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Willowbrook Corner Planning Services
Meeting Notes
March 22,, 2022, 5:30-7:00 pm
On-line meeting
Advisory Group Meeting #3

Meeting Attendees

Brazzil, G. (WSP Consultant Team)
Childress, M, NAACP
Fields, Reshawn, (WSP Consultant Team)
Greenspan, C. (spelling?)
Guenov, D. (Pace Suburban Bus)
Gulbranson, J. (WSP Consultant Team)
Hall, M, Avanath
Janowick, D, Community House – was he there?
Johnson, R., YWCA – was he there?
Jones, N. (WSP Consultant Team)
Kenyon, S. (DuPage County) was he there?
Loper, J. (DuPage Co, Project Manager)
Lupa, M. (WSP Consultant Team)
Patton, L., YWCA
Renehan, J. (DuPage County Board)
Rose, C. (Pace Suburban Bus)
Strafford, G, DuPage County Community Services
Truman, A, Hinsdale Township HS District 86
Williams, W. (Burr Ridge Middle School)
Young, J., Avanath

The 90 minute meeting consisted of a quick review of the status of the mobility project follows by five transportation, three infrastructure, and one programming option for discussion and screening by the advisory group. The project’s goal is to develop a pilot plan with ideas to improve transportation to, from, and through Willowbrook Corners that supports the community in accessing fresh food, employment, education, and other essentials. The screening took the form of a whiteboard joint exercise. Discussion took place during each part of the meeting.

John Loper opened the meeting and moved directly into the overview of work to date

Part 1: State of Transportation in Willowbrook Corners

The following points were discussed:

- Pace commuter routes discontinued during the pandemic will not resume due to operation costs and low ridership.

- Pace is investing in flexible on-demand and microtransit services, but the current geographic boundaries do not cover Willowbrook Corners.
- Pace DuPage Access Program is a new program in partnership with Uber that reimburses trips for commuters in the ADA community up to \$30.
- Pace DuPage Access Program offers flexible serve to people with ability differences.
- School-district “after-school ubers” with volunteer drivers in personal vehicles.
- Interfaith community partnership to offer volunteer-provided for little to no-cost to healthcare destinations for older adults.

Part 2: What We Know from the Advisory Group & Resident Survey

John then added a top summary of what DuPage County had learned from the Advisory Group and from the community itself.

Advisory Group

In addition to the need for more flexible and diverse transportation options, there is a bigger picture of how transportation can create access to living wage jobs and employment retention, keep youth engaged from school to extracurriculars, make essential resources like fresh food within reach, and support local economic development where there are vacancies or opportunities for rezoning.

- Fixed route bus service is not enough. There is a gap in midday and late-night service, and it is not an efficient trip for grocery shopping.
- Older students do not have enough options to get from school to work or school to enrichment programs.
- Streets are not pedestrian and bike friendly, particularly in areas near the highway, or areas that are long stretches between destinations.
- It’s not just about getting people out of Willowbrook Corners to surrounding resources, it’s also about how we bring resources in for them

Willowbrook Corners Resident Mobility Survey

In Fall 2021, the project team surveyed a sample of Willowbrook Corners residents through email and in-person pop-up events. The survey inquired about travel patterns and behavior. About 40 people participated in the survey.

- Affordability and flexibility are priorities for transportation options. People are primarily concerned about getting to school and work in the morning
- 72% of respondents prefer to work within 2-5 miles of Willowbrook Corners. But 59% would be interested in warehouse employers along I-55 with adequate transportation.
- 23% of adults would need a smartphone to use app-based transportation. 18% of adults with children would need a smartphone for their children to use app-based transportation.

- Bus stop improvements are very important with 67% wanting seating, and 31% wanting shelter from the weather while waiting.
- Sidewalk improvements are very important with 88% stating they feel unsafe walking given the lack of sidewalks in their neighborhood.

Part 3: Mobility & Infrastructure Options Presentation and Screening

Five mobility options were presented; Jared and Gabi presented each slide. In these notes, every effort will be made to reflect the issues brought to the forefront by the advisory committee.

MICROTRANSIT

Microtransit Option A: App-Based On-Demand Transit

This option offers flexible on-demand service for an individual or small group. It can be accessed through a smartphone app or by phone call, depending on the service provider. Usually, this option requires e-payment. Pick-up and drop-off spots may be near your location or door-to-door, depending on the service. Providers can include Via, Uber, Lyft, and others in the market.

Discussion:

- Jared noted that a telephone, land line or cell, can be used to request this service. A smartphone app is not required. Cellular coverage and/or wireless availability are important infrastructure needed to cell phone requests for this option.
- The group agreed that this option is flexible, but that cost per ride would be an issue. Several of the group cited very expensive though short Uber and Lyft rides taken in recent months.
- Subsidies are a potential solution to the cost per ride.
- Public information: Awareness of the availability of this option would be a key component of success. Need to advertise/ reach out to the community.

Microtransit Option B: Community Van

A volunteer or contract/paid operator driven van that provides rides for local trips. The service can be provided on routes that hit common destinations like grocers, retail, and health appointments. Or the service can be provided on-demand. The vehicles must be purchased or leased.

Discussion:

- Volunteers (unpaid) may not be a sustainable model. A contract service might be more dependable in the long run.

- Flexibility is present in this option.
- John noted that companies of this type already exist in DuPage County and may be a resource.
- The group agreed that the geography to be served needs to be limited. The area from Willowbrook Corners to 75th Street, along IL Highway 83 has emerged as a reasonable microtransit focus corridor.
- Public information: Awareness of the availability of this option would be a key component of success. Need to advertise/ reach out to the community.

Microtransit Option C: Fixed Route Vanpool

Vanpools usually provide fixed weekday service between home and work locations. Passengers of a given van usually live near each other and have the same or close by work locations. Vanpools usually operate based on the work schedules of the passengers; they are not available on-demand. Vanpools require at least four (4) passengers to operate.

Discussion:

- Work trip focused which would serve only a single trip purpose of residents.
- Flexibility is not present in this option.
- Perhaps best included a one of two or more options in the study “toolbox” solution set.
- Dmitri noted that Pace vanpools have active websites showing when a seat is available.
- Gabi noted that when Covid hit, some vanpools expanded and altered their customers. Jails and prisons, for example had continuous need for employees to be present on the job.
- Public information: Awareness of the availability of this option would be a key component of success. Need to advertise/ reach out to the community.
- There is much trust there is in a traditional bus service. We know that all you need is a bus pass (which you can fill with cash many places) and you have a dependable way to keep moving. The issue is flexibility (headways) and bus route which may not serve your destination.

Microtransit Questions & Discussion

With the three microtransit modes presented, the meeting turned to overall questions and discussion of microtransit.

Dmitri added context to the Pace services. He noted that Pace vanpools can be structured many ways. The website is a resource. Also, the vanpools may be distance-based or participant-based.

Ayesha noted that she was grateful for the meeting and workshop. Her main issue was the form of payment assumed with the microtransit options. Will it be friendly to high schoolers, and unbanked people? Also, if the resident's cell phone has limited or no data, is there a way in Willowbrook to access wireless service?

Julie asked for Option B and Option C, what agency would administer the service? Several members cited the shortage of drivers for all types of buses and vans.

MICROMOBILITY

Micromobility Option A: Bike and Scooter Share

Bike and scooter share provides small vehicles for individual use that are designed for short local trips. Bikes must be reserved from and returned to a docking station, while scooters can be accessed at random. Bikes and scooters require reservation and payment by app. Availability also depends on maintenance as the vehicles must be charged for use.

Discussion:

- Gabi led off by saying that bike and scooter share started in city centers with high density and where many popular destinations are close at hand. Willowbrook Corners is a somewhat different story since many important destinations are not within the neighborhood.
- Many of the group cited the safety concerns of using this technology - in Kansas City, for example, the scooter share is turned off in the evening in the tourist district to minimize late night accidents. They are also suspended in the winter season. Ayesha cited the very heavy backpacks that her high school students carry every day – tough to balance on a scooter or bike.
- The lack of infrastructure – sidewalks and bike lanes – within Willowbrook Corners and along IL-83 were both cited as problematic. This costly infrastructure is needed for success of this micromobility. Catherine Greenspan concurred with the safety issues springing from lack of infrastructure and noted that the trip distances would need to be short.

Micromobility Option B: Car Share/ Conventional or EV

Car share provides a small fleet of vehicles for short-term rental. Sometimes, cars must be reserved from and returned to specific parking spaces in public parking lots. Other times, cars can be anywhere within a geographic zone. Car share requires reservation and payment by app. Typically, the costs do not afford daily use.

Discussion:

- It was noted that those without a driver's license would not be able to use this service as a driver.
- Signage and docks (for EV) or designated parking would be needed in the Willowbrook Corners neighborhood.

- There is an EV car share vendor operating in DuPage which could be a resource.

Micromobility Questions & Discussion

With the two micromobility modes presented, the meeting turned to overall questions and discussion of micromobility.

The team returned to the issues of personal safety and the need for appropriate infrastructure to support bikes and scooters.

It was noted that a bike share in the neighborhood should be linked to (have docks at) any transit stations that might be built and/or important destinations if safe infrastructure were in place. Bike share might also be used for leisure purposes.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure supports mobility and thus three infrastructure options were developed and discussed.

Infrastructure Option 1: Pedestrian & Bike Network Improvements

Sidewalks and bike lanes create a safe environment that encourages walking and biking and supports people who are transit-dependent and need to travel to transit stops.

Discussion

- John reminded the group that the resident survey showed that 88% of survey respondents want to see sidewalks in their neighborhood. Sidewalks would allow more safe walking within the neighborhood as well as in and out using any mobility mode selected to go forward.
- Retrofitting IL-83, Clarendon Hills Road, or the streets within Willowbrook Corners with sidewalks is a big lift – utilities, storm water systems and related infrastructure would need to be relocated or altered in some way at a significant cost.

Infrastructure Option 2: Delivery Lockers

Delivery lockers are a solution to bring resources into the community, to supplement transportation group agreed that making delivery more affordable makes sense for Willowbrook Corners. Online orders can be delivered to lockers, including essentials like groceries, and accessed using a digital code provided to the recipient.

Lockers should be located in convenient and well-trafficked areas like large employer sites, transportation stations or hubs, park and ride lots, and mixed-use areas.

In addition to convenience, delivery lockers reduce shipping costs by up to 30% making home deliveries more affordable to low-income communities.

Discussion

- Electric power would be necessary at the delivery node.

- Access to broadband would be needed for residents to access the service.

Infrastructure Option 3: Bus Stop Improvements

A variety of transit services can utilize curbside bus stops. Improvements to these bus stops can include weather protection, seating, digital infrastructure for real-time arrival updates, ADA infrastructure and more.

Discussion

- John reminded the group that the resident survey showed that 98% of survey respondents want better seating and weather protection at bus stops.
- Amenities such as lighting, charging stations and real-time info would also be desirable.

Infrastructure Questions & Discussion

Infrastructure improvements were a popular avenue of investment since the group understood how important they are to overall mobility of all kinds. Several of the key issues emerged again in this discussion.

Ayesha noted that owning a smart phone so that you can download and use an app can be a barrier to many potential users of mobility options. Similarly, unbanked people, without access to credit cards, face a barrier to use of many mobility options.

Catherine noted that access to the internet, while nearly universally present in Willowbrook Corners within the home, is not necessarily present outside the home, making the use of internet-based mobility options a challenge.

PROGRAMMING OPTION

Programming Option 1: Guaranteed Ride Home

A program that reimburses local transportation costs when alternative transportation is needed to return home from work. This often includes the cost of Uber and Lyft.

Program administration and terms and conditions must be developed to determine how reimbursements are requested and issued, what trips are eligible for reimbursement, and how often an individual can be reimbursed.

Discussion

The group was open to this approach but was concerned about the rising cost of Uber and Lyft.

DISCUSSION & RANKING OF THE OPTIONS

At this stage, the advisory group was briefed on the five mobility options and was asked to discuss and provide a ranking of these options. The following is a mode specific discussion of the options following by a table derived from the interactive whiteboard ranking that took place during the meeting.

Microtransit - APP-BASED ON-DEMAND TRANSIT

- The question was raised if we have explored an Uber/Lyft partnership at this stage.
- Several of the group again noted the high price of Uber/Lyft rides recently and discussed how this process could be a barrier, even with a partnership.

Microtransit – COMMUNITY VAN

- Devontae asked if we had explored the barriers in the community to this mobility mode. How easy is it to find drivers? How reliable are the drivers? How are they paid? What is the backup plan if the driver is not able to work on some days due to illness or other?
- The group in general thought this mode a better option than app-based options because it is flexible, and the cost is lower than an Uber or Lyft type service.
- Julie asked who would administer the service?
- John noted that partnership is critical for success.
- Carol said that the Community Van mode has many good points – flexibility, on-demand service potential, and affordability – and that the Willowbrook neighborhood seems to be a good fit for it.

Microtransit – FIXED ROUTE PACE VANPOOL

- Pace provided an update on their vanpool program. These vanpools have traditionally been used for home-work trips.
- John asked if there could be a vanpool for College of DuPage. Vanpools have typically stayed away from school service due to conflict with school bus services.
- The group discussed how second and third shift workers could be assisted using this mode of travel.
- Ayesha noted that high school kids want to work at jobs after school/weekends and that lack of transportation stops them. Fixed route vanpool would not really help because the schedules for jobs they would like to work at are highly changeable.
- Wendy added that she is also “pro-kid”; she tried to establish a vanpool for travel to COD but the effort was not successful. Also vanpools serve work trips although Pace noted that they have a few that are not work related.
- Julie referenced a previous Pace survey of Willowbrook Corners that said people overwhelmingly (over 70%) preferred Pace fixed bus service.

Micromobility – BIKE & SCOOTER SHARE

- In general, the group felt that this mode required many steps to be put in place safely (sidewalks/bike lanes) and overall, not practical. Ayesha cited a traffic death recently when a young person was crossing IL-83 in the area.
- Infrastructure again was at the center of success for this mode.

Micromobility – CAR SHARE

- Julie and other group members thought this mobility option would be best deployed as an ancillary service to another option. Others agreed that the best way forward might well be two complementary mobility options.
- Program management by an outside agency or group would be best for deploying this option.
- As far as cost is concerned, a subsidy would be needed.
- Gina noted that Ride DuPage at \$3.00 per ride one way was still considered a high cost to pay for those who qualified to ride it in the township.

ACTION ITEMS (This is from AG Meeting #2)

- Project Team to research and recommend possible grant programs for transportation and safety solutions **WORK IN PROGRESS**
- Project Team to follow up with individual advocates on key discussion points **WORK IN PROGRESS**

CONCLUDING NOTES ON WILLOWBROOK CORNERS ADVOCACY GROUP MEETING #3:

- Several viable mobility options are available to serve Willowbrook Corners
- The consensus is that a combination, (likely 2 options) would provide the best mix of flexibility, affordability and service to drivers and non-drivers.
- Infrastructure is a make or break issue. Without sidewalks, bike lanes, and related elements, scooter, bike share, and some transit options which involve walking and waiting are unsafe.
- Critical to success are:
 - Public information on the selected option(s)
 - Decisions on who and how project management and administration are conducted.

Willowbrook Corners Advocacy Group
Meeting Notes
22/March/2022
continued

The meeting concluded at 7:00 pm

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Willowbrook Corners Advocacy Group
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continued