

MEETING NOTES

Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Environment Roundtable

1:00 p.m., November 10, 2015

Des Moines Area MPO Burnham Conference Room

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Roundtable Attendees Present:

Jane Clark, Central Iowa Sierra Club/DSM Area Audubon
Scott Flagg, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Doug Harr, Iowa Audubon
Jeff Geerts, IEDA
Loren Lown, Polk County Conservation
Mark Land, Synder and Assoc
Dave DeGeus, The Nature Conservancy
Ginger Soelberg, Trails and Greenways Committee
Mike Ludwig, City of Des Moines
Bob Blanchard, City of Des Moines

Staff Present:

Dylan Mullenix, Assistant Director
Zach Young, Principal Planner
Andrew Collings, Associate Transportation Planner
Mike Armstrong, Associate Transportation Planner

1. Call To Order

Meeting was called to order at 1:04

2. VOTE: Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved.

3. VOTE: Approval of Minutes.

Minutes were approved with an amendment to add West University to the list of congested corridors identified at the previous meeting.

4. PRESENTATION: PlanDSM

Bob Blanchard and Mike Ludwig from the City of Des Moines presented on PlanDSM, the city's update to its comprehensive plan. Bob and Mike discussed the planning process and emerging environmental themes. When asked about prioritizing likely regulatory changes to be recommended, Bob indicated the first priority likely would be to rewrite the zoning ordinance, followed by developing a transportation master plan as well as a parks and recreation master plan. Bob indicated a request for propels is being developed for the zoning code update, which will begin soon. Mike added the code likely will fall somewhere between a form based code or a hybrid traditional and form based code. The city has been working with the MPO as well as neighboring communities to keep all parties apprised. The MPO has provided funds to help develop a transit oriented development code with the idea that this code will be transferable to other communities in the area.

Comments were provided about the flood plain policies mentioned in the presentation, with support for the city's proposal to restrict development in the flood plan. Discussion ensued about how these proposals align with those from watershed management plans and best practices the roundtable has discussed.

Jeff Geerts asked about any discussion the city has had with regards to energy efficiency in non-public buildings. Bob said that it has been discussed but there are questions about what the city's role might be given regulatory and financial constraints. Instead, the consensus has been that the city should focus on setting an example.

5. DISCUSSION: Water Trails & Greenways Plan

MPO staff provided a summary of public feedback received to date as well as a preview of the existing conditions report being developed. Roundtable participants commented on the amount of public feedback centered around the call for more natural stabilization of waterways. Loren Lown commented that while preferable to have all streams restored in a natural fashion, some cannot be due to the force of water. Many Iowans expect streams to have 90 degree banks, which is unnatural. Expectations and the public's mindset need to change.

Discussion ensued about water quality being an actual barrier or only a perceived barrier. MPO staff noted this is a challenge with the planning process, as we are trying to encourage better stewardship of waterways which requires pointing out their shortcomings, yet encourage more use which requires downplaying those shortcomings. Loren noted that Polk County Conservation has started a monitoring program which will help identify specific locations that have problems that can be remedied.

6. DISCUSSION: The Tomorrow Plan Update

MPO staff updated the roundtable about the Tomorrow Plan steering committee's structure and took comments about initiatives to pursue in 2016 and speakers to consider for the 2016 speaker series. Topics and speakers identified included:

- Soils
- Walkability
- Green streets
- Infill development
- General update about Capital Crossroads
- Overview of Polk County monitoring plan
- John Olson with Iowa DNR about impaired waterway listings
- Gene Tackle from Iowa State identified as a good speaker
- Army Corps or US Fish & Wildlife to discuss their efforts and perspective on their role in the metro area

7. DISCUSSION: Upcoming events and trainings

- MPO staff noted that the Science Center's Café Sci series will feature an event on dams. Also mentioned was the soil conference at Drake University and likely events to be occurring around the state's energy plan.

8. DISCUSSION: Future topics and feedback from roundtable

- Members noted a good list was developed last meeting.
- Members requested more interactive and discussion-based topics vs. speaker/updates.
- Polk County Soil & Water to discuss Easter Lake restoration efforts.

9. Other Non-Action Items of Interest to the Roundtable

10. Future Meeting Date: TBD

11. Adjourn – 2:34 p.m.