

For Immediate Release
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Public Hearing to Receive Comments On Proposed Improvement Plan for Fifth & Division

Bike Lanes and Pedestrian Improvements Would Be Added

Ann Arbor, MI – - Transportation planning in the past worked to move cars but often neglected to consider the needs of people who lived and worked near highly trafficked corridors. The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority has spent several years studying ways to accommodate traffic demands along Fifth Avenue and Division Street while at the same time address other community needs. It has developed a comprehensive improvement plan for the two corridors and has scheduled a public hearing for Wednesday, May 14, 2008 at 7pm in City Council Chambers, 100 N. Fifth Avenue, Second Floor, to elicit feedback. All are welcome to attend.

In 2003 the DDA commissioned an Urban Design Workbook from Pollack Design Associates which outlined strategies to encourage more multi-modal use of Fifth and Division. In 2005 Beckett & Raeder was selected to refine these strategies and develop them into a comprehensive plan. The proposed improvement area runs the length of Fifth and Division, from Packard to Beakes. In 2007 the Ann Arbor Non-Motorized Transportation Plan cited the DDA's plan to install bike lanes on Fifth and Division as a "Near Term Opportunity." The DDA has scheduled a public hearing in mid-May to elicit feedback on the proposed Fifth and Division improvements plan as a first step before bringing a recommendation before Ann Arbor City Council.

Fifth and Division operate as an important one-way street pair that carry traffic north and south through downtown. Approximately 10,000 cars/day utilize Fifth Avenue and 8,000 cars/day use Division. The streets are at points three or four travel lanes wide, with street parking in some locations. As a point of comparison, Huron Street handles approximately 21,000 cars/day, or two to three times as much vehicular traffic, on two lanes each way. There is very little accommodation for pedestrians and bicycles along Fifth and Division at present, which is contrary to the Ann Arbor Downtown Plan goal to make downtown as walkable and pedestrian friendly as possible. In addition to the many visitors and others who seek a pleasant opportunity to traverse the downtown, an impressive number of downtown workers are walking or bicycling to work (21% walk or bicycle – source 2000 Census), and it is possible to encourage greater alternative transportation use by providing attractive and safe accommodations.

The goals of the DDA's proposed Fifth and Division Improvement Project are as follows:

"Complete Streets". Redesign the corridors to encourage pedestrian and bicycle use, while maintaining vehicular capacity along this one-way pair.

Connectivity. Connect the south and north sections of the city by creating bike lanes that connect to the bike lanes on Packard and across the Broadway Bridges.

Greenhouse gas reduction. Reduce the number of car trips by providing attractive and safe transportation alternatives.

Good planning. Provide design direction to future development projects with a comprehensive plan.

Strengthen activity in the core area. Use street meter parking as a pedestrian amenity, to strengthen retail, and to make government services more accessible to citizens.

The Fifth and Division plan would accomplish these goals by:

Installing bike lanes along the full length of the streets on the right hand side which would connect to the Packard bike lanes, and then across the Broadway Bridges. Travel lanes on these corridors are very wide. To create room for the bike lanes, travel lanes would be reduced to the more standard City lane width, and on certain segments the number of travel lanes will be reduced while still accommodating traffic volumes.

Adding 100 new on-street parking spaces generally on the left side of the street to give pedestrians a protected walking zone on adjacent sidewalks and additional access to City Hall, the Farmers Market, the Kempf House, and downtown businesses.

Creating gateways at Division/Packard, and Fifth/Beakes to ensure that traffic speeds are moderated to posted speeds as motorists enter the downtown area.

Reducing the east/west crossing distance at intersections by providing bump-outs to make pedestrian movements more comfortable and safe for seniors, children, and others.

Reducing City energy and maintenance costs by installing LED lights in locations that currently have cobra head and other kinds of street lights.

In addition, the plan includes elements that would repair the damaged brick streets in the Kerrytown Area, plant trees where necessary, add bike hoops, repair broken flags of concrete sidewalk, and work in partnership with the Ann Arbor Public Schools to improve the Community High School campus which is used every week by patrons coming to the Farmers Market.

In September 2007 the DDA commissioned a Traffic Impact Study from Parsons Brinckerhoff Michigan, Inc. to understand whether its proposed plan would accommodate current traffic use on the streets.

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) estimates that traffic in Ann Arbor will grow by approximately 0.7%/year. Using this traffic growth projection, Parsons-Brinckerhoff estimated that by 2025 it will take drivers 4-12 seconds more to drive the length of Fifth or Division due to increased traffic. Parsons Brinckerhoff then assessed the delay during rush hour if the proposed Fifth and Division improvements were installed. Their Traffic Impact Study determined that if the improvements were implemented it would take drivers approximately 5-30 seconds more to drive the entire length of each corridor using the same MDOT traffic growth projections. The difference then would be 1 to 18 seconds more were the improvements in place, which is not likely to be noticeable to the average driver.

The proposed improvement plan for Fifth and Division Streets has been developed to accommodate existing traffic demands while at the same time encourage greater pedestrian and bicycle use on these corridors and thus potentially reduce the number of car trips by providing attractive and safe transportation alternatives. Moreover, the plan will support citizen access to important downtown services, as well as downtown amenities such as core area restaurants and shops, by providing over 100 new on-street parking spaces.

The full Fifth and Division plan is available for review on the DDA website: www.a2dda.org. The community is welcomed to provide feedback on these and other elements of the proposed Fifth and Division plan. The public hearing on Wednesday, May 14, 2008 at 7pm in City Council chambers is welcome to all. Input can also be provided by emailing the DDA at: dda@a2dda.org

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