

# SOUTHWEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD BIKE NETWORK

Neighborhood Taskforce Meeting #2



## MEETING SUMMARY

### Southwest Side Neighborhood Bike Network

Neighborhood Taskforce Meeting #2

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Virtual Meeting - Microsoft Teams

### ATTENDEES

#### CDOT Representatives

Brad Huff – CDOT, Complete Streets Planning Manager

John Pickering, TY Lin – Complete Streets Planner

Steph Nappa, MUSE Community + Design – Complete Streets Planner

Sid Shah, Sam Schwartz Engineering – Pedestrian Program Manager

#### Taskforce Members

Dixon Galvez Searle – Southwest Collective

Andrew Spaulding – McKinley Park Resident

Tony Adams – McKinley Park Development Council

Brenda Vidal – Esperanza Health Center

Jeffrey – Gage Park Resident

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Brad Huff, Complete Streets Planning Manager, introduced CDOT staff in attendance and summarized the first taskforce meeting for new members and to confirm what we have heard from the community. Taskforce members introduced themselves and shared their personal and/or professional interest in the project and how it relates to biking.

#### Updates from Taskforce Meeting #1

CDOT has been connecting with the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Wards to engage them about the program and to find opportunities for outreach events to engage with residents. CDOT, as recommended from the taskforce members, has created an online event calendar where members can add upcoming community events and identify events where CDOT and SAFE Ambassadors will be engaging with the community. CDOT has been implementing an engagement plan, discussed below, that was vetted at the first taskforce meeting. Additionally, CDOT launched a survey that is available in both English and Spanish and can be taken online or as a paper option.

CDOT is currently identifying potential bike routes and will be asking taskforce members to prioritize projects at the next meeting. These routes are sourced from the first taskforce meeting, ongoing community engagement events, and results from the online survey. Design of short-term projects will begin later this year, and installation would begin in 2024. Long-term projects, which may require coordination with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) or discussions with community members.

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## ENGAGEMENT PLAN

### Youth Engagement

CDOT heard at the first taskforce meeting that youth engagement should be a priority. In response, the SAFE Ambassadors have been conducting weekly Learn-to-Ride a bicycle classes in McKinley Park that focuses on teaching younger people to ride bikes. Giveaway events have been scheduled at community destinations including parks and schools where CDOT will engage with youth about where they want to bike and their ideas for bike routes. Additionally, CDOT met with and attended events at various taskforce member organizations and provided materials to collect feedback including large street network maps. Neighbors were encouraged to write/draw on the maps with their destinations and ideas for streets in their neighborhood. Conversations have been ongoing about scheduling a group ride with some of the taskforce members.

Taskforce members liked the current engagement efforts, and asked whether CDOT was using **social media** for outreach, particularly youth outreach. This started a discussion about how younger people are often on social media networks, such as **TikTok**. Taskforce members suggested developing and using these social media sites to engage with younger people.

### Community Events

CDOT has been engaging with the community at the following events since the first taskforce meeting:

- Monthly community bike rides with The Southwest Collective
- Attended taskforce member community events
- Conducted Learn-to-Ride a bicycle series in McKinley Park throughout summer

Planned events include the **Back to School Bash** at Peck Elementary on **July 22<sup>nd</sup>**, and a pop-up giveaway at **Senka Park** on **July 25<sup>th</sup>**. CDOT will continue to seek opportunities for additional outreach events.

### Community Engagement

CDOT, with input from the taskforce, has identified community destinations and additional community groups to engage with in all three neighborhoods. Project information including outreach flyers, bike maps, and survey information has been distributed to **ward offices, libraries, parks, health clinics, transit stops, and community organizations**. Paper versions of the survey have also been made available and distributed at community organizations.

CDOT has planned additional outreach at community destinations in order to engage with as many neighbors as possible. When asked about additional areas to visit, taskforce members recommended outreach at **grocery stores**, and posting flyers at the CTA **Orange Line stations** and at **libraries** just outside of the main focus area.

## INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS

As of this meeting, over 180 residents have taken the survey. CDOT summarized some of the key findings:

- Destinations neighbors wanted to access most within the communities were **parks, schools, and grocery stores**.

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- Barriers to getting around on bike or on foot were **safety** and **driver behavior**, **road conditions**, **lack of bike and pedestrian infrastructure**, and **high traffic streets**.
- Despite challenges, **many people bike** in the area, including **younger people** and **workers** traveling to employment. Many people responded saying they bring their kids to the park to bike.

CDOT will continue to promote the survey and it will remain **open throughout summer**. Taskforce members were encouraged to continue to share with their networks. Paper copies are also available and have been distributed at community events.

### POTENTIAL NETWORK & PRIORITIES

#### Barriers and Access

CDOT summarized the discussion on barriers heard at the first taskforce meeting and showed a map highlighting land-use barriers and wide multi-lane streets, illustrating the disjointed street network that limits connectivity between the Brighton Park, Gage Park, and McKinley Park neighborhoods. A map showing locations of important community-identified destinations, highlighted the need for improved network connections between the neighborhoods and access outside of them.

Taskforce members discussed the barriers of **safety/crime/violence** concerns for people and asked how biking can address this. CDOT responded that while bikes alone will not fully solve these issues, biking and bike routes can provide people more opportunities to be out in their neighborhoods and act as a eyes-on-the-street while building a sense of community with neighbors. Additionally, connected bike routes offer the opportunity for community bike rides and encourage more people to bike.

#### Neighborhood and Commercial Streets Bike Routes

CDOT reviewed opportunities for bikeways within the study area, including on both residential and commercial streets. On quieter residential streets, neighborhood greenways can provide neighbors with low-stress alternatives to busier streets and connect to local destinations like schools and parks. On one-way streets, contraflow bike lanes would be included to formalized and organize two-way bike travel. Additionally, traffic calming features including: bumpouts, speed humps, and raised crosswalks can also be installed.

On busier commercial streets, potential bike routes include bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, and protected bike lanes. Many commercial streets in the southwest side are narrow, and the installation of protected bike lanes would require tradeoffs, such as the consolidation of on-street parking to one side of the street. Some of the busiest streets are under IDOT jurisdiction and would require additional coordination to install any type of bike route.

A map of protected bike lane feasibility was shared that depicted which streets require parking or travel lane removal and which are under the jurisdiction of IDOT. Protected bike lanes already planned for the area include:

- **Western Ave bridge** across the canal is slated to be reconstructed with an opportunity to upgrade to protected bike lanes
- Protected bike lanes are planned for **Kedzie Ave** across the canal and will create a low-stress north-south connection
- The existing buffered bike lanes on **Pershing Rd** will be **upgraded** to protected bike lanes
- **Damen Ave from 55<sup>th</sup> St to 51<sup>st</sup>** will be upgraded to protected bike lanes in 2023/4

**Taskforce members feedback on planned projects and the potential bike network:**

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- **Archer Ave** varies in width, which results in motor vehicles bunching in the narrower sections and causing some people to drive dangerously to attempt to avoid this issue
- **Pershing at Archer** is an uncomfortable intersection exacerbated by the industrial land uses adjacent to and the heavy truck traffic
- **35<sup>th</sup> St** was recommended as a potential street for a bike route
- **47<sup>th</sup> St** was recommended as a potential street for bike route especially at the railroad
- Many members support for **protected bike lanes on Archer Ave** as it connects to the Loop and many community identified destinations and local businesses
- Improved crossings across **Western Ave** and to the **CTA train** stations

CDOT mentioned 35<sup>th</sup> Street was currently being discussed with the wards for a potential bikeway.

CDOT asked taskforce members for their recommendations for messaging about potential parking removal in the area. Recommendations included:

- **Focus on the safety improvements** for everyone that the bike infrastructure comes with, how more people biking provides better for safety than more people driving
- Acknowledge that not all residents will be happy with any changes to the street
- Demonstrate how **bikes can be/are used for transportation**

Taskforce members also shared that some residents tend to think of their usual parking spot as “their” space and acknowledged the challenge of trying to make streets more bike friendly without making it too challenging for people who are currently dependent on motor vehicles.

### NEXT STEPS

CDOT asked the taskforce to continue sharing information about the project with their networks and encouraging people to take the online survey. The survey will be shared again on CDOT’s twitter account.

CDOT will contact the taskforce members who couldn’t attend this meeting and will continue to visit the neighborhoods posting flyers and sharing information materials. Additional pop-up events at community destinations will be scheduled, and CDOT will continue to attend community events.

A third taskforce meeting will be scheduled for early Fall to review the proposed bike network of short and long-term projects and to review results from the ongoing survey.