Multimodal Transportation Commission
9/25/24
ACTION MINUTES

These action minutes are intended to provide the reader with an overview of the committee meeting and actions made during the meeting.

For detailed information on this meeting please refer to the meeting recording Video located on the commission webpage or contact Jessica Morriss with any questions.

Present: Jack Igelman (Chair), Kenny Amstrong (Vice-Chair), Joseph Chesler, Leanna Joyner, Bill Loftis, Elyse Marder, Jaik Smith, Randy Warren, and Jared Wheatley
Absent: Cate Ryba and Mike Zukoski
QUORUM: Yes

Meeting start: 3:00 PM
Meeting end: 4:50 PM

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
Welcoming of Members, Staff, and Public	Heard at 3:00 PM
September 25, 2024, Agenda - Review & Approval	Heard at 3:05 PM; Motion made by Joseph Chesler to approve the September 25, 2024 Agenda, seconded by Elyse Marder, all in favor, motion passed.
August 28, 2024, Minutes - Review & Approval	Heard at 3:06 PM; Motion made by Elyse Marder to approve the August 28, 2024 Minutes, seconded by Leanna Joyner, all in favor, motion passed.
Public Comment	
Planning & Zoning Commission Land Acknowledgement - Jared Wheatley	Heard at 3:13 PM; Jared Wheatley read Planning & Zoning Commission's newly adopted Land Acknowledgement and noted that the commission is working through the process for a proposed amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan. ● Elyse Marder shared a recent Human Relations Commission Meeting included a Land Acknowledgement as well. ● Kenny Armstrong moved to have the Land Acknowledgement added to a future Multimodal Commission Meeting for open discussion, seconded by Randy Warren, all in favor, motion passed..

Announcements

Festival of Neighborhoods - Elyse Marder	Heard at 3:09 PM; Elyse Marder advised the Planning Committee has canceled the event scheduled for Saturday, September 14th, due to inclement weather. No alternative date scheduled. The committee voted to hold the festival in Spring 2025, possibly the last Saturday in April or the first Saturday in May.
Fire Prevention Kickoff Event - Jaik Smith	Heard at 3:11 PM; Jaik Smith shared the event scheduled for Saturday, September 28th, is canceled due to inclement weather.
Multimodal Transportation Commission Communication Standards - Jack Igelman	Heard at 3:11 PM; Jack Igelman stated he appreciates the work done outside of the commission but encourages members to send email requests to the Chair and Vice-Chair so they may keep track, determine the best course of action, and to make sure items are included in future meeting agendas.

New Business

Asheville Transportation Bond Project - Jaime Matthews	Heard at 3:19 PM; Jamie Matthews presented a comprehensive overview of all bond categories through a Presentation and Video. ● Joseph Chesler raised a question regarding the absence of transit projects in the $20 million capital allocation, despite known needs for the ART system, including rolling stock, the ART Place project, and maintenance facility improvements. ○ Jamie Matthews advised that while these transit projects are priorities based on adopted plans, they are not yet ready for this bond. The city aims for a more regular bond cycle to address numerous capital needs. ● Randy Warren noted during infrastructure improvements like paving, the Multimodal Transportation Commission emphasizes that Complete Streets and Vision Zero policies must be prioritized. Every road resurfacing project presents a 10-15 year opportunity to improve safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians, by adding bike lanes, shared lanes, or crosswalks.

Address Public Comment from Rebecca Norr-Hartman regarding Traffic Calming for Sulphur Springs Road - Christopher Cairns	Heard at 3:35 PM; Christopher Cairns advised the City received two traffic calming petitions for Sulphur Springs Road in the last year. Data collection shows it marginally meets requirements. Previously, speed humps weren't allowed due to emergency response times, but this can be re-evaluated. The City also installed two additional speed limit signs in each direction (four total) and, in early September, placed radar feedback signs in each direction to encourage drivers to self-regulate their speed. ● Elyse Marder shared that at a recent Neighborhood Advisory Committee meeting, traffic calming policy was identified as a key topic for discussion next year. Many neighbors are concerned and interested in this issue but lack understanding about the process for implementing such measures. Ms. Marder suggested this would be a good topic for NAC and MMTC to consider together. ○ Christopher Cairns responded that staff plans to update the policy within the coming year and have engaged internal stakeholders. Limited staff availability and the time-intensive nature of the process contribute to resident frustration. ● Jared Wheatley asked if the policy is not in the UDO, if speed humps are the most effective physical addition as speed deterrents, and proposed tailoring solutions to different solutions. ○ Christopher Cairns advised the policy is not in the UDO, it was approved by City Council in 2014 and the City currently permits only two traffic calming devices. While other ideas like chicanes and street chokes exist, they could be future considerations. Managing more options is difficult, but the City's goal is to simplify the process for residents. ● Randy Warren asked if the policy determines what implements can be used for speed calming or is it City Council approved. Mr. Warren agreed with Jared Wheatley that the City should not limit use of a few tools when more are available, despite the difficulty managing different options. ○ Christopher Cairns noted all raised devices, like speed humps, require

approval from both the Fire Department and Traffic Engineering to be legal and code-compliant.

- Randy Warren mentioned community involvement in both the policy's creation and evaluation would be beneficial, especially since this is the first update in a decade. If possible, the City could use volunteer neighborhood advocates for evaluation to reduce department workload and customize solutions. A key goal is to ensure equitable access to these resources for all neighborhoods.
- Jack Igelman noted during the MMTC January and February retreat, the commission identified four key work areas for 2024: Gap plan implementation, transit improvements, input on current projects and policies, and traffic calming. This last point is crucial, and members believe collaboration, rather than independent work, will yield better solutions. Mr. Igelman asked Christopher Cairns if he could clarify the rollout, timing, potential barriers, and the public input process for the traffic calming policy, especially considering the potential bond passing.
    - Christopher Cairns stated Traffic Engineering is getting help from the Transportation Planning Group. Later this year, staff plans to seek consulting help to consolidate ideas and organize public and stakeholder input, which is a crucial part of the process expected to begin next calendar year.
- Jack Igelman asked since public pressure is a factor, how can MMTC be as responsive as possible within the Commission’s constraints.
    - Christopher Cairns advised the policy update has strong momentum, he had no suggestions at this time. However, patience is needed with the current traffic calming process. There's a misconception that traffic calming can happen quickly, but it's a years-long process, even in the best-case scenario. While traffic calming is a valuable tool to lower speeds, it's not instant or universally applicable. The City needs to manage expectations and communicate this to the public. Additionally, sometimes help is needed

from residents to start petitions and to get agreement on implementation, as there are many points of public interaction where assistance is appreciated.

- Kenny Armstrong thanked Christopher Cairns for his work lowering speed limits as a positive first step impacting traffic calming based on both car speed and the speed limit. Bond money for new fire stations could help diversify how public response times are affected by speed humps.
    - Christopher Cairns noted Mr. Armstrong made a good point, speed cushions have improved response times on some streets, making them eligible for policies where they previously didn't qualify.

Recap last month's work session at the Burton St Community Center - Jack Igleman	Heard at 3:50 PM; Jack Igelman noted that to align with MMTC Retreats held in January and February. MMTC held an in-person meeting in May, and another in August at the Burton Street Community Center. Mr. Igelman asked if MMTC should continue holding in-person meetings, how to improve effectiveness and engagement, and when to hold the next meeting. ● Bill Loftis shared he valued in-person meetings for fostering closer connections, even if technology doesn't yet allow for hybrid options. Occasional in-person meetings are highly beneficial. ● Elyse Marder agreed with Mr. Loftis and noted the Neighborhood Advisory Committee plans to hold in-person meetings as well. ● Jaik Smith shared he is a strong advocate for in-person meetings. The Neighborhood Advisory Committee decided to move to monthly in-person sessions, finding it more productive than bi-monthly, demonstrating that many groups appreciate meeting in person. ● Maggie Ullman mentioned she enjoys in-person peer learning sessions, where members and staff familiarize themselves with information and generate ideas. ● Randy Warren noted In-person meetings are crucial for deep dives into projects, allowing for collaborative discussions, mapping, and sharing diverse experiences. The last meeting felt more like an update

session, which could be handled online, rather than utilizing the group's expertise for significant impact. MMTC should leverage in-person time for substantive work, making members a valuable resource to influence plans, not just receive updates. Observing reactions and agreements in person is also more effective. This should guide MMTC's future in-person meeting structures.

- Elyse Marder asked if the next in-person meeting can be held in January 2025. No objections from members.
- Jack Igelman asked members for topics for future discussions.
    - Randy Warren suggested holding a Traffic Calming Meeting where attendees pool their best traffic calming experiences from around the world to discuss with Christopher Cairns and his staff. This would allow MMTC to evaluate various resources—determining which are suitable, occasional, or never-to-be-used—and consider their costs.
    - Elyse Marder proposed a discussion regarding sidewalks and roadways, given that previous MMTC meetings focused on Transit and Greenways.
    - Kenny Armstrong mentioned framing the next meeting as a discussion about traffic to attract more participants who want to comment and be part of the meeting.
    - Leanna Joyner cautioned that traffic calming is an emotive issue due to safety concerns, creating a learning curve for acceptable change within desired timeframes. It is important to balance public engagement with realistic expectations to ensure productive outcomes and avoid setting false hopes for quick resolutions. Clear communication of parameters is crucial to encourage participation without discouraging it.
    - Kenny Armstrong suggested discussing parking and parking minimums.
- Jack Igelman asked if any members would be interested in joining an ad hoc group to begin planning the January 2025 meeting.
    - Maggie Ullman and Randy Warren volunteered.

Haywood Rd Resurfacing Project	Heard at 4:05 PM; Brandon Merithew provided an overview of the resurfacing project for a two mile stretch of Haywood Rd. Key elements of the project include keeping the current 20 MPH zones, reducing other sections to 25 MPH, adding rectangular rapid flashing beacons at intersections, adding bulb-outs, including bike lanes (both directions), and striping the road based on use. The project's bid date is October 15th with an anticipated two-year timeframe for construction depending on weather. ● Randy Warren inquired whether the speed limit for the section without bike lanes would be 20 MPH. ○ Brandon Merithew advised per Chase Carver that this is correct. Due to it being a resurfacing project, NCDOT did not purchase an additional right-of-way to widen the road. The lower speed limit is for traffic calming purposes. ● Joseph Chesler referenced sheet 10, station 105, located across from Battlecat Coffee Bar, noting the frequent presence of multiple semi-trucks with building materials queued in the escape lane, and inquired whether this issue had been discussed with local businesses. ○ Brandon Merithew responded that public meetings were conducted to gather input from local businesses and a Business Association meeting will be held September 26th at the West Asheville Library at 10:00 AM. ● Elyse Marder expressed her satisfaction with the increased number of pedestrian bulb-outs at several crosswalk locations. ● Kenny Armstrong inquired about the nature of the project had there been no City involvement. ○ Brandon Merithew noted the City's significant contributions to the project, including invaluable input and knowledge that shaped the design. The City was also responsible for sidewalk maintenance, and for using and funding cast iron truncated domes for ADA curb ramps. Merithew also pointed out bulb outs. The City's work, maintenance, and overall support and input throughout the project were exceptional.

- Anna Sexton recognized the NCDOT's efforts and willingness to consider approaches for this project beyond a traditional resurfacing.

Unfinished Business

Intercept Survey for Greenways - Leanna Joyner & Hayley Burton	Heard at 4:28 PM; Leanna Joyner advised she did not have a full report due to shifting schedules and requested city staff to provide updates. Anna Sexton shared an overview of both the Intercept Survey and Bike Ped Counts noting a full report will be available at the October meeting: ▷ Held the second Week of September ▷ 8 survey shifts at 2 sites (Recreational Greenway and WMA Dyman Greenway) ▷ 22 volunteers (7 from Multimodal Transportation Commission or Active Transportation Committee) ▷ 315 survey responses collected (approx. 40 per shift)
Annual Bike Ped Counts - Anna Sexton	Heard at 4:28 PM; Anna Sexton shared an overview of both the Intercept Survey and Bike Ped Counts noting a full report will be available at the October meeting: ▷ Held the second Week of September ▷ 44 count shifts completed across 30 sites ▷ Approximately 40% first-time volunteers ▷ 5 new count sites added this year: ▷Hilliard Ave and Biltmore Ave ▷Phifer and McDowell St ▷Amboy Rd and Lyman Meadow Rd ▷Bleachery Blvd and Swannanoa River Rd ▷Overlook Rd and Springside Rd ▷ New sites were chosen due to recent or upcoming pedestrian improvements, or to expand data collection in South Asheville (e.g., Overlook Rd and Springside Rd, which are on the GAP plan and near schools/community activities). ● Randy Warren expressed his gratitude for the hard work and including southside locations. Mr. Warren noted the southside area is a huge nexus for potential bike and pedestrian activity, with four schools in the Overlook area. Due to lack of facilities it is currently dominated by motorized vehicles. ● Kenny Armstrong noted he enjoyed being out on the greenway with City staff to observe the diversity of people using these facilities and talking with people. Mr.

Armstrong also added conducting bike counts downtown was also insightful, revealing the number of people out in the community.
- Jack Igelman extended his gratitude to Leanna Joyner for her assistance in organizing, and to Anna Sexton, Hayley Burton, and all staff involved.

General Committee Updates – Latest Agendas

Planning & Zoning Commission - Maggie Ullman	Heard at 4:36 PM; Maggie Ullman shared that the City Council held a work session focused on zoning updates and displacement strategies. It emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates upzoning, affordable housing, and displacement policies. The timeline for implementing changes, such as removing parking minimums and increasing home repair programs, was also presented. The Planning and Zoning committee will lead regulatory reforms, while the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee will collaborate on housing and community development. Ms. Ullman encourages reviewing the slide deck for more details and understanding the plan and timeline.
Transit Committee - Joseph Chesler	Heard at 4:40 PM; Joseph Chesler stated the last Transit meeting focused on staff updates and reports regarding the ART program. A significant portion of the discussion was about $967,000 in rescinded federal grant funds that the county offered to the city. The City council voted on whether to accept funds during their September 24, 2024 meeting. Mr. Chesler asked Maggie Ullman if the council voted to accept these funds. ● Maggie Ullman confirmed the council did vote to accept the funds. Joseph Chesler continued providing a breakdown of how funds will be used. ▷ $655,000 to purchase an additional bus in Fiscal Year 2025, allowing Transit to reach their goal of purchasing four to five buses per year, ▷ $62,000 of the funds will be used for a six-month pilot project for South Asheville Route S3, which includes adding two additional trips in the morning and evening.

	▷ $250,000 for a mobile faire payment system with an ongoing annual cost of $990,000 to improve ticket and pass purchasing for riders. Joseph Chesler noted the Transit Committee wasn't in total agreement with the use of the funds but understands the challenges that staff face in their present capital budget. ● Amber Wagner shared that the City Council approved accepting the $1.3 million of rescinded funds from Buncombe with the net of $967,000 to go forward with the expenditures mentioned by Mr. Chesler. Ms. Wagner noted there were conditions upon accepting these funds. Staff will review the County's request regarding a WE2 connection between our service and the Enka Candler Trailblazer that will be analyzed as part of the Comprehensive Operation Analysis, as well as further service expansion under the Transit Master Plan for Routes S3 and S6.
Active Transportation Committee - Leanna Joyner	Heard at 4:44 PM; Leanna Joyner advised a mobile meeting was held in September at the Walmart parking lot, where attendees walked most of the route for the Swannanoa River Greenway. The construction of the Greenway is beginning, which is seen as an exciting development that will connect important places on the east side of the city.
Neighborhood Advisory Committee - Jaik Smith	Heard at 4:47 PM; Jaik Smith reported Elise Murder was nominated as Chair and Elizabeth Lakus as Vice Chair. There are also a few open vacancies within the committee, which they plan to fill in January, as the city is now appointing these roles quarterly. The committee also set and discussed most of their future goals, including work sessions on topics like traffic calming, and will continue to develop goals at their next meeting in November.
I-26 Aesthetics Committee - Lucy Crown	Heard at 4:49 PM; Lucy advised there were no updates at this time.
Future Agenda Items	Not Heard, list of Future Agenda Items for Commission Members' reference
Adjournment	4:50 PM