



The Planning Post

The Newsletter of the City of Bloomington Planning Department



City of Bloomington Planning Department

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MPO Task Force

The Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has assembled a task force to address the long-range transportation goals for the urbanized area.

The task force includes members of all three MPO committees. It will assist staff in conducting research, collecting data, collaborating with community stakeholders and planning consultants, and determining high priority projects.

Under federal law, MPOs are charged with developing transportation plans and programs to accommodate mobility needs for persons and goods within their regions. As a result, MPOs need to estimate future travel demand and analyze investment scenarios using computerized travel models.

The task force's efforts will help guide the development of a Travel Demand Model and aid in the production of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the MPO. Both are slated for completion in 2013.



City Facilities Report

Planning Staff have recently completed a City Facilities Report. This was a multi-year effort that involved extensive research and close cooperation with various City departments. The goal of the City Facilities Report is to provide a concise report of current and future municipal facility needs, as well as the related service delivery aspects connected with those facilities, that can be integrated into the City of Bloomington capital improvement planning process. Members of the Plan Commission and City Council can also utilize this information within the planning and zoning approval process. This will ensure that City departments continue providing their respective services at ideal delivery levels, without interruption.

The City Facilities Report was conducted in response to guidance from the 2002 Growth Policies Plan. For purposes of this report, the term "facilities" include City of Bloomington buildings, real properties and other physical infrastructure (such as parks, fire stations, garages, etc). Additionally, the related public services that these facilities provide are also analyzed. These "public services" include the provision of municipal government activities (such as emergency response, recreational opportunities, trash collection, sewer and water lines, etc).

The facilities and services for six City of Bloomington departments, plus the City's transportation network, were selected for study in the City Facilities Report. These departments included the following: Bloomington Transit, Fire, Parks & Recreation, Police, Public Works and Utilities. The intention of choosing these particular departments and the transportation network was to offer a unique and diverse view of municipal government operations. These entities also typically receive some of the highest impacts from major planning and zoning land use decisions.

(Continued on page 3)

Biking on the Road to Platinum

Bloomington has long had a reputation as a community that fully embraces bicycling. This reputation has recently reached a new level. On September 14, 2010, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) announced its 2010 *Bicycle Friendly Communities* designations for new and renewing cities. The City of Bloomington was formally recognized by the LAB as having a “Silver” designation within the *Bicycle Friendly Communities* program. This is an additional level above its previous “Bronze” designation, which Bloomington has held since 2003.

A city that is formally recognized in the *Bicycle Friendly Communities* program welcomes bicyclists by providing safe accommodation for bicycling and encouraging people to bike for both transportation and recreation. The LAB assesses each applicant on five areas related to bicycling. These include education, enforcement, engineering, evaluation, and encouragement. If designated, the *Bicycle Friendly Communities* program provides incentives, hands-on assistance, and award recognition for the communities that actively support bicycling.

Since first achieving the Bronze designation in 2003, the City of Bloomington has made significant commitments to building an environment to facilitate active bicycle transportation. This has included increasing the number of bike lanes and bicycle parking options, providing educational opportunities and conducting enforcement activities that are geared toward safety. All of these efforts support the health, environmental, and community-building benefits of bicycle transportation.

To continue building on these improvements, the City Council unanimously passed a resolution to create a task force that will study ways to achieve a “Platinum” designation for Bloomington by 2016. This is the highest designation within the *Bicycle Friendly Communities* program. To perform this role, the task force will evaluate and assess a number of current bicycling conditions within Bloomington. The end result will be the development of an action plan that contains specific recommendations for obtaining the Platinum designation.



Crash Report Released

In order to assess transportation safety, the Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization compiles a report of vehicular crash data over a period of three years. The latest report for 2007-2009 considers crash locations, injuries resulting from each crash, and the number and type of vehicles involved in each accident.

The report also highlights intersections which qualify for improvements under the federal Highway Safety Improvement Program. Future iterations of the crash report will pay close attention to the safety improvements implemented, or in progress, at the intersections of 17th Street and Fee Lane, Atwater Avenue and Henderson Street, and Smith Road and Rogers Road.

Some of the report highlights include the following:

- A total of 12,410 crashes were reported from 2007 through 2009.
- Over 75% of crashes reported no injuries.
- 21 crashes in the three-year period resulted in fatalities (9 of which occurred in single-vehicle crashes, 6 involved mopeds or motorcycles, and 4 involved pedestrians).
- Problematic intersections often featured state highways (e.g. Bloomfield Road and State Road 37), likely due in part to the higher traffic volumes and speeds of these roads.

The full report is available online at the Planning Document Clearinghouse (under the BMCMPPO section): <http://bloomington.in.gov/clearinghouse>

Environmental Planner Shares Knowledge on Rain Gardens

Linda Thompson, the Senior Environmental Planner, recently helped to instruct a class and tour regarding rain garden fundamentals. Titled “Sustainable Stormwater Design: The Rain Gardens of Monroe County”, it was organized as a course within City of Bloomington’s “People’s University” program. Linda was joined by a panel of City of Bloomington and Monroe County Government staff members that specialize in water resource management.

A rain garden is a shallow depression that is landscaped with deep-rooted native plants and grasses. It is typically located near a downspout, driveway, or sump pump in order to capture rainwater runoff. The rain garden absorbs this water and acts as a filter, helping to prevent pollutants from entering the storm sewer system. By doing so, rain gardens help to conserve water, reduce pollution and preserve the overall quality of a community’s water system.

During the class, participants were introduced to the basic characteristics of watersheds, drainage fundamentals and the essential functions of rain gardens. This was followed by instructions for the planning, design and construction of a residential rain garden, along with tips on selecting the appropriate plants to use in a rain garden. Following the classroom segment, an afternoon tour showcased several current rain garden projects throughout the city and county. These included residential, commercial and government sites. Participants were able to see first hand the rain gardens located at the Evergreen Village subdivision, the Cook Group, Inc. Headquarters building, the City of Bloomington’s W. 3rd Street site and the Monroe County Highway Department garage.

Facilitated by the Parks and Recreation Department, the purpose of People’s University is to encourage lifelong learning in a relaxed environment. It offers affordable courses in a variety of interesting subject areas for adults 18 years and older. Classes are taught by businesses, teachers, and other community members with knowledge and skills to share with those who would like to learn. For more information on People’s University, visit <http://bloomington.in.gov/peoplesuniversity>.

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