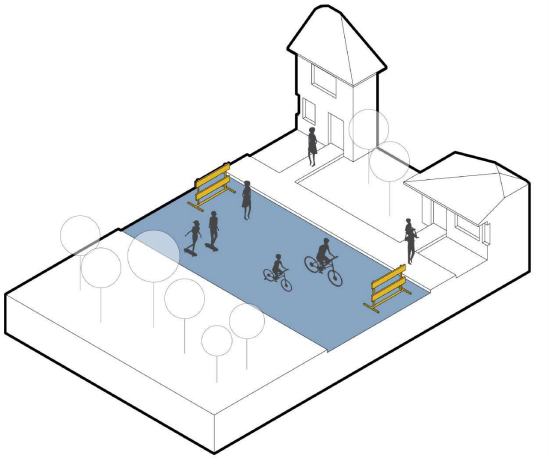
retail. This may include shifting outdoor dining to parking spaces to maximize sidewalk width or allow for increased spacing for patrons during times of needed social distancing.

Outside of downtown, City staff will analyze the input from the public engagement tool described above to see if there is demand for social distancing on non-residential streets outside of downtown that have on-street parking. Staff will advance partial or full closure of on-street parking if on-street parking exists and can be used as 'pedestrian passing zones'

Estimated costs
Costs vary depending on the extent of the treatment used to block off parking spaces. Minimal costs have been incurred to 'bag' parking meters to allow for pick-up/drop-off. Estimated costs to expand pedestrian zones by blocking-off parking requires traffic control devices (cones/barricades) at $50 per space or suitable alternative to control traffic (note: the lost revenue of the parking spaces is not included in this calculation and may be a notable amount). For downtown, the DDA and merchants may want to install features such as planters and other devices that are equally effective in managing traffic but may be more appropriate in a business environment.

Downtown Lane Closures/Road Closures

Description
Many communities across the country are closing lanes of travel or entire roadways to allow people to walk or bike in the street and observe social distancing that may not be possible on the sidewalks or bikeways alone. Access to and around the downtown will likely become more critical as shelter in place orders are lifted, but social distancing requirements remain in effect to protect public safety and/or to provide public comfort and confidence. Temporary changes to sidewalk and bike lane widths may be needed. The opportunity presents itself due to the decrease in traffic and vehicle miles traveled which is estimated to be down 50% or more in Washtenaw County.



What is being done amid COVID-19?
In the downtown area, the DDA will take the lead to work with businesses and the downtown merchant associations to help them understand barricade requirements, provide grants to assist with barricade costs, and empower them to identify times and locations for lane or street closures. Special care will be needed to ensure businesses are not adversely affected and that business access, service delivery, and emergency response are maintained during lane/road closures. Additionally, consultants who worked on the People Friendly Streets Initiative are assisting the DDA on strategies which balance transportation needs for all users, business needs, and social distancing needs to prepare a request for City Council. City staff will share any suggestions generated by the online engagement tool with the DDA for consideration and inclusion as well. Lane/road closures in the downtown will be brought back before City Council for their consideration as either a special event permit request or staff drafted resolution.

Estimated Costs
Costs vary greatly depending on the length of the closure and the type of closure devices needed. Downtown street closures might require Type 3 barricades and Portable Vehicle Barriers (PVB). The cost to deploy the PVBs is expected to cost between $900 and $1200 per event and an additional $200-$300 per block for barricades.

Non-Downtown Lane Closures/Road Closures (Multi-lane Arterial Lane Changes)

Description
Similar to the reasons cited above for downtown lane/road closures, temporary non-motorized shared lanes can be created to permit social distancing by closing streets or the outside arterial lanes to vehicular traffic. Ultimately, a network approach of lane closures can be used to create "quick build" non-motorized facilities to accommodate social distancing once the shelter in place order is lifted. These facilities could be created using temporary construction resources such as traffic barrels or 42" channelization devices combined with barricades and signs.

What is being done amid COVID-19?
Outside of the downtown, the public engagement tool input will be reviewed to determine where public support exists for lane/road closures on non-residential streets. Public input as well as

safety, connectivity, equity, feasibility, cost and street jurisdiction/ownership will all be factored into any recommendation for lane/road closures presented to City Council.

Estimated Costs
The estimated cost is approximately $5000 per mile plus design and staff administrative costs. This is for a two-way street and assumes installation of two-lane miles of repurposed space– one in each direction.

Bridges
Description
There are a several bridges in the city without any non-motorized elements or non-motorized elements that are too narrow for safe social distancing. This is problematic since there are no options for pedestrians to traverse safely. Techniques including reducing lanes widths to provide non-motorized accessibility in the vehicular travel lane can be considered to respond to community needs.

What is being done amid COVID-19?
Staff is developing areas where these options are applicable. Similar to lane/road closures described above, the public engagement tool will be reviewed for where there is public support for lane reductions on City-owned bridges. Public input as well as safety, connectivity, equity, feasibility, cost and street jurisdiction/ownership will all be factored into any recommendation for lane/road closures presented to City Council.

Estimated Costs
Though dependent on the treatment, the estimated cost would be similar to the cost described above for lane/road closures - approximately $5,000 per mile plus design and staff administrative costs.

Partial Lane Closures/Road Closures

Description
Installing traffic diverters or other make-shift 'cul-de-sac' measures to prohibit vehicle thru-movement while still allowing pedestrian and cyclist thru-movement is another possibility. Vehicles can still access the entirety of the street but may be forced to turn around or turn at a cross street instead of proceeding straight. This measure, accomplished through barricades and appropriate signage, provides safe and comfortable connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle facilities while limiting vehicular traffic and is a technique commonly used to establish "bicycle boulevards." Short length lower volume streets may be suitable for temporary dead ending or creating cul-de-sacs; longer length streets may be suitable for temporary diverters which force vehicles to turn.

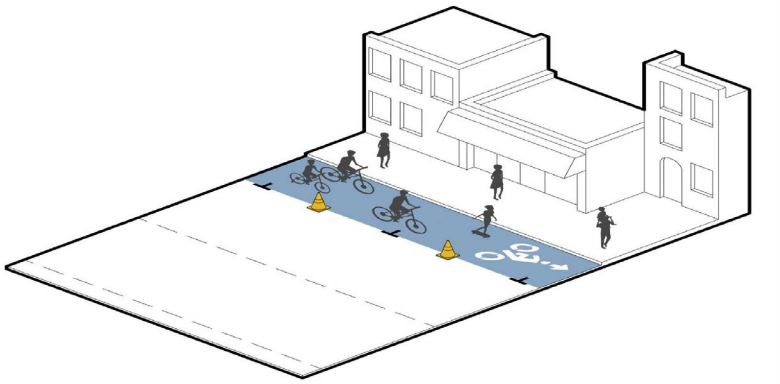
What is being done amid COVID-19?
Staff is developing areas where these options are applicable. Similar to lane/road closures described above, the public engagement tool will be reviewed for where there is public support for lane/road closures on non-residential streets. Public input as well as safety, connectivity,

equity, feasibility, cost and street jurisdiction/ownership will all be factored into any recommendation for lane/road closures presented to City Council.

Estimated Costs
The estimated cost per block for two barricades with signage is $200-$300.

Pedestrian Use of Bike Lanes

Description
Throughout the City, sidewalks may not have sufficient width to allow pedestrians to maintain safe social distancing. Most sidewalks are five feet wide which is less than the recommended six-foot width for distancing. Although in many situations one person can easily step onto a "lawn extension" between the sidewalk and the street, in other instances there will be larger groups of people than cannot easily pass in that space. A strategy is for someone to step off the curb and into the street allowing safe distancing. Of course, that introduces the potential for conflict with vehicles. Ann Arbor has a robust system of on-street bike lanes. Although normally not permitted, allowing pedestrians in bicycle lanes may serve to create space for social distancing in the non-motorized realm. Conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists are less dangerous then having people step into vehicular travel lanes. Permitting pedestrians to safely pass other pedestrians in the bike lane could be permitted until the COVID-19 social distancing recommendations are lifted.



What is being done amid COVID-19?
Currently, the City is communicating its intent to explore and implement these concepts. Staff is developing areas where these options are applicable. An ordinance amendment may be needed to allow pedestrians to legally walk in bike lanes for social distancing purposes through the public health emergency. A key element will be the collection of ideas through the public engagement tool for where such adjustments are desired.

Estimated Costs
Education, outreach and evaluation can likely be done with existing City resources. Temporary signs, including stand and sandbags, may be desirable and cost $100 each.

Sidewalk Gap Pedestrian Lanes

Description

Areas with sidewalk gaps pose an impediment to pedestrians. This is especially true for disabled pedestrians or those who rely on the use of mobility devices. Partial vehicular lane closures can be used to make such connections. All modifications should accommodate ADA ramping and barrier surfaces for guiding visually impaired people. ADA consideration may require temporary ramps, barriers and other smooth surface treatments to access such pedestrian zones. This would be similar to temporary sidewalk provisions around construction zones.

What is being done amid COVID-19?

Currently, the City is communicating its intent to explore and implement these concepts. Staff is developing areas where these options are applicable. A key element will be the collection of ideas through the public engagement tool for where such adjustments are desired.

Estimated Costs

Because each treatment will likely be unique, a full cost estimate will need to be developed that is reflective of the conditions present in the location for the temporary accommodation.

Staff will continue to report to City Council on developments of this Healthy Streets initiative. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

cc: J Fournier
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S Higgins
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*Acknowledgement and gratitude:
Thank you to Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition for providing information and several images used in this memo from in their April 27, 2020, webinar "Complete Streets responses to COVID-19"