

# CITY- COUNTY

## Task Force on Disabilities

February 22, 2021

### Task Force Members In Attendance

#### City

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

#### County

James "Chris" Noschese, Cochair  
John Tague, Treasurer  
Sarah Goldstein

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

Paul "Rich" McGann

### Task Force Members Absent

#### City

Janet Evans  
Kai Roberts  
Mark Schmeler

#### County

Cori Frazer  
Georgia Petropoulos  
Karen Warman

### Staff Present

Hillary Roman, City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator  
Caylin Snyder, Allegheny County ADA Coordinator  
Danielle Nicol, Dept of City Planning Senior Secretary

### Welcome & Introductions

Paul O' Hanlon called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force members introduced themselves.

### Agenda

#### A. Review and Approval of Minutes

- Paul made a motion to approve the minutes from January. The motion was seconded by Rich McGann and carried unanimously.

#### B. Treasurer's Report

- John Tague reviewed the CCTFD budget meeting that was held the week before. Hillary clarified at that meeting that the City would cover the expense from a

meeting with DOMI/BRT but the budget meeting fell under the County's obligation.

- John plans to request a budget increase from the County due to some increased foreseen costs, including meetings that run long and subcommittee meetings. They can submit a new budget request by March 15<sup>th</sup>. John asked whether additional monies should be requested for external events including "Small Differences" funding, Veterans with disabilities employment promotion, and the annual Richard Meritzer Award.
- Paul made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. The motion was seconded by Joe Wassermann and carried unanimously.
- Paul asked that John send an email to the Task Force this week in order to generate finalized ideas for budget allocation.
- Joe brought up that during the budget meeting members decided that stakeholders from the disability employment sector should be invited to discuss the CCTFD's role in aiding initiatives. John agreed.

#### A. Karen Brean: Allegheny County's Consolidated Plan

- Paul introduced Karen Brean to discuss Allegheny County's Consolidated Plan.
- Karen introduced her colleague, Kate Molinaro, to the group. Kate gave an overview of the Plan.
- The Consolidated Plan happens every five years when Allegheny County is required outline strategic priorities for community development, economic development, and housing needs for the next five years. The last five-year plan occurred during the period of the pandemic before public meetings, including the CCTFD, were occurring online. Kate will be going over what was discussed at that time and ask for feedback.
- Kate referred back to a known concern about sidewalk maintenance, particularly in suburban areas—she relayed that the County has set aside \$535,000 for compliant accessible sidewalks in areas such as the North Hills and Turtle Creek.
- The County has also addressed Fair Housing issues in the Plan by updating their analysis of fair housing choice. They've examined the barriers to fair housing in municipalities that do not create their own plan (City, Penn Hills, McKeesport).
- The Fair Housing Partnership has committed to providing at least two outreach and education events per year both inside and outside of the City.
- The Plan has incorporated analysis of impediments to fair housing in their Fair Housing Action Plan.
- Karen added they are aware of the exacerbation of housing issues as a result of the pandemic. She advises that those interested should take the citizens survey (circulated by prior email and added to the Zoom chat). Anyone who would prefer to talk through the survey should get in contact with her.
- Joe requested statistics regarding any increases in affordable housing and any comparisons and improvements since the last time Karen was able to speak with the group in 2019.
  - Karen referenced the large amount of money the County has set aside for sidewalk improvements. She offered to look up specific statistics and send them to the group.
  - She added that the outreach events are a response to requests for education and information-sharing events from the disability community.

- Rich relayed that he would like more access to interpreters at these events. He is concerned about the priorities of local Zoning Boards as well. Kate responded that the County has been working to help municipalities to better understand their obligations under the FHA.
- Paul is concerned that many parts of the County don't build sidewalks as part of commercial development. He is wondering whether this action will result in additional sidewalks.
  - Kate responded that community block grant dollars can be used for both maintenance and additional sidewalk installation. She will give Paul's feedback to the County.
- Chris Noschese commented that sidewalks should be priority over bike lanes.
- Karen asked if there were any issues they haven't covered that she and Kate should know about.
- Rich brought up the height of curbs and potholes in Dormont.
- Paul added that there are issue wherein people in wheelchairs become stranded at bus stops because there are no curb cuts where they get off.
- Paul also wondered about the status of accessible housing in the County. Chris underscored the problem.
- Rich asked Paul whether there are disability advocates going to Zoning Board meetings to raise awareness; Paul wasn't sure. Chris wants the ADA advocates to go to City and County Zoning meetings.
- Karen and Kate will be talking to authorities about low-income housing and the Dept of Human Services about a homelessness needs assessment.
- Karen will share information about the needs hearings she referenced. There will be opportunity for the public to make statements.
  - The first of these meetings will be March 10<sup>th</sup>.

B. PDP: high impact projects and implementation of the Downtown Advisory Group Mobility Plan

- Katheryn Schlesinger presented part two of the Downton Pittsburgh Mobility Plan from the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP), focusing on the high impact projects and priorities.
- Katheryn presented a slide show that described economic impact data since the pandemic.
- PDP is prioritizing equitable mobility and is supporting an intuitive and responsive network for Downtown Mobility.
- Katheryn offered to forward the presentation to anyone who is interested in reviewing it later.
- She asked for feedback on the best way/s PDP can stay engaged with the disability community.
- Paul offered that since the presentation wasn't accessible for blind and low-vision individuals, it might be best for PDP to return for a more discussion-focused visit.
- Rich added that the City and County need to be involved in whatever plans are proposed.
- Chris suggested that PDP hire more people with disabilities to help them have a fuller understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.
- Chris Watts agreed to come back in April or May to follow up with the CCTFD.

C. BRT: DOMI update on accessible parking

- Project Manager Steve Auterman from DOMI introduced himself to the group. He has been working with Port Authority and its consultant group, AECOM on the BRT project.
- Steve told the group that the design phase is nearly over and construction may begin as early as fall of this year.
- BRTs goals are to improve bus and pedestrian access in Downtown, Uptown, and Oakland.
- There will be a number of accessibility improvements, including curb cuts, audible signals, and push-button cross signals.
- The project includes a protected bike lane through Downtown, Uptown, and Oakland that is at the sidewalk level rather than the street.
- The project will shift use of the street and in some cases will remove and reconfigure parking, which he understands is an accessibility concern.
- There will also be bus stop consolidation, resulting in fewer stops, but this is not anticipated to be an excessive burden. For example, there will be bus stops approximately every 500 ft in Uptown.
- Steve has been working with Paul and other advocates to ensure equitable relocation of accessible parking spaces. Steve is concerned about the loss and relocation of a number of spaces on the right side of the street in Uptown. This limits the ability vans with right-side lifts to load directly onto the sidewalk. He has found a number of work arounds but acknowledges that there is still work to be done to ensure full accessibility.
- He noted that the US Access Board has not finalized their guidance on accessible public streets, which leaves gaps in public and private understanding around project management for projects like the BRT.
- Paul asked Steve why all of the parking cannot be moved over to the right side to accommodate those who require lifts.
  - Steve shared his computer screen showing one potential accommodation. The image showed a car pulled up to a bumped-in curb with an access isle between the car and the sidewalk. If the car were facing the other way, the car could park against the curb, leaving space for a person unloading on the street side. For this to work, the sidewalk must be narrowed in those locations. Steve isn't sure this is possible in all cases.
  - Paul noted that even if this diagram did work, it would still be a very tight area for a person in a wheelchair to get in and out of safely.
  - Paul and Steve acknowledged that this design is somewhat inconsistent with other US Access Board recommendations and would only be possible in some of the BRT plan and does not include Downtown.
- Steve noted that there are a number of spaces in the plan that are being reviewed by the design team for accessibility. He will communicate whatever they come up with to the CCTFD.
- He told the group that of the spaces being removed, there is only one space that is confirmed to be in use and the team is working with the resident who requested it.
- The BRT group is working with the nearby medical facility and PPG Paints Arena to ensure safe drop-off/pick-up areas for their buildings.
- Steve clarified for Paul that the parking aspect of the BRT is DOMI's obligation.

- Hillary asked Steve to share his information for those in the meeting with remaining questions due to time constraints. Information was shared orally and in the chat box.
  - [Steven.Auterman@PittsburghPA.gov](mailto:Steven.Auterman@PittsburghPA.gov), (412) 523-7516; [BRT@PortAuthority.org](mailto:BRT@PortAuthority.org)

D. Clear mask policy recommendation for public agencies

- Item was cut for time.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Rich and seconded by Joe. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

*YouTube link with closed captioning:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CagIDejDGY>