The Benefits of the Collaborative Process of Compromise: A Case Study from Alexandria, MN

by

Jack Forslund, PTP
Reuben Collins, EIT
Jessica Peterson, Health Educator, Douglas County Public Health
Presentation Outline

- Project Background
- Geographic Context
- Project Partners
  - City of Alexandria
  - Douglas County
  - Mn/DOT District 4
- Alternatives Development Process
  - Iterative, Collaborative Effort
- Identification of Improvement Measure
- Benefits of Collaborative Compromise
Project Background

• Mission of Active Living Douglas County & Douglas County Safe Communities and strengths of each organization

• Each organization independently identified a stretch of roadway in downtown Alexandria as unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclist to cross through community assessment

• A Technical Committee, comprised of representation from both organizations and other key stakeholders, was established to provide direction
Technical Committee

- Comprised representatives from:
  - Douglas County
  - City of Alexandria
  - Mn/DOT
  - Business Representatives
  - Citizens

- All partners shared the overall objective of improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists

- Each project partner had unique objectives for the corridor
A seven block section of 3rd Avenue (TH 29) from Broadway to Nokomis was selected.
Location Characteristics
3rd Avenue (TH 29) Characteristics

- 17,000 vehicles per day
- 7 blocks between signalized pedestrian crossings
- 5 traffic lanes
- 60’ curb to curb distance
- 68’ effective crosswalk distance
- 19 second crossing time
- Acceptable crossing gaps are infrequent
- Community indicated that crossing 3rd Avenue is difficult
Central Lakes Trail

• 55 miles long scenic paved trail between Fergus Falls and Osakis
• Valuable asset for residents and visitors
• Walking, Biking, Running, In-Line Skating
• ADA / Wheelchair Accessible
• Free
Objectives - Douglas County

• Promote active living and healthy lifestyles
• Enhance the pedestrian and bicycle experience
• Connect downtown Alexandria with Central Lakes Trail
Objectives - City of Alexandria

• Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety across 3rd Avenue (TH 29)
• Connect downtown Alexandria with Central Lakes Trail
• Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to destinations and attractions
• Connect the two sides of 3rd Avenue
Objectives - Mn/DOT

- Maintain or improve mobility on 3rd Avenue (TH 29)
- Improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing 3rd Avenue (TH 29)
- Adhere to established engineering standards
- Promote alternative modes of transportation
Alternatives Development

- Developed catalog of bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic calming techniques
- Discussed applicability to project objectives
- Discussed applicability to project area
- Identified primary measures to employ
Concept Characteristics

- Collaborative process to develop three concepts
- Common elements include:
  - Pedestrian refuge island
  - Pedestrian signal or beacon
  - High visibility crosswalk
  - Signage
  - Removing one or more turning movement
Comprehensive Concept

- Best accommodation for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Eliminates 6 turning movements
- Highest cost
- City concerned about reduced property access
- Mn/DOT concerned about maintenance
Concept Refinement

- Eliminates one enhanced crosswalk and pedestrian refuge
- Eliminates bicycle pass-through
- Eliminates 5 turning movements
- Allows greater automobile mobility
- Mn/DOT concerned about maintenance
- City concerned about reduced property access
- Mid-Range cost
Final Concept

- Eliminates 1 turning movement
- Least impact on automobile mobility
- Incorporates signage, enhanced crosswalks, and pedestrian refuge island
- Provides substantial improvement for pedestrians
- Lowest cost, easiest to implement
Before Improvements
After Improvements
Benefits of the Iterative Compromise Process

• Established an increased level of communication between agencies
• Fostered a greater understanding between agencies of the priorities and objectives of each agency
• Resulted in a concept that all agencies helped create
• Set the stage for funding administered by Mn/DOT
• Resulted in on-the-ground improvements (scheduled 2014)
• Established a working relationship for future projects, including the Broadway Streetscape project through downtown Alexandria
Thank you!