

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, November 18, 2015, 1:50 p.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Cathy Beecham, Michael Cornelius, Tracy Corr, Maja Harris, Chris Hove, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer and Lynn Sunderman Present; Ken Weber absent. David Cary, Brandon Garrett, Michael Brienzo, and Amy Huffman of the Planning Department.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Briefing on “Review Process for Long Range Plan and Comprehensive Plan Update”

David Cary, Acting Director of Planning Department, stated that this is the official kickoff for the updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Though there is a direct relationship between the two, they are two separate documents and processes. It is the role of the Planning Commission to shepherd us through the process. A major update is done every ten years. One was done five years ago and that plan is currently adopted. It was a hefty process consisting of a large committee made up of many individuals from outside the Planning Department. This update will be more minor in scale. Some items are tied to land use plans, so this is an opportunity to refresh both at the same time.

Cary said that the first part of the process is the affirmation that existing assumptions made by the Comp Plan are sound and do not need to be overhauled. A lot of material is based on these projections so this is an important step. The good news is, assumptions made about what will occur in terms of population growth, for example, are very sound. Land use decisions are used directly in prioritizing the LRTP. These findings will be reviewed in more detail in December.

Cary went on to say that both plans reflect the long range visions for the city. The LRTP requires a minimum twenty year projection. In hindsight, it was smart to go out to the year 2040 with the Comprehensive Plan because it covers the needs of the LRTP, while meeting the long-range needs. The city is developing in the way that the long range plan predicted. It includes long standing policy goals and assumptions about community concept, the school districts, and prominent neighborhoods and development areas among other things.

Cary said that because this is a parallel process for both documents based on growth assumptions and land use, each meeting will touch on both topics to make sure we get content on both topics every month. There are Federal regulations that require the update of the LRTP which if met, qualifies the City and County for Federal funding. That is why we do not take this lightly and want to make sure LRTP is up-to- date every five years. A website has been created

for both of these efforts. You will see many tabs where content will be filled in as we move through the process, so by next year, there will be a wealth of information available.

Lust requested that the link be emailed to Commissioners.

Cary went on to say that since there are two processes occurring simultaneously, the information is divided into two separate pages, though there will be some shared content. The PowerPoint presentation from today will be available there. The primary role of Planning Commissioners is to be the main advisory committee for this Comp Plan process. Planning staff will support the update process and very much looks forward to input from Commissioners. This time around, there will not be outside people on this committee, but there will be a lot of public outreach, including meetings with focus groups starting in January of 2016. The net will be spread wide for these groups and staff is confident we will acquire many perspectives. Staff will be supported by the consultant team, Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig (FHU), and a staff level, multi-departmental oversight planning committee. Bi-weekly meetings will be held on Planning Commission hearing dates, alternating between the plans. The content developed at those meetings will come back through this setting for your comment; you will be a touchstone for the process. There will be a lot of content to get through relatively quickly. These meetings will likely run through next summer. It is important to keep Commissioners up to speed on all the materials so they feel fully informed when it comes time to make decisions.

Beecham asked if Commissioners can expect to see a draft next summer. Cary said there will probably be a public meeting in February and at least one more after that. The general idea is to get to a point where an updated draft of both documents over the summer, but we never quite know. It depends on how quickly topics are reviewed. The main goal is to get it done before 2016. Summer will be a point where it is ready to take to the public. Cary said the City Council will act directly on the Comprehensive Plan and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will act on the LRTP.

Beecham asked if the items will be open to the public. Cary said that they will be. In the past, not many citizens were in attendance, but more can be expected for the transportation aspects because there are some interesting topics. Staff will come up with a protocol for if and when we want public comments at all of those meetings.

Cary said that today we will hear from Jenny Young and Rick Haden from FHU. They will go over the goals and objectives. On December 2nd, there are already briefings scheduled. One is on the Emerald Ash Borer. That could be included in the Comp Plan because it will have a long-term effect on the community. We also have an update on the Pipeline Planning Area. On December 16th, we will have an update on the growth trends and affirming basic Comp Plan assumptions. With so many meetings, we will try to break them into pre and post sessions. We understand if there are conflicts with some meeting times, but Staff is always available to go through all of

the material and answer all questions. Cary introduced Brandon Garrett of the Planning Department.

Brandon Garrett stated that one thing Staff wanted to do with the last Comp Plan update was to have live interactions with Commissioners. Now that option is available for free online via Kahoot. Garrett reviewed the login process. This is a fun, anonymous way to participate and it is a way for staff to gather additional input that might otherwise have been difficult to get.

Mike Brienzo, Long Range Transportation Planner, came forward and introduced Jenny Young and Rick Haden of FHU. There are other consultants on board to help including Steve Wolf of JEO, who is a public involvement strategist and will help with the public outreach.

Brienzo said this process began with a request for proposals. A number of firms were interviewed and FHU was selected because they had the most experience and the best qualified staff. This plan will be a bit different in that it will be structured more as a decision making process. We will develop more tools and you will see more of how we come to the conclusions that we do. So far, we have worked on some models with GIS tools and have also developed a public participation action plan, which the MPO is required to have. It informs the public about what we will do and how they can be engaged in the process. More detail will be added as we move through the process. A number of activities are planned to engage community leaders and the general public.

Young stated the primary role of the MPO is to carry out the planning and decision making for the Lincoln metropolitan planning area. It is a federally recognized organization who coordinates the planning activities of transportation related agencies, including the City, County, NDOR and Star Tran. The purpose of this update to the LRTP is to meet federal requirements. They require a performance-based update every five years. Our job is to make sure we are reflecting changes since the last LRTP, to provide a framework for future needs, and to prioritize transportation investment.

She went on to say that there are seven major work tasks. The first is project management coordination with various committees and with public engagement. The second is the travel demand modeling. Since we are keeping the out year at 2040, the major effort is recalibrating the base year from 2009 to 2015. It takes the land use forecast from the Comprehensive Plan and forecasts future traffic volumes and travel demand in the region out to 2040. We calibrate the base year model to match the counts that we have for 2015. The third task is to assess the existing and future needs of the transportation system, taking into account many factors such as biking, walking and safety, to name a few. The fourth task is the goals, objectives and performance measures. The goals and objectives in this update are mainly a refinement of what was in the last plan. We will also establish performance measures. The fifth is the transportation system analysis which takes into account the travel demand model and other

tools and gives us a way to test different scenarios and how they relate back to the performance measures we are working on. Task six is the implementation plan where we develop priorities in terms of projects and evaluation process. This ultimately leads to developing a fiscally constrained plan and recommending policy actions. The schedule shows that this process lasts roughly a year and a half. We have been working on plan for about three months, primarily focused on that base year update. The first public outreach will be in the beginning of 2016. A draft plan will be available in the summer of 2016, with adoption by the end of the year.

Haden said this Commission is the touch point for the big picture, looking at the transportation plan and for consistency with the land use plan, which will be used to update the model. The oversight committee is a broad group that includes those with technical knowledge of various subjects, and representatives from various stakeholders such as Star Tran and NDOR, as well as City and County staff, including Public Works who can provide input as to the condition of roads and the needs assessments. City and Planning Staff will identify up to eight different focus groups, who will give input and critique plans for specific areas. We focus on very specific items and will report back to make sure we are not overly focused on one area as opposed to the interests of the community as a whole. The MPO technical committee is very much involved. We anticipate the focus groups will begin in January. The public information meeting or open house could be in February. It is critical that we have information available at that point, so that schedule may be adjusted.

Haden said that so far, some of the performance measures have been tracked. Ms. Young has been surprised at the amount of data the City of Lincoln has available. We are looking more at course adjustments as opposed to wholesale change. As we pull together information going back as far as 1995, we see some of those priorities have been implemented. That will be powerful when we go to the public to show that when they get involved in the process, things are planned for and implemented. We look forward to that public process.

Beecham asked if the public will be part of the focus groups. Haden replied that the focus groups will be smaller groups of six to eight people. They can get into great details about topics, looking at the current plans and how they could be adjusted.

Beecham asked how those individuals are chosen. Brienzo said that list is being developed now. The meetings will be towards the end of January so what we do is look for community leaders. First of all, we want leaders of various communities and groups and to talk to them one-on-one. We assume they bring the interests of their groups to them. We don't limit it to one representative from each group and we look to have a broad community base that is active in planning activities. We get their ideas, develop a report and share that with Commissioners. After a rough plan is developed, we will go back to them and ask their thoughts.

Beecham asked if Commissioners will we be able to see who is participating in the groups and offer suggestions for individual that we know to be involved with certain causes. Brienzo and Haden both agreed that is the case. Cary added that they are just at that point of making those decisions so input will be welcomed. Haden said that if the right people are chosen, they may also appear at public meetings as advocates and will help us to get the word out.

Young said that performance based planning is a data driven, strategic approach to investment and policy decisions. It provides a story about how the system looked in the past, how it looks today, and what we want it to look like in the future. We use that to make decisions that will move the City and County towards their goals. These measures are really the central piece of a performance based plan. It is important to get them right because they are used throughout the remainder of the process, in testing different investment scenarios, in the project selection process, to track history and baseline trends and to develop targets and desired trends. They will ultimately be used as a guide to investment strategy and policy decisions.

Young said that they have worked with the oversight planning committee on refining the transportation goals. There are seven categories with a succinct goal listed for each. Those goals are to have a well-maintained transportation system, an efficient and well-connected system, a multimodal system that provides options for a livable urban environment, a safe and secure system, a system that supports economic vitality for residents and businesses, a system that enhances natural, cultural and built environments, and a system that utilizes collaboration in funding to maximize user benefits. There are supporting objectives for each of the goals that will feed directly into performance measures.

Young went on to say the goals are identified, so now we can begin to identify the performance measures. Good measures relate directly to the goals established so the City can head in the right direction. They are based on data. It is tremendous that Lincoln has an abundance of data because since it exists, there is no need to speculate. Right now there are thirty performance measures identified and only two do not have data. The measures should be trackable over time to make sure things are heading in the right direction on an annual basis. Finally, performance measures have great storytelling potential. They can be an effective means for garnering public support and in seeking funding. In the coming months, these measures will be further refined. We will be finishing the travel demand model update by the end of the year to use as a tool. The needs assessment will be done in early 2016. We will develop a technical memorandum for each of the tasks. That way, Planning Commissioners will have a chance to review materials as we move through the process. Public engagement will begin in January, with a full public meeting in February.

Beecham stated she thinks public meeting are critical to success. There is a lot of learning and betterment of ideas with a mixed group of people. She asked if there was a strategy for achieving diversity in the groups. Brienzo said focus groups were used for the travel options

plan and they worked very well to get a focus on many of the issues. We will also engage the public in meetings and online. Focus groups are meant to get a dialogue going and get the word out. So if the business community has specific ideas they want to express, we will get to talk to them about it at length.

Beecham said she was curious whether there would be a mix of representation at the same meeting in order to share different perspectives. Brienzo said we try to get a mix in our groups, but we also do not want any one interest to be isolated because the same depth in conversation may not exist in that setting. There will be a number of group sessions, sometimes three or four a day, and the groups can be diverse, including representatives from both the business community and neighborhood groups, for example, at the same meeting. We do try to get a broad base.

Cary added for clarification that at the focus groups won't necessarily have representation from a particular group attend all the different focus group sessions, but groups will not be one-sided in terms of representation of a particular interest. Beecham noted that there is crossover between groups, as well. Brienzo said that will be the effort that is made. Young added that this body could be a good resource for sharing the information obtained in focus groups with others and balancing the different needs reflected.

Hove asked about the timeline in identifying various deficiencies. He wondered if that had been done. Young said that the current deficiency data overlaps with the performance measure data that process has begun.

Hove went on to ask how something is defined as deficient. Young said that it depends on the focus. We ask how much congestion is there on the road system today versus the ability to bike around the community, for example. Hove said that, for example, north/south traffic through the city is tough. He wondered how it is identified as an issue that needs to be addressed. Young said that the travel model allows us to look at how a system operates today and to ask what we define as a deficiency. Hove said that a conclusion might be made as to how long a route should take. Young agreed and added that they are looking at the whole network, not travel time in one corridor. That could be a useful exercise, but it must be viewed as an entire system.

Haden said an example is the 33rd and Cornhusker project. We looked at the model from 2009 through today. Before then, we saw a lot of growth in that corridor that then leveled off. We looked at delays at the train crossing. If we just looked at counts, that would not give a full picture since there is plenty of capacity. But by using the model, we can see that there are many more people who would like to use it, but can't because of the delay of the railroad crossing. It is the same with traffic. We look at the model, but we also look into what people's desires are and try to make them match. We also look at constraints. The 1995 Congestion

Management Study was a good tool because it looked at maximizing 2 + 1, two lanes with a center turn lane, as a top priority. The second priority was to address bottlenecks. And a third was to look at inner ring growth where, on the fringes of the city, roads can be widened. The beltways are a part of that, and many of those ideas have come to fruition now.

Following the initial presentation of information, Young led a discussion, asking Commissioners a series of questions.

What are the most pressing issues relative to Lincoln's transportation system?

Hove responded that the need for the South Beltway is a priority. It would eliminate a lot of truck traffic along Highway 2. Issues with safety and traffic congestion would be addressed.

Beecham said that balancing the north/south traffic flow with the fact that most of that traffic is going through older neighborhoods is important. When you widen to four lanes, you can see a strip where the property values drop and urban decay occurs. She wants to see how we can solve that traffic issue and still keep the core neighborhoods strong. That is a tricky one.

Sunderman mentioned maintenance as an ongoing issue. He said it is doubtful that there will be more expansion of the neighborhood streets anymore, and the traffic has really become a problem. 27th Street is one of the worst.

Beecham said that, keeping in mind that we are taking huge steps to attract millennials to our community, in addition to looking at our use now, we need to look at what the preferred use will be in the future. We have made a start with the bike lanes. Where people my age want to live now is not the same as where that generation will want to live now or when they are my age.

What changes have occurred over the past five years that affected transportation the most?

Lust said the lack of the South Beltway is pushing traffic to Saltillo Road which has now become literally the most dangerous road in the county. Five years ago, we were not even talking about Saltillo. Hove added that it is by default that it has become that way because people find it more efficient.

Beecham said it seems like we are hearing more about dangerous bridges lately. That goes back to maintenance. Sunderman said he agreed that the County Engineer has really been focusing more on that problem.

Cornelius said there seems to be a perennial weakness in the public transportation system. It has a "chicken and egg" problem where it doesn't provide service when and where people

might want it, and therefore, people don't use it. Then, since it is underused, there is less interest in supporting it.

Sunderman said one of the biggest positives he has seen is with the backbone in the Arena and how it has improved traffic, even on football Saturdays. Once people figured out that they do not need to enter the Haymarket and can go around and park, their perception of the Haymarket changes instantly.

Beecham said services like Uber are a big change and that may be another challenge in terms of insuring safety, but that is huge with the younger generation. Cornelius said he recently heard of someone in Lincoln using Uber for the first time. Beecham said she has a friend who is a part-time driver. Harris said that she uses it. The standard wait time is less than a couple of minutes and she has never had any problems. Corr said she has noticed that the previous inconvenience of taking a cab in Lincoln has been alleviated since that market has been opened up more in Lincoln.

Corr said another new issue she thinks about is the introduction of roundabouts in Lincoln, and how people are not accustomed to using them. Beecham said she agrees they have not been safe. Harris said that there are many roundabouts in Europe. All countries that introduce them have problems at first. It's not that they become safer over time, but they become the norm and people get used to using them. She remembers when people complained about them at first. You can't judge that particular problem until more time has passed. Corr said there needs to be more education about them, which has started to happen, but there will still be people who don't know how to use them. Hove said that is a real issue with out-of-state people who have no idea how to use them. Harris said that it is a good idea to avoid making them larger than they need to be initially. The roundabouts with several lanes are difficult to navigate and to understand when to signal or enter.

Scheer said that every transportation system that he has seen designed and built in his lifetime creates additional capacity and then it actually gets used. The biggest changes are some of the systems that have been built, not just roads but things like the trails and dedicated bike lanes, which, once built, create a new and additional kind of change which is positive. It is important as a conceptual aspect to grasp the fact that once something is built, people start using the entire system differently.

Lust said that, five years ago, Antelope Valley was not fully implemented and that has made a huge difference in traffic patterns downtown. Beecham said that it still feels like because of the lights, drivers are stopping a lot. The answer given when that question was asked was that once the street is used more, the lights would be adjusted. Knowing that she would never hit a red light might encourage her to use it more. Scheer said the other impact of that is that if the lights were sequenced differently, people would quit using 16th and 17th Streets, which he

thinks is a goal of the City. So if things worked the way they were designed to work, it would have a better impact. Cornelius said that this issue also speaks to the idea of pedestrian friendliness. When you hit the lights walking east or west along there, they are very long lights and you stand around for a long time.

What do you see as the trends and driving forces that will influence transportation systems in the future?

Cornelius suggested that driverless vehicles could become a factor. Young asked what can be done now in planning for that potential. Cornelius said he believes it will affect individual vehicle ownership, the public cost of transportation, the need for parking, and the requirement for infrastructure like gas stations. He said he does not know how to react to that now because it is difficult to predict what direction things will go.

Lust went on to wonder if this body should be concerned with supplying more charging stations now, or as technology advances, if that will actually be needed.

Scheer said that a driving force in transportation planning is projected land use. That could have the most profound effect on how we plan transportation systems.

Beecham said that with innovation, things change so fast. We need to have flexibility in what we build. It almost seems that as soon as we build something to accommodate technology, something changes. So having something that could be a gas station that could change into a solar station, for example, that flexibility is going to continue to be important.

Harris said that the way the Lincoln Airport develops could have a real impact. There is no real public transportation for one who comes in from out of town. There is still no real reliable way for a business traveler to get to and from the airport. Uber and cabs have helped. Lust said you don't see shuttles circling. Commissioners agreed it is a call-only service.

Hove said the expectations of people make a big difference. It is important to think about, for example, what the expectations are for getting from home to downtown and whether those expectations will change with all of the other changes. Omaha is about a thirty minute town, where it takes about that long to get from one destination to another. Lincoln is about twenty minutes. He wondered if that trend will remain. Elaborating on that, Lust wondered if Lincoln will become the kind of town where citizens do not need to own a car and can get around with services like Uber or public transportation. Young wondered if that expectation will change in the future. Cornelius said it has already been changing. It used to be a fifteen minute town, now it takes twenty minutes.

Lust said she believes the need will be more pocketed. She does not go north of O Street very often. Cornelius said he often crosses O Street, all the way north to south, and it is twenty minutes. Beecham said land use is important because now you can stay in one part of town and do all the things you need to do within that one area. Lust said she agrees because she doesn't have a need to go across town.

Cornelius posed that the cost of fossil fuels and the tension between low fossil fuel costs and carbon emissions could spark changes. Scheer agreed The bigger question is how does a city gather data that takes into account external factors such as this. There should be a way to predict some of these factors. Lust agreed. Nebraska is one state that may be required to reduce carbon emissions, and Lincoln, being the second largest city, is obviously going to have a role to play in that Transportation is a big part of that.

Beecham said that it is her guess that there will be less demand to own cars, but most of that will come from a younger generation who want to live near the center of the city, while most suburbanites will continue to want to drive their own vehicle. Lust said that "empty-nesters" will also have that demand. Beecham said that those who live further out in town are not necessarily going to expect public transportation the same way those living in the center of town will. Young said that goes back to the point of land use. Haden agreed, adding that a higher density living area has higher need for the public transportation.

What do you think will constitute a successful Long Range Transportation Plan update? What components do you feel will be critical, and what would you feel good about?

Corr said it would be good to take away the stigma of using the bus system.

Cornelius said he looked everything over and liked what he saw, thus far. He would like to see a good balance among the goals, since there is tension within the document. That would be successful. Lust said she wants enough public support. One of the barriers always seems to be funding, particularly with maintenance. If we could somehow come up with the plan that generates public interest and support, so that maybe, if a tax increase was needed, it wouldn't be so unpalatable. Cornelius agreed, saying that public support up to and including funding would be very desirable.

Beecham said she would like the document and the plan to think outside the box and to help the public think outside the box. There is a lot of tension, but there are so many things that do not have to be mutually exclusive. Businesses and neighborhoods do not have to oppose one another. Being fiscally conservative and having a good trail system is possible. If we can engage people so they see a broader business and neighborhood model, that would be successful to me.

Young asked what the next steps in the process will be.

Cary said a follow-up email will be sent out, which will be a typical action. We might ask some specific questions and for comments, especially since Commissioners may think of additional comments after meetings. The goal is to keep an open dialogue.

Adjournment: 12:51 PM