



## Hilltop Community Mobility Plan Community Steering Committee Meeting



### Time and Location:

Wednesday, March 4, 2009  
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
J. Ashburn Jr. Youth Center  
85 S. Clarendon Ave.

### Minutes:

#### Attendees:

| <u>Name</u>         | <u>Organization/Neighborhood</u>       |
|---------------------|--|
| Terry Stewart       | City of Columbus Transportation        |
| Christopher George  | City of Columbus Transportation        |
| Dru Bagley*         | Greater Hilltop Area Commission (GHAC) |
| Stan Thornburgh*    | GHAC/Westgate Heights                  |
| Chuck Patterson*    | GHAC Chair                             |
| Rev. Patricia Cook* | Parkview Church Pastor                 |
| Gary Smith*         | Hilltop Neighborhood Action Group      |
| Marian Lupo*        | Highland West neighborhood             |
| Charles/Wanda Gaul* | S. Wayne Ave Blockwatch                |
| Gary L. Baker, II*  | Friends of the Hilltop                 |
| Lisa Boggs*         | Ogden Avenue Blockwatch                |
| Lisa Grazier*       | Camp Chase Blockwatch                  |
| Robin Traxler*      | Westgate Neighbors Assoc.              |
| Kathy Hoke*         | Wilshire Heights Blockwatch            |
| Sue Laughlin        | GHAC/Friends of the Hilltop            |
| Justin Boggs        | GHAC                                   |
| Tara Cox            | Catholic Social Services               |
| Mr. Rhynard         | Highland West Merchants & Residents    |
| Susan Daniels       | TranSystems                            |
| Josh Sikich         | TranSystems                            |
| David Shipps        | TranSystems                            |

\*Steering Committee members

### Introduction

Terry Stewart began the meeting by welcoming the attendees. Susan Daniels introduced the team and asked the attendees to introduce themselves. Attendees were provided hard copies of the powerpoint presentation and were told that it will also be available online at [www.hilltopmobility.com](http://www.hilltopmobility.com).

### Study Overview

Susan Daniels reviewed the goals of the City of Columbus mobility planning process as they pertain to the Hilltop community:

- Balance the transportation infrastructure for moving people and goods among all modes in accordance with Columbus' Complete Streets Policy
- Reduce traffic violations, both ticketed and not detected (speeding, failure to yield to pedestrian, running red-light, etc)
- Strengthen the connection between land use and transportation
- Promote distinct and vibrant neighborhoods
- Address issues from area plans, pedestrian crash history, and concerns from the public arising from open houses, walk audits, and 311 database (traffic calming, crosswalks, sidewalks, etc.)
- Coordinate with the Columbus Bicentennial Bikeways Plan

She provided an overview of the timeline for the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan, which began in October 2008 and is set to finish by the end of 2009. The events that have occurred so far are the Steering Committee Kick-Off meeting, Community Stakeholders meeting, Public Open House, and public outreach in the community.

### Public Input on Problems

Josh Sikich provided an overview of the public outreach to identify transportation problems in the Hilltop. He described that Open Houses were scheduled and advertised for January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> but a Class 3 Snowstorm Emergency on January 28 caused cancellation of one open house and poor attendance at the other.

He described the additional public outreach that occurred at the Hilltop Library and other businesses in the community. The study team staffed tables at these locations and administered questionnaires in English and Spanish. At the library, laptops were also available for the public to complete questionnaires online. Emails were sent to community stakeholders with a link to the survey available at the website at [www.hilltopmobility.com](http://www.hilltopmobility.com). Email recipients were asked to forward the email to others.

He stated that approximately 700 people filled out the transportation survey. The majority came from visitors to the library. Over 100 were filled out online by people at their homes or businesses. Over 50 of the completed surveys were in Spanish. The overwhelming majority wrote comments in addition to checking the boxes on the surveys. He showed a map that displayed the geographic coverage of respondents, which was generally representative of the overall distribution and density of Hilltop residents. The demographic information also followed the general trends of the 2000 census.

He reviewed the survey results with text and graphs. These covered the current distribution of transportation modes used by respondents, their perceptions about how easy it is to use those modes, and their desires about the future of walking and bicycling in the Hilltop. Surveys showed that 74% of respondents said it is easy to drive an automobile, 71% stated it is easy to ride COTA, 43% stated that it is easy to walk, and 30% of respondents stated that it is easy to ride a bicycle in the Hilltop. 77% of respondents stated that they would like it to be easier to walk, and 74% stated they would like it to be easier to ride a bicycle in the Hilltop. When asked where they would like it to be easier to walk and bike, the top response was "everywhere" for both modes. Mound St. was a top location where people stated that sidewalks are needed. Broad St. was a top response for where people wanted to be able to ride a bicycle with greater ease.

The top problems with walking in the Hilltop were: no sidewalks, existing sidewalks in disrepair, and cars driving too quickly on the roads. The top problem with riding a bicycle in the Hilltop was that there is no space for bicyclists to ride, which was followed closely by problems with fast-moving cars, poor roadway surface, and unsafe feelings about riding in the existing roadways.

On-street parking on Broad St., which is currently restricted during peak travel times, was the focus of a survey question. When asked if they were in favor of on-street parking at all times on Broad St., 80% of respondents split evenly on the issue and 20% did not answer the question. Those in favor said it would help businesses and facilitate economic development. Those opposed said there was already enough parking or said there were no businesses on Broad where they would want to shop.

Josh Sikich described other findings from the surveys. 7% of respondents over the age of 18 stated that they do not have access to an automobile. 10% of respondents stated that English is not the primary language spoken in their home. People who are Hispanic rated COTA more difficult to use than non-Hispanics, and their biggest problem with COTA is not being sure how to ride, much more so than non-Hispanic people. Westgate Park was repeatedly mentioned as an easy place to walk and bike, but many commented that it is difficult to get to the park safely because of a lack of sidewalks and speeding cars. Many people stated that crime and a lack of destinations were deterrents to walking in the Hilltop. Many stated that walking in residential areas without sidewalks is difficult. Negative comments about COTA focused on appearance and maintenance of bus stops and shelters, and the need for more shelters.

### Identification of Top Issues

Josh Sikich presented a list of top transportation issues and distributed a hard copy of the list to attendees. The issues were identified from: results of the transportation survey described a moment ago; comments from Steering Committee meeting, Community Stakeholder meeting, and Public Open House; pedestrian crash history; previous planning documents and studies in the Hilltop; 311 Call Center requests; and verbal comments, emails, or other contact with the study team. He described that the top issues are also a result of the goals of the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan reviewed earlier in the meeting.

The top issues are:

- Broad St – economic development facilitated by less fast-moving cars
- Bike lanes on major roads, especially Broad, Sullivant. Bike access to downtown.
- Broad St – on-street parking 24/7 east of Hague, possibly east of Demorest
- Sullivant Ave – speeding, running red lights, too narrow
- Mound St –needs sidewalks, narrow, can remove lanes
- Hague Ave – deteriorating curbs, parking on curbs
- Westgate & all residential areas east of Hague – speeding, public says roads too narrow, parking on both sides a problem
- Wilson - sidewalks between Broad and Sullivant
- Sidewalks needed everywhere. Where they exist, they need repaired.
- Bicycle emphasis needed everywhere.

The additional issues below were mentioned repeatedly, but will not be resolved within the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan and will be discussed with the appropriate entity:

- Potholes and street maintenance
- Sidewalks on Broad west of Wilson, and on Georgesville (Franklin Township)
- Maintenance and appearance of bus stops and shelters; bus education to Hispanic and non-English speaking populations (COTA)
- Crime (Police)

### Discussion – Top Issues

Susan Daniels asked for comments from the attendees. She asked if the list of top issues surprises attendees or if they believe anything is missing.

- An attendee stated that the intersection of Broad and Lechner has many pedestrian accidents.
- An attendee asked if the bike facilities that survey respondents stated they wanted on Broad and Sullivant had to be on those streets. He asked if the bike facilities could just be in the direction of those streets, such as on parallel side streets.
  - A team member responded that survey respondents wanted easier access to destinations such as downtown, and that the most direct route to downtown is the same for cars and bicycles – on major roads such as Broad and Sullivant.
- An attendee stated that the list of top issues is pretty consistent with her understanding of the major issues. She said she liked the list and was not surprised by it.
- An attendee stated that the area around Hague and Valleyview should be included in the list of issues. Valleyview needs sidewalks.
  - A team member responded that that is a good point and the list does not reflect the fact that the School Travel Plan for Valleyview and Westmoor schools near Hague and Valleyview is one of the focus areas for the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan.
- An attendee stated that parking on Broad is an important issue. He said that parking is necessary in front of Brett's Hair Salon near Broad and Wheatland, where a COTA bus stop currently blocks parking. He said the COTA stop should be moved to be in front of the nearby medical building.
- An attendee stated that Eakin Rd needs to be included in the list of top issues because of many pedestrian accidents there.
- An attendee asked if one-way to two-way road conversions came up much in the surveys.
  - A team member responded that the issue of one-way or two-way streets was not decisive in the surveys. An initial analysis showed that some respondents said they liked the one-way roads. But there are also many speeding complaints on one-way roads.
- An attendee stated that a bike lane on Sullivant may be dangerous because of the high amount of pedestrian accidents that occur there.
- An attendee stated that she does bike on Sullivant but she is an educated bike rider. Bicyclists and car drivers need education. She said that she doesn't recommend biking currently on Broad and Sullivant for inexperienced bike riders.
- An attendee stated that the list of top issues is a pretty good list.
- An attendee stated that there is a difference between biking for recreation and biking for commuting, as well as bikers with leisurely knowledge and those with expert knowledge of how to ride.
  - A team member stated that many survey respondents desire to travel to downtown on their bicycle, so they would likely use their bikes for commuting. Other respondents also stated their desire to be able to reach the Olentangy Multi-Use Trail or Westgate Park, which would imply their desire to bike for recreation.
- An attendee stated that a Hague Ave bridge over the railroad tracks north of Broad St is necessary. It is a project that was mentioned in previous plans.
  - A team member replied that the goals of the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan, the survey responses about transportation issues, and 311 requests cause that problem to not be a top issue for the mobility plan.
- An attendee stated that ODOT traffic should be channeled east to I-270.
- An attendee stated that a local COTA bus running north-south on Hague is needed.
  - A team member replied that that was mentioned in a number of surveys. COTA will be notified of that issue. It is currently in COTA's long-term plans to initiate a Hague route.
- An attendee stated that a bicycle needs to be defined in the city code when bike lanes are put in. There are variations of bicycles that should not be included in the definition of bicycle.

- An attendee stated that prioritizing 24/7 on-street parking on Broad versus bike lanes will be an issue.
- An attendee stated that parking could be eliminated on one side of many residential streets. Another attendee added that so many houses are currently boarded up and vacant so parking can be eliminated.
- Concerning residential streets, an attendee stated that 3-way stops on one-way streets would curb speeding.
- An attendee stated that a problem on residential roads is that people park cars too close to intersections. They block sight distance. There is a lack of enforcement by police concerning parking on streets east of Hague between Broad and Mound.
- An attendee asked if there is coordination between this plan and the land use plan that is also occurring in the Hilltop.
  - A team member replied yes – this plan is by the City Transportation Division, the land use plan is by the City Planning Division, and the two study teams are coordinating.
- An attendee asked if there is coordination with the Broad St construction. He stated that ODOT is paying for 80% of the resurfacing project.
  - A team member replied that it is likely that the resurfacing will occur before the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan recommendations can be implemented. Regarding eventual implementation of mobility plan solutions, Broad St is under the jurisdiction of the City of Columbus, not the Ohio Department of Transportation.

### Work Plan for Focus Areas

Susan Daniels presented the study team's plan for the upcoming analysis of solutions over the next few months. The W. Broad Street corridor is a key focus area. The team will consider several combinations of alternatives. The alternatives will include traffic analysis and look at on-street parking, bike lanes, and pedestrian amenities such as curb extensions. The alternatives may be different east of Hague and west of Hague due to the different traffic flow and land development in those sections of Broad. The goal is to present possible solutions so that the City of Columbus and the Steering Committee can decide between the pros and cons of each.

Susan Daniels continued to say that Mound St will be a key focus corridor. Mound St has come up in the Steering Committee and other meetings, and it was mentioned many times in surveys. The study team will analyze a previous study by the City of Columbus regarding sidewalks and possibly bike lanes on Mound.

Sullivant Ave. will be analyzed for pedestrian issues. Sullivant was mentioned many times in surveys and it has a high number of pedestrian crashes. The Hilltop Community Mobility Plan study team's analysis will be limited to pedestrian crash issues and will not address potential bike lanes or other issues on Sullivant. This is because an upcoming study by the City of Columbus will focus specifically on bicycle issues on Sullivant.

Susan Daniels described the rest of the upcoming study analysis, which will be broken down into neighborhood clusters. These clusters include the neighborhoods east of Hague including Highland West; Westgate; north of Broad; west of Hague and south of Sullivant including Wilshire Heights; and others to address additional concerns from public input and 311 requests.

### Discussion – Work Plan

Susan Daniels opened the meeting up to discussion of the proposed work plan. Attendees generally were in favor of the work plan.

- An attendee stated that on Sullivant east of Hague, drivers leaving the UDF parking lot cannot see east.
- An attendee stated that speeding is a big problem on Sullivant.
- Two attendees stated that they like driving on Sullivant more than on Broad St. They said that speeding might be able to be calmed on Sullivant by sequencing the stop lights. This could allow people to get the green light continuously along Sullivant if they drive the 35 mph speed limit.
- An attendee stated that Warren and Sullivant is a problem. There are no gaps to get on the street. Pedestrians need to be given a better chance to cross Sullivant. More lights could be added.
- An attendee stated that pedestrian buttons could be installed on signals with countdowns to assist pedestrians.
- An attendee stated that parking on Sullivant makes driving the road a jigsaw puzzle. Sullivant has a combination of visibility and on-street parking problems.
- There are several blocks between traffic lights on Sullivant. Many people don't use crosswalks on Sullivant.
- An attendee noted that Broad and Sullivant are the only two ways to get downtown and to the highway.
- An attendee stated that more study is needed of Hague Ave from Sullivant up to Upper Arlington. Hague is a long corridor and the only north-south route besides Wilson.

### Next Steps

Susan Daniels reviewed the upcoming schedule. In addition to the work plan just described over the next few months, there will be walking audits in late April or May, which will be open to the public. Blockwatches and neighborhood groups will be encouraged to attend. In June, the Steering Committee will meet to provide feedback on the preliminary plans, before public input is sought in July. The Steering Committee will provide feedback on recommendations and prioritization in October and the final report will be presented to city officials by the end of the year.

An attendee stated that the churches need to be kept informed of all activities. Josh Sikich replied that the churches have received notification of all events in the mail. Unfortunately it has been difficult to get many of them to participate, with some notable exceptions. Outreach to church leaders has even been attempted on Sunday mornings.

### School Travel Plan Update

David Shipps provided an overview of activities regarding the School Travel Plan for Valleyview and Westmoor schools near the Valleyview and Hague intersection. The plan is a subset of the Hilltop Community Mobility Plan. He described that a School Travel Plan seeks to encourage safe, active transportation for students to and from school in the form of walking and biking. It is required for a Safe Routes To School application, which applies for federal money in order to improve conditions for walking and biking near schools.

He stated that a kick-off meeting was held in January with the schools' principals and other stakeholders. He invited everyone to an upcoming meeting in the field on March 12 at the schools to identify problem areas. A final School Travel Plan will be completed by May of this year.

After the School Travel Plan update, the meeting concluded.