

Summary Report – Public Input Process

West Boardman Lake Redevelopment District

This Summary Report provides the background, framework and structure, and result for the public input process for the West Boardman Lake Redevelopment District. Additional detail on the process, information, options, and results are available in a separate full report.

Purpose

The City Commission needed to make a decision on whether to execute a purchase agreement for the Copy Central for the potential development of the Boardman Lake Avenue (BLA) by the end of May, 2011. The Commission requested that input be sought from the community to assist in their decision.

Scope

While the purpose was relatively narrow, to determine whether to purchase the Copy Central property, there was an attempt to broaden the discussion to include all aspects of the West Boardman Lake District, including recreation, redevelopment, and access. However, there was an interest expressed by a number of the participants that the discussion should be broadened to include overall traffic management in the City.

Meetings

Two meetings were held to gather input. At the first meeting, held on February 23, participants were asked to identify opportunities and issues for West Boardman Lake. Each participant was provided the opportunity to select their top six opportunities or issues. The top opportunities and issues identified at the meeting included:

- ❑ Concern of the loss of greenspace and wildlife habitat
- ❑ The project was starting without data; a traffic impact study should be conducted;
- ❑ Interest in traffic calming on Cass and Union; and other options to reduce single occupancy vehicles;
- ❑ Boardman Lake Avenue would help route east – west traffic around the Old Towne neighborhood;

- ❑ Would like to see the project extend south of 14th Street;
- ❑ Concern that the BLA would impact the overall trail experience and pedestrian access;
- ❑ Concern over increase in traffic on 10th Street and other connecting streets;
- ❑ Challenge of Eighth Street intersection;
- ❑ BLA would create another divide in Traverse City.

A complete listing of the opportunities and concerns identified at the February 23 meeting and their scores are provided in the Full Report.

The second meeting, held March 22, attempted to provide a response and options to address the key issues identified at the first meeting. The opportunities and issues were allocated in four categories: Data/Information, Natural Features/Environment, Plans, and City Impacts. The following is a summary of the information provided:

Data/Information: A City Traffic Map which graphically depicts average daily traffic volumes by street, as well as a comparison of traffic volumes on various City streets. An excerpt from the Grand Vision Transportation Gap Analysis and Refined Corridor/Intersection Analysis Report, prepared by Mead and Hunt in October 2010, that addressed the Boardman Lake Avenue.



Natural Features/Environment: A summary of proposed plans for recreation enhancements and trail development;



Plans: A series of eight alternative plans were provided:

North – Rail Easement



North – Rail 4 Lane Intersection



North – Roundabout



North – Lake Street Alternate



South – 14th Street Access



South – 16th Street Access



Center – Trail Access



Center – Trailhead 11th-12th St. Access



City Impacts: Discussion of various broader City impacts

At the end of the meeting, participants were asked to identify components of the plans that they liked and did not like. While there was an attempt to provide the opportunity for those who did not believe the road should be built by marking the road itself, a number of participants did not feel this method was adequate. A member of the audience posted

piece of paper entitled “No Road” which garnered a number of votes. Our approach, as described in both meetings, was to identify the opportunities and issues and present information and designs that attempted to realize the opportunities and address the issues. Unfortunately, we were not able to design the process that was satisfactory to those who wished to express their opposition to the BLA, which resulted in a feeling that the development of the BLA was an inevitability.

Comments and Reaction: The following is a summary of the comments and reaction from the meeting:

- ❑ *Divergency:* There is widely differing opinions about Boardman Lake Avenue. There were a number of participants who questioned the efficacy of Boardman Lake Avenue, a number of participants who believed the BLA will help relieve traffic on Cass and Union, and a number of participants who were undecided.
- ❑ *City Traffic Management:* A number of participants were frustrated that the process was focused on West Boardman Lake and Boardman Lake Avenue, and not discussed in the context of a broader traffic management plan.
- ❑ *Cass and Union Overload:* The traffic on Cass and Union is untenable and some action is necessary to make this neighborhood less dominated by automobiles and more livable for residents.
- ❑ *Recreation and Trails:* There is strong support for investments in improvements to the recreation area and trail construction; however, the residents of Lake Ridge are concerned about the trail along Boardman Lake.
- ❑ *Roundabout:* The predominant preference for the Eighth Street intersection is a roundabout.
- ❑ *Connection:* There is opposition to providing a two-way connection to 10th Street from BLA.
- ❑ *South End:* The opinions were split between the 14th Street access and 16th Street access for the south end of Boardman Lake Avenue.

Challenges: The development of the Boardman Lake Avenue and the input expressed at the meetings give rise to a series of challenges and dichotomies that make the decision to exercise the Copy Central option and to more broadly manage City traffic very difficult.

- *Copy Central Purchase vs. BLA Opposition:* The preferred option for the Eighth Street intersection, a roundabout, would require the acquisition of Copy Central, which would increase the likelihood that the BLA is built; however, there is significant and strong opposition to the development of the BLA. The broader conversation regarding overall City traffic management requested by a number of the participants does not fit within the current purchase agreement timeframe.
- *Connectivity vs. Livability:* One of the reasons that the City road network works effectively is its connectivity and the opportunity to select a variety of routes to get to a particular destination. However, residents on potential connector streets do not want to provide for a connection that may increase traffic on their street – this was strongly expressed with the discussion of the 10th Street connection to the BLA. The closed connection between Cass/Union and Division on 7th and 8th Street in the 1980's likely contributed to the use of Cass and Union Street as an east – west route. If so designed to limit connections to the neighborhood, the BLA would become a bypass, as opposed to addition to the City street network.
- *Access vs. Calming:* There were a number of comments regarding the installation of traffic calming measures and other steps to reduce the number of trips and lower traffic volumes on Cass and Union. However, these streets served as significant access points to downtown. As a regional commerce, recreation, and entertainment center, there is an interest in encouraging visits to downtown and the attendant access needs. A goal of reducing overall traffic volumes on City streets may run counter to encouraging access and use of downtown Traverse City.
- *Direct Benefit vs. Diffuse Malady:* There is significant and strong sense of frustration by Old Towne residents that something needs to be done and no significant action has been taken since 1999 when the stop signs were installed at 10th and 12th Streets on Cass and Union Streets. There were individuals at the meeting or have provided other input who live in Old Towne neighborhood and do not support the development of the BLA. Actions taken to reduce traffic on Cass and Union will

have a direct benefit to Old Towne neighborhood, but may have more diffuse impacts to the broader community.

- *Targeted Funding vs. General Funding:* The funding for Boardman Lake Avenue is derived through Brownfield Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which captures increased property taxes due to additional private investment on eligible property, which must be contaminated, blighted, or functionally obsolete under definition of Act 381, the state brownfield act. The funding source is limited to infrastructure that directly benefits the eligible property, which, in this case is limited to the Boardman Lake Avenue. Infrastructure investments, including traffic calming, on Cass and Union are not eligible for this funding source and must be allocated from City transportation or capital improvement funds.
- *Analysis vs. Assumptions:* A primary concern raised at the meetings was that there was not enough information and data to adequately answer key questions, including whether BLA would reduce traffic on Cass and Union, whether the BLA would induce additional traffic, and the impact of traffic on the rest of City. Past work has focused on compiling traffic counts and road design, but has not necessarily analyzed the impact of the BLA on traffic counts. There are some challenges in such analysis. Computerized traffic models do not have the capability to analyze traffic flow in such a small area between Division, Cass, Union, and the BLA; they are built for a much more regional approach. The analysis of whether a road would induce traffic is based on a series of assumptions to measure the elasticity of demand by travelers, including the relative impact of congestion relief, alternatives, destination shifts, and additional travel trips, among other factors. It appears unlikely that agreement could be reached on such assumptions, depending upon the perspective of the participants. However, there are some data that could be collected and additional analysis conducted that would fill key information gaps, including origin and destination studies to determine the extent of east – west and north south traffic on Cass and Union Streets.

Recommendations

The participation and input provided at the West Boardman Lake meeting demonstrated the strong interest of the community in important infrastructure decisions, support for recreation, and a divergence of opinion on Boardman Lake Avenue. The following are recommendations for next steps:

- **Recreation:** Continue to pursue the development of City property for recreation purposes to increase access and use of the west shore of the Boardman Lake;
- **Trails:** Continue to work on trail design and development, balancing the interest of the City to expand access and utilize the City easement along the shoreline of West Boardman Lake with the interests of Lake Ridge and provide for both recreational and transportation uses for the trails.;
- **Wye:** Acquire the wye property from the Michigan Department of Transportation;
- **Copy Central:** Allow the Copy Central option to expire.
- **Traffic Analysis:** Develop a scope of work for a traffic analysis that will include an origin and destination study for Cass and Union Streets to determine east – west and north – south traffic patterns and evaluation of the impacts of Boardman Lake Avenue on Cass and Union Streets, as well as impacts on adjoining and adjacent streets.