



Legislation Text

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TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Approval of the revised selection process for the New Sidewalk Program

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: Kelly Dunne, Project Manager

BACKGROUND:

Since its adoption in 2004, the Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy (CSP) has served as a guiding document that defines the policies and programs for implementation of the pedestrian component of Naperville's Comprehensive Transportation Plan. The CSP serves to enhance pedestrian mobility with facilities that are safe, accessible, and provide continuity throughout the community.

In order to enhance a pedestrian-friendly environment throughout the City, the CSP established the New Sidewalk Program. The New Sidewalk Program annually installs new public sidewalk in locations that are lacking sidewalk along the roadway (sidewalk gaps). To date, the program has installed 13 miles of sidewalk in 111 gap locations.

The program has successfully expanded the City's sidewalk network for fourteen years, providing residents and visitors with increased travel mode choice, social and recreational opportunities, and connections to community facilities such as schools and parks. The program was designed to systematically install new sidewalk by annually selecting the most suitable candidates from the sidewalk gap inventory. These top candidates were located along higher-speed, higher-volume roadways, near schools and school walk routes, and in locations which did not have sidewalk on either side of the roadway.

As the program has progressed, its success has started to become an obstacle. Nearly every top scoring gap location has been filled. In fact, with the exception of some locations which have especially challenging constructability or are located along dead end roadways, the program has achieved the CSP's goal of providing sidewalk on at least one side of every street. Of the remaining gap locations, the original scoring criteria fails to distinguish top candidates. One-hundred and fourteen gaps score within ten points of each other when comparing characteristics such as proximity to schools, roadway classification, and connectivity. The scoring criteria originally created for the New Sidewalk Program is no longer able to effectively prioritize the remaining locations.

Additionally, gap locations requested by residents do not correspond with locations selected by the current scoring criteria. Residents are frustrated by a program that seemingly builds sidewalk where it is not wanted, and fails to place sidewalk in desirable locations that would meet the needs of the neighborhood.

The intent of the original scoring criteria - maximizing pedestrian safety and mobility while also considering constructability - is still valid, but the sidewalk gap selection process must be modified in order for the New Sidewalk Program to continue being effective.

DISCUSSION:

NEIGHBORHOOD GAP LOCATIONS

With the overarching goal of providing pedestrian safety and mobility throughout the City, the CSP identifies several factors which are considered in the evaluation of gap sidewalk locations: Connectivity, Parallel Routes, Proximity to School, Roadway Classification, and Constructability (see attachment for definitions). These factors serve to ensure that there is an emphasis placed on gap locations that will provide safe, connected pedestrian routes throughout the community.

The current selection process consists of determining which factors apply to a gap location, assigning the appropriate point values, and then ranking the locations from highest scoring to lowest scoring. As noted, this process is no longer effective in determining the best locations that would improve pedestrian safety and mobility.

Filtered Approach

To help differentiate gap locations, a filter will be added to the process. During their consideration of the 2018 New Sidewalk Program, the City Council expressed support for locations that are beneficial to students and locations that are within the City's corporate boundaries. Therefore, the filtered approach will remove locations that are not consistent with City Council's valued attributes and will apply the scoring system only to gaps which are located along a school walk route and are within the City's jurisdiction.

The filter will also remove locations that have a constructability rating of D or F. These challenging locations are considered cost-prohibitive and would require an undue amount of resources to construct, resulting in a program that is falling short of the goal of maximizing pedestrian mobility throughout the City.

Top Locations

Once the filters are applied, the 235 non-arterial gaps (30.1 miles) reduce to 97 gaps (9.9 miles). These 97 locations are therefore located along school walk routes, within the City's jurisdiction, and have no major constructability issues.

The remaining 138 locations are still part of the gap sidewalk database and eligible for future new sidewalk construction, but the near-term focus will be on locations that most strongly correlate to the objectives of the Comprehensive Sidewalk Policy. Of these near-term locations, the same scoring criteria and point values used in the current evaluation will continue to be applied.

Once construction of the 97 near-term locations is completed, staff will reevaluate the remaining gap locations, determine a process for selecting top candidates, and present that process to TAB for approval.

Resident Input

In the current process, residents are not made aware that the City is considering their block for

sidewalk installation until they receive notification that the location will be presented to TAB and they are invited to the upcoming meeting to provide feedback. This is a shortcoming in the selection process in that it can result in locations being proposed to TAB that are not supported by the neighborhood, and locations being overlooked that in fact are strongly supported by the neighborhood.

To incorporate resident input to a greater degree in the selection process, as well as identify pedestrian needs that the City may not be aware of, the revised process will begin by distributing a survey to all affected residents located along the highest scoring locations. Affected residents are defined as all property owners along the side of the roadway segment where sidewalk construction is proposed, whether their residence currently has sidewalk or not. Based on the responses received:

- Locations where more than 50% of property owners oppose sidewalk installation will not be brought to TAB
- Remaining locations will be ranked by percentage of support
 - Where a tie occurs, non-responses will be counted as support
- When the survey process is repeated for future programs, responses from those surveys will supersede any prior responses

When the highest scoring locations are surveyed, all gaps with an equal score will be surveyed at the same time, e.g., if 10 locations have a score of 25, property owners along all 10 locations shall be surveyed. The total amount of locations surveyed for the program is based on the funding level. For the first iteration of this approach, at least 30 locations will be surveyed to ensure that the level of resident support received allows for a robust, multi-year program. For following iterations, it is anticipated that at least 10 locations will be surveyed per year.

Proposed Locations

Top ranked locations that can be accommodated within the budgeted amount shall be brought to TAB for consideration and vetting through a public hearing process. Community input is an integral component of the Annual New Sidewalk Program and all affected residents adjacent to the proposed locations will be invited to TAB in order to provide public feedback. Public review and comment of the proposed installation locations are encouraged to ensure that new sidewalk is constructed in locations that are in the best interest of Naperville's residents, neighborhoods, and the City as a whole.

TAB will take residents' comments and discussions into consideration, as well as the factors and ranking described previously. TAB may accept or reject locations, or direct staff to conduct further investigations on specific gap locations.

ARTERIAL GAP LOCATIONS

The New Sidewalk Program serves to improve the pedestrian network, both locally and regionally. Local sidewalk segments generally benefit those who live in proximity to the new sidewalk, such as residents of a neighborhood or children walking to school. Sidewalk segments along arterial roadways benefit regional travelers - pedestrians who are traveling to other parts of the City or have destinations outside of their own neighborhood. Arterial roadways are defined as streets which serve to provide efficient traffic flow, both within the City, as well as to locations outside of Naperville. Examples of major arterials are Washington Street and 95th Street, and minor arterials include Naper

Boulevard and Aurora Avenue.

Given the difference in usage between sidewalk gaps along neighborhood streets and sidewalk gaps along arterial roadways, different criteria must be applied when selecting locations to be considered for near-term construction. The current scoring system applies high point values to arterial roadways because pedestrian safety is greatly improved by providing sidewalk along high speed, high traffic locations, and because arterial sidewalk gaps are often significant barriers to pedestrians due to their traffic volumes.

Therefore, arterial gaps will be prioritized as follows, based on the roadway's volume and speed:

1. High Speed, High Volume
2. Moderate Speed, High Volume
3. High Speed, Moderation Volume
4. Moderate Speed, Moderate Volume

High speed is defined as a posted speed limit of 40 mph or greater. High volume is defined as an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 20,000 or greater vehicles per day.

Additionally, only arterial gaps that are characterized as primary walk routes will be considered for inclusion in the near-term program. Staff defines primary walk routes as connections to established pedestrian routes or links to pedestrian generators such as parks, transit, retail, and other key pedestrian destinations.

There are 14 gap segments along arterial roadways that are considered primary walk routes, constituting 4.6 miles. The remaining 34 arterial gap segments (14.5 miles) are not considered primary walk routes.

Proposed Locations

Staff will propose arterial gap locations that provide a demonstrable benefit to pedestrian safety and mobility. Priority will be based on the speed and volume thresholds described previously. Locations that can be accommodated within the budgeted amount shall be brought to TAB for consideration.

Property owners adjacent to the proposed locations will be invited to TAB in order to provide public feedback. The initial public survey will not be carried out for sidewalk gaps along arterial roadways and property owner support will not be used to rank the proposed arterial locations. This is because implementing sidewalk links along arterial roadways is derived from high-level transportation planning and recognizing crucial gaps in the regional network, whereas connectivity within a neighborhood is typically requested by the same residents that the new sidewalk would serve. Staff plans to propose one or two locations each year based on regional travel needs.

TAB will take comments and discussions into consideration before deciding to accept, reject, or direct staff to conduct further investigations.

FUNDING

To estimate the funding level required, a cost of \$65 per linear foot of new sidewalk is used. This is the average cost from the most recent New Sidewalk Programs and includes costs from concrete, earthwork, driveway adjustments, retaining walls, parkway restoration, and other construction

elements.

Historically, \$300,000 is budgeted annually through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for new sidewalk installation; however, the budget amount is subject to City Council approval. For example, although \$300,000 was included in the CY18 CIP, City Council selected a smaller program of locations at a cost of \$75,000 for that year. Staff recommends that target funding proportions between neighborhood and arterial gaps be established on an annual basis. TAB will be asked to provide input on the proportions for how the overall funding shall be split between neighborhood gaps and arterial gaps each year.

Gap Type	Number of Locations	Length	Cost
All	283	49.2 miles	\$15.8 million
Neighborhood	97	9.9 miles	\$3.4 million
Arterial Walk Route	14	4.6 miles	\$1.6 million

For example, if TAB recommends that \$200,000 be allocated to neighborhood gaps and \$100,000 to arterial gaps each year, both types would be completed 17 years. If TAB emphasized a focus on filling neighborhood gaps and decided to recommend all \$300,000 be allocated to those locations, all neighborhood gaps would be completed after 11 years.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAM

TAB's final recommendation to City Council will be a list of locations that constitutes a three to five-year program, depending on funding level. When making the recommendation, TAB shall determine the order of construction for both neighborhood and arterial gaps, prioritizing based on resident feedback and staff justification. Recommendation and approval of a multi-year program will afford the City the opportunity to maximize the budget for new sidewalk. Staff will potentially be able to use the larger list of approved locations to include alternate locations when preparing the bid documents each year. In years where bid prices are favorable, alternate locations could be included in the recommendation for award, allowing the City to complete gaps more quickly.

In the event that a resident petitions to have sidewalk constructed in a neighborhood gap segment that was not included in the approved program, staff will bring an amendment to TAB for approval of that location, if and only if there is full support from all adjacent property owners. It will be the responsibility of the petitioner to demonstrate that 100% of property owners located along the entire gap segment are in support of installing sidewalk. The requested gap will be brought to TAB with either a positive or negative recommendation from staff, as determined by the safety and mobility factors, as well as an emphasis on school walk routes, jurisdiction, and constructability.