

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 2:30 p.m., Bill Luxford Studio, Room 113, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Cathy Beecham, Michael Cornelius, Tracy Corr, Maja Harris, Chris Hove, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer and Lynn Sunderman; (Ken Weber absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: David Cary, Paul Barnes, Mike Brienzo, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Rick Haden and Jenny Young of Felsburg, Holt & Uelvig; Lonnie Burkland of Public Works and Utilities; and Brendan Lilley of County Engineer.

STATED PURPOSE: Briefing on **“2040 Long Range Transportation Plan Update”** by Planning staff

Chair Chris Hove called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

Mike Brienzo stated that the presentation today is regarding Green Light Lincoln and what has been done up to this point on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), as well as the next phases. We will also be talking about technology and the future.

Jenny Young stated that the last time this group met, we discussed goals and weights. We took that information, along with the information we received from the public and had the LRTP Oversight Committee go through a similar exercise. We will be finalizing those weights with the Oversight Committee tomorrow. They will be working on the scoring process. They have also been working on a subset of the revenue team to look at revenue streams. There is more information that will be coming to this group.

There will be a public meeting at Everett School on Tuesday, May 3, 2016 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. The open house will help us understand the priorities of the public. We will have maps and exhibits that show the projects.

Lonnie Burkland appeared to talk about Green Light Lincoln. There is a lot of information on the City of Lincoln, Public Works Engineering webpage. A keyword search for ‘traffic’ will find this page from the city’s main page. There has been a lot of articles talking about asset management and exploring options. We put together a master plan. It took about six months.

The plan was to identify the current gaps in our traffic system. About every two or three years, the National Transportation Operations Coalition (NTOC) comes out with a report card. Nationally, it does not rate that well. Nationally, Americans lose 5.5 billion hours stuck in traffic every year. That is the time it takes you to drive across the U.S., 110 million times. That is 2.9 billion gallons of fuel. That equates to 120 billion dollars annually. All Quality of Life surveys have a traffic commute index. There are a lot of things we can do to improve safety and operations. In Lincoln, we have over 7,000 annual crashes. This is a cost of over 280 million dollars. If we can make improvements by even ten percent, it will save 30 billion dollars. Our system has over 400 traffic signals at about \$3,500.00 each.

About one year ago we shared some new information. We completed an asset management to create a database of our system. We created a GIS map of everything for our signal system. This is on an internal site for employees. We used to spend days sending people to the field to do research. Now a lot of things can be done from the computer. This caused us to reflect on our system. We have a phased implementation plan to modernize some of our equipment. We want to move traffic more safely and efficiently.

There are wires and loops under the pavement in many locations. New technology allows us to put up cameras. We made a map of where detection is faulty. Despite maintenance programs, some things just age. The city did an upgrade to their central software system. It has been a good system, but hasn't been upgraded in 17 years. We are writing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new central software package. There are limitations with what we can do now.

The fiber to home initiative will bring high speed connectivity to all our network. That is a great thing. We are looking at a total system strategy for signal optimization. We have identified priority corridors. We developed Green Light Lincoln. It is about fixing things that are broken, rolling out new timing capabilities and improving congestion and traffic flow in Lincoln. We submitted to Smart Cities for a grant. There is a report from the United States Department of Transportation called Beyond Traffic 2045. It talks about how we have mishandled our system in the 1960's and 1970s, and funding gaps. We used to build big capacity improvement projects. Ninety percent of capacity is filled up within five years of opening. There was a study that asked people if they would rather have a car or a cell phone. Ninety percent would rather have a phone. There is a lot of talk about millennials and driving. This could have a huge implication on future facilities. We talked about an autonomous system here in Lincoln. Driverless cars are coming. People talk about a lot of changes coming. There are big things on the horizon. The biggest thing we are trying to do now is how we can be compatible with future technology. Someday, there will be no signs or lights. Your car will know when my car is closer and needs to stop, pass, etc. There is a lot of data and good information in that report. The Transportation System and Management Operation (TSMO) is more focused on operations. We have a need for maintenance, but we need to be smart about where we are headed with technology. We talk about the age and condition of our system as well. The useful life of a signal is around 30 years. 100 around town are over 30 years old.

Hove thinks that a thirty percent failure rate on signals seem high. Burkland stated we have a goal for five percent. It doesn't mean that all detection is bad, just some loops might not be working correctly. Cornelius understands these are not failures, but detection problems. Burkland replied he was correct. We can put together the best system in the world, but if we have twelve intersections with bad detection, the system fails. That is what we are putting together now. A brand new roadway will have new loops that last a long time. Saw cut loops only last about five years. A lot is modernizing our equipment. We have been getting smarter with how we spend our money.

Cary was excited about this presentation. His core background is as a transportation planner. The city has tried to implement some of this and it didn't work well. We are now in a position to nicely implement this. The focus on the last Comprehensive Plan was toward maintaining what we have. He feels that this time, technology is key to our plan. We need to know what we are talking about. We are going to start seeing numbers in the next few months. We are not going to be able to build our way out of congestion. The more we can do with technology, the better off we will be. He was wondering if Burkland has any thoughts on the benefits or capabilities of our system when we implement this technology. Burkland replied that U.S. infrastructure used to be listed at number eight. Six years later, we have doubled that. We knew there would be discussions about this topic. It became obvious that we need to spend on a citywide benefit. When you talk about safety, there is a lot of low hanging fruit. We are one of four states in the U.S. that doesn't do a lot of quick incident management, in addition to a lot of other things that can be done.

Cary wondered what kind of numbers we are talking about. Burkland replied that the signal system is fourteen million dollars in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) over a six year period. Complete funds for replacing equipment, signal retiming and traffic signal rehab was closer to thirty million. Two thirds of that number was traffic signal rehab. If you talk operational items, we will already be pinching pennies at the end of this year. Citywide, two to four million dollars is needed for detection. The cost of three blocks of widened road will pay for this.

Scheer sees the trick as determining where those three blocks are. We have been doing scoring now. CIP dollars are needed for many projects.

Hove believes this is an economics argument. We can't raise taxes, but you will pay for it with the gasoline and time that you waste sitting at a light. Burkland is sensitive to the concept that there are lots of roads and needs that people have a personal connection to, but cost benefit analysis would say that someone eight miles away doesn't care about the stretch of road in front of someone else.

Beecham believes it is a balancing act. Since we are looking at traffic flow, she would like to be looking at biking and pedestrians. Is part of this technology how you can most efficiently have traffic and bikes cross paths with cars? She wonders how we can get the bike trails efficient and not slow down traffic. Burkland replied there is technology that looks at multi-modal issues. Something that has alarmed him is a spike of pedestrian and bike crashes. That has happened nationally. There is some technology out there that is coming.

Lust inquired if we have we looked at right on red. Burkland replied yes, we have. People call in and when we investigate and we implement a 'no right on red' when needed.

Beecham has a fear of some of the roundabouts in town when she is a pedestrian. They are great for cars, but some are dangerous for pedestrians.

Cornelius is looking forward, imagining a time when cars never stop. They slow down and talk to each other. We will need some type of grade separation or something for pedestrians. Scheer sees the point. You can talk cost and benefits, but sees an important piece that these things have less an impact on how our city looks compared to massive construction projects. With these items implemented, we make our city what we want it to be from a visual point as well.

Harris questioned if the traffic light on the bike path can detect bikes. Burkland doesn't think so. A lot of the new camera systems can detect bikes. We haven't done standalone bicycle detection yet. We have installed some counters on the Rock Island Trail. He sees working with the Planning Dept. more on installing more counters. Cary added that we now have funding to purchase four more counters. That is more data that lets us make more informed decisions.

Lust wants to know if we are confident that the timing is correct for someone to cross the street. Burkland stated we are doing some analysis right now of the downtown area. We want to make sure we have incorporated the latest best practices. Cary thinks we can say we are glad the work is being done. Technology is growing and we need to take advantage of that.

Brienzo handed out a pamphlet on Transportation Futures

Corr left.

Brienzo stated that he would like commissioners to think about technology and how it will fit into the plan. There are a lot of new issues for potential new modes of travel. How does the use of technology help pay for the system? Some communities already use the new technology. An insurance company is using technology to charge for insurance. The charge is based on what you use. How is our plan going to respond to these technological changes? We don't have a handle on how flexible the plan can be.

Young read the article on Transportation Futures and it talks a lot about flexibility. When this group started talking about the LRTP, they wanted flexibility for future technology. She believes it is in terms of strategies and funding

Harris left.

Sunderman wonders if this isn't ultimately a capacity question, a trade of something where technology is present or at the horizon, versus building more roads. Brienzo believes information is a big piece of this. The more information you have on alternate modes of travel, the more you are aware. Bike sharing ties in nicely.

Beecham stated that we have talked about being able to buy your bus pass on your phone. Technology options would increase ridership. Brienzo added that it would be convenient if you could buy your bus pass and bike share at the same time.

Lust was in Berlin, Germany. You see smart cars every half mile that you rent with your cell phone. She can foresee a lot of people who find that urban living and not owning a car, is a great idea. That would be a cost saving measure.

Beecham believes we need to incorporate technology more to benefit people who aren't millennials. We need to show how technology can be used for everyone to improve their life. It needs to show how this benefits everyone. She thinks we have a large generation of folks who want to age in their home. If we can make it easy to use the bus, she thinks we can get a lot of folks to use it. Cornelius would like to see it go much farther with driverless cars. Lust sees widespread use of driverless cars are coming fast. She knows people who are afraid of that technology, but she believes human distraction is a bigger cause.

Cornelius wants to talk about capacity. He doesn't have a good handle on what capacity means, where people are less and less dependent on location. We are getting to a point where being in a certain place is a choice, more than a necessity. In a world where the matter of your position is less important, the question of capacity becomes harder to nail down. Brienzo agrees that more people are telecommuting.

Sunderman thinks it sounds somewhat isolationist. Cornelius understands the point, but thinks it is also a connector. Beecham thinks there are a lot of events. When you are at an age where kids participate in things, you spend a lot of time driving after school and on weekends. She thinks we also need to think about mass transportation. Cornelius agreed. You are making a choice. We are less and less dependent on those questions.

Scheer finds it fascinating and more complex to think about whether this is an isolator or connector. Regardless of capacity, the tried and true idea of the link of transportation to land

use is huge and will become more significant. Cary thinks about the shift in land use policies and understands it will probably trail much slower.

Young stated that they will talk with the LRTP Funding Subcommittee tomorrow. She would like to know how the commissioners feel about allocating funds to things like technology. Should the general category of Information Technology Services (ITS) be funded at a higher level than it has in the past?

Lust thinks it absolutely does. The more we invest in that type of technology the more we invest in the physical.

Brienzo believes as the system gets more efficient, it builds capacity.

Cornelius stated that we can talk about capacity in terms of miles or service. Technology is a better investment. Hove agreed. The economics argument will speak to how it saves the community money.

Beecham believes it all comes down to what we want our community to look and feel like. She doesn't want us to take money away from small neighborhood streets, or not fix any potholes.

Scheer thinks that this solution is one of those few times where economic and quality of life align. It doesn't do that very often.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.