

Session: Parks, Open Space & Trail System Planning

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Moderator: Julia Cuchna, Parks & Trails Council, jcuchna@parksandtrails.org

Note-taker: Judy Geck, U of MN, geckx003@umn.edu

Jeff S.

Overview of system planning: evolution, new paradigms, and realities

Main Points:

- shift from standards and formulas to dynamic process focused on values and outcomes
- comprehensive planning including parks, open spaces and trails rather than focus on separate parts
- more work to consider needs, values, trends, and provide better results
- Lino Lakes: provided concrete example of combining traditional planning and open space planning to achieve improved value; influence developers rather than depend on public funds to achieve desired results.
- Oak Grove: example of paradigm shift to dynamic planning building in eco and open space layouts then working on comprehensive plan for implementation, tailored to local community needs, population density impact on interlinked trails and distance, neighborhood park as destination.
- definitely more work to define at local level the needs and values but worth the effort, dynamic process and communities need to develop skills to work with business to achieve desired results.

Arne

-communication effects on planning, adapt for today's circumstances, stakeholders & public

- identify what stakeholders want from planners and deliver in best communication format to each group

-use internet based communication and utilize internet in future planning

-tailor communication to audience to acquire input from stakeholders and public:

consider different types of communication tools

-snowball surveys to broaden audience by passing info to others, this can be significant in reaching broader audience

-email allows participation

-Survey benefits in general: broad response from varied audiences, directly conveys response without interpretation, easy to cut/paste results and cluster comments in order to quickly convey common interests and differences to policy makers, meets staff requirements

Question: How many using email info gathering? 1/2 to 2/3 of participants in session

-concern about special interest loading of responses to sway results: Arne responded that technology can be used to prevent more than one response per computer/email address

-also, snowballing via groups doesn't seem to carry additional weight in terms of number of responses, concerned more with number of *ideas* that results show

Laurie

- trends in planning: emphasis on communication which extends to broad collaboration and partnerships, strong leadership, complexity, and systems planning (dynamic, broad)
 - planners are becoming facilitators, conveners, and must actively seek out opposition and various user groups to include in collaborative approach to planning
 - shared leadership, tools needed by government and user groups
 - jointly sponsored meetings may bring in opposition
 - product line more than just recreation, serving broad user groups, new and changing partners include tourism professionals, health care, etc.
 - focus shift from agency to systems and big picture
 - control/leadership changes: individual contributions to initiative from local participation in planning process, behind the scenes as leaders steering but not controlling
 - complexity affected by multiple funding sources, specialized needs and requirements regarding facilities: research and models essential to develop effective systems, must involve opposition to avoid project derailment
 - case studies: regional, demonstrate partnerships and creative strategies for coping with trends and challenges
 - eg. SMART which emerged out of summit and interest in trails including managers, users, stakeholders all acting together to further agenda of organization
 - SMART provides ability to collectively lobby and fund to achieve regional vision and set priorities, effort to develop regional trail plan
 - MN River Trail: corridor stakeholder partnership, broad range of partners working together
- Conclusion: need to bring together to develop at regional level, exchange information on planning efforts, step away from leader to facilitator
- Difficulties include compromise/conflict resolution and knowing when to fight/give in, how to share info, private ownership issues still complicated, bring in opposition for discussion/engagement in planning process

Dawn

- newly developed park system
 - conflict between urban in north and rural in south and west and farms/agriculture
 - challenge: new residents want open space and trails, ag doesn't care about open space
 - new cost for county, some partnerships, eg. 3 Rivers, & County in regional parks at Cleary Lake & Murphy Han.
 - split with 3 Rivers in 2005, doing own planning & funding now
 - Spring Lake Reg. Park: land donated for park, family added to regional park system
 - forced to be creative, transfer of development rights outside boundary, bring in donated parcel
- Cedar Lake: design as county park, 170 acres from developer, not using, got some lakeshore-a win-win situation
- Scott County: not willing to purchase land, conservative, not much Met Council money available, don't meet their criteria for funding
- education effort: to inform public and county commissioners about funding needs and ways to look at areas for open space and trail potential
 - ideally look at big picture and be ready to discuss with developers to make it work for county, developer knows costs
 - work to get planning department to be proactive and make proposals to developers, influence them to work with the county
 - money is big challenge

Q & A/Issues

- 1) Chuck/Stearns County: concern about customizing rather than formula, *how to report* without structure, sees as catch 22 if creating new each time
- 2) Eric/City of St. Paul: make connections with surrounding communities, seen as transportation rather than recreation, changes in public works engineers, get them to think about *new* modes of transportation, work with our own internal planners and workers with users
- 3) Dale/Brooklyn Park: trails that connect with other regional trails (eg. 3 Rivers), is there effort to make trails work together? Need better partnerships and communication
- 4) Dave/Circle Pines looking broadly and gathering all Park Directors in adjacent areas together to discuss connections of trails (Anoka Cty), city wide coalition with Anoka Cty
- 5) Susan/MNRRA: works with 25 communities with vision for continuous trail along Mississippi; brought together trails and open space partnership; map with trails, gaps, funding needs, work together to achieve vision with public, private, community; hinges on communication and creates strength in numbers.

Julia asked if someone is charged with coordination of partnership: comes from groundswell, SMART is an example, citizen force and agency can track and report
 -Parks & Trails Council: landowner and acquisition can be enhanced by joint collaboration, larger group, greater good.

- 6) Marty/Carver Cty Parks: general process for systems plan, how and who to contact? Jeff S. (tie to Chuck's question about customizing also): define what we are confident about and what is weaker; avoid convenience of a standard and discuss other uses, viability; diminished returns if create a void by not using standard; suggests MRP research initiative with neighborhood input, nonusers, users, politics, realities of confidence, collective erosion in relevance in public realm.
- 7) Lawrence/Hutchinson: start of process: identified great locations on map, who do you work with at start? Largely rural, who do you sit down with?
 Laurie Y.: contacted communities about trail interest along MN River, brainstormed about economic, natural resources, education, all possible interests, what places should be connected, good base maps, operations and constraints, *found consistency*.
 Dawn: used GIS to see large area, talked with people who know the area like DNR, local & state agencies, held public meetings for comments and info, now with exact locations identified approached Met Council, public works and natural resource managers have conflicting views for implementation along roads and open areas.

Julia-summary:

- (A) need for collected or coordinated info source? How does communication occur, who to talk to and how to find them?
- (B) Collecting new info, research, data as Jeff suggested
- 8) Ron/DNR Parks: potential to pull together info for public to see planning efforts and coordinate interest in products being produced, communicate earlier,
 -in progress effort: info to agencies and public, maintain broad base of interest

- 9) ?/: Planning, parks driven by land values and connectivity of trails, best practices?
 Larry H./Ramsey Cty Parks: hard to finish and identify, continuity of trails start and fade, MNDOT maps, broad support
- 10) Jeff S.: working with DNR on trails manual trying to establish common language, due June/July and online
 -ecological sustainability, hopefully example of best practice
- 11) signage: inconsistent and also funding for maintenance & signage, maps change frequently
 Susan/MNRRRA: point person for follow-up should be designated, constituents are collaborators, keep info simple and general, avoid duplication and produce additional info as needed
- 12) Dave/Circle Pines: (directed to Jeff): discussion with users about motorized/nonmotorized
 Jonathan/3 Rivers: about motorized, check existing law and know what exists in terms of legal aspects, eg. Segue is authorized as personal mobility device on pedestrian trails, motorized bikes are not. If possible, have a research manager and look at research, demand, supply, cost/benefit analysis, annual and initial capital investment, fee structure, market driven versus private & public sector.
- 13) Larry H/Ramsey: open space acquisition, economic benefit and perceived value beyond open space can include storm sewer vs. wetland costs to drain storm water, *consider early in development* of linear trails any interruption, road crossings, etc. that need to be worked out, linear versus natural corridors.
- 14) Chuck/Stearns Cty.: standards, signage, etc. MRPA website could have examples or electronic matrix of county, policies, ordinances, benefit of analysis to niche feature.
- 15) Chris/DNR Parks: info on who is working directly on trail maintenance.
 Jeff S.: addresses in manual.

What to tell MRPA:

- follow up with funding, signage resources and references, matrix
- Holly/NPS: think comprehensively regarding public works, transportation, ecosystems, and take advantage of corridors as comprehensive plans are being redesigned.
- Jeff S.: mid-summer final plan available online, develop series of workshops
- Jeff S. Q to Jonathan/3 Rivers: would 3 Rivers share research pool if \$ from MRPA for distribution to broader audience?
- Jonathan/3 Rivers: YES, need regular clearinghouse of data, Met Council effort began to gather info in past, put pressure on regional planning agency, data-driven info is defensible.
- Holly/MNRRRA: regional coordination provides most successful process. MRPA could help develop regular coordination where there is none, LCMR grants available. DOT bike map required by legislation, need comprehensive plan, local, county, state, existing and planned trail map, defined by who is leading effort.

Topics to Explore:**Partnerships:**

- Continuity
- Communication
- Mutual Benefit
- Structure

Communication/Information Exchange

- planning process
- comprehensive planning at regional level
- funding sources

Data/Research

- knowledge base
- justification to constituents

Perceived Values/Costs & Benefits

- justification
- analysis
- reporting

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What are the 3 most important factors/ideas to emerge from this session?

1. communication/Info Exchange. Must have a systems approach to comprehensive regional planning.
2. Data/research – base of knowledge
3. Perceived value – cost/benefit & economic value