

BMA EXPERTISE

Public Involvement Facilitation – Case Examples Helping Leaders Envision Active Livable Communities

Public involvement facilitation is a cornerstone of the groundbreaking work undertaken over the past 15 years by Bowman-Melton Associates (BMA). Methods vary from elaborate multi-day charrettes to neighborhood, sector or citywide workshops. Imperative is the documentation of the process, which becomes the foundation of any federally or state-funded project's environmental clearances and funding potential.

A prime example is a stakeholder charrette conducted for the Friends of the Trinity Strand Trail in Dallas, Texas that led to an adopted plan or more than \$25 million in non-motorized public infrastructure through the Dallas Medical Center District and along a remnant river channel meandering through an aging warehouse district with potential for mixed-use redevelopment and connections to a soon open light rail transit system. Early in the project for this privately funded trail study, BMA negotiated pro bono assistance for the charrette from the local chapters of APA, ASLA and AIA.

The process began with a bus tour to familiarize landowners, friends group members, the professionals, and agency (city, county, MPO, state and federal) staff with responsibilities within the study area, followed by a plenary overview of the project with breakout sessions focused on visioning and landowner responses to the potential for redevelopment with the trail in each of four study area zones. The process culminated with an open house for participants, landowners, user groups, and elected officials that set the vision and course for subsequent master plan development and implementation. Today, phase 1 of the plan is fully funded, and parts of the trail are either built, under construction or in design.

Similar successes were achieved more recently for a feasibility study encompassing 31 miles of Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority commuter rail corridor in Austin, Texas in 2007, and a citywide bikeway implementation project in Plano, Texas in 2009. Stakeholder involvement was key to arriving at locally preferred options for connections to the adjacent neighborhoods and communities. In Austin, area landowners and developers were key to decisions on connectivity to and within newly established Transit Oriented Development zones.

"Walkabouts" are another way of guiding community leaders to see ways to support multi-modal access and envision complete streets that can contribute to sustainable transportation balance. These can foster creation of great urban places and living streets with transportation options that work for everyone.

Public involvement is also vital to building civic support for future capital investments. With respect to non-motorized mobility options, most civic leaders, landowners and developers recognize the value of incorporating physical activity into our everyday routines. Contact Bowman-Melton Associates, Inc. to learn how public involvement can be part of your trail, bikeway or transit-oriented project.

