

Blue Ribbon Commission Report

Recommendations on Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure Improvements

July 2017

Plan Development:

Our committee consisted of seven individuals appointed by the Mayor and Village Board. Those members included:

- Richard McFarlane, Chair
- Susie Kuruvilla, Member
- Bob Shuppert, Member
- Nancy Hill, Member
- Joyce Mason, Member
- Randy Seebach, Member
- Paul Bruno, Member

Five members represent different neighborhoods within the Village. In addition, the Executive Director of the Gurnee Park District and the Director of Planning and Land Preservation for the Lake County Forest Preserve District joined our group. Significant support was provided by Jack Linehan, Assistant to the Village Administrator, Eric Venden, GIS Coordinator and members of the Village Engineering Division. Their support was critical with the organization and communication for this initiative, and our sincere appreciation is extended to them.

Our process started with the development of a set of guidelines that were used as a foundation for the preparation of the Improvement Plan. We then performed an evaluation of the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the Village to determine what was in place currently. A preliminary map was prepared that identified existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, schools, parks, roads and regional trails.

We reviewed historical plans from the Village's 1994 Pedestrian/Bicycle Trail Master Plan and the 2016 Pedestrian Survey and incorporated elements of that Master Plan and Survey into the Commissions Improvement Plan. An extensive review of the neighborhoods was completed to determine inefficiencies. We also paid particular attention to the requirements of the three distinct areas of the village which are based on the division of major north-south roads. Those areas were identified as west of the Interstate 94, between Interstate 94 and U.S. Highway 41, and the east of U.S. Highway 41 to the Village's shared boundary with the City of Waukegan. Each area has specific characteristics that were considered.

A list of recommended infrastructure improvement projects was created and prioritized based on our interpretation of urgency and its relation to guidelines that were developed

early on. We associated these improvement projects with the corresponding guiding principle(s) as shown below.

Guiding principles:

1. Improve connectivity to regional trails (Des Plaines River Trail, and the Millennium Trail).
2. Improve connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian paths and sidewalks to schools, parks, and recreational facilities.
3. Improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along major roads within the Village. For our purposes, major roads were identified as:
 - Grand Avenue
 - Washington Street
 - Almond Road
 - Milwaukee Avenue (Route 21)
 - Hunt Club Road
 - Dilley's Road
 - Gages Lake Road
4. Improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to local businesses.
5. Eliminate existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure gaps.

Commission Goals:

Our Commission was given the responsibility of developing a long term Improvement Plan to make Gurnee a more accessible and connected community through improved sidewalks, paths and trails that provide safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the Village. Trails and Paths provide safer ways to get around, offer a huge return on investment in terms of providing more options for mobility, provide a means for keeping families healthy and can be an economic driver for communities.

The Improvement Plan shall:

- 1) Serve as a guide for future planning, design and implementation of a Village-wide effort to improve connectivity to places of employment, local businesses, schools, parks, forest preserves and other destinations throughout Lake County.
- 2) Be consistent with the Gurnee Park District's **Go Gurnee** initiative by promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for Village residents.

- 3) Compliment the Lake County Health Department's effort to encourage a change in the physical environment to provide safe and active living throughout the County.
- 4) Address comments/concerns received from the Villages 2016 Pedestrian Survey.
- 5) Build off the recommendations from the Villages 1994 Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan.
- 6) Reduce vehicle congestion and vehicle emissions within the Village by providing safe non-motorized transportation alternatives.

Recommendations:

The Commission is recommending 30 specific projects that will improve accessibility and connectivity for pedestrian and bicyclists. In addition, each project has been associated with a primary and secondary guiding principles that served as the foundation for its selection as an important project. Attached to this report is a table of the recommended projects that are grouped by priority, which are based on which project will have the most impact and provide an immediate benefit to the community.

Implementation:

The implementation this multi-year Improvement Plan will be dependent on resources available each year and the partnership with transportation agencies, local businesses and land developers. Active collaboration will benefit both the timing of implementation and the funding. The establishment of partnerships will yield a much more integrated system that will be more cost effective and completed in a timelier manner.

We believe long term success requires attention to three key areas:

1. Communication
2. Accountability
3. Integration

Communication

The benefits of the Improvement Plan and the implementation by the Village must be communicated to Village residents with regular updates as additional elements are added. The new Village website will be a great tool to accomplish this, along with the mayor's updates and announcements through emails. Establishing an e-newsletter that will provide interested residences with information and updates on the Improvement Plan and a means for tracking its progress.

Village staff and elected officials should constantly look for opportunities to provide information about the Improvement Plan including the participation in transportation

agency Stakeholder Involvement Groups, Community Advisory Groups and attend public open houses or hearings on road improvement projects within or adjacent the Village. Village staff and elected officials should constantly be aware of new land developments or re-developments within or adjacent the Village and use the plan review process as an opportunity to communicate the Village’s desire to improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and possibly complete some of the planned improvements at little or no cost to the Village.

Coordination of the improvement plan and updates should be shared universally with the Gurnee Park District, Lake County, transportation agencies, potential developers and neighboring villages. Regular updates, coordination and communication of the Villages planned improvements will help complete and fund the work at the least cost to residents and local businesses.

Accountability

The Villages Administration Department seems like the appropriate group to be responsible for tracking the progress of the Improvement Plan and incorporating the projects through the budget process. They can also coordinate with Village Engineering Division and the Public Works Department to complete the Improvement Plan projects.

We recommend mandatory progress reports on the Improvement Plan in the village Strategic Plan/Budget reviews.

Integration

Implementation will be a multi-year effort dependent on funding and resources available each year. The development of partnerships will benefit both the timing of implementation and funding. Through these collaboration efforts, a stronger more integrated system will develop that will make sense for Village residents.

For example: The Lake County Division of Transportation is planning improvements to the intersection of Hunt Club Road and Grand Avenue. Through participation in public meetings and plan reviews, the Village and Park District provide input on the Improvement Plan early on in the planning for road improvement project. Taking advantage of road improvements and redevelopment will play a major role to achieving our goals and completing the Village projects sooner and at a reduced cost.

The Gurnee Park District is already sponsoring the Go Gurnee program that promotes wellness activity. This is a great program that encourages residents to set goals and commit to walking and a healthier lifestyle. Implementation of this Improvement Plan will play a significant role in supporting the Go Gurnee program by providing safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Funding:

Collaboration by Gurnee, Lake County, Lake County Division of Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation and land developers will create joint funding opportunities that can significantly reduce the Village's capital commitment for these improvement projects. Coordinated grant applications for state, regional, and federal funding opportunities can speed up the implementation and create the integration discussed above. The Chicago Metropolitan Area Planning Council (CMAP) also provides grants for trail projects. The Active Transportation Alliance, which is part of CMAP, is also a valuable connection. It is recommended that Village staff and elected officials regularly scan the horizon for grant opportunities and prioritize which projects are stronger candidates for outside funding.

Signage and striping:

Much can be accomplished by adding signs and possibly striping existing Village roads. Some of the roads may already be wide enough to accommodate a 5-foot striped bike lane. This striping combined with a "share the road" sign will alert drivers and provide a designated space for bicycles. Just having the marked lane will raise awareness of residents to biking and walking opportunities. In addition, participation will be enhanced with good communication on the ground.

Providing wayfinding signage for pedestrian and bicycle paths will help eliminate confusion and promote a safer experience.

Providing information kiosks at Village entry points and on regional trails with a map showing the existing and proposed Village paths will help promote the Improvement Plan, local businesses and reduce confusion. QR codes can be placed within the kiosk and possibly include printed copies of the maps that allow users to take it with them. Coordinate signage to incorporate elements of the Village logo for consistency, and incorporate the Go Gurnee logo.