

CITY- COUNTY
Task Force on Disabilities

June 27, 2022

Task Force Members In Attendance

City

Leah Northrop, Member at Large
Paul O’Hanlon
Mark Schmeler
Joe Wassermann

County

James “Chris” Noschese, Chair
John Tague, Treasurer
Sarah Goldstein

13th Member

Paul “Rich” McGann

Guests

Adam Drake
Laura Chu-Wiens

Task Force Members Absent

City

Janet Evans
Michelle Walker

County

Cori Frazer
Karen Warman
Georgia Petropoulos

Staff Present

Hillary Roman, City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator
Jessica Farrell, City of Pittsburgh Mayor’s Office
Amy Ganser, Senior Secretary, Department of City Planning

Welcome & Introductions

Chris Noschese called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force members introduced themselves. Chris noted that 25 attendees were watching the live stream.

Agenda

A. Review and Approval of Minutes

The motion by John Tague to accept the May meeting minutes was seconded by Rich McGann.

B. Treasurer's Report

John Tague had no official report to give this month. He presented a request to support the Disability Pride event on July 23rd with funding to provide interpreters, with an estimated cost between \$1000-\$1500. John reported that the funds are available for use. Chris Noschese presented the motion, Rich McGann seconded. The motion passed.

C. Sidewalk Concerns- Adam Drake

- Guest Adam Drake, recently moved to Pittsburgh from Seattle. Being new to the area, he has noticed how difficult it may be for differently abled people to navigate. Many sidewalks don't exist or are damaged, sandwich boards do not provide enough room on sidewalks for wheelchair accessibility. He is concerned that Pittsburgh has fallen behind on accessibility progress. He believes businesses need education to improve access to their doors, which will improve the safety for anyone who visits.
- Rich agreed. And also noted that new outdoor dining areas for downtown restaurants are really making getting around difficult.
- Leah Northrup has been monitoring the enforcement of the new outdoor dining legislation closely and has found that very few restaurants are abiding by the guidelines of the ordinance. She has made several calls to the 311 line to report violations but has not gotten any response. She would like to create a subgroup to focus on this specific issue.
- Paul voiced frustration that the Task Force has not been addressed by the City regarding sidewalk dining or other issues. The Task Force is the driving voice of change and it seems they have no input into the City's planning process.
- Rich noted bus stops are places where accessibility is lacking and there is much room for improvement.
- Paul O'Hanlon noted that there was previous work on City Council to discuss sandwich boards and other sidewalk issues but it was not carried through.
- Wendy from the 311 line reported that the Mayor's Office is taking a deep dive into sidewalk and curb issues. The group agreed that it will be important for the Task Force to be involved in these discussions and requested that someone from the Task Force be invited into future meetings.
- Chris asks the members to brainstorm on ways to get the attention of City Council, Mayor's Office, etc on these sidewalk issues. Maybe an op-ed piece in a local newspaper. This is the time to raise voices and be heard.
- Paul suggested that leadership from DOMI and other City officials be invited to Task Force meetings to hear about the concerns first-hand. That was part of the purpose of the Community Forum that was being planned but that has not happened yet.
- Jessica Farrell from the Mayor's Office commented that this is a priority issue for the Gainey administration and she will be a permanent representative in these meetings. Leah will be requesting a meeting with Jessica to concentrate on sidewalk safety.

D. Open Forum Discussion

- Paul initiated a discussion on the parking situation in the area of the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) which involves the corridor between Oakland and Downtown. It appears that the plans have all been drawn with parking on the wrong side of the street for the disabled. Paul wants to know when the public hearings will be to raise this concern with parking. The issue is that in the current design, disabled riders would exit directly into traffic. Chris agreed that this has been an ongoing problem with the development of the BRT- very little attention is being given to accessibility.
- Paul also is concerned with the elimination of bus stops and wants to know how to address this and get involved in the decision process. Chris mentioned that moving bus stops is problematic for people with autism as well, as it disrupts routines that they rely on.
- Leah asked about communication and connection with Bike Pittsburgh, thinking that they might be helpful advocates when it comes to accessibility.
- Laura Chu-Wiens, with Pittsburghers for Public Transit, grass roots organization advocating for more accessible affordable public transportation. Bus stop consolidation was started in 2019 in a route by route manner, but halted due to the pandemic. It restarted recently but with a less orderly approach and with little transparency. PPT is asking Port Authority for impact reports.
- Chris expressed frustration with public hearings- in general the hearing public dominate the conversations and spend more time explaining than listening to the concerns of the public.
- Buildings in Downtown are using blue lights this month to raise awareness for the Deaf/Blind community.
- Reminder that July 23rd is Disability Pride event, 1:00 to 5:00 near the Clemente Bridge, Oakland For All Ramp Crawl is August 19th, more information will be forthcoming.
- Transition committees finalized their report, Tina Callabro was going to write a letter, as yet it has not been sent but it is a work in progress and should be finished in the next week or so.
- Paul raised the question of the relationship of the City and Port Authority with the Pittsburgh Mobility Collective, MOVE Pittsburgh and in particular SPIN, the new scooter fleet. The scattering of scooters on sidewalks all over the city has become problematic from an accessibility standpoint. Hillary will look further into the background of this group.
- Jessica posted information about a public hearing for the BRT plan and Paul and Chris expressed interest in attending.

E. Adjournment

Chris adjourned the meeting at exactly 4:00 pm.

