

Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2018
8:00 – 10:00 a.m.
Duquesne University Student Union, Africa Room

Present: Greg Alan (Duquesne Light), Anthony Boule (Parking Authority), Derek Dauphin (DCP), Ruari Egan (PWSA), Bill Generett (Duquesne University), Tad Hale (Avenu), Amy Hart (Center for Hearing & Deaf Services), Josh Henschel (Resident), Amber Jackson (Bethlehem Haven), Simona Loberant (SEA), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Shantalaya Mathews (URA), Jeanne McNutt (Uptown Partners), Justin Miller (DOMI), Ray Morrison (Uptown Resident), James Myers Jr. (Urban Innovation21), Kristen Osterwood (GBA), Tim Parks (Life's Work), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Janet Strahosky (Bethlehem Haven), Andréa Stanford (Allegheny County), Joe Wingenfeld (Uptown Partners), Joan Hayek (Duquesne University)

Regrets: Roger Altmeyer (UPMC-Mercy), Terri Baltimore (Hill House Association), Angelica Cirianni (GBA), Cliff Blashford (NRG), Gary Desjardins (PPG Paints Arena), Rich DiClaudio (Energy Innovation Center), Craig Dunham (representing Pittsburgh Penguins), Debbi Linhart (Bethlehem Haven), John Kraemer (NRG), Brian Kurtz (PDP), Linda Metropoulos (ACTION – Housing), Leslie Montgomery (Pittsburgh Blind and Vision Services), Rebekkah Ranallo (OPDC), John Wilds (Pitt)

Invited/Absent: Antoine Davis (Pittsburgh Police), Kirk Holbrook (Rep. Wheatley), Marimba Milliones (Hill CDC), Carl Redwood, Jr. (Hill Consensus Group), Sonny Williams, Daniel Wood (Councilman Lavelle)

Guests: Mike Burdelsky (Allegheny County), Michael Dillon (Allegheny County Public Works), David Harper (Duquesne University), Megan Jahrling (Duquesne University), Mark Minoski (Duquesne University), Ann Ogoreuc (Allegheny County)

Call to Order/Welcome: Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting at 8:09 a.m. with a welcome and an introduction of all the present Task Force members. Mary Ellen made a special welcome to Andréa Stanford, who will now be representing Allegheny County at Uptown Taskforce meetings.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Ellen asked for a motion to have the March meetings minutes approved that were previously distributed to all members via email. The motion was approved with no dissent.

Agenda Discussions:

Presentations:

(1) Armstrong Tunnel Project: Mike Burdelsky of Allegheny County presented on the updates that are planned for the Armstrong Tunnels. Mike began by giving a little history on the tunnels. They were originally built in 1926 to connect the Southside neighborhood to the Uptown neighborhood and Downtown, and the last time they were rehabbed was in the 1990s. They are on the National Register for Historical Places.

The scope of the upcoming construction includes new lighting, fire and heat detection, as well as structural repairs, etc. The new configuration inside the tunnel will go down to one lane, expanding into two lanes at the end of each tunnel on the outbound sides, one lane for left turns and one lane for straight and right turns. The wider shoulders will act as a pedestrian refuge if something were to happen in the tunnel.

There will be detours during construction. Regarding time frame, the project is about to go into the final design phase. They are looking to receive bids in early October of 2019 and to begin construction in early 2020. Right now, they are looking at closing both of the tunnels for about 10 months, reopening them to traffic in late 2020. The county is considering phased construction and closing only one tunnel at a time. If this were to happen, the project would take a year and a half to two years, reopening the tunnels to traffic in 2021. The current cost estimate for this project is \$10 million dollars.

Michael Burdelsky stated that the upcoming BRT project will not interfere with their construction, nor vice versa. He then opened the floor to questions.

Some questions posed by Task Force members:

Will pedestrian safety be improved as part of the project? They are hoping the tunnel will be brighter with the new lighting, and since the tunnel will be only one lane, cars won't be traveling as fast, or as close to the shoulder as they currently are. A second question was asked about the noise, and if that could be improved for pedestrians. Since the tunnel bores are so high, there is a major echo effect, but they will look into materials that could possibly help reduce noise inside the tunnel.

Will there be any improvements to exterior of tunnel? The plan is to clean it only, as they cannot do much else due to the historical nature of the tunnels. A follow-up question was asked about how the lanes will be marked in the tunnel. They will use line striping most likely. Or, potentially candle sticks/plastic bollards.

Will a bike lane be added? At this time, they are not considering adding a bike lane as it would have to end in the middle of the tunnel, and there are no bike lanes marked on either side of the tunnels. A Taskforce member mentioned that the new BRT project does have a bike lane projected for the Forbes Ave. side. Mike followed up by saying that they are definitely open to discussing the addition of a bike lane in the future, however right now, it is a safety hazard connecting the potential bike lane in the tunnel to the Downtown side of the tunnel. The tunnel is also a federally funded project, so all bike facilities would have to meet federal standards.

What's the current maintenance agreement for the tunnel? The County owns the tunnels, but that the City owns and maintains the lighting in the tunnel and is also in charge of cleaning, i.e. debris removal. Everything else falls to the County.

Mike then clarified the phased construction option of the project. He mentioned that there is not enough space in the tunnel to make one bore a two-way tunnel. Therefore, if one tunnel is closed, that traffic would still have to go on a detour. Therefore, they are leaning toward closing both bores to make this only a ten month project instead of a year and half long project. This decision will be made during the final design phase. Finally, Mike mentioned that the 10th Street Bridge will be done at the end of the year, so there will a one year break between projects.

(2) Duquesne University A.J. Palumbo Center Project: David Harper, Duquesne University's Athletic Director, presented the proposed Palumbo Center Renovations to the Task Force. He started by explaining Athletics has been exploring fundraising opportunities, and that he believes the renovation of the Palumbo Center could better align Duquesne's athletics with other Division I athletic programs.

A video animation of conceptual renderings was played. The renderings showed a new façade that is open on Forbes Avenue, with two floors of floor-to-ceiling windows, which will be much more aesthetically pleasing than the current façade. There will be two entrances to the new building, one next to the fire station on Forbes, and the other will still be on McGee Street, closer into campus. The back area of the new center will become a fieldhouse, an indoor field area that will allow teams to practice in inclement weather.

The mechanics of the building will be located on top of the building, and they will all be covered. The capacity of the building will be the same.

Some questions from Task Force members:

What's the energy goal of the building? They are currently planning on going for LEED certification, and they do want everything in the building to be as energy efficient as possible.

How are you going to deal with crowds for events on a smaller (10ft) sidewalk? The entrance for events will be on McGee Street, so there won't be any crowds gathering on Forbes Avenue. The inside lobby will now be able to hold more people, so there will be more space to efficiently greet larger crowds.

Will this facility be available to the public? There's the potential for corporate partners to create an academy for mentoring public school students with Duquesne student athletes, and the potential for other community programming. Due to liability issues, the University cannot open the facility to the public for workout space use.

Will any trees be planted on Forbes Avenue? The project is in the early stage of planning and they are open to any ideas. It was also suggested that the project should be coordinated with Justin Miller of the Department of Mobility & Infrastructure to make sure that the plans line up with the upcoming BRT project plans for landscape, hardscape, sidewalks, etc.

Will the roof be able to include solar panels or storm water collection? At this time the plan does not include solar panels or storm water collection. It was requested that someone from Duquesne meet with the GBA, as well as the PWSA, to discuss ways to make the building more green as well as how to lower its storm water fees. Mary Ellen will facilitate the connection to get a meeting scheduled.

David Harper closed by saying that he would follow-up again with the Task Force when they enter the final design phase.

Discussion of Presentations with Task Force Members:

Mary Ellen opened the floor for post-presentation discussions.

Armstrong Tunnel – Members felt there should be more consideration/discussion of potential for enhancing the pedestrian walkway and introducing a bike lane, if possible. There was also discussion of potential for rerouting truck traffic to improve pedestrian and bike safety. After discussion, it was decided that Andréa Stanford will report the Task Force's feedback and concerns to the County to determine further consideration of these issues.

Palumbo Center – Some members said that overall, the renovations were positive, but the University needed to look into ways to add greenery along the sidewalk, as well as how to achieve a higher LEED certification. They were also interested in Duquesne pursuing conversations with PSWA to see what options may be integrated into the plan to address storm water issues. Mary Ellen said that she would make sure that the appropriate DU representatives will meet with those organizations and will report back to the Task Force.

Sub-committee Updates:

Development Sub-Committee – They shared a document with all Task Force members to help establish their work plan. They will review this document at their next meeting. They have an upcoming meeting with the URA to discuss property acquisition requirements and procedures.

Community Sub-Committee – They are making progress with the Slow Streets project. They have identified two options for completion of the project (1) to have the city pick the artist after they are vetted by the Community Sub-committee, or (2) the artist can be chosen by a local organization and then that organization helps complete the art. Joe Wingenfeld said that the Uptown Board said that all of this could take too long and that it seems a better idea to strip the confined area. A small 6 ft. by 9 ft. space is not worth the temporary art process. Another Task Force member agreed, saying that maybe the money would be best spent somewhere else in Uptown. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Task Force would follow-up at the next meeting after the Community Sub-committee discussed the remaining options. Currently, they are prioritizing projects. They passed out a survey to all Task Force members and posted it online to help with this task.

Mobility Sub-Committee – There was no update at this time.

Infrastructure Sub-Committee – There was no update at this time.

Member Updates:

Avenue: There is a food truck planned for every Wednesday this summer in their parking lot. They are losing a lot of parking to UPMC-Mercy and the new Vision Institute, so they are currently looking for other options.

Port Authority: There are more BRT project meetings coming up, so the Taskforce will be made aware of those. A revised service plan will be pitched at an upcoming community meeting.

Urban Innovation21: There was a joint event held with UI21 and Duquesne University that introduced the University's facilities management to local minority owned and women owned businesses. Facilities will be in touch with those businesses throughout the summer as projects are decided on for the campus.

Uptown Partners: The Duquesne Sustainable MBA Program gave presentations about adding solar energy sources into the neighborhood that are legal. UP will be studying properties in Uptown to see if any of those options might work. 3 of the houses on Moultrie Street have been purchased. The current owner is going to redo them and sell, hopefully for an affordable price. Open Streets is coming again to Forbes Avenue over Memorial Day Weekend (Sunday, May 27). UP will be following up with Bill Generett to discuss this further. UP is also partnering with Duquesne for their Spring Cleanup on April 14th. UP submitted a grant to the Heinz Endowments which is looking promising, to hire a neighborhood advocate as well as allow them to work on conservatorship projects to repurpose long-term blighted, vacant building. Finally, the UP Board voted in support of the new Vision Institute at UPMC Mercy.

Duquesne University: Bill Generett recently traveled to Bilbao, Spain to present on inclusion innovation occurring in Pittsburgh. IDOM, a prominent consulting, engineering and architecture firm, really wants to get involved in Pittsburgh, as they have in Pittsburgh's sister city Bilbao. Bill will share his presentation and other conference presentations with the group, and he is hoping to get more MBE and WBE involved with the upcoming potential projects.

Bethlehem Haven: They received their fire permit at their new space so they are almost finished with 905 Watson. The Task Force will be invited to the open house. No updates on 1402-1408.

PWSA: There is about \$150,000 that the green infrastructure team wants to use for a grant program. That decision goes in front of the board later this month. They are currently working with the BRT project on

storm water management. Next week, the zoning goes into place for green spaces larger than 500 sq. ft. that must submit a storm water form.

City Planning: The Public Art Program received some applications for their projects but they are pushing back their deadlines in order to bring in more applicants. UPMC Mercy has a hearing before the Planning Commission on proposed amendments to its Institutional Master Plan (IMP) to allow for the construction of the Vision Rehabilitation Hospital. The Planning Commission may vote to recommend the amendments on to City Council. Planning Commission has been provided with a member stating how the proposal conforms to the EcoInnovation District Plan. CP is developing best practices guidelines for IMPs and will share them with Duquesne University as they begin their IMP update. The DPW property on 5th and Dinwiddie Streets is being transferred to the URA and then the RFP will be released. CP is currently working on a Freshmen Experience project for about 300 students that has the students look at vacant buildings and vacant lots in the Uptown area and come up with ideas on what to do with them. This class will begin in the Fall. The 2nd Avenue lot now has 5 solar charging stations or “solar trees” that will initially be used to charge City fleet electric vehicles. They will be available for the public to use shortly as is consistent with the EID Plan. Finally, CP is establishing an environmental planning team permanently to help with future projects such as the green infrastructure projects, storm water policy, and parks planning.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Next Uptown Task Force Meeting - 8 a.m. on Thursday, May 5 UPMC- Mercy in Sr. Ferdinand Clark Auditorium – Side A