

# CITY- COUNTY

## Task Force on Disabilities

August 17, 2020

### Task Force Members In Attendance

#### City

Paul O'Hanlon, Cochair  
Joe Wassermann, Member at Large

#### County

James "Chris" Noschese, Cochair  
John Tague, Treasurer  
Karen Warman  
Sarah Goldstein  
Cori Frazier  
Georgia Petropoulos

#### 13<sup>th</sup> Member

Paul "Rich" McGann

### Task Force Members Absent

#### City

Janet Evans

### Staff Present

Hillary Roman, City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator  
Caylin Snyder, Allegheny County ADA Coordinator  
Andrew Dash, Director of City Planning  
Danielle Nicol, Dept of City Planning Senior Secretary  
Cassandra Leopold, DOMI  
Paige Anderson, DOMI

### Welcome & Introductions

Paul O' Hanlon called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force and staff members introduced themselves.

### Agenda

#### A. Review and Approval of Minutes

The motion to accept July's minutes was made by Joe and seconded by John. The motion was carried unanimously.

#### B. Treasurer's Report

- John Tague informed the Task Force that initial funds of \$9000 from the County were allocated in July of this year and run until June 30, 2021. Expenses from July's meeting have not yet been accounted for, so the current balance still stands at \$9000. Paul asked whether there was money left-over from the

previous year. John wasn't sure but said that he is confident the County would cover an expense that may go over budget.

- Chris Noschese asked whether the CCTFD pays for the Zoom account. Hillary clarified that the City pays for the Zoom account, not the Task Force. She also answered questions about the closed captioning mechanism for the Zoom platform, clarifying that captions on Zoom are provided by a third-party provider who is paid for by the Task Force, the same way that they pay for ASL interpreters.
- Paul made a motion to have the City purchase an add-on to the Zoom platform for closed captioning. John and Chris seconded it and it was carried unanimously.

#### C. Membership Update: Welcoming New County Member, Georgia Petropoulos

- Georgia Petropoulos was introduced as the newest CCTFD member from the County. She is the Executive Director of the Oakland Business Improvement District, managing the corridors along Fifth and Forbes Avenues that service Oakland's major universities and the UPMC hospital system. Georgia is familiar with many other members of the Task Force through her advocacy work as a founding member of the Oakland for All accessibility community organization. She has specialized in improving accessibility in Oakland's storefronts and infrastructure, advocating for physical accessibility however possible.
- John addressed the vacant City appointments noting the work he's been doing with Hillary. He sent an email to the Mayor whose Office responded that they are waiting for City Council's reconvening to make a decision. John noted that the CCTFD members are not typically approved by Council but it was good that they responded.
- Chris asked whether a physical letter would be more effective instead of emailing the Mayor's Office. Paul replied that since the City did respond to the email, there wasn't any need to change approach.

#### D. Update on Highland Park: Tina Calabro

- Tina Calabro provided an update on her grievance with the City on the closure of Reservoir Drive to vehicles. The City's initial resolution was to offer additional accessible parking from Farmhouse Drive to Highland Avenue. Tina appealed this resolution as inadequate. She met with Director Dash and Hillary to discuss more restorative options for accessibility in the Park. The matter is being reconsidered by the City for final resolution. She noted that City Planning has been responsive and amenable in these conversations.

#### E. Independent Police Review Board: discussion of Councilperson Bennett's listening session

- Cori Fraser prefaced their brief of the session by noting that the parts of the session that were personal experiences with officers were not recorded in order to protect the confidentiality of participants.
- Cori reported that the conversation with Councilperson Bennett went well, the takeaway from the session is that the police reforms will require further discussion with County Councilmembers because right now they do not have the votes needed to pass reforms.

- The meeting also involved community members giving Councilperson Bennett more information about how police policies affect people with disabilities.
- Rich McGann brought up the problem with the fragmentation among police bureaus. It is challenging to change policy for all the different municipalities and entities with police forces.
- Chris echoed Rich's sentiments that there are management problems that come with overarching police policies for the whole County. Chris told Councilperson Bennett that there should be a way to centralize by having intakes all to the Allegheny County jail. This would help to ensure that the County only needs one standard review board. Cori clarified that the police review board would first have to be approved by County Council. Each municipality and private entity would then opt into being regulated by a review board. Cori encouraged members to speak with their own Councilmembers about opting into this process.
- Cori offered to be the point person on policing for the Task Force. Paul moved to have the CCTFD pay for interpreters for relevant events covering the topic hosted by the Pittsburgh Center for Autistic Advocacy. The motion was seconded by John and carried with Cori abstaining.
- Cori will email the Task Force on next steps. Joe Wassermann recommended that Cori get in touch with Gabe McMoreland to compare notes on work that has been done in the past on police reform in the area.
- A conversation ensued about the effectiveness of police review boards and police trainings.

#### F. Updates on DOMI projects: Cassandra Leopold, DOMI Principal Planner

- Members of the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) introduced themselves along with Elissa Goughnour, a Transportation Engineer at Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
- Cassandra Leopold discussed DOMI's Bike+ Plan as part of the Move Forward campaign, a rapid implementation plan allowing new tools and traffic calming mechanisms to improve the bike and pedestrian experience in the City. One such tool is the Neighborways project which have been implemented in low-speed residential areas and require certain parameters for their use. They are aimed at reducing head on collisions and other accidents in residential areas.
- Two Neighborways have been installed so far using traffic calming tools. The Euclid Neighborway is the first of these to utilize traffic circles as an intervention. Paige Anderson said that Euclid was a good candidate for a traffic circle because the traffic speed is not very high to begin with, but the intersections are known to be unsafe. The traffic circles are intended to improve safety by forcing cars to slow down when they travel through the intersection by traveling to the right of the circle. It works better than a four-way stop because the centerpiece prevents head-on collisions. The biggest threat in a crash is a head-on collision in an intersection such as this one.
- Chris asked how pedestrians are protected in these intersections, specifically those who are low-vision, blind, or deafblind.
- Elissa gave an overview of the traffic circles' design. She shared her screen on Zoom. All four crosswalks remain at the intersection. Additional tweaks have been added since their initial installation, including yellow "splitter islands" that

help ensure vehicles go to the right to travel around the intersection. They also changed some of the signage to communicate the expectations of the driver, including high-visibility crosswalks. These crosswalks were also set further back from their original placement in the traffic circle.

- Paul asked how a blind person would know how to safely traverse the traffic circle.
- Member of the public, Harold Love, commented that he has seen drivers drive through the crosswalks to avoid hitting the perimeter of the circle on Euclid. Elissa responded that the traffic circle on Euclid does not have high-visibility crosswalks right now, but that the design team is carefully monitoring the intersection for improvement.
- Harold also brought up the concern of reduced visibility for drivers. Elissa responded that the team has heard this concern from Hillary and is planning on keeping all objects within the circles, including plantings, very low to the ground to ensure visibility. They will also be painting curbs to ensure that drivers are more aware of the parking restrictions near the traffic circles.
- Rich asked if there would be traffic circles on one-way or dead-end streets, particularly in Oakland. Elissa responded that there are no current plans for Oakland. Paige clarified that they are typically only planned for four-way stop intersections.
- Member of the public, Janet Jai, is concerned about how blind people use these intersections. She took photos of a blind friend who had to move much further back from the intersection when a bus came around the circle. This is a concern because blind people are trained to stand close enough to traffic that they can listen for oncoming vehicles and this presents a danger to their safety. Elissa responded by saying that they have been working with the Port Authority on training drivers to stay safely within the circle. Janet interjected that this is not just an issue with busses, it's an issue with all large vehicles. Elissa responded that the permanent design will be enlarged for safe passage of large vehicles.
- Chris asked whether cars will be expected to stop for pedestrians in these traffic circles. Elissa responded that high-visibility crosswalks should help to serve that function. The team is also looking into other mechanisms to increase safety such as an education campaign. Cassandra added that they are also open to adding stop signs at these four-way intersections.
- Rich added that the White Cane Law already requires drivers stop any time they see a person crossing with a cane. The problem comes up when drivers are impaired by substance or illness. Elissa agreed and added that distracted driving is a bit concern. They are hoping that the traffic circle design helps to remedy that problem by forcing drivers to slow down.
- Joe urged DOMI to work with CMU on creating 3-D models to help blind people understand how to navigate these circles safely. He is also concerned about the narrowness of certain intersections, like in Oakland. Elissa agreed that many different areas are poor candidates for traffic circles and won't be installed there.

- Karen Warman asked how they will prevent a car from pulling into the crosswalk. Elissa responded that this situation occurs at all crosswalks and the expectation is that drivers will approach slowly enough to see crossing pedestrians.
- Wes Speary of the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations asked 1) whether the ramps at the crosswalks will be expanded or moved to accommodate for these changes. Elissa responded that the ramps will not be changed as of now, but the team is discussing the possibility of upgrades.
- 2) At what point did DOMI start to consider ADA standards in this project's design? Cassandra responded that she asked Hillary for a list of field advocates from the community who helped to provide feedback. Advocates included John Tague, Jonathan Duvall, Bonnie Dodson Burk, and Alisa Grishman. This feedback led to substantial improvements to the design of the traffic circles.
- Alisa asked whether the team had considered installing midway bollards to prevent cars from pulling through the crosswalks. Elissa responded that the team has considered similar safety measures for further enhancements including in-street pedestrian warning signs and other additional changes.
- Paul added that the team should be sure to make sure the piano key crosswalk texture is not slippery for people who use crutches. Hillary responded that the City has been working on improving the texture of piano key crosswalks.
- Paul also wants to make sure that signage placed in the center of the traffic circles isn't placed so as to obscure pedestrians. Elissa responded that they are following the recommended guidelines and field testing to ensure that all signage is placed at the proper height.
- Paul contested the idea that traffic circles are safer for pedestrians. His understanding is that they are safer at preventing car-car collisions, but the safety improvement for car-pedestrian collisions is not known. Elissa responded that this question is difficult to answer for all traffic calming mechanisms. What is known is traffic circles effectively reduce the speed of cars, and car speed is the strongest indicator of harm when collisions occur.
- Paul is concerned that DOMI is claiming that traffic circles are ADA compliant when there is no known standard for traffic circles from the US Access Board.
- Paul asked how blind people are expected to cross these intersections when traffic circles are designed so that traffic does not stop. Blind people are taught to rely on the sound of oncoming traffic stopping to know when it is safe to cross. This may result in very long wait times for blind people trying to cross the street. Paul asked whether DOMI could install a sound indicator for oncoming cars but was told that this would be too disruptive for neighbors. Elissa and Cassandra responded that they are continuing to look for innovative treatments for safety of pedestrians. They are exploring putting the stop signs back in where they have been replaced with yield signs, but Elissa worries that this will miscommunicate the expectations of drivers and pedestrians when drivers are expected to yield.
- Mavis Rainey of the Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA) requested that DOMI educate drivers and pedestrians on how to use traffic circles as this is a new traffic pattern for the area. She also asked whether DOMI had considered increasing lighting in these intersections to increase pedestrian

visibility. Paige responded that DOMI is looking to improve lighting in places with low visibility. Mavis also asked whether DOMI had considered reducing speed, Paige responded that the places where traffic circles have been installed are already at the lowest allowable speed limit—25 mph.

- Paul asked what the next steps are for the pilot. Elissa responded that they will continue to pilot the program for the time being. She would like to continue to work with Hillary and the disability community to improve safety measures for the traffic circles.
- Hillary asked that the group add their emails to the chat for remaining questions and Paige added that [moveforwardpgh.org](http://moveforwardpgh.org) can be accessed for further information with the option to provide feedback to DOMI.

### Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Chris and seconded by Rich. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

*YouTube link with closed captioning:*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfnxL\\_tPFM0&t=1472s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfnxL_tPFM0&t=1472s)