

Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 4, 2021

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present: Gary Alan (Duquesne Light Co.), Roger Altmeyer (UPMC Mercy), Gwendolyn Boldenn (Pittsburgh Parking Authority), Dara Braitman (DOMI), Keyva Clark (Rep. Jake Wheatley's Office), Lilly Freedman (URA), Evelyn Garon (University of Pittsburgh), Amy Hart (Center for Hearing & Deaf Services), Joan Hilton (Duquesne University), Jordann Kline (SEA), Sean Luther (InnovatePGH), Mike Madden (InnovatePGH), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Brittany McDonald (Uptown Partners), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Paul Svoboda (Duquesne Light Co.), Alex Toner (University of Pittsburgh), Marlene Williams (Uptown Partners), Megan Zeigler (GBA)

Guests: Steven Auterman (City of Pittsburgh), Tim Piette (Duquesne Light Co.)

Call to Order/Welcome: Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting at 8:03 a.m. with an introduction of all present Task Force members.

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

Agenda Discussions:

(1) Uptown Utility Duct Bank Work (Gary Alan, Tim Piette, Paul Svoboda): Paul Svoboda of Duquesne Light began the presentation by giving an overview of Duquesne Light's upcoming construction projects related to Bus Rapid Transit system. Duquesne Light is trying to minimize the disruption throughout the neighborhood and be proactive in communicating projects in advance. Paul then turned the presentation over to Tim Piette, who walked the group through an overview of the duct bank replacement project, the construction timeline, plans to navigate traffic through the construction, and next steps.

The purpose of the duct bank project is to improve the reliability of electric service to the Downtown, Uptown, and Hill District communities. This project includes the replacement of old equipment and electrical cable. As of right now, construction is slated to begin in Q3 of 2021 in the Downtown area in the hopes of finishing at the end of 2021. The majority of the work in Uptown will be happening in Q1 and Q2 of 2022, with the work closer to the Birmingham Bridge finishing by the end of 2022.

The route of the project will start at Grant Street in Downtown and go up through Uptown to Moultrie Street on Fifth Avenue. Then, on Forbes Avenue, the project will run from Diamond Street to Moultrie Street. There will also be some work on Chatham Square, as well as Van Braam Street.

Duquesne Light is actively working with DOMI and the Port Authority on all traffic plans for the project, as well as work hours that would be best for the community. They are also talking with PWSA and Peoples Gas about any construction that they need to do in the hopes of coordinating that work.

Throughout the duration of this project, there will be some lane restrictions and a few temporary closures, including Van Braam Street in Uptown. Duquesne Light is working with Port Authority to move bus stops accordingly as construction moves along Fifth and Forbes. Details on impacts and timelines will be shared as we get closer to the start of construction.

After completing the review of the duct bank project, Tim quickly went over the high-level aspects of the future substation located along Watson Street in between Fifth and Forbes Avenue. This substation will significantly improve electric supply resilience throughout the Uptown, Downtown, and Hill District neighborhoods. Construction is tentatively planned to begin in 2023 and run through 2025. Duquesne Light is very mindful of integrating this project into the community, and they will look for community input and feedback regarding design accordingly.

Questions posed by the Uptown Task Force:

- Will there be service outages? Potentially, however customers who will be affected will know in advance and the outages will never be longer than one day.
- How will private driveways be affected? Duquesne Light will be working with customers with driveways that might be affected by the construction so that they will still have appropriate access to their homes or offices.

(2) Uptown BRT (Steve Auterman): Steve Auterman, BRT project manager for DOMI, began his presentation by giving an overview of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, which is being managed by Port Authority. In Uptown, busses will be running the same direction as traffic on Fifth Avenue towards Downtown and Forbes Avenue towards Oakland. There will be pairs of stations on both Fifth and Forbes on Chatham Square, Jumonville Street and Miltenberger Street. Port Authority is in the process of determining the final design for the stations. Port Authority is awaiting the release of grant funds. Once funding in place, construction is currently planned to start at the end of this year.

As far as the timeline goes for the BRT, the design portion is nearly complete. The project will go out to bid for a contractor this summer with the hopes that construction will start in December of 2021. It will take about 24 months to complete. The BRT revenue service will start at the end of 2023, maybe the beginning of 2024, barring no significant setbacks.

Questions posed by the Uptown Task Force:

- Are there plans to increase awareness and ridership? There will be a public campaign closer to the end of construction in late 2023 in coordination with branding communication to inform the community about the new system and hopefully increase ridership.

(3) Community Action Team Proposed Work Plan (Brittany McDonald): Brittany began her presentation by reviewing the new priorities set by the Community Action Team. Most of them are continued priorities set by the action team in the past, however there are some new ones. The priorities are as follows:

- Continue 311 reporting/monitoring dumping and nuisance issues.
- Organize more neighborhood cleanups and hire paid staff to help keep Uptown clean.
- Community Safety.
- Work with URA & City to assist in property acquisition and revitalization regarding Tustin Street.
- Preserve the community's historic character mainly through preventing unnecessary demolition.
- Advocate for equitable development that includes MWBE and 30% affordable housing.
- Identify and Implement Community programming.
- Collaborate with appropriate partners to help residents and businesses in Uptown.

- BRT Communication for Uptown residents and businesses
- Attract Public Art.
- Showcase Uptown's Tech and Innovation district to engage the youth.

All of the metrics and indicators are similar to action plans in the past. The group also set a rough schedule for their meetings in 2021. The first two of the year went according to plan. At the most recent meeting, experts came in to discuss clean air initiatives in Uptown. Brittany stated that she put a call for new members out in Uptown Partner's most recent newsletter in the hopes of attracting more residents to the group and increase engagement. The proposed work plan will be circulated via email to the group in the hopes of being adopted at the April meeting.

(4) Forbes Fun Grant/Status of RFP (Brittany McDonald and Mary Ellen Solomon): Brittany stated that yesterday was the kick off call with the consultants and the Forbes Fund. During the call, the group reviewed a potential process plan. Since they got a late start with the consultants, the timeline has been pushed out about 3 months. The consultant group will begin their due diligence work to create a scope of work with action items and timeline to be shared with the UTF.

(5) Member Updates:

- **InnovatePGH:** A [miniature golf course](#) has been set up in Oakland to benefit local businesses and restaurants.
- **University of Pittsburgh:** The University's Institutional Master Plan is currently with Planning Commission. The first briefing was last week, and there will be two more coming up before final approval.
- **URA:** [The RFP](#) has been released for the properties at 1319 and 1325 Fifth Avenue with the intent of renovating the existing buildings and keeping the facades intact.

Action Team Updates:

- There were no action team updates at this time.

Mary Ellen adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Next Uptown Task Force Meeting - 8 a.m. on Thursday, April 1st, 2021 via Zoom.