

Community Engagement Plan (CEP)

Fergus Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

DRAFT 08/07/20

I. Summary

This Community Engagement Plan (CEP) presents an overview of the tools, approaches, issues and considerations for engaging the Fergus Falls community and receiving comments and guidance for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

This CEP is intended to evolve through the life of the project, and to respond to guidance from City of Fergus Falls staff, Project Steering Committee (PSC) members, City Council, and other project partners.

2. Impacts from and Response to COVID-19

The State of Minnesota continues under a set of social distancing guidelines as work on this plan begins. Community engagement traditionally includes in-person and online activities. *In-person* activities are generally not compatible with the social distancing guidelines currently in effect. To respond, this CEP includes an enhanced set of *online* activities designed to engage the community and receive the guidance that is needed to develop a responsive and effective plan.

Although in-person activities are still included and described in this CEP, it is assumed that due to current conditions the great majority of this project's engagement activities will be conducted virtually using agreed upon online / internet tools.

This CEP will be updated as needed to reflect changes in engagement strategies and activities.

3. Audiences / Stakeholders

Two general audiences / types of stakeholders are identified as part of this project:

- » Internal stakeholders: City staff, Steering Committee members, agency and organizational partners
- » External stakeholders: Community organizations and the general public

More detailed definition and potential engagement activities for each are defined in the following sections of this document.

4. Engagement with Internal stakeholders

Internal stakeholders include City staff, agency partners, and members of project-related bodies who are directly involved in the steering, management, or development of the project.

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The Project Steering Committee:

- » Guides key decisions and the overall direction of the project
- » Offers guidance for development of project recommendations and the draft plan
- » Facilitates communication with other stakeholders
- » Provides initial review of key items prior to wider distribution
- » Provides support with gathering data
- » Ensures that the plan is compatible with the current City plans and policies

The PSC meets every month. Meetings are coordinated by City of Fergus Falls Development and Planning Specialist Ryan Miller and facilitated by CDG.

Members of the PSC include (affiliation provided in parenthesis):

- » Tom Rufer (City Council)
- » Wayne Hurley (WCI, Pedal Fergus Falls)
- » Patrick Hollister (PartnerSHIP4Health, Pedal FF)
- » Carol Dudgeon (BPAC)
- » Katrina Johnson (Community Member)
- » Kelsee MacIntosh-Ellig (Planning Commission)
- » Kevin Rogness (Parks and Recreation Board)
- » Ryan Miller (City staff - Community Development Dept.)
- » Klara Beck (City staff - Community Development Dept. & Port Authority)
- » Guy Taylor (City staff - Public Works Department)
- » Brian Yavarow (City staff - Engineering Department)
- » Abram Silbernagel (City staff - Police Department)

Meetings will begin in mid-June 2020 and continue until the completion of the project in November 2020. Meetings will be used to share project updates and receive guidance at key points throughout the plan process.

City Council and Mayor

The Fergus Falls Mayor and City Council will be informed of project progress and consulted as needed throughout the project. Ryan Miller will be the main point of contact with the Mayor and City Council, and will coordinate meetings and presentations as needed.

Other City Boards and Committees

The City of Fergus Falls includes several councils, boards and commissions. As needed, board members may be invited to participate in project update meetings and to provide comments on project direction at major milestones.

City boards and committees that may receive project updates from the project team include:

- » Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
- » Parks and Recreation Board
- » Planning Commission

Ryan Miller will be the main point of contact with City boards and committees, and will coordinate meetings and presentations as needed.

5. Engagement with Community and External Stakeholders

External stakeholders include residents, business owners, other governing bodies, educational entities, and visitors.

Residents

Fergus Falls residents will be consulted at the project visioning stage and at major decision points throughout the project. The goal of engaging the residents is to receive their priorities for improving walking and biking in the City.

Potential organizations for connecting with residents include:

- » Neighborhood or Resident Organizations
- » Fergus Falls Public Schools / ISD 544 (<https://www.fergusotters.org/>)
- » Farmer's Market and Community Events
- » Arts Centers:
 - A Center for the Arts (www.fergusarts.org)
 - Kaddatz Art Galleries (www.kaddatzgalleries.org)
 - Lake Region Arts Council (www.lrac4.org)
 - Springboard for the Arts (www.springboardforthearts.org)

Bike and Pedestrian Advocacy Community

Fergus Falls has an active and engaged population of advocates for active transportation.

The project will work closely with:

- » Pedal Fergus Falls (<http://www.pedalff.org/>)
- » Fergus Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC - [Link >](#))

Business Community

Members of the Fergus Falls business community will be consulted to receive their priorities for improving walking and bicycling in the City.

Potential organizations for connecting with the business community include:

- » Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.fergusfalls.com/>)
- » Fergus Falls Downtown Riverfront Council (<https://ffriver.org/>)

Schools and Education Partners

Schools and other education partners will be consulted to learn about their existing issues and upcoming projects, and to discuss opportunities to increase student walking and biking in the city.

Potential organizations for connecting with the Fergus Falls education community include:

- » Fergus Falls Public Schools / ISD 544 (<https://www.fergusotters.org/>)
- » Hillcrest Academy (www.fhillcrest.org)
- » Minnesota State Community and Technical College (www.minnesota.edu/about/campuses/fergus-falls)
- » Private K-12 schools

Under-Represented Populations

Members of under-represented communities will be consulted to learn about their current issues regarding walking and biking in the city, and to receive their goals and visions for walking and biking improvements.

Potential organizations and partners for connecting with under-represented populations in Fergus Falls include:

- » Fergus Falls Human Rights Commission ([link >](#))
- » Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living (<https://www.freedomrc.org/>)
- » Food shelves
- » Non-English language groups

Visitors

Visitors to the city's many destinations and events will be included in the engagement process. Potential opportunities for connecting to visitors to the city include:

- » Table and project presence at Fergus Falls area events
- » Visit Fergus Falls (<https://visitfergusfalls.com/>)
- » Connecting with
 - Hotel owners
 - Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce (www.fergusfalls.com)
 - Fergus Falls Arts organizations

Adjoining Jurisdictions and Other Government Partners

Adjoining jurisdictions and other government partners will be consulted to learn about existing and upcoming projects, and about opportunities to coordinate related improvements across jurisdictional boundaries.

Potential government partners for coordination include:

- » West Central Initiative (<https://www.wcif.org/>)
- » Fergus Falls Port Authority ([Link >](#))
- » Nearby communities
- » Otter Tail County (<https://ottertailcountymn.us/>)
- » State (DNR, MnDOT, etc.)

6. Engagement Methods for Community and External Stakeholders

Overview

Members of the public and other external stakeholders will be engaged through a variety of tools and approaches. The comments and data gathered through engagement will be processed and summarized in the project's Engagement Summary.

The Engagement Summary will be shared with the PSC and included as an Appendix in the plan. Progress reports will be shared with the PSC as engagement activities continue.

Impacts from COVID-19

In-person activities are currently on-hold as Minnesota continues under a set of social distancing guidelines. An enhanced set of online engagement tools will be used to engage the community and receive the guidance that is needed to develop a responsive and effective plan. This CEP will be updated as needed to reflect changes in engagement strategies and activities.

Engagement Methods

The following engagement tools are recommended as part of this project:

- » ONLINE Community Workshop / Open House
- » ONLINE Focused Small Group Outreach and Engagement
- » Project Website
- » Online Interactive Map (Wikimap)
- » Community Survey
- » Social Media
- » Use of Previous / Concurrent Projects to Inform the Process
- » News Releases and Media Alerts
- » Broadcast Interviews with Local Experts
- » Mailing List

A brief description of each tool is provided below.

ONLINE Open Houses / Community Workshops (implemented virtually / online)

Open Houses / Community Workshop meetings provide an opportunity for members of the public to receive project information, express preferences, and ask questions of the project team. Early and proactive outreach using social media, press releases, and communications with community partners, will be an important contributor to higher levels of participation by members of the public.

Two ONLINE / Virtual Open House / Community Workshop events will be provided as part of this plan. The content and format of these events will be finalized decided in consultation with the PSC.

Generally, virtual Open Houses will share these characteristics:

- » Supporting materials (maps or documents) will be available online just ahead of the event
- » A brief presentation orienting participants to the project and the project materials will be provided via Zoom conference (or Facebook Live event)
 - This presentation will be recorded and made available on the project website after the event
- » A survey or other comment-gathering tool will be made available immediately after the presentation, and kept open for at least another week to receive the public's comments

Open House / Community Workshop #1 would be hosted in September 2020. The purpose of this Open House would be to gather input on opportunities and challenges for pedestrian and bicycle travel in Fergus Falls. This Open House would also gather ideas, input, and comments to inform plan elements.

VIRTUAL Open House / Community Workshop #1:

- » (Date to be decided in consultation with PSC)
- » Location: virtual / online via Zoom
- » Presentation (live event): 5:30–6:00PM
- » Community participation activities: immediately following the presentation

Open House #2 would be held as the draft plan nears completion (around November 2020). Following a presentation of the draft plan, participants would be asked to comment and provide ideas related to the draft plan. Following the Open House, the draft plan would be updated in response to comments and guidance received.

VIRTUAL Open House #2

- » (Date to be decided in consultation with PSC)
- » Location: virtual / online via Zoom
- » Presentation (live event): 5:30–6:00PM
- » Community participation activities: immediately following the presentation

Pop-Up Workshops (currently on-hold)

Pop-Up workshops are mobile workshops that bring the project to the places where people are already gathering. Pop-Up workshops are friendly and casual activities that include richly-illustrated materials, provide timely information about the project and design alternatives, and offer multiple tools for direct participation and comment by participants and passersby - from games and surveys to informal discussions. Pop-Up workshops offer the opportunity to gather the opinions of people who might not otherwise attend a public meeting. Pop-Up workshops can include several types of standalone activities, each of which can be completed quickly, in five minutes or less - for example, dot map activities, paper/tablet surveys, and sharing of brief educational materials.

It may be possible to host a booth at the farmers market, which is currently open, and maintain social distancing depending on how the booth is setup. CDG will continue to work with the PSC to determine how / when to move forward with this type of engagement.

ONLINE Focused Listening Sessions (implemented virtually / online)

Listening sessions are engagement events hosted by an organization as part of their regular meetings or around a specific topic. They allow people to discuss their ideas in a small and relaxed environment. Listening sessions can take a variety of different formats, and can be used to exchange information, discuss assets and opportunities, and discuss innovative ideas.

Up to two Online Focused Listening Sessions (implemented virtually / online via Zoom) will be facilitated by CDG.

Some potential partners for listening sessions include:

- » Fergus Falls Business Community
 - Area Chamber of Commerce (www.fergusfalls.com)
 - Fergus Falls Downtown Riverfront Council (<https://ffriver.org/>)
- » Fergus Falls Arts organizations
- » Pedal Fergus Falls (<http://www.pedalff.org/>)
- » Fergus Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC - [Link >](#))

Project Website

The project website will be used to provide an overview of the project, share project progress, provide access to mapping tools and surveys, and offer a platform for commenting on the plan. The website will serve as a central online resource for the Fergus Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

CDG will develop the website and regularly update its content. A link to the plan website will be provided by the City of Fergus Falls from the City's official website in one or several visible locations. Webcards advertising the project website can be distributed widely at community events.

URL: www.ffbikepedplan.org

Interactive Online Mapping (Wikimap)

An interactive online map (Wikimap) will be used to receive location-specific comments about walking and biking assets, locations of concern, and locations they feel should be prioritized.

URL: <https://wikimapping.com/FFBikePedPlan.html>

Online Community Survey

One or two brief online surveys will be used to gather specific information from Fergus Falls residents regarding their ideas, needs, and desires for the pedestrian and bicycle network in the City, as well as to receive comments on the Draft Plan. Survey participants will be self-selected (not random sample). The surveys will be administered online.

Social Media

Coordination with the City's current Facebook and Twitter channels can be used to provide timely project announcements and share information about the online participation tools and upcoming public workshops to help increase participation. Social media can also be used to invite visitors to the project website to view project updates and plan drafts. CDG can provide the City with social media template messages that can be easily used. Ryan Miller will be the liaison with the City's communications department for publishing information and announcements.

Some techniques to expand the reach of social media posts include:

- » Include an image with each post (facilities around town, facilities residents might like to see, or examples from elsewhere - a good resource for images is here: www.pedbikeimages.org)
- » Include a brief description (can be something like: "Happy to announce we've started work on our new Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan - learn more here: www.ffbikepedplan.org ")
- » Include a link to the project website

Use of Previous / Concurrent Projects to Inform the Process

Several other planning efforts with pedestrian- and bicycle-related components or implications have been or are being conducted as part of City, County and regional initiatives. Where possible, public comments and guidance gathered in those processes will be brought into this project.

Recommendations from those projects will also be used to inform recommendations for the plan.

The following are examples of other plans or projects that may inform the Fergus Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan:

- » Fergus Falls Transportation Plan
- » Pedal Fergus Falls Preferred Network Plan
- » Safe Routes to School Plan (Includes Complete Street Policy language)
- » Glacial Edge Trail Master Plan
- » Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan
- » Northeast River Reach Small Area Plan
- » MnDOT District 4 Bicycle Plan

News Releases and Media Alerts

News releases and media alerts covering upcoming community meetings, significant findings and recommendations, and important project milestones may be authored and submitted to local and regional news outlets, websites, and public media outlets. Potential outlets for distribution include:

- » Fergus Falls Daily Journal
- » KBRF, other local radio
- » PEG Access Cable Access Channel

All drafts of news releases and media alerts will be shared with Ryan Miller one week prior to deadlines and presentations to allow sufficient time for review. To ensure consistent messaging, Ryan Miller will be the main point of contact for any media inquiries and press releases.

Broadcast Interviews with Local Experts

Interviewing planning staff and/or members of the PSC through local media may be used to help publicize the plan process, provide valuable updates from local voices, and provide an additional platform for community member questions.

Members of the PSC, City Council, City staff and/or CDG would be excellent candidates to discuss project updates and answer questions. Interviews may be conducted at several stages of the project.

Mailing List

The City may already have a mailing list for interested residents. Sign-in information from participants at plan events will be processed and shared with the city for future plan communications.

7. Project Schedule

Task	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
PSC Meeting	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Open Houses (2)				●		●	
Listening Sessions (2)			●	●			
Press Releases			●	●	●		
Online Survey			■				
Interactive Wikimap			■				
Project Website	■						

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