

Sauk Creek Corridor Plan – Engagement Plan Feedback

Date: Sept 26, 2023

Attendees: Jojo O'Brien (City of Madison), Janet Schmidt (City of Madison), Alder Nikki Conklin (District 9), George Meyer (FOSC), Dean Ryerson (Tamarack Trails), Gwen Long (FOSC), Brent Denton (Oakbridge), Janet Hirsch (Tamarack Trails), Jim Rather (Wexford), Liz Fenster (Walnut Grove), Randy Bruegman (FOSC)

Agenda:

1. Presentation by City Engineering
2. Feedback / Q&A

*Note, all questions and responses were recorded as accurately as possible by the note taker**

Question 1: How many phases? Is it known?

Response: There will probably be 2-3 phases. We will need to figure out how to budget and build what is proposed in the final corridor plan. It's possible there would be 2 phases of channel construction and another phase of pond re-construction, but we don't know yet.

Question 2: For the ecological & channel assessment – please explain more on what goes into that

Response: The City contracted with an ecology firm that will look at what each section of greenway was historically and what it will become based on the current trajectory. They will look at rare species and species of interest and how they impact the overall ecology. The consultant will provide a health assessment. More information will be provided at the kick-off meeting.

Question 3: You mentioned parameters that can't be changed. Can you please go over that again in particular is there anything with regards to path can't get input.

Response: West Area Plan is currently gathering community input. Community input helps determine how the base plan mapping will look – from there we look at what is recommended in the West Area Plan with the Corridor plan.

Question 4: Residents are concerned that widening channel and adding amenities will not allow much else left for the channel and trees. We all agree that we need a maintenance route since it's not well maintained now because of access.

Response: That will be something that is discussed during the Corridor Plan process.

Question 5: are public meetings in person?

Response: We are still trying to figure that out. We are looking to balance that more folks attend if virtual but also like the in person connections. For the kickoff, we will have dual meetings (one in person and one virtual). Will assess what type of meetings to hold for subsequent meetings following the kick off meeting.

Question 6: For engagement, there's been a lot of communication on the project, yard signs, with different feelings. How does city intend to engage with those that are not just the loudest voices? Loudest voices tend to get what they want. Make sure quieter voices have equal weight.

Response: The intent with the focus groups to help balance that and hear more voices. We will look into if surveys may help with this as well. We are hoping to tweak engagement as needed as we make our way thru the process and if we aren't reaching as many people as we were hoping. We can adjust as needed.

Question 7: May want a focus group for each neighborhood so we have something dedicated for specific NHs. Maybe something like a neighborhood gathering to get people engaged.

Response: We will be sending post cards and reaching out to a larger community. Will try to do more reach out and post signs at main access points at the greenway (to get more broad outreach) than what a post card would get. We will record meetings. Will have polls during the meeting to get people to provide input without having them stand-up and speak.

Question 8: There are different aspects that can provide input. Those aspects may get perspectives that don't match well. How do you balance something like transportation and ecological issues for example? How will the City balance those and how will that be balanced through public input.

Response: That is going to be challenging. The intent of the issues and opportunities phase, which is first, will be to hear the values of the community and use those to try to navigate the conflicts and lend towards creative solutions. The process will help inform how to come to those conclusions and creative solutions. We are interested in hearing other opinions and ideas others have.

Question 9: I appreciate the in-person meetings but also understand the value of online sessions. In either event, I suggest that the open sessions are open to others for others to speak. Others can get up and present or talk too. People learn a lot from different perspectives. Get community blending of ideas and get more community acceptance. Those that don't want to get up and talk can write out ideas. What I don't think works is that there is a presentation and doing small group breakouts because others may not be privy to those conversations in smaller groups. Need a good moderator to help process run smoothly and give confidence to express feelings.

Response: We will allow time for comments. There will be a balance to keep meetings moving along and will try to get a moderator. Didn't intend to have people break out into groups quite yet in the larger kick off meetings.

Question 10: Questions on the final slide "standard greenway design vs corridor" –needs clarification.

Response: The slide is intended to show we are going above and beyond the standard greenway engagement track with the corridor plan. Since we are re-starting the project as a "corridor plan" we will be doing a more robust public engagement process. (Note: this slide was edited since the original presentation to make this clearer)

Question 11: I attended 3 West Area Planning meetings; we were not aware of the plan to put the path thru until the 3rd meeting. Is path part of the Sauk Creek plan or separate?

Response: Path will be part of the Sauk Creek Corridor planning process. However, during the kick-off meeting, we will not go into detail on the paths because we need to get recommendations from the West Area Plan first.

Question 12: Do you know what the project will cost?

Response: We have about \$3.2M budgeted for stormwater components over several years. We will be asking for more funds in the upcoming budgets, if necessary.

Question 13: What is the time of year for the projects? Spring? Summer? Fall?

Response: Construction would occur in winter of 2025 at the earliest. Depending on the scope of the project winter projects may be preferable for certain tasks such as tree removals. Then maybe wait till later for grading. It will depend on what the Corridor Plan ends up proposing for channel stabilization, and the proposed phasing of the projects.

Question 14: Preliminarily are we planning to change routing of the channel? Are we relocating it?

Response: We don't have a specific plan. If the channel is migrating onto private property we would shift it away, but other than that, there is no specific plan. General channel alignment changes will be part of the discussion once the ecological and channel assessment is done. We are looking for feedback to try to inform that.

Question 15: some of the channel is getting close to access roads or close to people's property.

Response: We will look to stabilize the channel to keep it from migrating off its course and eroding people's property or degrading infrastructure such as access roads. A challenge with urban waterways is that we have to try to manage them so they aren't impacting adjacent properties.

Question 16: I'd recommend a 2 point notification system for public meetings. An electronic notification a few weeks in advance and then specifically connect w/ NH organizations to make sure they know and can help get communities engaged. And then the post cards coming out closer to the meeting time. What would help is really try to keep information accurate and up to date on project website. Post presentation up when the post cards go out so people can come prepared. Maybe have additional details beyond what is in the presentation. Include what dictates decision making criteria, etc. Could help with the people perception that things have been decided in advance. Really put time and energy to get info up and available on project website.

Response: These are great suggestions. We will try to get electronic notifications up early but may not be able to get presentations up as early as 4 weeks in advance. We agree the webpage is a good tool for sharing information.

Question 17: Hoping people in this group can be point to associations to help us get engagement. Trying to get folks from every NH association and hoping they can also get the voices to the table. City can help get info to the stakeholders to get information out and provide presentations early as well.

Response: No response needed

Question 18: How long will the channel assessment take?

Response: We hope to have it by mid-January so can share during concept refinement session.

Question 19: Can we get a copy of the PPT today?

Response: We will ponder to make sure we have something that is helpful and not confusing to share.

Question 20: There are a lot of places with encroachments. Since reforestation is part of the larger goal, this may be a part of the larger conversation.

Response: OK.

Question 21: Consider good PA and spaces for in person meetings.

Response: OK.