REPORT / RECOMMENDATION

To: City Council

Agenda Item #: VIII. A.

From: Karen M. Kurt
Assistant City Manager

Date: August 20, 2013

Subject: Approve Living Streets Policy

Action ☒
Discussion ☐
Information ☐

Action Requested:
Approve Living Streets Policy

Information / Background:
In May 2011, the City Council adopted a resolution in support of Living Streets and directed the Edina Transportation Commission to work with staff to develop a Living Streets Policy. Key steps in the development of the policy are outlined below:

- ETC formed a Living Streets Working Group. Members Paul Nelson, Jennifer Janovy and Michael Thompson played a critical role in policy development.
- The City received a $15,000 grant from the Bloomington Health Department. These funds were used to hire a consultant to review current city policies and to provide a framework for moving forward.
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield sponsored a workshop on February 15, 2012 led by representatives from the National Complete Streets Coalition. Key community stakeholders attended and participated in a brainstorming session about Edina's vision for future streets.
- The ETC Working Group and staff prepared a draft Living Streets Policy which was reviewed with the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, Human Rights and Relations Commission, Park Board, Energy and Environment Commission and Bike Edina Task Force. Feedback is collected for incorporation into the Living Streets Policy and future Living Streets Plan.
- The Living Streets Policy draft is reviewed during a joint work session with ETC and City Council.

Upon policy adoption, Mark Nolan, Transportation Planner, will begin working with internal and external advisory groups to draft content for the Living Streets Plan. The Living Streets Plan will address how the Policy will be implemented by providing more detailed information on street design, traffic calming, bike facilities, landscaping and lighting, as well best practices for community engagement during the design process.

Confirmed members of the external advisory group are:

- Arnie Bigbee, Human Rights and Relations Commission
- Claudia Carr, Planning Commission
- Jennifer Janovy, Transportation Commission
- Ellen Jones, Park Board
- Bill McCabe, Arts and Culture Commission
- Paul Nelson, Transportation Commission
- Paul Thompson, Energy and Environment Commission
- Courtney Whited, Transportation Commission

Staff is waiting for confirmation from additional representatives from the Planning Commission, Energy and Environment Commission and Community Health Committee. Additional community expertise will be sought as needed throughout the process.

Members of the internal advisory team are:

- Ross Bintner, Environmental Engineer
- Jeff Elasky, Police Lieutenant
- Susan Faus, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director
- Cindy Larson, Redevelopment Coordinator
- Chad Millner, Assistant City Engineer
- Bob Pestrud, Parks Foreman
- John Scheerer, Street Supervisor
- Jeff Siems, Fire Marshal

Additional staff expertise will be sought as needed throughout the process. Staff is also in the process of securing a $5,000 grant from Bloomington Public Health that will be used to develop a community education and outreach plan for Living Streets.

Attachments:

Proposed Living Streets Policy

Living Streets Policy

Introduction

Living streets balance the needs of motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders in ways that promote safety and convenience, enhance community identity, create economic vitality, improve environmental sustainability, and provide meaningful opportunities for active living and better health. The Living Streets Policy defines Edina's vision for Living Streets and the principles and plans that will guide implementation.

The Living Street Policy ties directly to key community goals outlined in the City's 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Those goals include safe walking, bicycling and driving, reduced storm water runoff, reduced energy consumption, and promoting health. The Living Streets Policy also compliments voluntary City initiatives such the "do.town" effort related to community health, and the Tree City USA and the Green Step Cities programs related to sustainability. In other cases, the Living Street Policy will assist the City in meeting mandatory requirements set by other agencies. For example, the Living Streets Policy will support the City's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan which addresses mandates established under the Clean Water Act.

The Living Streets Policy provides the framework for a Living Streets Plan. The Living Streets Plan will address how the Policy will be implemented by providing more detailed information on street design, traffic calming, bike facilities, landscaping and lighting, as well as best practices for community engagement during the design process. Lastly, existing and future supporting plans such as the Bicycle Plan, Active Routes to Schools, Sidewalk Priority Plan and the Capital Improvement Plan will help to identify which projects are priorities with respect to this Policy.

Living Streets Vision

Edina is a place where…

- Transportation utilizing all modes is equally safe and accessible;
- Residents and families regularly choose to walk or bike;
- Streets enhance neighborhood character and community identity;
- Streets are inviting places that encourage human interaction and physical activity;
- Public policy strives to promote sustainability through balanced infrastructure investments;
- Environmental stewardship and reduced energy consumption are pursued in public and private sectors alike; and
- Streets support vibrant commerce and add to the value of adjacent land uses.

Living Streets Principles

The following principles will guide implementation of the Living Streets Policy. The City will incorporate these principles when planning for and designing the local transportation network and when making public and private land use decisions.

All Users and All Modes

The City will plan, design, and build high quality transportation facilities that meet the needs of the most vulnerable users (pedestrians, cyclists, children, elderly, and disabled) while enhancing safety and convenience for all users, and providing access and mobility for all modes.

Connectivity

- The City will design, operate, and maintain a transportation system that provides a highly connected network of streets that accommodate all modes of travel.
- The City will seek opportunities to overcome barriers to active transportation. This includes preserving and repurposing existing rights-of-way, and adding new rights-of-way to enhance connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.
- The City will prioritize non-motorized improvements to key destinations such as public facilities, public transit, the regional transportation network and commercial areas.
- The City will require new developments to provide interconnected street and sidewalk networks that connect to existing or planned streets or sidewalks on the perimeter of the development.
- Projects will include consideration of the logical termini by mode. For example, the logical termini for a bike lane or sidewalk may extend beyond the traditional limits of a street construction or reconstruction project, in order to ensure multimodal connectivity and continuity.

Application

- The City will apply this Living Streets Policy to all street projects including those involving operations, maintenance, new construction, reconstruction, retrofits, repaving, rehabilitation, or changes in the allocation of pavement space on an existing roadway. This also includes privately built roads, sidewalks, paths and trails.
- The City will act as an advocate for Living Street principles when a local transportation or land use decision is under the jurisdiction of another agency.
- Living Streets may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance activities over time.
- The City will draw on all sources of transportation funding to implement this Policy and actively pursue grants, cost sharing opportunities and other new or special funding sources as applicable.
- All City departments will support the vision and principles outlined in the Policy in their work.

Exceptions

Living Streets principles will be included in all street construction, reconstruction, repaving, and rehabilitation projects, except under one or more of the conditions listed below. City staff will document proposed exceptions as part of the project proposal.

Exceptions:

- A project involves only ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition, such as mowing, cleaning, sweeping, spot repair, concrete joint repair, or pothole filling, or when interim measures are implemented on a temporary detour. Such maintenance activities, however, shall consider and meet the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians.
- The City exempts a project due to an excessively disproportionate cost of establishing a bikeway, walkway, or transit enhancement as part of a project.
- The City determines that the construction is not practically feasible or cost effective because of significant or adverse environmental impacts to waterways, flood plains, remnants or native vegetation, wetlands, or other critical areas.

Design

The City will develop and adopt guidelines as part of the Living Streets Plan to direct the planning, funding, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of new and modified streets, sidewalks, paths and trails. The guidelines will allow for context-sensitive designs.

The City's design guidelines will:

- Keep street pavement widths to the minimum necessary.
- Provide well-designed pedestrian accommodation in the form of sidewalks or shared-use pathways on all arterial and collector streets and on local connector streets as determined by context. Sidewalks shall also be required where streets abut a public school, public building, community playfield or neighborhood park. Termini will be determined by context.
- Provide frequent, convenient and safe street crossings. These may be at intersections designed to be pedestrian friendly, or at mid-block locations where needed and appropriate.
- Provide bicycle accommodation on all primary bike routes.
- Allocate right-of-way for boulevards.
- Allocate right-of-way for parking only when necessary and not in conflict with Living Streets principles.
- Consider streets as part of our natural ecosystem and incorporate landscaping, trees, rain gardens and other features to improve air and water quality.

The design guidelines in the Living Streets Plan will be incorporated into other City plans, manuals, rules, regulations, and programs as appropriate. As new and better practices evolve, the City will update the Living Streets Plan.

Context Sensitivity

Although many streets look more or less the same, every street is a unique combination of its neighborhood, adjacent land uses, natural features, street design, users, and modes. To accommodate these differences, the City will:

- Seek input from stakeholders;
- Design streets with a strong sense of place;
- Be mindful of preserving and protecting natural features, such as waterways, trees, slopes, and ravines;
- Be mindful of existing land uses and neighborhood character; and

- Coordinate with business and property owners along commercial corridors to develop vibrant commercial districts.

Benchmarks and Performance Measures

The City will monitor and measure its performance relative to this Policy. Benchmarks demonstrating success include:

- Every street and neighborhood is a comfortable place for walking and bicycling;
- Every child can walk or bike to school or a park safely;
- Seniors, children, and disabled people can cross all streets safely and comfortably;
- An active way of life is available to all;
- There are zero traffic fatalities or serious injuries;
- No unfiltered street water flows into local waterways; storm water volume is reduced; and
- Retail streets stay or become popular regional destinations.

The City will draw on the following data to measure performance. Additional performance measures may be identified as this Policy is implemented.

- Number of crashes or transportation-related injuries reported to the Police Department.
- Number and type of traffic safety complaints or requests.
- Resident responses to transportation related questions in resident surveys.
- Resident responses to post-project surveys.
- The number of trips by walking, bicycling and transit (if applicable) as measured before and after the project.
- Envision ratings from the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure.
- Speed statistics of vehicles on local streets.

Implementation

The goal of this Policy is to define and guide the implementation of Living Streets principles. Several steps still need to be taken to reach this goal. The first step will be to develop a Living Streets Plan to guide the implementation of the Policy. The Plan will:

- Identify and implement standards or guidelines for street and intersection design, universal pedestrian access, transit accommodations, and pedestrian crossings;
- Identify and implement standards or guidelines for streetscape ecosystems, including street water management, urban forestry, street furniture, and utilities;
- Identify regulatory demands and their relationship to this Policy (ADA/PROWAG, MPCA, MNMUTCD, MnDOT state aid, watershed districts);
- Define the process by which residents participate in street design and request Living Streets improvements; and
- Define standards for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to ensure access to key public, private and regional destinations.

Additional implementation steps include:

- Communicate this Policy to residents and other stakeholders; educate and engage on an ongoing basis;
- Update City ordinances, engineering standards, policies and guidelines to agree with this Policy;
- Inventory building and zoning codes to bring these into agreement with Living Streets principles as established by this Policy;
- Update and document maintenance policies and practices to support Policy goals;
- Update and document enforcement policies and practices to ensure safe streets for all modes;
- Incorporate Living Streets concepts in the next circulation of the City's general plans (Comprehensive Plan, Bicycle Plan, Active Routes to School Plan, etc.);
- Incorporate Living Streets as a criteria when evaluating transportation priorities in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP);
- Review and update funding policies to ensure funding sources for Living Streets projects; and
- Coordinate with partner jurisdictions to achieve goals in this Policy.