



## Conference Planning Committee

June 17, 2021

**In attendance:** Matt Saam, John Mazzitello, Brad Henry, Nick Egger, Russ Matthys, Chris Petree, Jessa Trbojyevich, Toby Muse, Mike Marti, Anna Bessel, Bev Farraher, Christina Mlejnek. Eric Nelson, Mark Erichson, Sara Flagstad, April Crockett, Chris LaBounty, Mary Detloff

**Minutes taken by:** Mary Detloff, Crescendo Consulting Solutions – Conference Planning Consultant

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### 1. Review of Planning Process, Timeline and Committee Roster

#### Overview of Conferences

The following comments were made during discussion:

- Spring conference focused more on managers and supervisors – held at Grandview
- Fall conference focus is broader and more likely to impact everyone – held at Earle Brown
- Fall conference includes a workshop the day prior to the conference; generally a technical topic
- Fall conference is larger than the spring conference, with more education topics and a wider variety of topics covered
- The 2021 workshop will be focused on a Fleet Management Certificate offered by APWA. The presentation is now being finalized and is anticipated to be rolled out for the first time at PWX in August. APWA-MN will likely be first US chapter to offer the program.
- Mary will be working with the APWA-MN Education & Training Committee to plan and execute the workshop scheduled for November 17, one day prior to the fall conference. To the extent it makes sense, workshop and conference planning logistics will be connected and executed in tandem.
- Though the fall conference is being planned as an in-person event, we are not sure about attendance so are budgeting conservatively.
- Audio visual services have been provided by both MnDOT and Earle Brown in the past. MnDOT will be asked to provide services like what has been done previously; that request must be made from within MnDOT. Mary will send the names of those within MnDOT connected to AV requests to Matt and Nick.

#### Planning Process and Timeline

General Fall Conference Planning Timeline:

- May 21 – Call for Presentations distributed
- June 11 – Call for Presentations deadline
- August 12 – Session topics, presenters and moderators finalized
- September 15 – Registration opens
- November 17-19 – Workshop & Conference

A more detailed timeline will be created using the above dates as a starting point.

## Conference Planning Committee Meetings

Assuming Matt is hosting future meetings in his Apple Valley office, he has the option to add virtual participation for those who can't make it in person. We will plan to meet in person moving forward with a virtual option available.

Hosted lunch may not be provided at all committee meetings to control expenses for APWA-MN. All committees are proceeding in this way. At this time, the committee will host lunch for all in-person attendees at the July 13 meeting; committee members will be notified if this changes. If lunch is not hosted at future meetings people are welcome to bring their own lunch.

Jon Horn is stepping away from this committee as he transitions to retirement. Matt will work with the chapter volunteer coordinator to find a new committee member to replace Jon, likely someone in private practice/consultant like Jon. Send suggestions for a new committee member to Matt if you have any.

## 2. Input and Ideas for Structure, Format of Fall Conference

### working version – Fall 2021 conf program

Spring 2021 Conference Eval: [Full survey results](#) | [Dashboard results summary](#)

[Fall 2019 Conference](#) (contains attendee, workshop and exhibitor responses)

Comments related to the spring conference:

- A couple of minor technical hiccups but in general things went well
- Overall positive comments from attendees
- John Kriesel and Steve Bench were extremely popular
- Not as positive on MnDOT update
- Question period after each session worked well – able to submit/type questions as they were thought of and moderators could bring those forward. How can we continue this type of format in a live format? How can we provide for people to submit questions to a “moderator” to read them at the end for response? Make sure we allow enough time for presenter to respond to a few questions at the end of each presentation.

What questions are on your mind survey question – stand out responses:

- Hybrid work environment
- Employee retention
- Lack of good candidates when positions are open
- PFAS and drinking water (maybe a breakout session)

The fall conference budget does not include the option to do a hybrid or virtual option in addition to an in-person option, although we could consider bringing in a speaker virtually in addition to those present on-site.

## 3. Suggestions to Consider

### a. Record Sessions

- Good idea if not burdensome
- Concurrent sessions – presenters are not paid and asking to pre-record a session might be asking a lot and schedules are tight
- Recording would best involve presenter and slides – need to combine the two
- Can we set up a Zoom to record sessions as they happen live at the conference? Would need to test this to make sure it works.

- People who register to attend in person would have the option to view sessions after the fact as well at no additional fee
  - Non-attendees – do we set up a la carte/per session fee or one fee for all?
  - Online access fee – option for those who can't attend in person
  - Mary will explore this option more for committee
- b. Designated Time for Attendees to Visit Exhibit Hall
- Suggestion to consider setting aside time at the conference for attendees to visit the exhibit hall with no other concurrent activity happening. Comments and suggestions from the committee:
- Is there enough space in Carriage Hall B for a designated exhibit hall visit time with all attendees in the exhibit hall at one time? Anywhere near normal attendance numbers might make this difficult.
  - This is potentially more relevant for future conferences at a different, larger facility where space constraints are not such an issue.
  - Try to make more of an effort to get people to walk through exhibit hall – could add more emphasis on visiting exhibits during announcements and in moderator remarks.
  - Adding exclusive exhibit time and/or lengthening breaks would impact the overall conference times – either longer days or less education time
  - Potentially move break food into exhibit hall in addition to hallway instead of only in hallway
  - Make a point of visiting the exhibitors – they are supporting the organization and its members and it is important we spend some time with them
  - Sponsors are looking good so far for renewals this year
- c. Special 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference Element(s)
- The History Committee is working on ideas and concepts on what to do if anything. Hopefully by the second meeting in early July we will have a better idea of what to do. Assume the conference will incorporate something related to the anniversary but not sure what yet.
- d. Collaboration with Communications and History Committees
- Communications Committee – There is a call to action to help spread the word about the conference. All committee members are asked to share APWA-MN social media posts on their personal Twitter and LinkedIn pages.

History Committee collaboration is noted in item c. above.

#### 4. Exhibitors, Exhibit Hall Format

##### 2019 exhibit floorplan as example

- How many exhibit booths are available? (2019 = 41; 10 in hallway, 31 in Carriage Hall B)
- Platinum sponsors get a booth automatically if they want one but there is not a set system for assigning booth space
- Consultants generally grouped together – traditionally platinum sponsors and those hoping for higher traffic are grouped together and platinum sponsors get first choice if they have a preference
- If people ask for a specific spot this is ok
- Split bars in the room to break up traffic and generate movement
- Could break up sponsor levels – check email with rank choice option

- Mary will request an updated exhibit hall map with bars and food tables separated to encourage movement within the room
- In conference program, state “exhibit hall open” during breaks – put this in writing to encourage people to visit

## 5. Review Potential Conference Session Topics

### Master topic list

Most recent [Call for Presentations responses](#) and [Spring 2021 conference survey](#) ideas

2020 Fall Conference potential topics and follow ups (shared by Toby Muse):

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nPG8J89b6Xfg5DgFR2-Stm0vezSWIkWpxexNeFmuk/edit?usp=sharing>

The remainder of the meeting was spent reviewing potential topics and suggestions from committee members, with the following points of conversation shared verbally or in the Zoom meeting chat:

- Homework for all committee members is to review the list of topics submitted and consider what they would like to see; additional suggestions for general sessions are welcome
- Should there be a need to transition to virtual conference from in person, confirm presenters are open to doing virtual presentation if needed
- Mike Marti and Brad will reach out Don Elwood about unrest to see if they are interested in presenting – this was submitted in call for presentations – line 92
- A general session about the future of remote work in our industry would be timely and interesting - maybe a panel discussion on different perspectives and approaches, challenges, best tech practices.
- Hennepin Co. is making dramatic changes how they do work moving forward, which could be an interesting presentation topic. Could also be a panel of big and small counties, big and large cities, big and large companies, etc. This would be a good general session – Mike, Eric and Jessa will work together on this idea.
- How does hybrid/remote work affect peak traffic congestion? Interesting to evaluate and discuss
- Drones
- We generally have someone from APWA national present at the fall conference – maybe they could cover their new program called Focus On (focus on different subject areas) and/or PWX at Home
- Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart would be a good person to have back. This ties in with the Government Affairs Committee initiative. Matt will send Mary information on this.
- Raise Our Grade – how to get the chapter and industry moving in a direction to share message and support the industry. MN2050 initiative update could include Raise Our Grade on Thursday morning for 15 minutes.
- Community engagement – What are things going to look like moving forward?
- Bring speakers back on Bike/Scooter Share, Transit changes after COVID, and Food Waste Organics getting rolled out in Hennepin Co. – where to use compost, challenges (all were topics from the 2020 Fall Conference) – Chris LaBounty will help organize if needed
- The LRRB asked about providing an annual update to the APWA audience. There may have been a couple of abstracts submitted from recently completed LRRB projects and if so, this update could be added to those projects. The purpose would be a quick summary of recently completed projects and/or projects about to start and request to get APWA folks on the committee to oversee the research.
- Line 105 – WSB the Benefits of a True Digital Design Approach
- Sustainability – could be general session or two concurrent sessions – line 91

**6. Brainstorm, Prioritize Session Topics/Presenters**

Did not cover due to lack of time.

**7. Committee Members to Follow Up on Identified Session Topics, Presenters**

Did not cover due to lack of time.

**8. Action Items Summary**

1. **ALL:** Send suggestions to Matt for a new committee member to replace Jon Horn (retiring) if you have any.
2. **MARY:** Further explore the option to record conference sessions.
3. **ALL:** Share APWA-MN social media posts on your personal Twitter and LinkedIn pages.
4. **MARY:** Send the names of those within MnDOT connected to AV requests to Matt and Nick.
5. **MARY:** Request an updated exhibit hall map with bars and food tables separated to encourage movement within the room.
6. **MARY:** Develop a conference planning timeline/calendar.
7. **ALL:** Homework for all committee members is to review the list of topics submitted and consider what they would like to see; additional suggestions for general sessions are welcome
8. **MIKE MARTI AND BRAD:** Reach out Don Elwood about unrest to see if they are interested in presenting.
9. **MIKE, ERIC AND JESSA:** Hennepin Co. is making dramatic changes how they do work moving forward, which could be an interesting presentation topic. Could also be a panel of big and small counties, big and large cities, big and large companies, etc. This would be a good general session – Mike, Eric and Jessa will work together to further develop this idea.
10. **MATT SAAM:** Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart would be a good person to have back. This ties in with the Government Affairs Committee initiative. Matt will send Mary information on this.

**9. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 13 from 11:00 am – 1:30 pm at the City of Apple Valley Public Works Dept. 7100 – 147<sup>th</sup> St. West, with a Zoom option available.