

Minutes

OPDC Updates

Wanda Wilson, Oakland Planning and Development Corporation

Every few months OPDC hosts a town hall gathering with news about what's going on in the neighborhood. Tonight we'll be hearing some transportation updates.

Wednesday, April 18, 6 pm: OPDC is hosting a community meeting about the proposed development on McKee at the site of the Jewish Federation. Walnut Capital will review the plans of their proposed redevelopment and OPDC will also be introducing and talking about potential opportunities for capturing value of new development happening in the Oakland neighborhood to fund community improvement initiatives.

Saturday, April 28: There are two events happening on Saturday, April 28. OPDC is working with the Pennsylvania Resource Council on a Hard-to-Recycle event that morning (9 AM-1 PM). Later that day the Coalition of Oakland Residents is hosting a fun event at Zulema Parklet (12 PM-4 PM). It is a great opportunity to come and hang out with your neighbors and have a bite to eat. There will be a rummage sale and some other activities. Please tell your neighbors about both of these events.

Thursday, April 12 and April 19, 5:30 pm: A yoga instructor will be offering free yoga for the community. Feel free to bring your own mat, but if you don't have one she will have some available.

Oakland Community Land Trust: OPDC is currently selling our first Community Land Trust home in West Oakland to an income-qualified buyer and will have a few other homes available later this year. Please let your friends and neighbors know about the CLT if they are interested in buying a home in Oakland or if they would like to put their home in the CLT.

Oakland Affordable Living: OPDC is accepting applications for Oakland Affordable Living, 49 affordable rental units in West Oakland.

Next Town Hall: OPDC's next town hall will be in June. OPDC will be focusing on some further design and planning topics.

Q: When is the next meeting about the Mon-Oakland Mobility Plan?

A: No meeting has been scheduled yet. You can find out more on their website: <http://mon-oaklandmobility.com/>

Healthy Ride

David White, Healthy Ride

Healthy Ride is a small nonprofit that owns and operates Pittsburgh's bike share system. Their goal is to expand access to public transportation via active transportation. Currently there are 50 healthy ride stations throughout the city and the bikes are available for point-to-point rides. Pittsburgh has one of the most affordable bike share systems in the country.

For the past six months, Healthy Ride has offered free 15-minute rides with your Port Authority Connect Card (and this pilot program is now being extended another 6 months). They also offer a pay as you go rate of \$2/30 minutes and monthly passes for those who regularly use the bikes. Since 2015, people have taken over 200,000 trips via the Healthy Ride bikes.

Healthy Ride is currently working on a large expansion of their system for 2018. The planning for this expansion began in 2016 with several neighborhood and citywide meetings. They launched an online, “Suggest a Station” tool, which received over 2,000 station suggestions and 5,600 recommendations. They then performed a technical analysis of the proposed stations based on access to transit, solar cover (the stations are solar powered), steep slopes and hillsides, proximity to bike lanes, and areas of concern identified by the city. They also prioritized census blocks with high numbers of people who do not own cars and whose income are lower than the Area Median Income. This is an aggressive expansion (to 175 stations from 50 current stations) and will create a denser footprint as well as expand into new neighborhoods.

Healthy Ride will begin installing equipment next month. Installation will occur in phases and they anticipate that installation will take about 6 months. They have also redesigned the station to create a smaller footprint and include more lightweight signage. Currently, Healthy Ride has a few large stations, in the future there will be multiple smaller stations to allow for a greater number of trips. You can see maps of all the proposed stations and provide feedback on their website: <https://healthyridepgh.com/>

Where are the stations in Oakland?

- Forbes Ave. at Carnegie Mellon
- Forbes Ave. and Morewood Ave.
- Margaret Morrison St. and Forbes Ave.
- Tech St. and Margaret Morrison St.
- Frew St. at Hunt Library
- Craig St. and Center Ave.
- Bayard St. and Craig St.
- Craig St. and Fifth Ave.
- Forbes Ave. and Craig St.
- Ruskin Ave. and Bigelow Blvd.
- Bellefield Ave. and Fillmore St.
- Fifth Ave. and Tennyson Ave.
- Fifth Ave. and Bigelow Blvd.
- Forbes Ave. and Bigelow Blvd.
- O’hara St. and De Soto St.
- Bouquet Ave. and Sennott St.
- Sennott St. and Atwood St.
- Forbes Ave. and Coltart St.
- Semple St. and Louisa St.
- Swinburne St. and Dawson St.
- Junction Hollow Trail at Boundary St.
- Technology Dr. and Bates St.
- Technology Dr. and Middle Access Dr.

Q: People will only ride the bikes downhill.

A: Yes. Part of our job from an operations side is to check on the bikes and move them around the city.

Q: There are some Healthy Ride stations on the Southside, but what about at the other end of the trail in the Waterfront?

A: We would love to get there, but it is a bit too far out of our network right now.

Q: Are any of these proposed stations going to be taking up existing parking spots?

A: Our goal is to occupy the spot between the cross walk and the first parking spot. But in some cases, where the turning radius is too tight, we will need to use a parking spot.

Q: I think you shouldn’t give up any parking spots. I regularly have cars parked illegally in front of my house between the first parking space and the corner and it is very dangerous.

A: We understand that parking is in high demand and we are trying to encourage people to use other forms of transit besides cars.

Q: Students park their cars and don't move them. You won't eliminate the need for parking by having more bikes.

Q: I've been a patron of healthy ride and I travel a lot to other cities and there is a different mentality out in Portland or Seattle where bicyclists are welcomed and cars are the secondary priority. It is much safer there. I am afraid to ride on the roads here because I am afraid of being hit by a car. So I think it's a great idea to take away a parking spot to make more room for bicyclists.

Q: I'm not trying to be your opponent, but I think there are many bicyclists in Pittsburgh who need to be more aware of drivers and pedestrians. I frequently see bicyclists riding the wrong way on Atwood St., cutting across traffic, or riding on a sidewalk.

Q: I appreciate the Connect Card partnership, but university students and staff have their bus pass on their university ID cards. Have you considered expanding the benefits to university ID cards so students and staff can take advantage of it?

A: University students can get a Connect Card for a dollar. We have offered to integrate with the University ID cards, but it is harder than we expected.

Q: Will the stations around CMU's campus be on CMU property or in the public right of way?

A: Our goal is to have all of these stations in the public right of way on a side walk or street location so that we can access them for service and maintenance.

Q: Have you considered any stations in Oakcliffe, the other part of South Oakland on the far side of the Boulevard. We have a lot of Point Park students and are seeing more Pitt students recently.

A: There are many parts of the city we would like to cover. It has been a hard decision to narrow down the locations. Do you have a recommended location?

Q: Craft Ave and Boulevard of the Allies.

Q: Walnut Capital is building a two-story garage in that area. Maybe you could have a little corner for a station.

Q: With this proposed increase in ridership, how are you addressing safety concerns? Do the bikes have lights? Do you provide helmets?

A: The bikes have both front and rear lights that come on as soon as you start peddling. They also have safety instructions that encourage people to follow the rules of the road. State law does not require that people wear helmets. We encourage people to use their own helmets, but other cities have found that providing helmet rentals did not increase safety (because rented helmets are usually not well-fitted to users' heads).

Q: Do you pay rent to the city for the locations of the bike share stations?

A: No. We have an operations agreement with the city.

Oakland Transportation Updates

Justin Miller, Department of Mobility and Infrastructure, City of Pittsburgh

The new Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) began about a year ago. It combines services that were scattered across several different departments including City Planning and the Department of Public Works. DOMI includes planning policy and permitting, traffic operations, project design and delivery, and the paving program.

DOMI uses the following measures of success:

- Zero traffic related deaths or serious injuries
- Access to fresh foods within 30 minutes, without a private vehicle
- Trips less than a mile should be enjoyable by non-vehicle travel
- Street intersections should be intuitively navigated by a 14 year old child
- Transportation should be affordable, so that the cost of housing and transit do not exceed 45% of a household's income.

Bus Rapid Transit

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project has been going on for a few years. They are currently in the thick of planning and looking into grants. The goal is to have better transit reliability and performance for all modes—not just buses. Currently, buses tend to stack together in Oakland and don't provide efficient service. We need a street network that operates more efficiently.

The BRT will include upgrading vehicles, stations, signals, and sidewalks and creating better coordination between connections. Most of the infrastructure changes will be between Downtown and Oakland including rebuilding streets and sidewalks. In this central corridor, busses will operated in their own designated lanes. There will be major reconstruction in Uptown. In Oakland, Fifth Avenue will be partially reconstructed on the southern side with new sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. The Forbes Betterment project is currently laying the groundwork on Forbes. Forbes will be expanded to allow three through lanes at Craft Ave and a new right hand turn lane. Through Oakland, the right lane on Forbes will be for busses only and the two remaining lanes will be for cars. There will be a BRT station on Forbes between Oakland and Bouquet.

There are several upcoming public meetings scheduled for this month through the end of May to talk about the design and get community input. The Port Authority will also be sharing a revised service plan in response to the concerns from people in the Mon Valley.

Timeline:

- April/May
 - finalize service plan for non-BRT routes with survey and community input
 - 30% design complete
 - Secure funding for final design
- Mid 2018
 - Branding and naming discussions
 - Begin final design
- 2019 final design
- 2020-2021 construction

- Late 2021: service begins

Q: Is the BRT just another name for a dedicated bus lane from Downtown to Oakland?

A: Yes.

Q: Are there no bicycle lanes on Forbes?

A: I didn't get into a detailed plan, but we will have detailed drawings at next month's meeting. There will be a two-way cycle lane on Fifth Avenue.

Bigelow Boulevard

DOMI is working with the University of Pittsburgh to take a fresh look at how Bigelow Boulevard operates between Forbes Ave and Fifth Ave. They have made a few temporary changes adding bike lanes and making the mid-block crossing more visible. The goal is to make the flow better, increase pedestrian safety, and beautify the public space.

About 8,000 cars pass through this section of road every day and about three times that number of people use the crosswalks (at Fifth, Forbes, and mid-block) every day. So the highest usage of the street is people crossing. Pitt wants to create better connections between the Cathedral of Learning and the William Pitt Student Union, upgrade the crosswalk, and keep the perimeter crosswalks working well. They also want to make sure that curbside drop offs can still happen (shuttles, Uber/Lyft), provide ADA parking spaces, and maintain traffic flow for through traffic and those turning onto Fifth and Forbes.

This is a work in progress, they will be coming back later this year with updates based on feedback from the previous community meeting. The current design includes a raised crosswalk in the middle of the block; planters for the middle and the sides to guide pedestrians, beautify the street, and manage storm water; and places for quick drop off activities.

There will be another meeting before the design is finalized but no date has been set, so stay tuned.

Q: People cross Bigelow at locations other than the crosswalk. Why can't we have a controlled light? Is it just because Pitt says that the students wouldn't obey a light?

A: They are looking into investigating having a crossing guard during peak hours. Hopefully by the next meeting we can have an answer. I don't know right now one way or the other.

Q: They had a similar problem at PPG center during the games and they put a fence on Center so you can only cross at the crosswalk. They also have that on Fifth by the Cathedral.

A: A lot of the planters and other changes proposed would also have that effect. But there are three times as many people on foot. If you take that volume and send it to the crosswalks at the corner, it will take longer for people to turn onto Bigelow from Fifth or Forbes.

Q: Do you drive that route regularly? When classes are changing? I would rather have a longer signal for students to cross than to worry about students jumping out into the road. Give them time to cross the street and a signal to make it safer.

Q: Is there no parking in this plan?

A: There are a few metered ADA spots, but other than that there is no metered parking, just places for drop off and pick up.

Citywide Steps Assessment

DOMI is working to make sense of the archaic but unique and interesting system of stairs in the city. They are critical links to our transportation networks. There are about 800 sets of stairs with varying ages, materials, and conditions. Their goal is to prioritize and strategize how to invest in the repair and replacement of these stairs and come up with new designs and materials based on lifecycle costs.

The first step in the process was public outreach to get input about the stairs that people use and like. They are targeting stairs based on transit access, school access, and a detour index (how far would you have to detour if that staircase was not in use). They have prioritized the top 10% based on these metrics. You can see a map of the stairs here: <http://pittsburghpa.gov/domi/planning-design/steps.html>

Mon-Oakland Mobility Plan

The goal of the Mon-Oakland Mobility Plan is to connect Oakland, Panther Hollow, Four Mile Run, and Hazelwood using electric, and potentially autonomous, vehicles, circulating on-demand within the service area. Project goals: (1) address storm water flooding and landslide conditions in neighborhoods between Oakland and the Mon; (2) address connectivity and access gaps between Mon Valley neighborhoods and Oakland employment/service district; (3) promote sustainable mobility and development; (4) preserve/enhance neighborhood/traveler safety and local quality of life; (5) buildable/operable in the near term.

The next meeting will be held in May with PWSA.

This project originated out of a storm water management project that has been needed for a long time in the Hollow and in the Run. The storm water project is happening. PWSA has funding and is moving forward. Because PWSA will need to replace the trail, DOMI wanted to address mobility at the same time and add another type of mobility connection. Through meetings with the different neighborhoods, they came up with five alternatives which have now been narrowed down to one. This plan includes bike and pedestrian paths, stairs, and a mobility trail to carry some type of electrical vehicle which is cleaner and quieter and will carry about 10-15 people between Oakland and Hazelwood on demand. The mobility trail hugs the railroad tracks operating on Sylvan Avenue, which has been closed for a number of decades. There is a separate bike and pedestrian trail. They still need to work out what happens at Selma St. and Greenfield Ave. as well as what happens at the top of the hill in Oakland. The route will circulate through the Hazelwood Green site and potentially through the Tech Center on the South Side. More information is available at mon-oaklandmobility.com

Q: Do you have buy-in from the railroad to hug their rail lines?

A: We are required to be 15 feet from the center of the tracks. Everything proposed is on city property—we are not encroaching on the railroad right of way.

Charles Anderson Bridge

The Anderson Bridge needs to be significantly rehabbed or replaced. Money has been set aside to address the issues as part of the regional transportation master plan. There will be some level of disruption to the community, as there was with the closure of the Greenfield Bridge.

DOMI wants to provide the safest and most useful connection possible. They have contracted with Michael Baker International for engineering and design work and will be developing a purpose and needs statement, a historic bridge rehab analysis (since it is a historically listed bridge), an engineering analysis, and an alternatives analysis. DOMI will go through that process with their team and the community. They want to know: what are the important connections to and from the neighborhood and the region. The current bridge is not suitable for bikes or pedestrians and is barely suitable for cars.

Q: What was the cost of the Greenfield Bridge?

A: In the neighborhood of \$20 million. This would be similar or a bit more. It would depend on rehab vs. replacement.

Q: I hope you will think through ways to reducing speeding. It is currently dangerous with the turns on and off the Boulevard.

Q: Will this happen after the Mon-Oakland Mobility Plan is implemented?

A: I am involved in both projects and folks on that team are aware of the Anderson Bridge project and will be phasing it so that we are not dropping a bridge on new infrastructure.

Q: Are you prepared for the detours?

A: No, not yet. But we will be. It will depend on whether we decide to do a rehab or a replacement. If we rehab the bridge, we can do half at a time. There may also be an option to build a new one while the old one still exists. We don't know which options we have yet.

Q: What kinds of constraints are we working with? Budget? Historic designation?

A: It is not a historic designation like Greenfield, where there were pieces people wanted to preserve. We do, however, want to be context sensitive. For instance, the railing and lighting will have a historic look.

Q: This "historic" bridge got a major update in the 80s when the city stapled fencing to the railing. Can we have the view restored in some way?

A: I hope so. Or at least have the fencing in a way that is more ascetically pleasing. Railroads require fencing on anything crossing their right of way.

Q: When will construction begin?

A: That's a good question. We won't have an answer until we go through the alternatives analysis.

Q: Would the Mon-Oakland connector underneath the bridge be open?

A: If there is a demolition we would have to close it temporarily, probably a week or two. Like with the Greenfield Bridge when 376 was closed for a weekend.

Q: Is the railroad going to let you drop a bridge on the railroad?

A: There is not a whole lot we can do about that. We would have to work something out with them.

Q: Is it unreasonable to ask for a temporary (heading toward permanent) pedestrian or bike connection across the hollow during the construction?

A: That would be cost prohibitive.

Q: Even if it zig-zagged down the hill?

A: If it goes down the hill we probably could.

Q: We want to connect down to the trails.

Q: What about connecting to the trails on the park side, to the Bridle Trail?

A: There is a possibility of doing that, getting closer to the trail head parking lot. It is a muddy switchback now, and we want to improve that as well as provide connections to the lake—we just need to figure out how to get people across the tracks legally.

Q: Will the scope include looking at the access ramps?

A: It doesn't go all the way to the cloverleaf ramps, just a few hundred feet on either side of the bridge.

Q: What would be involved to include the cloverleaf?

A: Lots of millions of dollars, it would be another project.

Q: It would be nice to provide continuous bike connection from the Boulevard to Panther Hollow Bridge by widening that ramp.

Q: Would you provide any protection plan to the houses below the bridge?

A: I don't know how in danger they would be. The demolition crew would give us a report. We learned a lot from the Davis Avenue Bridge project.

****DOMI invited community members to share suggestions on connections and priorities (via sticky notes) on a map of the Anderson Bridge.****

- Create a secondary bike-pedestrian bridge down to the hollow and the lake
- Keep sidewalks on both sides
- Keep four lanes of traffic
- If adding a bike lane, make the bridge wider
- The intersection at Boulevard and Parkview is dangerous and the city hasn't wanted a light or stop sign. Need better intersection safety.
- Have the bridge come into the Boulevard at a straight angle so visibility is better.
- Provide access for the bike lane to enter through the playground
- The current sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate pedestrian usage.
- Healthy Ride station bikes at Anderson Bridge and Parkview are fixed, add connection for bikes.
- Reopen Juno St. for bike/pedestrian connections
- There is a great horned owl's nest under the bridge
- Connect the bridge to Bridle Trail for bikes and pedestrians
- Is it possible to re-grade the Murphy Trail?