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Firm evaluating respondent data for SUP update

May 7, 2019

By TIFFANY REPECKI (trepecki@breezenewspapers.com) , Island Reporter, Captiva Current, Sanibel-Captiva Islander

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Public feedback collected on the city of Sanibel's Shared Use Path Master Plan is currently being analyzed, with the goal of bringing a proposal before the city council at its June meeting.

On April 30, the Project Advisory Committee for the SUP update held its third and final meeting. Project manager Christopher Keller, with the firm Tindale-Oliver in Tampa, provided a status report on what work had been done and an overview of the data received at open houses and island events.

It was also the last day for people to submit feedback through an online survey.

Article Photos



TIFFANY REPECKI



"Our goal is still aggressive," he said. "To be done with this in June."

Keller explained that once the feedback is evaluated, the goal is to present city staff with the draft report in May. The public will have a chance to review it before it goes before the city council.

"We're getting close to the end," he said. "We're in the home stretch."

At the meeting, Keller reported that 14 people filled out comment cards and 37 people submitted surveys on site at the second and final SUP open house held on April 22 for the community.

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"Most people who came in had already taken it," he said of submitting feedback.

As of April 28, a total of 2,536 people had completed the online survey.

Keller reviewed the most up-to-date findings for the committee.

He reported that 96.68 percent of the respondents felt the path system was "very important" or "important" to the city, with 75 percent biking it and 21 percent walking or jogging-running on it.

Of the respondents, 78.3 percent reported using the SUP for exercise-fitness, 74.7 percent for leisure-recreation, 47.5 percent for shopping-errands and 43.2 percent to avoid traffic for the top answers.

A total of 77.1 percent indicated that they used it "daily" or "several times a week."

"They're not just casual path users, they're out there a lot," Keller said. "So we have informed responses."

For overall experience, 88.67 percent were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the SUP. In addition, 82.82 percent of respondents were "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" using it.

"We're going to go and look at it and see why they feel uncomfortable," he said, explaining that the majority of them seem to enjoy the path and using it. "But there's a little bit of work we can do."

"That's what we're trying to address," Keller added.

Respondents also provided feedback on the SUP's amenities and signage, as well as what elements of the system made the path users on it and motorists driving near or adjacent to it feel uncomfortable.

The system features about 26 miles and users were asked about adding paths.

"Just about over half of our respondents said yes," he said.

Feedback was also submitted via an online interactive map and through the website itself.

"What we want to do is identify opportunities to improve the path system," Keller said of analyzing the data. "So they're not necessarily recommendations, but 'where are my opportunities to do things?'"

"That blueprint for the future of what the shared use path will look like," he added.

The opportunities fall within four categories: safety, quality of service, connectivity and stewardship.

Keller explained that safety is broken down into engineering, education and enforcement. The lists included things like ensuring new and retrofitted paths are ADA accessible, encouraging participation from responsible parties to develop and distribute educational materials to path users, and exploring opportunities to expand law enforcement presence along the system.

In addition, path design considerations highlighted vegetation and landscaping, lighting, path surface, path width, signage and pathway markings, horizontal and vertical clearance, and accessibility.

"To ensure that the path system is a safe environment for all users and all mobilities," he said.

Quality of life is broken down into maintenance and management lists.

"If there's opportunities to go and do maintenance and do a design improvement, do the improvement then to the extent possible," Keller said, pointing out that regularly updating the master plan is key.

"It is a living document," he said.

As for stewardship, the category is broken down by community and communication. While the community list mostly focused on

continuing actions, communication included things like produce and distribute informational guidelines and partnering with businesses to inform and educate users.

"Work with all partners in owning and maintaining and delivering information," Keller said.

Connectivity is divided into improvements, extensions and support facilities-amenities. The lists included things like providing a minimum path width of 10 feet at high-volume segments, considering environmental and quality of life impacts when evaluating path extensions, and locating support facilities and rest areas in existing and future rights-of-way and easements.

He also reviewed for the committee three improvements currently planned for the system and existing path widening opportunities, plus path connections and intersection enhancements under evaluation.

"We're still going through this," he said of the connections and enhancements.

"These are just concepts," Keller added.

The existing Master Plan was adopted in 2009. The current project, which will guide future updates to the system, is being done in partnership with the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

For more information about the project, visit sanibelbikeped.com.

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