

Richland Township Active Transportation Plan

Meeting Minutes

Steering Committee Meeting #2
September 25, 2023, 5 pm, Richland Township Municipal Building

In Attendance:

Ray Kendrick, Supervisor
Donna Snyder, Supervisor
Natalie Thiess, Assistant Manager
Melissa Williams, Parks and Recreation Coordinator
Diane Pontoriero
Charlie Brethauer
Cal Miller Jr.
Rowen Poole
Tim Gaichas
Heather Cuyler, Pashek + MTR
John Buerkle, Pashek + MTR
Sarah Rizk, Pashek + MTR
Ann Ogoreuc, Allegheny County Economic Development

Absent:

Lisa Shaffer

Discussion Items

1. John welcomed the group back and introduced the agenda for the meeting.
2. John provided a brief overview of the meeting which is as follows:
 1. Online survey results
 2. Key person interview updates
 3. Analysis of the utility right of way
 4. Streetlight data analysis
 5. Current walking and biking trends
 6. Bakerstown Road bridge replacement
 7. Railroad updates
 8. Ordinance Review
3. John reviewed activities since the first steering committee meeting, including:
 - The maps updated to reflect input,
 - key person interviews conducted,
 - the survey questionnaire closed on September 19,
 - attended the Community Day for public input, and
 - continued to build out the material reviewed in the rest of the meeting.

4. There were 263 responses to the online survey. Almost 20% of respondents said they walk daily and 16% of respondents said they bike at least once a week. The survey confirmed many suspicions about walking and biking trends in Richland Township.
 - Things like the lack of sidewalks (73%), lack of trails (49%), and distance to destinations (30%) are some of the main challenges to residents walking in Richland Township more often.
 - Most people walk for health and wellness reasons, as well as to get into nature.
 - The lack of bike infrastructure (65%) and concerns about safety (55%). Over 90% of respondents do not believe biking in Richland to be safe currently.
 - 62% of respondents believe that with proper signage and infrastructure, all modes (walking, biking, driving) can co-exist.
5. John reviewed the initial key person interview results. As of the meeting date, 13 people had been interviewed about the challenges, opportunities, and existing conditions of walking and biking in the township.
 - Interviews with the superintendent of Pine Richland Schools, avid walkers and bikers in the neighborhood, the police chief, the president of Point Park University, faculty at Chatham and the Rachel Carson EcoVillage, and the director of the library. The major organizations that PMTR has not yet been able to reach yet include St. Barnabas, the HOAs, and Premier Bicycle Club.
 - The existing conditions make it very challenging to walk or bike to destinations in the township. Interviewees all want to do more walking or biking and believe that if conditions improved, they would.
 - The major concerns are about safety, including the speed/volume of vehicles and the lack of designated space or sidewalks.
 - Target, grocery stores, the library, Richland Park, and North Park as major destinations interviewees identified as destinations to walk or bike to.
6. John reviewed the analysis of the utility right of way (ROW) and showed the challenging terrain based on the side profile of elevation.
7. John introduced the streetlight data and thanked the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) for their help.
 - He explained what streetlight data is and the findings. The data used in this analysis was averaged from a 24-hour 7-day span.
 - The pedestrian and cyclist numbers are the most important for active transportation. Vehicle data may be skewed based on things such as stop lights, traffic, and the turnpike. However, this is not an issue for the practical use of this data.
8. John showed the routes that had been identified from public input and steering committee comments.

9. The Bakerstown Ridge Replacement is important to discuss because it is very challenging to have PennDOT replace or add sidewalks. The consensus of the group is that replacing and keeping the sidewalks are of the best interest to the community.
 - The group discussed the responsibilities of installation and maintenance of the sidewalks, including the addition of a fence.
10. John provided an overview of the railroad's response to his email about a Rails with Trails inquiry. John and Ann Ogoreuc's suggestion is to identify the railroad as a desire path in the plan and demonstrate its regional significance. The plan should acknowledge this as a long-term opportunity to monitor.
 - The group discussed the railroad's property from the center of line outward. John explains that the railroad was required to map all of the parcels in the early 1900s. It is at least 60 ft ROW.
 - There are lines that are currently being abandoned (ex: Aspinwall). This shows the future potential and reiterates the future-focused importance of the plan. John notes that when a line is abandoned, the impacted communities receive a notice of abandonment from the Interstate Commerce Committee.
11. John reviews the ordinance review that Pashek + MTR conducted.
 - For sidewalks, John uses the example of what is happening in Mt. Lebanon. They have conducted a comprehensive review of their sidewalks and give notice of repairs, with the opportunity to use their municipality rate.
 - The group expresses concern over the elimination of cul-de-sacs. John explains the way cul-de-sacs can increase costs of services, like snow removal or police.
12. The group wraps up their discussion for the evening around 6:30. Pashek + MTR will email the meeting minutes, PowerPoint slides, and survey questionnaire results to the steering committee following the meeting.
 - Pashek + MTR will begin to shape the plan's recommendations before the next steering committee meeting. The goal of meeting #3 would be to discuss these preliminary recommendations in early November.
 - Pashek + MTR would like to have a public meeting for input in early December but notes the challenges with the holiday season.