Blue Ribbon Committee for Trails

Project Scope

Committee Purpose

To evaluate the benefits of a proposed regional system of walking and bicycling trails, help determine whether the region should accelerate its development and if so, recommend strategies that should be employed. The committee will also help identify the most compelling arguments for the system's development and, if it agrees that development should be accelerated, help make this case.

Objectives

Develop an overall strategy for funding and completing the system

- Clarify pace of development for a regional trails system
- Identify existing and potential funding sources, including new initiatives
- Clarify local, regional, state and federal responsibilities
- Identify and evaluate important components of the trails system
- Identify values that should guide priority setting
- Recommend policy changes

Make case for a regional trails system

- Develop a cost-benefit analysis for policy-makers and public
- Create a broad regional vision
- Cultivate advocates
- Advocate to policy makers

Work of the Committee

The committee will address three issues:

1. The committee will evaluate the benefits that would accrue from the proposed regional trails system in relation to expected costs.
2. Given the costs and benefits of the proposed system, what level of commitment should be made to its completion? How quickly should the region attempt to complete the system? What are the most compelling arguments for the system?
3. If the pace of development should be accelerated, what is the funding strategy that the region should employ and what policy changes need to be made?
    a. What should be the responsibility of local, state, and federal governments and private sources?

b. What should the region ask of the major, relatively near term funding sources (such as the federal transportation reauthorization)

c. Should the region consider any entirely new funding sources?

d. What policy changes should be made?

Meeting Schedule and Summary

Note: The agenda for meeting 1 is finalized. The topics and agendas for subsequent meetings are in outline form so that they can be further shaped as the work of the committee progresses.

Meeting 1(May): Empanel, brief and celebrate the committee

The purpose of this meeting is to welcome and orient the committee, discuss its charge, and to provide information on the history, status and future of the regional trails system. The agenda includes:

- Context and committee charge by Metro Council President David Bragdon
- Committee introductions and discussion
- A video introducing regional trails and the people that use them
- A PowerPoint presentation on the benefits of trails
- A committee discussion of the programs, constituencies and other factors which will affect its work
- An introduction to the trails packages and trails posters
- A reception for the committee

Homework for meeting 2 (provided two weeks prior to meeting 2)

- PowerPoint presentation on trails usage, benefits, mode split in the US and in Europe.
- Articles and other information on active transportation benefits.
- Optional reading on trails.

Meeting 2 (June): Understand the fundamentals, benefits and opportunities of active transportation, identify values

This meeting will give the committee a hands-on opportunity to work with their personal values in relation to system elements and available data on outcomes. The committee will create a product—a set of values and outcomes along with supporting arguments backed by available data—that staff will use as a point of reference in talking about costs and sources of funds in meeting 3.

The committee will address the following issues and questions in meeting 2

- What values are most important to the committee? What outcomes are most important to committee members?
- How do trails relate to identified values and outcomes?

- What are the benefits of trails (health, environmental, fiscal, transportation, recreation, economic)?
- What are the relative benefits of different components of the trails network?

Homework for Meeting 3 (Provided two weeks prior to meeting 3)

- An evaluation of the results and preliminary analysis of the values/outcomes exercise conducted in meeting 2.
- Information on how much it would cost to build a system that meets the committee's personal values and outcomes.
- Information on aspects of the system related to values that were not emphasized by the committee.

Meeting 3 (July): Identify Costs and Funding Options

This meeting uses the committee's identified values as a way to talk about costs, potential sources of funds, and significant trade-offs that we face in building the system.

The committee will address the following issues and questions in meeting 3

- What do trails cost? What will the system cost?
- How has the regional trails system been funded to date?
- What would a system cost that is in line with the values and outcomes the committee identified?
- How long would it take to build a system that achieves the committee's values and outcomes at current pace of development? What sources of funds might be available to develop it? Policy changes? What are the opportunities and constraints related to those sources?
- By emphasizing the values and outcomes the committee has identified, what values and outcomes are de-emphasized? What opportunities are lost?
- What would be required to approach particular funding sources?

Optional Field Trip: July 11 Policy Makers Bike Ride (committee members will receive invitations to the ride)

Meeting 4 (August) & **Meeting 5** (September): Develop a Strategy

At these two meetings the committee will begin to develop strategies for accelerating trail development.

The committee will address the following issues and questions in meeting 4 & 5

- Should the region increase its level of commitment to trails?

- What possible strategies are there? What elements of the system do they apply to?
- What should be priorities for follow up?

Meeting 6 (October): Complete Strategy and Recommendations

The committee finalizes an overall strategy for funding and completing the regional trails system. The strategy will be accompanied by a broad regional vision endorsed by the committee. The strategy and recommendations may include:

- Recommendations on the pace of development for a regional trails system;
- Recommendations on pursuing existing and potential funding sources, including new initiatives;
- A recommended outline of local, regional, state and federal responsibilities in completing the trails system;
- Recommended arguments to use in making the case for the trails system;
- Values that should guide priority setting;
- Recommend policy changes to support completion of the system;

Study Tour (early October): Study Exemplary Systems (Optional Meeting)

This will be an optional week-long fact finding trip to Copenhagen and Amsterdam. The committee will fully immerse itself in exemplary pedestrian and cycling systems.