

Work Session Summary Minutes

February 7, 2022

Hybrid Meeting

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Keba Samuel (Chairperson), Phillip Gussman (Vice Chairperson), Douglas Welton, Sam Spencer, John Ham, Erin Barbee, Peter Kelly, Andrew Blumenthal, Astrid Chirinos, Courtney Rhodes, Ronnie Harvey, Melissa Gaston, and Wil Russell

Commissioner Absent: Elizabeth McMillan

Planning Staff Present: Alyson Craig (*Interim Planning Director*), Candice Rorie, Shavon Davis, Alysia Osborne, and Kathy Cornett

Call to Order & Introductions

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm, welcomed those present and went over the protocols of the hybrid meeting.

Minutes and Reports

Approval January 10 Work Session Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Spencer and seconded by Commissioner Welton to approve the January 10, 2022 minutes. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes.

New Business

Strategic Mobility Plan

Mr. Ed McKinley shared a slide presentation and provided an overview of the Strategic Mobility Plan, Streets Map, and Comprehensive Transportation Review.

Commissioner Chirinos commented that the corridors revitalization planning is going on now and asked if this will be ready to be able to be implemented because she thinks this will be a great model. Mr. McKinley explained the specific role of the streets map and advised that it is in draft form and haven't been adopted yet. He said even in draft form, they have been using it as they've been talking through rezoning's and development. He went on to say the streets map is not only for giving clarity on the private investment side, but it's also a good tool to use for longer term public investment.

Commissioner Ham commented that he loves the idea of the bicycle facilities and the bike lanes uptown, but he's noticed in several locations a driving lane has been taken away. He understands we are trying to change the way people think about mobility but questioned what impact will that have on the traffic flow post covid when people return back to these offices uptown. Mr. McKinley replied that was one of the big challenges they've faced when making some of these shifts is that tradeoff. He said there are corridors where they don't have room to add everything they want to add so they will have to decide corridor by corridor or place by place what is the appropriate mix and the appropriate infrastructure to put in place. They go into these kinds of projects with a very methodical approach to both the technical analysis and the community engagement and let the conclusion be a part of that process.

Commissioner Russell asked how are they pushing avenues into being more balanced and less car centric and what tools are neighborhoods going to have to help that push. Mr. McKinley explained their intent with avenues is truly to be multi-modal and to find the right balance because there are streets they believe do have the ability in some cases to do trade off discussions. He went on to say to answer the question about what tools neighborhoods have, one tool is the discussion and feedback of the draft that's out there now; the review and testing of what their vision is for most of those avenues.

Chairperson Samuel put out a reminder that providing tools for smart balanced development including their transportation and mobility infrastructure, it's a highly collaborative effort between CDOT, planning department, council, city manager's office and even this body; there's a lot in entities that kind of contributes to that.

Commissioner Kelly asked where there any examples that they could provide to neighborhoods for the types of tradeoffs that are available based on different degrees of investment. Mr. McKinley replied one direct example would be what they have done in uptown with the bicycle lane and the work that they've done recently on Park Rd., where they reconfigured the curb-to-curb space to take a tradeoff by rebalancing the uses. He described that this comes in a wide range of investment and in some cases, it's just reconfiguring the existing pavement and that is something that is relatively easy to do. He went on to stress that the streets map isn't a project map and do not define all of the specifics, but what's implied in this broader vision is lots more work that needs to happen in terms of what is the specific solution corridor by corridor.

Chairperson Samuel asked are there any provisions in the CTR (Comprehensive Transportation Review) or SMP (Strategic Mobility Plan) that might call for a review of multiple petitions at once if they're happening at the same time, concurrently, or within a very small geographic area. Mr. McKinley replied the short answer is there's nothing in their guidelines that specifically addresses that, but he felt it was important to note there is a somewhat technical layer in which they do traffic impact studies but when they scope those out, part of that process involves working with the petitioner to identify some of the adjacent projects and if so, they design the scope of that traffic study to incorporate them to help them understand, in some cases, the timing of those projects, the investment, and the analysis they did.

Commissioner Kelly asked are they effectively requiring the developer to put more investment in our infrastructure on an incremental basis, even if it's by-right; is that implicit in this approach. Mr. McKinley explained through their by-right, these new guidelines allows them to more explicitly have that conversation in a by-right condition that they honestly don't do today. He further explained in these new guidelines, a developer would be required to do that multi-modal mitigation based on the scale of that development and what amount of investment they would need to do.

Commissioner Kelly commented that it may be helpful if they were to rate each of the roads in particular; where it is on the range of desirable versus actual so that people would be aware of the potential for how much would be both public or private.

Vice Chairperson Gussman inquired as to how would they transition into this from their zoning use and if there is any intent over the next few months to start adding this to the CDOT reports for zoning. Mr. McKinley replied they have not had that discussion yet and thinks that was a great idea so they will sit down with Deputy Director Craig and her team to think through what this would look like. Deputy Director Craig added she thinks they may need to wait until they are in full adoption of those documents.

Chairperson Samuel shared there is some time before the UDO gets adopted and implementation so as they are in that transition period now with the 2040 plan, they have a checklist at the back of every petition that they hear with goals 1 – 10. She thinks to Vice Chairperson Gussman's point, maybe there is an opportunity after the adoption of the UDO to add additional comment rather than a separate layer so to speak on goal #5. In her opinion, the Strategic Mobility plan and the Comprehensive Transportation Review makes goal # 5 a little more reachable and achievable. She went on to say maybe there could some additional data in the box that says goal #5 in addition to their regular CDOT comments.

2040 Policy Map Update

Ms. Kathy Cornett shared a slide presentation provided a brief update of where they are with the community engagements for the 2040 Policy Map. There were no additional questions or comments from the Planning Commission.

University City Vision Plan

Mr. Tobe Holmes shared a slide presentation and update for the University City Vision Plan.

Chairperson Samuel asked Mr. Holmes to share the boundaries that the plan covers. Mr. Holmes advised the boundaries roughly begins at the 6:00 point at the University City light rail station, following counterclockwise into NC49/University City Boulevard, it then wraps around to Mallard Creek Church Road into Mallard Creek Road, and back around to connect to University City Boulevard/NC49. It is a bit of a pie shaped, bound on two sides of Mallard Creek Road and NC49.

Commissioner Chirinos asked what are their plans in terms of engaging the highly international community that is on the north corridor. She said there is a tremendous amount of talent already established on the north side of Charlotte with all of the corporations that have come as well as all of the students and wanted to know have they had any plans with the Ethnic Chamber of Commerce and many of the economic development such as the airport.

Chairperson Samuel asked Mr. Holmes to clarify what iteration is the plan in; is it fully baked or are they in a first or second draft. Mr. Holmes advised they are in the final stages and basically have a final draft to some extent and have taken this through several city departments including Long Range Planning, Zoning, Urban Design Center, CDOT, Housing and Neighborhood Services, Economic Development, applicable county departments and went on to list several committees, elected officials, and stakeholder groups for that final input.

Mr. Holmes answered Commissioner Chirinos' question saying that they have been working hard over the last 6 months on how they could program their community in an inviting way to their

stakeholders. He explained they are looking into celebrating international holidays and started a program to publicize the international restaurants and shops in the community.

Commissioner Russel questioned the infrastructure saying considering that University City and their geographical area in which University City Partners serves are bounded by state roads, he asked does University City Partners have a plan to coordinate or tackle NCDOT in working to make these areas more comfortable and fit better with their vision plan. Mr. Holmes informed him that NCDOT works with them where they can, so they lean on CDOT a lot to understand the kind of bigger picture on some of these things. He went on to say that it's a partnership and they recognize that NCDOT has a job to do, and they also have a responsibility for their constituents that cross the street; so all they can do is try to figure this out the best they can and that work it is best done, he thinks, is with CDOT.

Chairperson Samuel commented they are fully aware that there are other communities and geographies in the city that will look to this plan as an example as they may look to develop their own community plans, so she appreciates the efforts that University City Partners has made in terms of commitments to strengthening multi-modal options; being one of the most car dependent areas still in the city but also one that has the highest number of acres undeveloped, she appreciates that effort.

Other Business

Commissioner Blumenthal provided a brief update of the efforts they have begun to make concerning the Environmental Statement.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:03 pm.