

Meeting Summary



- Date:** August 12, 2020
- Time:** 10:30 AM-12:00 PM
- Location:** Zoom Conference Call
- Meeting:** Stakeholder Committee Meeting #1
Introductions, Study Overview, Understanding Issues & Priorities
- Attendees:** Dakin Schultz (Iowa DOT); Ragen Cote (Downtown Partners); Jill Wanderscheid, Marty Dougherty, Monette Harbeck, Chris Madsen (City of Sioux City); Angela Drent (Siouxland District Health Department); Brian Fahrendholz (Sioux City School District); Ann Brodersen (Seniors Advisory); Julie Schoenherr (City Council); Bob DeSmidt (Active Transportation); Rouleen Gartner (LaunchPAD Children's Museum); Alejandra Quintana, Erin Berzina, Hannah Neel (SIMPCO); Leif Garnass, Bill Troe, Joni Giese, Eavan Moore (SRF); Marty Shukert (RDG)

Purpose of Meeting:

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce members of the Sioux City Downtown Transportation Study consulting teams, client, and stakeholder committee to one another and to gain a shared understanding of the study background, scope, timeline, issues, and priorities. Meeting materials are attached.

Summary of Meeting:

The meeting opened with introductions and a background primer on the study. Downtown Sioux City has been seeing more downtown residential and riverfront development that creates new opportunities to enhance mobility for all users. The objectives of the downtown transportation study are to:

- Identify traffic flow and parking impacts of converting 5th and 6th Street to two-way streets. Develop recommendations to address impacts.
- Evaluate the skywalk system and make recommendations for improvements with the goal to increase use with the goal of enhancing the downtown environment to attract and support new capital investment.
- Analyze the pedestrian network conditions and needs of downtown and make recommendations for improvements and connections.

Stakeholder Committee Input: Changes to Downtown

Input was requested from the committee: Based on your history, what has changed in the Downtown area? What does the future look like from your perspective?

- **Businesses:** There used to be a lot of retail businesses downtown, and many of them are gone now. Their appeal has changed as well – department store draws have turned into coffee shop draws. Downtown lacks a true grocery store. Walgreens serves as the downtown grocery; pedestrian access there could be improved. Hard Rock Hotel & Casino generates activity, with the downside of noise and traffic congestion. Downtown has pockets of vacant or underutilized properties that are prime for future redevelopment, likely as mixed uses. Age-appropriate services are also lacking. New hotels opening-up will add to traffic/use of parking ramps downtown.
- **Housing:** Every 10 years, the construction activity in downtown goes through a cycle from office-residential-civic drivers. Most recently it has been residential development. Historically, housing has been low-income. The growing presence of transient or homeless people keeps others away, especially at night. They gather at the Union Gospel Mission, warming shelters, Walgreens, library, movie theater. New, more market rate units have recently been built. More market-rate residential development is expected in the future. Downtown needs ample and affordable housing. Investments in historic buildings are helping to make that happen.
- **Pedestrians & Bicycles:** Disjointed bicycle and pedestrian networks could be improved, especially connections to/from the river. Access for people with disabilities is problematic, especially in certain buildings and intersections (e.g., Pierce Street and 5th Street have too-steep of curb cuts). Improvements to the skywalk system are needed and should be a priority. Need to improve usage of skywalk system.
- **Downtown seems to be seasonal – congested in the summer, especially during events.**
- **Regional Center:** Downtown lacks the ability to attract outside employers. Multiple changes need to happen at the same time. However, Sioux City is a regional center for the area. In the future, more people will live and work downtown. “I think there’s a historic transformation going on right now.” “I’m pretty positive about the future.”
- **Parking:** Despite recent development, there appears to be an excess of parking. This needs to be evaluated to ensure we are right-sizing our downtown transportation system.
- **Catalysts:** City updated the zoning ordinance with design standards five years ago, although it has not been used a lot. The planned replacement of the Gordon Drive viaduct will generate changes, as will the riverfront redesign. A new hotel on 4th Street and new development on Pearl Street will add activity. The Career Academy is growing and creates significant student traffic/business activity immediately around its building. Need to make entry corridors to/from downtown are appropriate, and need to consider the “users”, especially vehicles vs. pedestrians/bikes vs. trucks vs. buses.

Engaging the Community

The draft plan for community engagement was presented. The plan envisions all-virtual early engagement supplemented by intercept and pop-up surveys where possible/safe. That is a conversation to be continued with SIMPCO.

Downtown businesses are the most important stakeholder group. Other groups include downtown residents, downtown employees, and visitors. It is important to make sure we understand our audience and how we reach them. Through engagement we will find conflicts between group priorities. Sometimes people think “Conflicts are bad,” but conflicts are going to happen. We need a plan for how to address these conflicts and identify priorities of those who are less vocal.

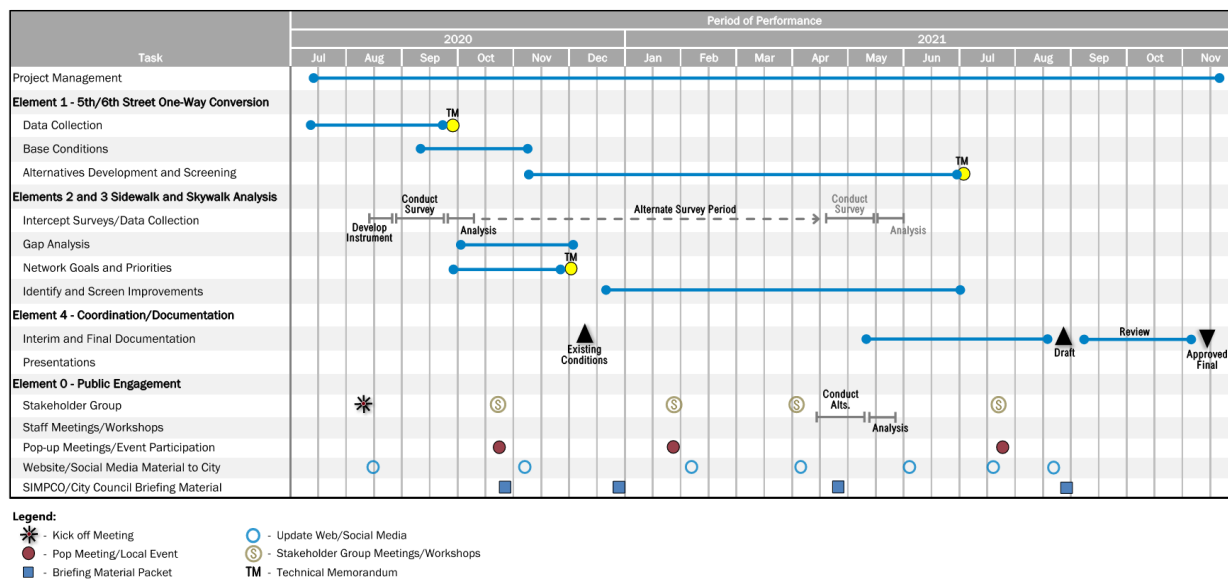
Stakeholder Committee Input: Engagement

Input was requested from the committee regarding the engagement plan. The following feedback was provided:

- “Visitors” also include people from smaller towns nearby.
- Property owners/developers get overlooked – their input is important.
- Engagement opportunities need to be a mix of virtual and methods that support people who do not actively use the internet.
- Just east of downtown are light industry/construction businesses whose vehicles use 6th Street to travel west. Ready-mix trucks, dump trucks, etc. use downtown heavily. There may be resistance to having only one lane in each direction as there is no good east-west “bypass” for downtown.
- Mercy Hospital is an important stakeholder.
- Churches generate off-peak activity that should be understood.
- Farmers markets are the most likely opportunity for pop-up engagement. They have high turnover over the course of the day.
- Contacting the service coordinators of apartments (like the Oakleaf facility) could be a way to distribute surveys.
- LaunchPAD has a nonstop survey kiosk that could temporarily display the transportation study questions instead. There are other opportunities there.
- Face-to-face engagement can be more productive, allowing for stronger education to be incorporated.
- Most in-person events have been canceled or modified:
 - Food Truck Friday now discourages lingering.
 - Alley Art Festival may be IRL or virtual – to be determined.
 - Hard Rock holds outdoor events.
 - The Labor Day expo could be an opportunity.

Timeline and Deliverables

The planned study schedule (see Page 4) was presented. Concern was expressed about the length of time between engagement and final deliverables. SRF will review with SIMPCO.



Final Questions

The study team asked if there were other key destinations with safety considerations:

- Alleys are a concern.
- Drivers do not yield to pedestrians, except at the farmers market, which has both signs and police. Right-turns on red are problematic.
- Pearl Street gets congested in summer.
- Virginia and Gordon Drive will be a hotspot with the new riverfront development.

Actions Items:

Actions Needed	Responsibility
Finalize draft engagement plan over the next month	Consulting team and SIMPCO
Review schedule for potential time reduction	Consulting team and SIMPCO