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City, county kick off SUP plan update

February 5, 2019

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

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Extending over 26 miles and spanning from Lighthouse Beach Park on the east end to the Blind Pass Bridge on the west end, the Shared Use Path system is one of the city of Sanibel's unique gems.

And city staff, in partnership with the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization, is seeking feedback from residents and visitors pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists on the operation.

The city and county recently kicked off a project to update the master plan for the Shared Use Path. The current version was adopted in 2009 and has guided the implementation of updates to the system over the past decade. A Project Advisory Committee has been established to assist with the process.

Article Photos



Christopher Keller



On Jan. 31, the eight-member group held its first public meeting with officials and staffers. Project manager Christopher Keller, with the firm Tindale-Oliver in Tampa, conducted a presentation.

"We're establishing guidelines for implementing improvements to the path in the future," he said. "Over the next 10, 20 years, where should the path system go? This is your path system, your plan."

Keller explained that the goal is to identify gaps or needs in the system current challenges then determine how to go about

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addressing the recommendations, including exploring funding options.

"We're looking to wrap this up by June," he said, adding that the city council must sign off on it.

Keller outlined the steps of the process, which will include outreach and engagement, reviewing the existing data and master plan, updating the needs assessment and plan, and a funding analysis.

"That really goes throughout the entire process," he said of the first step.

In addition to creating the PAC, the firm will organize open houses on Feb. 19 and March 22, pop-up community events at farmers markets and festivals, and an online survey, plus will question path users.

"We want the input," Keller said.

On Feb. 11, the online survey will launch at sanibelbikeped.com. Visitors to the website have until April 30 to fill it out to have their feedback considered. The site also features information on the plan update and project, background on the existing path system, an interactive wiki map tool and more.

On Feb. 16, the team will conduct its path intercept surveys, which will entail stopping users at multiple locations along the system to ask them to participate in a questionnaire. He explained that the survey will not only gather data from users, but will raise awareness about the update going on.

"To get their attention on the project and, hopefully, their input," Keller said.

In reviewing the existing data and master plan for his presentation, he explained that prior updates to the system have focused on areas like widening paths, making markings and crossings more consist and uniform, and updating amenities along the path, such as adding shelters, benches and water fountains.

Keller also looked an incident data, including bike versus bike, bike versus vehicle, and falls.

"There are five common challenges when looking at paths and trails," he said, listing off space, speed, surfaces, signage and social behavior. "I came up with some additional and emerging challenges."

Keller described the other challenges as congestion and user conflict, bicycle parking, shared active transportation and micro-mobility, and ACES autonomous, connected, electric and shared vehicles.

"We're also going to look at the existing vision, goals and objectives of the plan," he said.

Keller noted that he does not see them being rewritten, however.

"More of a refresh and re-look than we're looking for a new vision or goals or objectives," he said.

For more information or to provide feedback on the system, visit sanibelbikeped.com.

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