

MEMORANDUM



cityofnovi.org

TO: WALKABLE NOVI COMMITTEE
FROM: MARK SPENCER, AICP, PLANNER *MS BEW*
THROUGH: BARBARA MCBETH, AICP, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: CIDER MILL/EMERALD FOREST BIKE ROUTE ISSUES
DATE: SEPTEMBER 14, 2012

At the Walkable Novi Committee's August 16, 2012 meeting, residents from seven households said they were opposed to the installation of bike route signage along the proposed Cider Mill Road/Emerald Forest Drive "neighborhood connector" bike route. The residents presented a list of reasons why the planned bicycle route was not a good idea. The Committee members discussed the issues with the residents briefly and asked staff to review the issues and report on the matter at their next meeting. The City's Department of Public Services is waiting to complete the installation of the route signage until the Committee has reviewed the matter.

Background

The concept of "neighborhood connector" routes was developed during the planning process for the City of Novi Non-Motorized Master Plan which was adopted in February 2011. The Plan was funded by the Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program to develop strategies to reduce energy consumption in the City. The Plan prepared by the firm, Greenway Collaborative with help from Novi's elected officials, appointed officials, public employees and the general public, lays out a systematic set of strategies that when implemented will reduce the number of motor vehicle trips in the City and thus reduce energy usage. As a side benefit, increasing non-motorized trips will increase the amount of exercise the City's residents get which should improve the health of those residents.

The Non-Motorized Master Plan proposed a network of neighborhood connector routes located in low speed, low traffic local road right-of-ways along with connecting off-road paths. Envisioned to primarily be used by bicyclists, neighborhood connector routes will connect residential areas with key destinations in the City while minimizing a bicyclist's exposure to a large volume of high-speed motor vehicles. These routes are planned to complement the primary road pathway and sidewalk system and produce a tighter non-motorized network, making it easier for bicyclists to travel throughout the City. These signed and mapped routes are especially attractive to people who prefer not to bicycle along a busy major road.

Neighborhood connectors are a low cost way to expand the City's non-motorized network. Bicycles typically do not need any special accommodations on local residential streets as they can comfortably share the road with the limited motor vehicle traffic. Signs will identify the routes and provide wayfinding by noting direction and distance to key destinations. Installing bike route signs and placing bike routes on maps

will bring notice to residents that the City is bike friendly and thus encourage more people to bicycle. Bike route signs will also alert motorists that bicycles are in the street. The Non-Motorized Master Plan recommends first establishing neighborhood connector routes that require little improvements and then later establishing the routes that require building new off-road pathways and mid-block crossing facilities.

One of the proposed neighborhood connector routes will follow Rochester Drive, Nantucket Drive, Cider Mill Road and Emerald Forest Drive from about a half mile west of Beck Road to Taft Road. The proposed route includes a 270 foot long five-foot wide sidewalk connecting the ends of Cider Mill Road and Emerald Forest Drive. This route will connect to the existing pathway system along Taft and Ten Mile Roads and be part of a non-motorized route that will connect subdivisions along the route with Fuerst Park, the Novi Library, City Hall, Novi High School and Power Park. The proposed route also intersects Taft Road about 360 feet south of where a mid-block crossing is proposed in the master plan. This crossing will connect the pathway with another future neighborhood connector route. The latter route will connect to the existing pathway along Novi Road, making further links to another future neighborhood connector route that will connect to Main Street, the Town Center and the I-275 Metro Trail.

Neighborhood Concerns

On August 16, 2012, several residents, who live near or along the existing sidewalk connecting Cider Mill Road and Emerald Forest Drive, expressed concerns about the inclusion of the sidewalk connector with the proposed route. To further the discussion of these concerns, staff has listed them in the following table. Staff reviewed and researched these concerns and offers the following responses as its report to the Committee on this matter. Staff's responses to the residents' concerns also include some potential ways to reduce the route's impact. These responses were crafted assuming that bicyclists will make up the vast majority of increased traffic along the route.

No.	Concerns	Responses and/or potential ways to reduce impact
1	Route signs are not needed because residents know or could find out how to get to the library.	Installing wayfinding and bike route signage along neighborhood connector routes will accomplish several things. The signs will identify safe connected routes to destinations that may not be obvious to someone who is unfamiliar with the area. The signs will reassure users they are still heading toward their destination. The signs will remind motorists to expect bicycles in the street. The signs will promote bicycling in the City by getting people to think about biking. A number of the mid-block "To Library" bike route signs could be replaced with "Bike Route" signs if that would make the signs more appealing to residents. There may be additional cost to the City to modify the sign selections at this point.
2	Other routes are available	Although alternative routes exist, they do not provide the

No.	Concerns	Responses and/or potential ways to reduce impact
	especially routes that use portions of the sidewalk on the north side of Ten Mile Road.	same level of service. A route using Fairway Hills would include 1,600 feet of five-foot wide sidewalk and the proposed route only 270 feet. The proposed route intersects Taft Rd. about 360 feet south of where a mid-block crossing is proposed. This crossing will connect to a future route that will connect to Novi Road. The pathway along Novi Road provides access to a proposed neighborhood connector route that will connect Main Street and Town Center with the I-275 Metro Trail.
3	The connecting sidewalk was installed only to provide a walking route for school children living in Simmons Orchards and attending Novi Meadows Elementary School and since the elementary school boundaries have changed, and the students in Simmons Orchards now go to Parkview Elementary School, the sidewalk is not needed.	On the approved tentative preliminary plat for Yorkshire Place, Cider Mill Road was depicted as a through route from Beck to Taft Roads. During the review of the Final Preliminary Plat for Yorkshire Place No. 3 in 1986, the City's planning consultant, Brandon Rogers, suggested relocating Cider Mill to save trees, reduce grading and to reduce the straight alignment of the street which would be conducive to higher speed traffic. Subsequently, the developer submitted the current street design which included the cul-de-sac at the west end of Emerald Forest Drive. During the review of the Final Plat, the Novi School District asked for a pedestrian and biking connection between the two streets so school children from the proposed Simmons Orchards Subdivision could walk or bike to Novi Meadows Elementary School. The City's Subdivision Ordinance supports connecting new developments with neighboring developments and schools with pathways. Before the current easement location was selected, a connection from the east end of Cider Mill Road to the school district property to the north was considered but rejected because it emptied into a woods without a connection to the school. The plat for Yorkshire Place No. 3 includes a 12-foot wide open space between lots 111 and 112 where a sidewalk was installed to provide a connection to Novi Meadows Elementary School. Although children from Simmons Orchards Subdivision do not use the proposed route to go to school, they do use it to go to Novi Meadows Elementary School for recreational purposes. The current connecting sidewalk is popular and many nearby residents use it for recreation, visiting friends or going to the library.
4	Easement is private and only for a walkway.	A twelve-foot wide easement for a "public walkway" was executed on February 23, 1988 by the property owner and developer of Yorkshire Place, Tri-Mount Land Development Co. as a condition of Final Plat approval. The Final Plat was recorded on April 14, 1988 and the easement was recorded on May 12, 1988. The City's Subdivision Ordinance requires walkways to be located in a 12 feet

No.	Concerns	Responses and/or potential ways to reduce impact
		<p>wide right-of-way and built with 8-foot wide pavement. In Yorkshire Place No. 3 Subdivision's case, the City permitted an easement instead of the right-of-way and permitted a 5 foot sidewalk, both at the request of the developer. Although "walkway" is not defined by the State of Michigan, walkway and sidewalk are often used interchangeably. The Microsoft Word Thesaurus includes sidewalk as a synonym for walkway. Bicycles are permitted on sidewalks in Michigan unless expressly prohibited. The Michigan Vehicle Code states "<i>An individual lawfully operating a bicycle upon a sidewalk or a pedestrian crosswalk has all of the rights and responsibilities applicable to a pedestrian using that sidewalk or crosswalk.</i>" Therefore, since walkways are sidewalks, bicycles are permitted on the public sidewalk located in the public walkway easement that connects Cider Mill Road and Emerald Forest Drive.</p>
5	<p>The current sidewalk is unsafe for bicyclist. Accidents could increase and if signed as a bike route parents may think the sidewalk is safe for their bicyclist children. The sidewalk has the following issues:</p> <p>a. The sidewalk is narrow (five-foot wide) Bicycle trailers cannot pass and bicyclist are too close to pedestrians.</p> <p>b. The sidewalk has two sharp (90 degree) curves with limited visibility.</p> <p>c. The sidewalk has steep slopes (avg. grade 6%).</p>	<p>Signs asking bicyclists to walk their bikes are proposed at each end of the connecting sidewalk to alert unfamiliar sidewalk users of the non-standard bicycle route conditions and encourage them to slow down by walking their bicycle.</p> <p>a. The existing five-foot (60 inches) wide sidewalk can accommodate the passing of two wheel chairs or two bicycle trailers. Both are typically designed with a width of 30 inches or less. A bicycle is usually no wider than 24 inches thus a bicycle should easily be able to pass a bicycle trailer. If the City determines it necessary, other types of signs could be used to slow down bicyclists including "yield to pedestrians" signs. If the amount of bicycle traffic or the number of accidents warrant further improvements, a two foot wide shoulder could be installed on both sides of the sidewalk or the sidewalk width could be increased to eight or ten feet.</p> <p>b. The two 90 degree curves can be safely maneuvered by a bicyclist if they approach the curves at a low speed. Vegetation could be cut back to improve visibility. If the City determines it necessary, "curve" warning signs could be installed in the walkway easement to warn bicyclist so they will slow down even more. If traffic or accidents warrant further improvements, the sidewalk could be widened and the curve radii could be increased.</p> <p>c. The current sidewalk grades meet minimum mixed use trail slope standards. On any sloped bicycle route, users need to manage their speed.</p> <p>d. Animals may jump out where ever sidewalks and</p>

No.	Concerns	Responses and/or potential ways to reduce impact
	<p>d. Animals may jump out and startle users.</p> <p>e. The sidewalk is close to utility boxes.</p> <p>f. The adjacent driveway and paved parking area is used by sidewalk users. Some sidewalk users cut across the driveway to the street. Bicyclists may damage cars parked in the driveway. Drivers backing down the driveway may not see the sidewalk users.</p> <p>g. Storm sewer backup floods the sidewalk.</p> <p>h. The sidewalk is often wet from overland sheet flow.</p> <p>i. The proposed "walk your bike" signage is unenforceable.</p> <p>j. Who will shovel the snow on the route?</p>	<p>pathways transverse natural areas.</p> <p>e. Very visible utility boxes are located in the walkway easement in front of 45661 Emerald Forest. If the City determines it necessary, yellow and black striped tape could be applied to the structures to make them more visible.</p> <p>f. A driveway and paved parking area are located within the walkway easement adjacent to the sidewalk in front of 45661 Emerald Forest. Removing the parking pavement from the easement and adding bushes or a fence section could eliminate the pedestrian and bicycle use of the driveway as a shortcut. Adding a curb ramp between the street and the sidewalk would provide a direct route from the sidewalk to the street which would eliminate short cutting across the driveway.</p> <p>g. A storm water catch basin is located adjacent to the sidewalk. During storm events some flooding may occur for short periods of time. Regular maintenance of the catch basin will keep the facility operating as designed and reduce flooding issues.</p> <p>h. Due to adjoining terrain, the sidewalk is subject to the overland flow of water. Most pathways and sidewalks located on sloping terrain have the same issue. Usually, the overland flow is only a problem during the storm event.</p> <p>i. Many bicyclists will ride their bike on the connecting sidewalk and ignore the instructions on the sign. As mentioned above it is hoped that the sign will alert the bicyclist that the route should be traveled at a lower speed.</p> <p>j. The City could assume that bicyclists will need to walk their bike if they use the sidewalk when it snows. The City could add the sidewalk to the list of places they shovel the snow.</p>
6	Sidewalk does not meet ADA requirements.	This issue will not impact bicyclists. Existing facilities are not required to meet ADA requirements because signage is installed. The use remains the same. The City has an ADA Transition Plan to systematically bring all sidewalks and pathways into ADA compliance.
7	Some sidewalk flags have heaving and cracks	It does not appear that current conditions will impact bicyclists. All sidewalks are subject to cracking and heaving. The City will inspect the sidewalk and repair it if necessary.

No.	Concerns	Responses and/or potential ways to reduce impact
8	<p>An increase in pedestrians and bicyclists using the neighborhood connector route could reduce property values. The two homes that are within 13 feet of the connecting sidewalk could see a decrease of property values by up to \$30,000 due to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increased noise. Already loud talking, wheel noise from expansion joints and the bouncing basketballs disturb the neighbors b. More litter c. More unpicked up dog excrement d. Increased trespassing and other criminal activity e. Decrease in privacy 	<p>Studies have shown that today's home buyers want to be located close to recreational facilities and properties near recreational facilities go up in value or stay the same. Typically the closer a property is to a recreational facility the higher the property value. Staff responses to the resident's specific concerns address bicyclists, since it is anticipated that most new users of the route will be bicyclists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Loud talking, wheel noise and noise from bouncing balls are not usually labeled undesirable noises. Bicyclist may talk to each other but since bikes have pneumatic tires little road noise is generated. Bicyclists are unlikely to be bouncing balls. Skateboarders and children (some with balls) will continue to use the route at the same level they do today. b. Bicyclists generally do not eat or conduct other liter producing activities while they ride, thus the amount of litter is not likely to increase. c. Bicyclists generally will not be walking dogs thus the amount of dog waste should not increase. d. It is unlikely that bicyclists using the route for transportation purposes will want to delay getting to their destination by stopping to trespass. Increased bicycle traffic along the route adds additional eyes in the neighborhood. People are less likely to do illegal activities when someone might see them doing it. If trespassing is a current problem, homeowners could use fencing, walls or landscaping to discourage trespassers. e. Most bicyclists using the route will likely pass through with little notice. The additional bicycle traffic could provide residents along the route with additional opportunities to meet and converse with more people. Homeowners adjacent to the sidewalk who feel they lack privacy could install additional fencing, walls or landscaping.
9	Off-road vehicles use the sidewalk.	Off-road vehicles are not permitted on sidewalks and establishing a bike route will not increase off-road vehicle use. Please report such activity to the Police Department.
10	The proposed signs were not reviewed or approved by the Yorkshire Place homeowners association board.	All signs are proposed to be located in the public right-of-way. The homeowners association does not have authority to regulate signs in the right-of-way.
11	Signs add to visual pollution.	The City understands that an excessive number of signs can add to the visual clutter. Thus, the number of

No.	Concerns	Responses and/or potential ways to reduce impact
		proposed signs is the minimum necessary to adequately mark the route. Only two sign posts will be placed in the Emerald Forest Drive right-of-way. One in front of 45611 or 45626 Emerald Forest Drive and one on the side of 25062 Portsmouth Avenue
12	Signs placement could reduce on street parking in the Emerald Forest cul-de-sac because posts could prevent doors from opening all the way.	The City's consulting engineer recommended placing this sign about two feet from the driveway for 45611 Emerald Forest Drive centered between the street and sidewalk. If a sidewalk ramp is installed the sign would be moved to about two feet from the sidewalk. These locations should not interfere with parked cars.
13	The new signs might not be maintained.	The City has an on-going sign replacement program. Damaged signs are replaced regularly.
14	Traffic could greatly increase because organized groups may use the bike route. They may also park in the neighborhood to use the route.	Organized groups prefer to hold bicycle events on major routes so it is unlikely that this route will be used in that manner. If a group does decide to use this route for their event, the parking required to stage the event will be located away from the subdivision.

Recommendation

At this time staff recommends installing the neighborhood connector route signs as planned. As discussed in the above responses, staff believes the route will have little impact on properties along the route. The connecting sidewalk between Cider Mill Road and Emerald Forest Drive will adequately facilitate additional bicycle traffic if users use caution. If problems arise after the establishment of the route, the City could consider alternatives or minor improvements along the route to improve the situation.

If you have any questions regarding this memo, please feel free to contact me.

- C. Clay Pearson, City Manager
- Victor Cardenas, Assistant City Manager
- Jason Mangum, Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Service
- Rob Hayes, PE, Director Public Services/City Engineer
- Charles Boulard, Director Community Development
- Barbara McBeth, Deputy Director Community Development