

Seventh Street Process Committee

Minutes from Meeting on November 23, 2020

Committee members present: Julie Boland, Linda Diane Feldt, Seth Peterson
City Staff present: Kayla Coleman, Eli Cooper, Raymond Hess, Cynthia Redinger, Nick Hutchinson

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft of the Committee's recommendations. The recommendations had been prepared by the committee and feedback received from staff prior to the meeting and is appended to the minutes.

Before discussing staff feedback, it was noted that the draft recommendations did not cover all of the issues laid out in the charter of the committee. For example, the committee was charged with assessing what had gone wrong with the remediation process, during which multiple treatments were tried on Seventh with the goal of reducing speeding. This was not addressed in the recommendation, but the committee agreed that it should be addressed in the revised recommendations.

Next, staff recommendations were summarized and discussed.

There was much discussion concerning the first recommendation, regarding data collection of vehicular speed and other safety-related data. It was noted that the Vision Zero approach assumed in the 2020 Transportation Plan requires data-driven decision making and thus this recommendation is consistent with the Transportation Plan in that respect. However, others noted that data-driven decisions in the past are sometimes overturned when negative feedback is received by residents. In fact, this happened on N. Seventh, when implementation of a recommendation from the 2007 Transportation Plan was attempted. The issue was that residents along the street insisted that street parking must be maintained rather than replacing it with a bike lane.

The first recommendation, as currently written, asks for new data collection equipment and procedures along all arterial roads, so that data-driven recommendations can be made and evaluated. This requires funding and cost estimates were requested from staff. Although there are electronic speed-collection boards currently on South Seventh, they only store data for 2 weeks and the data are lost if traffic control does not manually download the data, which happens irregularly. The committee confirmed that the recommendation was for a more automated data collection system that could be used system-wide on arterial roads. An off-the-cuff estimate of costs might be \$35K per corridor, though different staff members had different senses of what was needed.

Reducing speeding is a high priority of the TC and within the Transportation Plan. Speed data would be useful not only for decision-making, but also education, and evaluation. Thus, the committee believes that it is worth allocating money to data collection, and indeed such allocation is implicitly assumed within the Transportation Plan. However, the committee deferred to staff in terms of where the funding should be sourced.

A related point is that speed cameras are a well-tested solution that is known to greatly reduce speeding. This enforcement method would obviate that need for investing in additional data collection infrastructure, and is highly regarded as an equitable method of traffic enforcement. At

least some committee members and staff suspect that this would solve speeding problems on Seventh and elsewhere in the city and are a first-choice solution. Because they are currently not legal in Michigan, legislation is needed to allow us to use this option. Perhaps permission could be obtained for a “demonstration corridor” to be set up with trial traffic cameras along Seventh.

Staff changes to the second recommendation (Tactical Urbanism) broadened it and the committee did not object. One committee member expressed scepticism that the behavior changes caused by “paint and post” measures would last beyond the initial break-in period.

It was noted that the third recommendation (Major Streets Traffic Calming Program) overlaps with the goals in the Transportation Plan. However, the Transportation Plan, which identifies three tiers of priority for Major Streets, based on vehicular volume and speed, and Seventh Street does not meet the criteria for any of the three tiers. The committee will be considering whether and how to advocate for Major Streets Traffic Calming on Seventh, given that the data used for the Tiers of prioritization do not currently prioritize Seventh.

A general suggestion from staff was to consider whether the 6 E’s might be emphasized more equally than in the current document, which seemed to staff to be heavy on Engineering, with just a bit on Education and Evaluation, and little or nothing on Equity, Encouragement, and Enforcement.

The committee expressed their gratitude to staff before staff (except for Kayla) left the meeting so that the committee could make the following plan:

- Julie took notes and will prepare minutes for distribution within 24 hours
- Seth and Linda Diane will have further discussion about what went wrong with the process, as mentioned at the beginning of the meeting.
- Seth will revise the draft recommendations, considering staff feedback, his discussions with Linda Diane on process, and the discussion in the meeting today. The goal is to have this ready by Dec 1 or 2.
- The committee will meet again on Dec 4th, 3-4pm.
- The committee hopes to have final recommendations ready for the TC by Dec 11th. They will need to be sent to Gage, because Kayla will be out that week.