

## BRIEFING NOTES

*Advanced public notice of the Planning Commission briefing was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website.*

**NAME OF GROUP:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Wednesday, December 17, 2025 12:00 pm, City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Dick Campbell, Maribel Cruz, Bailey Feit(arrived at 12:04pm), Brett Ebert, Gloria Eddins, Rich Rodenburg(arrived at 12:05pm) and Cindy Ryman Yost.

Lorenzo Ball and Cristy Joy absent.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Paul Barnes, Andrew Thierolf, Rachel Christopher, David Cary and Kristi Merfeld of the Planning and Development Services Department; Greg Youell Felsburg Holt & Ullevig (FHU) and other interested parties.

**STATED PURPOSE:** Briefing on **“Long Range Transportation Plan Update, Lincoln Mobility Plan, and Comprehensive Plan Update”**

**Rachel Christopher, Planning and Development Services Department, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE** came forward and thanked everyone for coming today. She stated that they had another briefing to present on the Long Range Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Plan. We just finished up phase one engagement. Today, there will be a summary of what has been heard from participants in phase one. Essentially, that means we are now in phase two of the three phases of engagement for the Comprehensive Plan, LRTP, and Mobility Plan. We will be working on project alternatives, funding, and prioritization in phase two. Christopher turned the presentation over to Greg Youell from FHU, the consultant on the transportation plans, to discuss the results from the engagement.

**Greg Youell, Project Manager with Felsburg, Holt & Ullevig (FHU)** came forward and stated he was here for both the overall LRTP and Lincoln Mobility Plan for the City of Lincoln. The first phase is wrapping up and the second phase will be where we are getting into more of the analysis and reviewing projects. Today, we want to look back and what has been heard from the public for the engagement phase one of this plan. This is a LRTP (Long Range Transportation Plan) that is updated every 5 years in coordination with the Comprehensive Plan, which will also be discussed

briefly today. We are not starting from scratch, as several of the themes have been carried over from the past five years. This is a good time to step back and look at what we are hearing from the public. This engagement was a team effort, with staff and consultants all involved. There were over 2,000 individual engagements, which included in-person and online. 9 community events and 10 focus groups were also held. We were trying to reach as many people as possible through our communication staff from the city and county. The main way of reaching people was online. The website at <http://lincoln.ne.gov/planforward> is where you can see all the comments and review the community assessment. The site has closed, but you can still see results. People were able to vote up or down if they agreed or disagreed with the comments they saw on the map. It would also give a short survey to engage them as they made a comment. The pin categories allowed people to select a category that they pinned. The tally list shows that things related to bicycles came in with most comments. The list also shows it broken down by the area of town as to what is most important to them. In every quadrant of the city, bicycle safety and traffic were a top concern. The multimodal aspect was an area of concern overall. This is not surprising for a transportation plan. Looking at the big picture the southeast portion of the city had the most comments coming in at 211. Northeast Lincoln had the next highest comments, followed by the southwest and southeast parts of the city. Reaching people outside of Lincoln is always a little bit of a challenge. It is being discussed for the next phase on how we can better partner with some of the surrounding communities. We were able to get some representation in Hickman for their Halloween event that drew at least 1,000 people.

The high concentration areas could be discussed all day in terms of all the detailed comments that were submitted. The 27<sup>th</sup> and Nebraska Parkway or old Highway 2 area has trails and roundabouts, so that discussion was probably the highest. Another specific area was the 48<sup>th</sup> to 70<sup>th</sup>, A, O and Normal. Several clusters within that area were called out for bicycle crosswalk redevelopment. There was also mention of taking the 84<sup>th</sup> corridor all the way south and seeing how we can provide some better connectivity and also making it safe. In the Downtown and Haymarket area, scooters, bicycles, and pedestrians were mentioned. Also, the Cornhusker into the Fallbrook area has safety and capacity mentioned as a theme of concern. The Havelock area was concerned with the barriers to the bike network for transit-oriented development (TOD) It was also mentioned how transit could be provided in towns outside of the city. There would probably not be a fixed route, so trail extensions are being looked at for that issue.

This is just a sample of some of the areas and the comments that were made. The marble game used at our pop-up events brought a sense of what people are thinking and what they are feeling. It doesn't exactly align with the goals, so we had another question to ask specifically about the goals. What should be the top regional transportation and mobility priorities for the future? The top idea that was pretty consistent was to have transportation that supports everyone regardless of income, age or ability. This used to be the transportation equity goal, but it has been rewritten a little. It is looking at all people and those that are not able to get in a car and go where they want to go. It is interesting that this is now at the top of the list. Another top choice is smoother traffic flow and reduced congestion, with a more reliable transit system coming in second and all things related to transit. Also, there is interest in the multimodal transit center being built with hubs around the transit system and then biking and walking options were the top vote ideas.

These goals have been reviewed and updated and there is an oversight committee that contains people from a number of different departments including the county, city and outlying communities. There will also be a subcommittee structure as we start to look at the specifics of roadway projects and lead into more of the mobility plan and the bicycle pedestrian projects and policies.

These goals were largely the same as last time, but with some discussion these were the overall 8 goals. As we go through the planning process, this is what we are trying to do here, for the long-range transportation goals. The goals were displayed on the screen and include; Maintenance, Mobility and System Reliability, Livability and Travel choice, Safety and Security, Economic Vitality, Environmental Sustainability, Funding and Cost Effectiveness, and Access and Opportunity. People have been asked to rate those goals and what resonates with them the most. Once again, Access and Opportunity was the top goal. All of these goals are very important things and they all need to be considered in a good transportation plan. This is good input to keep in mind as we go through this process during the next 6 to 12 months.

Youell asked if any of this information was surprising to anyone.

Feit responded that she felt the top four goals matched the marble game. The goals on the system reliability from the marble game matches the transportation goals of the transit system structure.

Youell agreed with this comment, and one of the things heard is that transit continues to be an issue, but it has improved and there has been progress. This was mentioned particularly in the focus groups. We asked people if you had one word, what would you like transportation to feel like in 2050? The top results were safety, connected, bike friendly, walkable and roundabouts. The level of service expectations and engineering speaks for being able to drive without a lot of congestion was mentioned several times.

Campbell asked what was in the other category.

Youell responded that the other category includes level of service expectations and free flowing traffic without congestion. Also having a light rail train to Omaha, or more trails for recreational experiences. This is very apparent in planning projects. The community here is very engaged, and they are very knowledgeable and they understand their own transportation system.

Another question that was asked is what do you like best about your community? Trails and safe neighborhoods were at the top of the list. People also listed that they feel the sense of safety and community, parks and green space, walkability, people and community spirit are favorites. This is similar to other planning efforts when you hear these types of questions, but it is good to see what people are thinking.

It was also asked what would you like to see improved in the community? The active transportation and the bicycle pedestrian are by far the highest item mentioned. Safety culture and reduced car dominance have a similar type of theme. Transit and roads of infrastructure were

also mentioned. Last time, there was more emphasis on road maintenance. This will always be an issue, but some progress has been made. Youell discussed that the voting had specific comments on the maps where people could vote and say their likes and dislikes. There were 939 yes comments and 84 no, that they did not like the comment. Some of the areas that were brought up, include 62<sup>nd</sup> and Vine Street. This is where the Mopac Trail crosses Vine Street and the intersection. People would like this redone so that it is a roundabout and has pedestrian safety. Taking a look at 3200 A Street by Antelope Park and the zoo, this was one of the highest votes. It is difficult to cross with kids and the street is really busy. The next item had several votes as well. They supported narrowing to 3 lanes, because of too many accidents. Something else that was mentioned was a rail line from Downtown/Haymarket up to Omaha. They were spread across the whole city. These comments will be very helpful in the planning process and there are several things to work with and utilize going forward.

The 10 focus groups working with the city met in late October and early November to discuss positives and challenges, emphasizing what has changed in the past 5 years and ideas to improve things. There was some good positive energy that resulted from these meetings. People seemed engaged and wanted to give their input. We are eager to discuss what they thought and the positive comments received from these groups. Again, the good collaboration they see between the city, county, and different agencies makes it easier to navigate the city. The trails network of some of these have been represented from different organizations and social services.

Transit came up as an area where there is a lot of interest in seeing more or different and recognizing the availability of a transit road and the importance it plays. The signal timing came up as positive and completion of the South Beltway. This allows regional travel and moving freight traffic with progress on the maintenance with Lincoln on the Move and some of the additional funding. There has also been progress on access to jobs that support remote or hybrid working was another positive comment.

The challenges include things like keeping pace with growth and the lagging infrastructure behind new development. Also, that the cross town commuting is too long. The impact fees do not have alternatives, so looking at how you can keep pace with the development is another challenge. Finding the sources to provide infrastructure to support the growth of e bikes and scooters on the trails. It was mentioned that the rules and enforcement are not aligned well. This is an area where we want to look at policies as part of the plans.

The changes in trends are that there is a more aging population, and it is something we heard a lot and was also reflected in the pop-up events. There is also a trend in diverse populations, and an increase in homelessness was also mentioned. So, city growth and expanding boundaries for affordable housing are issues in Nebraska and across the country. Youell also stated that there have been positive comments about the funding of maintenance in the projects, and some progress on the larger projects completed in the last few years.

Additional public involvement will happen in phase two and April will be the next public engagement for this phase. We will take what we hear and will get feedback on particular

projects. Youell added that Andrew will talk about the bicycle pedestrian aspects and how the Comprehensive Plan feeds into that.

Campbell asked if there has been any discussion from the focus groups on the new computerized system of moving traffic. This has helped move traffic faster, except when you reach an intersection where both streets are significant like 9<sup>th</sup> Street where you always hit a red light. Is there any way of trying to balance it on those intersections?

Youell responded that a comment was made that congestion is still a concern, but a positive comment was about the signal coordination. So, people are paying attention and seeing that. The two major crossings were not mentioned as a particular concern, but thank you for mentioning that issue.

Christopher added that the only similar concept brought up at focus groups was that north to south travel is slow and so is east to west.

Campbell stated O Street is very well coordinated now for moving traffic east to west. There isn't an answer for it to be solved. 84<sup>th</sup> and Pioneers is not coordinated as well. But they have improved from what they used to be.

Eddins commented that 27<sup>th</sup> Street is slow. O Street to Cornhusker Highway is the worst. There are three lights and you will stop at each one, unless you speed. That is not what we are encouraging.

**Andrew Thierolf, Planning Department and Development Services Department, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE** came forward and stated that Greg mentioned the aging population. An interesting fact from our demographic projections is that for the first time this year the 75 and older age population has exceeded the 5 and under group. It will take a couple of years for the census to confirm that, but that is what our projections are showing. Now we are going to talk about the comp plan. Everything that Greg talked about had some questions in relation to the comprehensive plan attached to them. From everything we have heard so far from the public, these are more comp plan related. We had asked what do they like about the community and what would they like to see in 2050? So at the beginning of the year we will get into phase 2 and start looking at those topics and policies. The top common area that people liked overall was quality of life. Safety and parks and recreation also got several positive comments. Some specific comments were that the city is safe and peaceful, with a small town feel in a big city. Also nice parks and public schools received positive comments, and the availability of higher education.

Thierolf displayed on the screen that from the open house that there are more comments on what needs improvement than what is liked by people. The top comment on improvements is housing and overall development of the city and then government governance. There are also

several comments about improving housing prices. Landscaping on mediums was a niche comment, but it came from 10 different sources. Reducing pollution by using more solar produced many comments about sustainability and doing things with solar and wind to improve city infrastructure. Comments were made about TIF, so it was referencing Urban Development since they work with TIF neighborhood items, and it focused on infrastructure. The other side of this is the comments that said the TIF process doesn't have enough community participation. This was experienced in the most recent blight.

Eddins replied that it has been a tough conversation in her neighborhood with people and investors.

Thierolf continued with the final question of what would you like to see in the community in 2050? This brought similar ideas. Improved housing sustainability was a top idea and place making and the appearance of things. The 15 minute city was mentioned frequently and Greg mentioned the European city model, which is under the same theme. Needing more unique designs for housing was requested. People were talking about there not being very attractive homes being built. Local food was a topic of lots of comments. An indoor local food public market is something we are actively working on, along with more public murals. Universal preschool was mentioned and making better activation of public space. Fun events that bring people into our public spaces. This is a brief sample of the comments that are comp plan related.

Ebert asked on the design for housing and new development, were people talking about new neighborhoods or was it the apartments are not unique?

Eddins responded that her neighborhood they are not getting any diversity of housing. We can't get the zoning to match up.

Cruz stated that she had worked with a housing engineering firm and since there are smaller builds that are focused on affordable sustainable living, how do you make it easy with building codes to put up those types of houses. If it is challenging to put up those kinds of buildings with safety codes and zoning, those things can facilitate affordability and sustainability.

Thierolf replied that there has been discussion about design standards for a long time, and it will continue. The final item to mention is there were a lot of comments about land use. We will not talk about it today, but this could be a topic for a future briefing. Right now, we have been meeting with every single department or agency that has any part in the comprehensive plan, to go through the text and see what changes if any they would like to see. This will be going on for the next 2 or 3 months. Any questions, if not he will pass it back to Greg.

Youell spoke that working with the Comprehensive Plan in coordination with the transportation plan, most communities do not do that, and so their plans don't align well. He felt that it was helpful to do that as Lincoln/Lancaster County do. The event at Culler Middle School in October

went well and had good attendance. One neat thing was that the staff had passports for people, so you could get a stamp at each activity. Also, there was information at the meeting related to the Lincoln on the Move covering the sales tax and asking for input on projects being funded. It was also family friendly event with things for kids to do. This can be an obstacle to coming to a public meeting if you have children.

Youell also mentioned the wonderful trail foundation and the feedback received to take it to the next step and fill in some of the gaps where you can't get around on some of the trails. To make sure we move this forward, it is important to identify some projects that are a part of the whole goal. It needs to be not just a plan, but something we did that translates into projects and action and focusing on this mobility plan. The bicycle pedestrian transit piece has its own set of goals, from the LRTP and there are some similarities where they are pretty specific. One that is at the top of the list is Connected Network. Safety and Access Options mirror some of the feedback from other questions asked previously about the mobility plan. These three rose to the top.

Youell discussed that we are going to prioritize investments towards destinations and corridors. This would be designing intersections and traffic controls for a safe mobility network. It is making sure the safety theme and the design with our intersections in particular with different modes come together. This is increasing traffic transit access and supporting the needs of all, as there are people with mobility limitations. Making a separation of active modes for motorized vehicles for safety and comfort is even more apparent with e-bikes and scooters. We need to create space, as they do not belong on the sidewalks or even streets, which can be very dangerous. So where are they supposed to go? How do we promote safety and awareness for bicycles and other modes, but also trying to encourage them to follow the law? The city can support and be the backbone organization, but other organizations can really take the lead on that as well. One of the things talked about in the subcommittees is the idea of nodes and corridors. These are identified in the comprehensive plan as one of the items and it is called MOD. TOD is planning jargon for transit oriented development and MOD is just expanding that to mobility oriented development.

Youell stated if you need to get around without a vehicle, the infrastructure is supportive, whereas you might have different experiences for trails and sidewalk connectivity. The bus routes are important in the winter when biking and walking may not be possible. Youell showed an example of a concept out of the Comprehensive Plan for Gateway Mall. It shows where you can walk around and utilize different modes of transportation. These were looked at in the bike share plan and one idea is that these nodes are potentially a place where one can get off the bus and then have a bike share station. This would be infrastructure supportive and inviting to make it safe, convenient and usable. So, a node can be a physical hub and describing multimodal infrastructure that comes together providing supportive services and potentially real time arrival information, repair facilities, retail spaces and in placemaking activating those places that were discussed. In the Comprehensive Plan there are redevelopment opportunities listed as nodes focused on development. The Lincoln Zoo is one of these areas. There are trails and transit routes with a lot of activities, but not a lot of opportunity for redevelopment. This is what we would like to call an intermodal node. It may enhance and be more friendly towards other modes of transportation

or may be something the city wants to target for redevelopment opportunities. This is just the beginning of this process in identifying these nodes, where you have active transportation, and where the gaps are located. We also look at a bike demand index, which looks at population density employment and the density of the transit bike routes and a whole number of characteristics. The pedestrian signal crossing demands were in the last bike plan and are being updated for this one. We have the traffic count data and pedestrian crossing to look at the big picture. This is the first draft but is written up for 3 types of modes. They have existing city modes somewhere like Gateway Mall or something like new growth mobility modes might be in a newer area. The intermodal mobility modes may be in a place where there is not a connection to development. There also could be trails coming together that suggests a good place for a node. This is just being introduced to our subcommittee and there is a lot of interest, so it will be reviewed.

In trying to identify additional places to have nodes, we need to look at prioritizing projects where there are trails and neighborhood routes. Also, bicycle boulevards, which are in other cities. How do you get from north to south or east to west when there is no trail? There needs to potentially be a place where some street connectivity is available and additional infrastructure that provides connectivity across the city. One of the directions we want to go is prioritizing locations and projects where there may be gaps in the existing and near term system.

Rodenburg asked if they are working directly with the Pedestrian Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Youell responded yes, there have been some updates.

Christopher commented that staff have been regularly attending these meetings providing updates, mainly focused on the Mobility Plan.

Eddins stated that when going to a new city, she uses Google Maps to find pedestrian walkways and bikes, as there are no steps on a bike route. We get everywhere we need to go and won't run into problems. Bike routes are the way to go usually and they do not have curbs.

Feit replied she likes the collaborative effort, how it can be made multimodal and in a variety of ways. She liked this work, even though it is challenging. There is a lot of data to try and maneuver through and problem-solve with varying opinions. Thank you for doing that.

Ebert said Omaha is working on something that gets someone from their house to a bus stop. They described it like an Uber. This would be another option to explore that could work here or help with the last piece of the transportation plan.

Youell agreed that it is a pilot program that started free and now is \$3.00. If you are within a certain mile range of transit routes, you can register ahead and a van will come take you to the bus stop.

Cruz responded it reminds her of European cities like Amsterdam. Everything is connected to bikes and always connected to a train station, so you are able to connect and bring your bike. These hubs are places where all different modes of transportation can intersect. Anyone that rides the trails, is looking for a place to place to fill up their water bottle and there are no places.

Barnes stated that these have been good comments and conversations, but we are at the end of our time.

Youell commented that the next steps in 2026 are adding new projects, cost estimates and funding analysis, and determining what projects are realistic. There will be a lot going on in the next few months.

There being no further questions, the briefing was adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

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