

MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, November 20, 2001

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: COG, 777 North Capitol Street, NE
First Floor, Room 1

CHAIR: Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation

ATTENDANCE:

Don Barclay, WalkDC
Paul DeMaio, City of Alexandria
Eric Gilliland, WABA
Jim Hudnall, Oxon Hill Bicycle Club
Michael Jackson, MDOT
Daniel Janousek, City of Gaithersburg
Paul Lebow, One Less Car
Randy Mardres
Rich Metzinger, NPS
Allen Muchnick, WABA
Jim Sebastian, DC DPW
Fred Shaffer, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Gail Tate-Nouri, Montgomery County DPWT
Kenneth Todd, National Center for Bicycling and Walking
Sharonlee Vogel, WMATA
Heather Wallenstrom, VDOT NOVA
John Wetmore, Perils for Pedestrians

COG STAFF ATTENDANCE:

Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese

ACTIONS:

1. **General Introductions.**

Participants introduced themselves.

2. **Review of the Minutes of the October 16, 2001 Meeting**

Minutes were approved. Heather Wallenstrom noted that she had meant that we should actively pursue the development of software for bicyclists similar to Mapquest, not merely asked if it could be done.

- Action Item: Actively pursue development of software for bicyclists similar to Mapquest.

3. **Progress Report, Washington Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Plan**

Michael J. Farrell, MWCOG

Michael Farrell discussed progress on the Washington Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. In accordance with the discussion in the October meeting and discussions with Jim Sebastian, Michael proposed a reduced bicycle plan similar to the one Jim Sebastian had partially completed. He also passed out spreadsheets listing projects, accurate as of one year ago, and asked that committee members return hard copies to him with any changes. Hard copies make it easier to track any changes. Committee members who have extensive changes may submit electronic copies. Michael Farrell thanked the group for the comments he had received on the previous bike/ped plan outline. In response to a request from the group, he promised to compile those comments and send them out to the group, so that people would get a better idea of what each other's thoughts were.

- Action Item: Compile comments on the bicycle plan and send them out to the group.

4. **Progress Report, Pedestrian Safety Outreach Task Force**

Michael J. Farrell, MWCOG

Michael Farrell described the progress of the Pedestrian Safety Outreach Task Force. The task force agreed that both outreach and enforcement needed to work in tandem to be effective. Concerns identified but not fully resolved included picking an advertising firm, getting buy-in from law enforcement, and funding for both ads and law enforcement.

Michael proposed that the subcommittee rely on Smooth Operator, the regional anti-aggressive driving campaign, to carry out a pedestrian safety advertising and enforcement campaign aimed at drivers. Smooth Operator is an integrated enforcement and public awareness campaign with a \$1.7 million dollar budget. It consists of a series of waves of advertising and enforcement. Smooth Operator was created by the DOT's of D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, and it has the cooperation of 36 regional law enforcement agencies. Many of the behaviors targeted

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by Smooth Operator, such as speeding and running red lights, are relevant to pedestrian safety. Other messages, such as stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalk, would fit well within the anti-aggressive driving theme. George Branyan of the Maryland DOT has approached Hank Rockel, the interim coordinator of Smooth Operator, and Hank agreed that pedestrian safety and Smooth Operator are a good fit. Smooth Operator already has buy-in from law enforcement, a project manager, an advertising consultant, and support from the two States and the District.

The group agreed that bicycles should be incorporated into Smooth Operator as well, not necessarily with the same weight as pedestrians, perhaps on the order of three pedestrian messages to one bicyclist message. Share the road with bikes would be a good message. Failure to yield right of way to bicyclists, or running cyclists off the road, is an aggressive driving behavior.

Heather Wallenstrom thought that we should still run our own separate advertising campaign, independent of Smooth Operator. She also inquired about a concept paper for that campaign. Michael replied that he had been trying to get the Smooth Operator commitment firmed up and clarified before writing down the concept. Michael said that he thought obtaining law enforcement support for a completely separate effort would be too difficult, so the participation of Smooth Operator would be crucial for getting the enforcement component which the task force had agreed was necessary. Heather agreed that it would be a good idea to run our advertising campaign in coordination with Smooth Operator. Michael replied that his idea had been to do a low-budget effort aimed at pedestrians, using the posters Montgomery County has prepared in partnership with WMATA. Advertising and enforcement aimed at motorists could be accomplished through the framework of Smooth Operator. Heather replied that the task force meeting had talked about an independent campaign. Jim Sebastian added that such a campaign could happen later, but that we would have to start working on it now if we want to run the ads a year or two from now. Getting the money lined up takes time; we have to put in the grant applications now to hire a consultant. Michael replied that he had been hoping to rely on Smooth Operator to do ad design and television campaigns. Heather replied that an independent effort should be the goal; distributing the Montgomery County materials and incorporating pedestrian and bicycle issues into Smooth Operator should be considered first steps towards a larger effort. Michael raised the question of a project manager, saying that what Heather was describing would probably need one. Heather replied that a concept paper would outline the needs and steps towards a regional pedestrian safety outreach campaign. A concept paper will give us something that we can sell. Someone else noted that the City of Rockville had obtained state funding for a project manager for its Safe Walking to Schools pilot project. Michael Farrell promised to produce a draft of a concept paper and send it to both committees. Michael Farrell said he thought we could get 95% of what we needed by incorporating pedestrian and bicycle messages into Smooth Operator, and we probably can do that. An independent advertising effort would be harder to pull off. Michael Farrell promised to solicit the opinions of both the Bike/Ped Committee and the Ped Safety Task Force.

Kenneth Todd asked if we were going to address design issues. Michael Farrell said that the task force had decided that we were not going to address design issues just yet, but hope that

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through education and enforcement design issues might come to the attention of police and the public. Michael noted that the task force had considered sponsoring guest speakers such as Dan Burden or Michael Ronkin to educate public officials and traffic engineers. The State of Maryland is sponsoring mandatory seminars on pedestrian design and enforcement for law enforcement officers involved in its state-funded pedestrian enforcement efforts. The hope is that pedestrian safety outreach and enforcement will provide a climate within which decision-makers will be more receptive to design changes.

Michael Jackson said that the group should move ahead with a pedestrian safety outreach program, and incorporate pedestrian and bicycle elements into Smooth Operator. But there is still some question as to the degree of action that we need to take to realize those goals.

- Michael Farrell promised to send out a short concept paper to the group, gather information on ongoing regional pedestrian safety efforts, and call another meeting of the pedestrian safety task force as soon as appropriate.
- Act to ensure the incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle concerns into Smooth Operator.

5. Sample Safety Videos from Other Regions
Jim Sebastian, DC DPW

Jim Sebastian played several bicycle safety videos from the State of Maine. Jim said that these videos might provide a model for the more ambitious pedestrian and bicycle safety outreach program that we discussed earlier, beyond the Smooth Operator aggressive driving and the Montgomery County “Walk Smart” posters on WMATA buses.

The first video promoted bicycle helmet safety, predictable riding behavior, riding on the right with traffic, and stopping for stop signs. The second, directed at motorists, informed motorists that bicycles are vehicles with all the rights and responsibilities of vehicles. Motorists should share the road, only pass a bicycle when it’s safe to do so, slow down, and leave three feet of space between their vehicle and the bicycle when passing. Motorists should yield to bicycles when turning, as with any other vehicle. Motorists should never cut off bicyclists.

Jim said that this type of video is a good example of what we can do on a regional level. D.C. could do it on its own, but then Maryland and Virginia would benefit without contributing. Maine is relying on free air time, but media time is more expensive in the Washington area. Something like this could be step three, after posters on WMATA and Smooth Operator.

Michael Jackson suggested that we look at newspapers including smaller newspapers, transit buses. We should have a budget, since it’s not usually possible to get much ad time for free, but if you pay, the station will often throw in some free time because it is a public service announcement. Michael Jackson commented that the Maine videos showed too many pictures of child and recreational cyclists, and not enough commuter and adult cyclists. Traffic engineers tend to be reluctant to accommodate recreational cycling on the public right of way. Allen Muchnick praised the image in the videos of the motorist crossing the center line to pass the bicyclist. We need more images of cyclists doing things that they can do legally, such as turning left from the left-hand lane. Another person suggested partnering with Comcast, as in “this message brought to you by”, which

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could stretch our ad dollars further. We need a range of ad lengths, to allow stations to fill odd time slots. Another person said that media people themselves are ill-educated about bicycle and pedestrian issues. One misstatement from an anchor can wipe out a whole ad campaign. Michael Farrell mentioned Chicago's Commuter Challenge race, which pits news reporters on bikes against a van. The race sends a simple and powerful message; bikes are a practical method of transportation that can be faster than a car in an urban area.

Jim Sebastian said that it was fine to think about what a bike and pedestrian safety campaign should be, but we need to move to get a campaign. We need to get money and get a consultant. It is going to take time and money to run this, and it can't be run by a COG staff person, so we will need money for a project manager too. Jim suggested that this effort be overseen by the pedestrian safety task force. We should re-name it the pedestrian/bicycle safety outreach task force. Heather seconded Jim's motion. Maryland has some programs, and D.C. is interested, as is Virginia. Arlington has been holding off while they wait for our ideas. COG is the most logical location for a pedestrian safety program. Michael Farrell promised that the concept paper would reflect the demand, apparent at this meeting, for a regional program that would go beyond Smooth Operator.

6. Smart Step Forward – Felecia Baker, Governor's Office for Smart Growth.

Felecia Baker gave a Powerpoint presentation on A Smart Step Forward, a campaign for walking from the State of Maryland. This campaign is being developed by the Governor's Office of Smart Growth, the Maryland Department of Transportation, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth. The purpose is to encourage more Marylanders to walk, to encourage the development of a more walkable Maryland, and to improve public health. Inactivity is associated with poor health. Currently, walking is declining among adults, and obesity is rising. Children are also walking less and getting fatter, and adult on-set diabetes is rising among children. The black population is more affected by obesity than the white population. The State will be asking a variety of organizations for their support.

Maryland will provide walking coordinators in each County to work with the local health departments to promote walking. The program will also conduct seminars for engineers, developers, and others. A media campaign will promote walking, with Generation Xers and Baby Boomers as the primary audience.

The State intends to apply for foundation grants to fund Smart Step. Smart Step needs ideas and letters of support to include in the grant proposals.

Michael Jackson asked about the proposal to target the marketing campaign at Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. Felecia explained that they were considered the portion of the population most likely to change, and that the campaign would not exclude other age groups.

Paul Lebow praised the Smart Growth office for taking on this initiative. It implies that we are not just asking people to add walking to their current lifestyles, but highlighting the fact that the possibility to walk has been taken out of most communities. Allen Muchnick suggested that public schools be included, and the AARP.

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The grant application for funds to pay for the pedestrian coordinators will go to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, for a \$5 million grant. The coordinators will work in the Health Departments, and their role will be to encourage people to walk.

Ellen Jones suggested that the State could set an example by not placing sidewalks next to the curb, and work more with developers to improve design. Felecia replied that that is part of the proposal now. Another person said that it won't do to beg and plead to get people to walk, and then have them find it an unpleasant experience so they never do it again. People need a way of giving feedback, like a walkability checklist, that gives them a way of asking for improvements. Michael Farrell asked if the pedestrian coordinators could have a role reviewing highway designs, subdivision designs, and serving as point of contact for reporting poor pedestrian conditions.

Felecia thanked the group for their input.

7. Update from Member Agencies on Ongoing Activities

Paul DeMaio reported that Alexandria had recently widened and striped 2.5 miles of bike lane. The current paint markings will be replaced with thermoplastic. An existing trails map for Fairfax County was distributed.

8. Other Business

Jim announced that Michael Jackson's two-year term was up, and it was now time for a Virginia member to chair the subcommittee. Nominations should be put in via e-mail.

Michael Jackson adjourned the meeting at approximately 3 p.m.