



Planning Standards Working Group Meeting
March 23, 2006, 3:00 PM
CATS/NIPC Offices, Cook Conference Room
Sears Tower, 8th Floor, Chicago

MEETING SUMMARY

Present:

Dave Barber, Downers Grove (Chair)
Rob Cole, Oak Park
Pete Dame, Oak Park
Bob Dean, Naperville
John Flood, Hillside
Tam Kutzmark, DMMC
Jill Leary, WCMC
Beth McCluskey, NorthCentral COM

Dan Doenges, Wilbur Smith Associates
Charu Kukreja, RTA
Bill Lenski, RTA
Gary Mitchell, Wilbur Smith Associates
Michelle Ryan, RTA
Nancy Seeger, Nancy Seeger Associates, Ltd.

- I. **Attendance:** Dave Barber, as PSWG Chair, made introductory remarks, welcomed John Flood, and lead self-introductions.
- II. **Summary of Previous Meeting:** Dave Barber gave a brief overview of the first meeting on February 23rd and referred to the meeting summary, noting that the PSWG will not formally approve meeting "minutes."
- III. **Development of Community Profiles**
 - A. Status Update

RTA and Wilbur Smith Associates are reviewing 12 local comprehensive plans to understand what topic areas are covered and the type of information presented that may be useful for the community profiles. Plans were reviewed for several communities represented on the PSWG, including Downers Grove and Oak Brook. Bill Lenski thanked NIPC for access to its library.
 - B. Preliminary Assessment Tool

Gary Mitchell explained that while the Technical Committee is focusing directly on transportation issues and needs, the goal for Corridor

Planning Standards is to get a picture of the communities, what they value and how they are alike or differ relative to economy, development patterns, access, etc. The draft survey is the tool that will be used to obtain basic information and perceptions. Profiles for each corridor community will then be developed when results of the survey have been compiled and synthesized. Dave suggested that the survey be sent to the mayors because they would like to elaborate about their communities. Gary noted that RTA plans to draft a cover letter explaining the survey purpose. Michelle Ryan raised a concern about the letter and survey getting separated, and Gary suggested using a folded 11 x 17 format to keep the letter and survey as one document.

PSWG members next discussed the draft *About Your Town* survey (Attachment 2 in the meeting packet) and indicated it was generally on target for the intended purpose.

Gary Mitchell made note of all suggested edits during the PSWG discussion of the draft survey and will prepare a "deletions and insertions" version that reflects specific comments made. General comments included:

- Is the survey trying to capture today's situation or the desired future condition? (e.g., questions 8, 11, 12 and 15)
- Under the "In General" section, maybe ask about major developments in their community since 2000.
- Related to Population and Economy, Dave Barber noted that trends in business, development, technology and lifestyle are affecting travel and transit use (e.g., telecommuting, "tear downs" and larger homes, income growth).
- Question 6: Should also ask about special events or sporadic activities that might have significant transportation needs and implications.
- Question 7: Tam Kutzmark suggested including school/college-related trips and not just commuting to jobs (and Gary noted that medical centers can also generate many trips by patients as opposed to people employed there). Tam also suggested a checklist option for communities that "experience an influx of weekend visitors" to capture tourism-related activity.
- Question 11: Gary noted a concern about asking this question of communities with no transit service. But, if so, should the survey ask where they would like to be in the future on transit orientation?
- Questions 12, 13, 16: Reword some questions to ask first if something applies to their community (e.g., traffic congestion, substantial transit use, pedestrian-friendliness). If yes, then provide checklist options on ways in which this is apparent (e.g., congestion around employment centers, Pace or other shuttle service between Metra station and major destinations, sidewalk investments in key areas).

- Question 16: What is the survey seeking on walkability issues (to decide how best to word this question)? The question is aimed at getting a sense of where pedestrian and bicycle circulation rates in the communities relative to other needs/priorities (e.g., in Downers Grove it perhaps receives too much attention, in Oak Park sidewalks are everywhere). This is another question that is mainly about self-perception and then asking them for indications of it – what are you doing to promote it, and do people in your community actually walk? Tam noted one community that is not walkable but applied for a CMAQ grant, so they are making the effort. Everyone defines walkability differently. Bob Dean suggested focusing on how people access the transportation system and get around (how much through walking and biking?) as opposed to recreational activity.
- Possible additional question (everyone liked this suggestion from Bill Lenski): What key destinations in the region would you like your community to be better linked to? (then provide some checklist options plus a space for “other”). It was also suggested to ask the reverse question, What key destinations in your community should be more accessible to people from elsewhere in the region?
- Possible additional question: What would motivate your residents/businesses to use transit services?
- Bob Dean suggested providing space after all questions should they want to elaborate or explain their answers. Gary suggested part of the 11 x 17 format could include blank space for adding such comments.

C. Testing with Downers Grove

Testing of the survey and community profile process will proceed through a testing phase with Downers Grove. The PSWG could be provided updates and interim results in the meantime.

D. Assessment Process and Approach

Dave Barber suggested that a “tool kit” will be needed to get specific demographics and other relevant information for each community (the survey process will not address this completely as elected officials do not necessarily know the demographics or other details). Tam Kutzmark noted that this survey is different from ones she and others do that are aimed at obtaining specific data and information. This survey will be helpful by focusing on community values and desired enhancements (more general information).

Regarding the variety and depth of data that might be compiled for each community, Gary noted there are 51 potential communities to be profiled in the corridor and there are issues of budget and time, particularly the need to move the Planning Standards process along in conjunction with the Options Feasibility effort (Technical Committee focus). Michelle noted that more detailed data can be obtained during the Alternatives Analysis phase, so Corridor Planning Standards will focus more on goals and values.

E. Anticipated Schedule

Michelle Ryan distributed a potential schedule for Community Profile development over the next several months. A testing phase in Downers Grove will occur during April (so no PSWG meeting in April), as well as collection of regional data for all communities and the corridor.

The surveys might be distributed in mid April. It was discussed that four weeks for responses might be too long and not necessary anyway for this level of survey.

To ensure good response, Michelle asked if the survey should come from someone other than RTA since not everyone recognizes the agency name. It was agreed that RTA should distribute the survey and direct it to the mayors, who might respond directly or forward it to a staff person. A follow-up email should be sent one week after the letter and survey are mailed, perhaps with an electronic version of the survey (although there was concern that each community should return only one completed survey). Dave Barber said he could also send an email notification to all public works directors in the area. It was also noted that Council staff could help ensure that communities in their area participate and respond.

It was discussed that responses and compilation of survey results should be timed to allow for summary presentation/discussion at the May 25th Policy Committee meeting. Dave Barber will make a PowerPoint presentation to the Policy Committee, which the PSWG could see in advance when it meets just before the Policy Committee meeting.

Other Business and Announcements: Pete Dame announced that he has resigned his position with the Village of Oak Park and has accepted a new position with the City of Grosse Pointe, Michigan. He introduced Rob Cole of Oak Park.

IV. Next Meeting: The PSWG will not have a monthly meeting in April while the initial process with Downers Grove proceeds. The next potential meeting date is May 25th preceding the Policy Committee meeting, which is scheduled for the same day at 3:00 pm at Elmhurst City Hall. A possible location for the PSWG meeting is the DuPage Mayors and Managers offices.

V. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:00 pm.