



City of Aurora

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1	Planning and Zoning Commission	04/16/2025	Forwarded	Building, Zoning, and Economic Development Committee	04/23/2025		Pass

Action Text: A motion was made by Mr. Kuehl, seconded by Mr. Roberts, that this agenda item be Forwarded to the Building, Zoning, and Economic Development Committee, on the agenda for 4/23/2025. The motion carried.

Notes: *Mr. Minnella said good evening, Alex Minnella, Senior Planner with the office of Economic Development, for those of you who I have not had the pleasure to meet. Tonight, we are discussing the 2025 City of Aurora's Bicycle Pedestrian Plan. I would be remiss if I didn't introduce also to you honorable members of the Commission and Chairman, my colleagues Roopa Anjanappa and Kevin Anderson, as well as our consultant Eric Mueller with Epstein, an architectural firm and planning and engineering firm in Chicago.*
I'd like to provide you a brief overview, a context to put this discussion in context. In 2009, the City of Aurora approved the first Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Consequently, also the City approved through resolution the institution of the Bicycle Pedestrian Committee Advisory Board. Ever since, that plan was meant to be a comprehensive plan, a long-range plan. Due to its nature, the Comprehensive Plan and any planning plan has to be a flexible document. It has to be adaptive. And as you can tell just from the...(inaudible, microphone cutting out)

Chairman Pilmer said could we just turn that one off and use the one up top?

Mr. Minnella said absolutely.

Chairman Pilmer said there we go. Thank you.

Mr. Minnella said since 2009, 16 years have passed by, and the landscape of the built environment has changed as well as how people navigate through the space to go from Destination A to Destination B. We have the obligation to be current and answer any needs and wants that the public might have. And also, we need to adapt the transportation system. We need to adapt it to what the trends are. In light of that, in 2015, the Planning and Zoning Staff, back then under the leadership of Stephane Phifer, former Director, initiated the discussion of changing, amending the Bicycle Pedestrian Plan. Few details were addressed back then at the Planning Commission level. We took our time to digest all the information that we needed to present to Planning Commission members and the consequent boards and commissions. But then, Covid happened, and we simply took a step back and we thought maybe this was the time to assign this level of competence and this level of detail to consultants. That's the reason why in 2023, the City procured a request for qualification to assign this monumental project. I mean, looking at it with a magnifier lens, the entire City. And Epstein was the qualified consultant chosen to carry the work before you tonight.

As you can tell, 2023, 2025, it took a lot of community engagement efforts. It took also Staff time, the Advisory Board which I have to give kudos to, who was involved, who was instrumental in shaping the new 2025 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan before you. And with this being said, this document is absolutely a valuable tool to advance our City standards and being recognized not only locally, but regionally and statewide, and why not nationwide. The City achieved the bronze designation as a Bicycle Pedestrian community, so bicycle-friendly community and I'd like to simply pass the baton to our consultant, Eric Mueller, to guide you through the plan. Thank you.

Chairman Pilmer said thank you.

Mr. Mueller said alright, let's go back to the first slide there. Hello everyone, I'm Eric Mueller. I'm a Planner with Epstein Architecture and Engineering and Construction firm based out of Chicago, and we have been working with the City of Aurora to develop this Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. So, today, I just want to take you through the planning process that we went through, the purpose and goals of this plan, the public engagement that we did with the community of Aurora, the existing conditions and the existing Bicycle and Pedestrian networks that we analyzed when making this plan, as well as a needs analysis to see where were the greatest areas of need within Aurora. And finally, obviously, the meat and potatoes of this whole thing are the recommendations, both infrastructure as well as policies and programs. And we'll spend a little bit more time in that area.

(Mr. Mueller submitted and explained a presentation on the new 2025 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that is attached.)

Chairman Pilmer said thank you. Very impressive. When I first read this, I thought it's taken 2 years to get to this point, now I see why. It's a lot. I thank you and the group and all the volunteers. A lot of impressive work. Does Staff...I think...any questions?

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said I have one.

Chairman Pilmer said sure.

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said just, again, very impressive. And we are looking forward to seeing a lot of the proposed improvements actually show up in our neighborhoods. Just a question in terms of did you have any discussions on timelines of when to start implementing some of these recommendations, if, you know, this needs for Committees to be able to do that? I don't know what's...

Mr. Mueller said yeah, I mean, a lot of that's going to depend on City rules and what can be implemented. And a lot of that does come down to the City itself and what, a lot of times, what they want to implement first. I know some of the things we had recommendations in there and they came to us, and were like, "oh, we're already implementing that." We're like, we're gonna take that out because, great, you're already doing things. But yeah, timeline, it kind of depends on the City and what they want to address first. Obviously, we've put in the priority areas and that's kind of like, "hey, this is where you should start looking first. Look at these 5 priority areas. Are there any projects in here that make sense?" And then just kind of figuring out the best way to implement sidewalks as well. It's a lot of sidewalk, so obviously you can't do it all at once. It's just kind of slowly chipping away at that as well.

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said okay. Is there any recommendations for funding sources? Is that in the plan?

Mr. Mueller said it's in the plan. We didn't include it here...

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said I didn't get to read it, but...

Mr. Mueller said there are...we have a whole table of funding sources provided that where they can go to, the types of facilities they would apply to, and I wish I had it actually in this presentation but it's a...just a large table, a lot of check marks, kind of shows you what roadways...well, there's one that shows you what roadways are the different facilities acceptable but then the funding kind of goes down like, okay, this grant or this program is suitable for off street facilities. This is suitable for sidewalks but not bike lanes. This one's for bike lanes. So, they kind of vary. In all different levels, some might be federal, some might be state grants, as well as sometimes you can also find out through CMAP, the regional planning agency's always plugged into those funding agencies as well.

Mr. Kuehl said I'm an avid biker, and it's a great place to bike, just Aurora. This plan is really...it's phenomenal. It's really nice.

Mr. Mueller said thank you.

Mr. Kuehl said a lot of stuff. One thing I was wondering about, is there anything about E-Bikes in it? They're becoming more and more...

Mr. Mueller said so, I believe there is something (inaudible) talks about it with a policy regarding E-Bikes class or speed limits, but I believe Roopa or Alex might be able to speak to it. Like, it's already being worked through with the City or the Park District.

Ms. Anjanappa said (off mic) should I just come up there?

Chairman Pilmer said sure. If you could just state your name, please, for the record.

Ms. Anjanappa said sure. This is Roopa Anjanappa from Public Works Engineering. I think a lot of discussion was made for the E-Bikes when we were building up this plan. I think one thing that came up was basically about the speed limit. The trails that we have within City of Aurora are the regional trails, which is the Fox River Trail, and I think Fox Valley Park District has come up with some sort of an ordinance for, you know, the Class 1 and Class 2 E-Bikes and their speed limits. And obviously, as the City of Aurora and, you know, hosting those regional trails, I think we kind of piggy-back on those. So, we'll have to see how things go. And I think just today I heard that DuPage County is also working on some of the plans. And I probably will be sitting on those meetings. And, you know, we'll hear more about it and see what different counties are doing and then probably, like you know, take some input from there and see what we could do. But having said that, most of our trails are, you know, more like a side path. They're not necessarily a regional trail. So, we'll have to just coordinate and see what's best for us.

Mr. Kuehl said okay.

Chairman Pilmer said thank you.

Mr. Lee said if I could follow up on Mr. Kuehl's question; in 2025, would bike lanes also accommodate electric scooters?

Mr. Mueller said that would have to be in the discussion. So, again, that would depend on the City or community. Obviously, if you go to a place like Chicago, yes, E-Scooters are in the bike lanes. So, typically, they are allowed but that would have to be something as well that the City would have to look at in terms of...in addition to E-Bike speed limits, and seeing what Dupage County what their current trails plan that they're working on, as well as the other trail policies that are going into place.

Mr. Lee said would you be able to tell us some of the other communities that have achieved gold status?

Mr. Mueller said gold status, yes. There are five, let's see if I can remember them. I believe Portland, Oregon is one. Davis, California. Boulder, Colorado. I want to say there's one more in Colorado and one more in California. The highest one in...one of the highest ones in Illinois is Urbana, and it is silver. So, that's a good one to think of in terms of Illinois as well.

Mr. Lee said I hate to be the grammar police, but you have "liaison" spelled incorrectly on one of the slides.

Mr. Mueller said do I? That is good to know. I do. I have it spelled 2 different ways there. Thank you.

Mr. Roberts said just from a process perspective, I'm curious we're...I'm assuming we're going to adopt this but then it sounds like the general direction we want to go is the City and then it's incumbent upon Public Works and Economic Development to go out and secure the funding, the budget for all of the infrastructure changes and help prioritize that? Is that kind of how it works once we...?

Mr. Mueller said yeah, usually...we're helping with the planning process, creating the blueprint, making the recommendations. And so, when it comes to a lot of implementation, looking for funds and finding the right consultants and engineers to design these facilities, that does fall back on to City and Public Works to make sure what's recommended in the plan is achieved, which actually goes back to also the Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator. That would kind of be that role: to make sure what's in the plan is actually getting implemented and achieved within the City.

Mr. Roberts said okay. And that being the principal in the Public Works Department then? That would be...

Mr. Mueller said yeah, Public Works has led this, although I believe it would be...Public Works on that one. I can't speak completely to City structure on that.

Ms. Anjanappa said sorry, so the question was about how do we implement these...

Mr. Roberts said yeah, I just...once the plan gets approved, who owns it and is responsible for pushing it forward and securing the budgets...

Ms. Anjanappa said right. It's absolutely Public Works Engineering Department. You know, just like Eric was mentioning, once we have the plan ready, I think the goal for us is to go for the grant programs. So, there are several grant programs that we normally go for. Those would be I-Tech grants and C-Map grants and Tap grants and the HSIP, you know, which could...Highway Safety Improvement Program. That basically looks at enhancing the safety at intersections which also looks at the bike and pedestrian as well. I think our goal was...would be to go for the grants, because obviously these projects are going to be really expensive. And once we go for a grant, and if we are eligible and we get rewarded those projects, it takes a couple year because there's a Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 Engineering that goes into it, and obviously any plan that we build needs to be reviewed by IDOT and that's a process in itself. So, if we do get a grant, let's say this year, which we already applied for a couple of projects and we're waiting for announcements, so, if we get the grant awarded this year, it may take up to 5 years to actually see the built facilities.

Mr. Roberts said thank you.

Mr. Minnella said also, if I may, I'd like also to give kudos to the Zoning and Planning Department because spot improvements are also pursued every time a development comes in, and Ed Sieben, Tracey Vacek, and their Staff also pursue those connections if and when those connections are feasible and possible. So, Final Plans you will see at times that missing gaps are filled because we think that through and...

Chairman Pilmer said because we look at additional plans throughout the City, Tracey and Ed and their team would look to make those changes at that time which...(inaudible)...

Mr. Minnella said they never miss a connection.

Chairman Pilmer said good.

Ms. Anjanappa said and I just want to add another point. So, we have something called Contract 2 which looks at resurfacing projects. So, if there are some low budget projects and something that we can achieve through those contracts, we normally take care of it. And that should happen within 2 or 3 years. And we don't necessarily have to wait for those 5 years after we get the grant.

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said can I ask one more question regarding existing facilities? Are there any new ideas to maybe if you come across a sidewalk that's 5 foot, is there ways that you looked at to make it

a multi-use path as opposed to rebuilding, you know, building another one adjacent to it? Would we look at some of those in the plan as well?

Mr. Mueller said yes, I will mention anything that's a side path. It would essentially, in some of the areas, just replace the sidewalk that's there. It's for pedestrians and for bicyclists. We would never recommend putting them side-by-side because it would be redundant...

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said I was talking about like across the street...

Mr. Mueller said oh, across the street...

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said (inaudible) concept...

Mr. Mueller said yeah, sometimes that recommendation would be there. So, that way bicyclists would be able to travel on one side of the street, but also that way pedestrians also have access on both sides of the street if they want to cross it, and they're not just stuck on one side as well. And sometimes we might recommend side paths on both sides of the street as well, and that would be also just to allow bicyclists more freedom and access throughout the City, and that way they're not like, "alright, I'm on over here, now let's cross and go down to this street, and have to work my way back around." They can just go back on the same street.

Mr. Gonzales said I have a quick question. So, was there any recommendations or updates to safe biking now that there may be some paths going through the downtown area, whether...in the evening time...whether it's the reflective vests, beacons that are flashing, or just some sort of additional safety that might be put in place where putting more bicyclists in the downtown area in the evening time?

Mr. Mueller said yeah, yeah. I mean, that's definitely one where...definitely comes in handy with 1, a lot of the education recommendations. Making sure people understand to wear helmets, even reflective vests. Obviously, we can't really go around and tell adults always to wear reflective vests but just educating people that it's good to wear there. My misspelled bicycle liaison would...and the police department...that would also be a part of their job. Just making sure everyone's safe as well. Making sure people have proper reflectors on their bikes, vests, helmets, and making sure everyone's safe. And it could also be incorporated with a lot of these things: bike month or a group ride, putting down flashing beacons and lights so that way, hey, we know this group ride happens in the evening in downtown every Thursday night. Let's make sure we have lights out there for them. So, it can be incorporated into a lot of things.

Mr. Pickens said two things: I didn't hear any mention of toilet facilities. Is there any study on that? You know, like Gilman Trail, that's a long way sometimes and I know there's a lot of woods, but women don't like to use the woods. So, has there been any discussion about that?

Mr. Mueller said unfortunately, we have not had that discussion. That is an excellent point you bring up though. But along with those trails, a lot of that too making sure proper trail heads are in place and that those facilities are implemented there. We didn't really have that as a part of our study. More like where should these go, not necessarily what facilities should be along the trails as well.

Mr. Pickens said okay. And the second item I had is probably drilling in too much detail, but I'm a Gilman and Waubonsie Creek Trail guy, and that gap between the 2 trails, it looks like a no-brainer just to follow the creek. Is there property lines that go down the middle of the creek for them farmers? Or is it...is there easements on each side of that? Who owns the creek?

Mr. Mueller said there is a property there that made it more difficult to build within there. I cannot remember the name of the person who owns it, but they own a large part of that property. I'm trying to remember where on here. But that kind of was the reason we couldn't follow the creek. And there were no easements for it.

Mr. Pickens said it's a lot easier.

Mr. Mueller said it would be a lot easier. That's why we had to play around with a lot of different creative ideas for this.

Mr. Pickens said better off with rafts down the river.

Chairman Pilmer said any other questions? Thank you very much. Well done.

Mr. Minnella said if I may, just to...I wanted to point out that this would be a Public Hearing item.

Chairman Pilmer said so, this is a Public Hearing. Anyone in the audience who wants to address the Commission, they will have the right to do so. And I'll state for the record that no one has come forward. And I will close the Public Hearing. And does Staff have a recommendation?

Mr. Minnella said Staff recommends approval of the Resolution adopting the 2025 City of Aurora's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Chairman Pilmer said you've heard Staff's recommendation. Is there a motion?

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: Mr. Kuehl

MOTION SECONDED BY: Mr. Roberts

AYES: Chairman Pilmer, Mr. Chambers, Mr. Gonzales, Mr. Kuehl, Mr. Lee, Mrs. Owusu-Safo, Mr. Pickens, and Mr. Roberts.

NAYS: 0

Motion carried.

Chairman Pilmer said motion carries. And then, where will this next go?

Mr. Minnella said next week, Wednesday, Building, Zoning, and Economic Development Committee, April 23rd.

Chairman Pilmer said thank you.

Mr. Minnella said thank you. Good evening.

Aye: 8 Chairperson Pilmer, At Large Lee, At Large Chambers, At Large Gonzales, At Large Owusu-Safo, At Large Pickens, At Large Roberts and At Large Kuehl

Text of Legislative File 25-0244