

**TOWN OF BELMONT
COMMUNITY PATH IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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**MEETING MINUTES
February 15, 2017**

Present: Russel Leino, Chair; Brian Burke; Vincent Stanton; Heather Ivester
Absent: Michael Cicalese
Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler and Spencer Gober, Office of Community Development

The Committee and Pare held a public engagement meeting focused on the central area of the Path – Belmont Housing Authority to the east side of Belmont Center.

Prior to the meeting, presentation materials were available for the public to review at 6:30 p.m.

1. **7:00 PM** - Mr. Leino, introduced the consultants and opened the meeting. He provided a brief overview of Study and the purpose of the meeting.

2. Presentation:

The consultants presented a PowerPoint presentation on the matrix used for scoring, and the alternative central routes for the Belmont Community Path and how well each alternative route scored using the matrix.

3. Discussion:

- Discussion/concern regarding encroachments, easements, and takings and the differences between them.
- Question and discussion about reusing the Clark Street Bridge instead of replacing it. It was confirmed that aesthetic updates would most likely not require completely replacing the bridge, but that the width of the bridge structure was the problem – it is too narrow. The Clark Street Bridge was always intended to be a temporary structure when put in place 25 years ago
- A question was raised as to why there was a route that required going up to grade and back down at Clark Street. The answer being that this allowed for connectivity at the existing Clark Street Bridge.
- Frustration was expressed over the Town's prioritizing the needs of motorists over the needs of pedestrians and cyclists where signalizing the Concord Avenue approach to the railroad bridge is concerned. This particular intersection is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, and access to both the Post Office and library are difficult from Belmont Center. It was stated that a south to south connection would be good for Belmont.

- Concern over a lack of costing negotiations with property owners on routes that require a taking. It was felt that not costing this out would result in a higher score for these routes. The consultants reassured the audience that this concern was addressed in other ways in the matrices.
- Discussion about difficulty getting to the Post Office or the library from the train station. Putting anything else at this intersection (meaning the Path) would be a "disaster." Widening the sidewalk under the bridge sounds problematic.
- It is felt that the stretch between Clark Street and Belmont Center will be a highly utilized portion of the trail. There should be anticipation of high traffic on connections, particularly the underpass of the railroad bridge at Belmont Center no matter if it is a northern or southern route.
- Staying on the south side of the tracks would be a value added to the community, and that a safe pedestrian route to the Post Office and library is needed. Questioned why this route scored an 11. Consultants responded that the route impacts historic structures, high cost, accessibility issues, and switchbacks.
- Difficulty understanding which route scored what. Request to review connectivity of the routes that did not contain fatal flaws.
- Further discussion around signalizing Concord Avenue and the Town's unwillingness to do so. Concerns over the pedestrian experience at this intersection and its dangers. Do any of the options alleviate that danger?
- Stated that Royal Road Woods is on the Town's recreation map, but currently is not utilized. A path through the woods would be an asset. Desire for exercise stations and benches. Royal Road is too steep, and most cyclists have to walk their bikes up it. Consultants acknowledged a common concern over user experience and overall elevation change along the path.
- The matrix should include length and directness as factors for scoring.
- Belmont Center is an important hub, maybe we want to consider a northern AND southern route. Two routes instead of one or the other.
- Discussion around daylighting the Wellington Brook through Royal Woods, and the potential to receive grant funding for this stretch of the Path.
- Confusion about the fatal flaws was expressed. Question asked about why long segments that are not direct didn't score lower.
- Question asked about what happens if viable routes are out, and how to connect with the West alignments?
- Question emergency access along this route.
- Given the anticipation that the Path will bring lots of people to Belmont Center, has bike parking been considered? The consultants stated that it was included.
- Question asked about whether or not joining the East alignments would raise the score of a lower scoring alternative.
- Question asked if Route through the Belmont Housing Authority will serve the residents there, and if so, shouldn't this route receive a higher score because of its positive social impacts?
- Discussion around whether or not funding sources was a criteria in the matrix.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the consultants noted that the PowerPoint presentation and a link to the Belmont Media Center broadcast of the meeting will be made available online through the Town of Belmont webpage.

The meeting concluded at 9:15 p.m.