

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, September 18th, 2012

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Department of Planning
Round Hill Room
1 Harrison Street SE, Third Floor
Leesburg, VA 20177

CHAIR: Jeff Duncel
Montgomery County Department of Transportation

VICE-CHAIRS: Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation
David Goodman – Arlington Department of Environmental Services
Jim Sebastian, District Department of Transportation
Fred Shaffer, M-NCPPC, Prince George's County

Attendance:

Vanessa Aguayo	FCDOT
Justin Antos	WMATA
Mike Armstrong	Town of Leesburg
Dale Castellow	Loudoun OTS
Adrienne Dealy	Sherry Matthews, Inc.
Randy Dittberner	VDOT
Jeff Duncel	Montgomery County
Chris Eatough	BikeArlington
Kate Elkins	MHSO
Cindy Engelhart	VDOT
Judy Galen	Loudoun County

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Robin Geiger	Loudoun County Administration
Pat Giglio	Loudoun County Planning
David Goodman	Arlington County
Joe Gorney	Loudoun County Planning
Arkopal Goswami	Loudoun County
Christine Green	Safe Routes to School National Partnership (by phone)
Kristin Haldeman	WMATA (by phone)
Michael Jackson	MDOT (by phone)
Rudy Landon	Loudoun County
Tom Merce	Town of Herndon
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Bicycling Federation
Chris Pauley	NVRPA
Bruce Perry	Town of Herndon
Kate Rudacil	NVRPA
Charlie Strunk	Fairfax County DOT
Debbie Spiliotopoulos	Northern Virginia Regional Commission
Pat Turner	BikeLoudoun
Chris Wells	Fairfax County DOT
Kenna Williams	Sherry Matthews, Inc.
Tom Wyland	Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling

COG Staff Attendance:

Michael Farrell

1. General Introductions.

Mr. Dunckel chaired the meeting. Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the Minutes of the July 17th meeting.

The minutes were approved.

3. Jurisdictional Updates

Metrorail Station planning for the Reston area is moving ahead. MDOT is finalizing its agreements with eight jurisdictions for bike sharing grants. Six of those eight are in the Washington region. Pro Walk Pro Bike in Long Beach included many innovative designs,

including banners on lamp posts to promote safe bicycling.

4. “Washington and Old Dominion Trail – A Six Intersection Study”

Mr. Pauley spoke to a powerpoint. The trail is heavily used, often for transportation. It is 45 miles long, built on the old Washinton and Old Dominion Railroad. It has about 2 million users per year. It features numerous at-grade crossing.

In 2011 NVRPA commissioned the Toole Design group to look at the conditions on the trail and come back with recommendations. Both short and long-term fixes were examined. At-grade, unsignalized crossings are a concern. User behavior was examined, including noncompliance with signs and signals. Video, site visits, an intercept surveys were used. Mr. Pauley discussed the Belmont Ridge Road crossing in detail. Many users felt uncomfortable at that crossing, according to the intercept surveys. VDOT has put in zig-zag lines on the approaches. Users thought they made the crossing more visible, and caused motorists to slow down.

The long-term plan for the Belmont Ridge Road crossing is grade separation, but there is no funding for that now.

Short term, parking at the site will be eliminated, and sightlines improved. Signs and rumble strips on the trail approaches are also being considered. Re-alignment of trail approaches is being considered at some locations.

Mr. Farrell commented that DDOT has had good results from actuated “HAWK” beacons as opposed to constantly flashing beacons to alert motorists to the presence of the trail crossing.

At Belmont Road, because of the speed, trail users are required to yield to motorists. Stopped motorists can lead to read end collisions.

Mr. Farrell asked if there had been any consideration given to treatments designed to slow motorists down, such as rumble strips, speed tables or raised medians. It is done on toll roads, to slow motorists down in advance of a toll plaza.

Due to high speeds on this road, and poor sightlines, as well as the downhill approach, it would be difficult to slow motorists down at this location, Mr. Pauley thought. Rear-end collisions are a real concern; there are many dump trucks on this road that cannot stop quickly.

Mr. Dunkel said that in Montgomery County there had been a considerable amount of traffic calming in areas with posted 35 mph speed limits, where treatments had lowered speeds closer to the posted limits. When speeds reach 50 mph it becomes difficult for pedestrians to judge a gap. Ms. Engelhart replied that Montgomery County’s traffic calming took place in developed areas, whereas Belmont Ridge road is still rural-ish.

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Trail users, mostly bicyclists, at Belmont Ridge Road, generally don't come to a complete stop. They look for a gap in traffic as they approach.

Mr. Wells said that there are some grey areas in Virginia law. At high speed locations a pedestrian or bicyclist should yield to motorists, but once they enter the intersection they should be yielded to.

Eventually Belmont Ridge Road will be expanded to four lanes, and at that point it will be grade separated, by agreement.

Mr. Farrell said that refuge islands have a good record of reducing crashes at uncontrolled intersections, by 50%. They simplify the pedestrian's task when choosing a gap. They also slow traffic down.

Ms. Engelhart asked if the statistics I was citing had to do with lit locations. Mr. Wells argued that there would be a transition problem; you would need a long transition zone and significant ROW. Ms. Elkins noted that NHSTA research on refuge islands is for pedestrians, not bicyclists, and the majority of the trail users at this location are bicyclists. Bicyclists have different behavior patterns.

Another concern with rumble strips and speed tables in the road is noise – this is a residential area.

Mr. Jackson asked if standard street name signs could be placed at all trail intersections, to improve motorist recognition of the trail crossing. Mr. Jackson also brought up the issue of placement of stop signs on trail crossings of low-volume roads and driveways. The Stop sign should be on the lower-volume facility. Also, under the new AASHTO guide, the least restrictive sign consistent with safety should be used. Yield signs could be used instead of Stop signs at many locations.

At the Belmont Ridge Road motorized traffic volume is much higher than trail user volume.

Mr. Dunckel said that adding an S-curve at one location had been effective at slowing bicyclists down prior to the crossing.

Mr. Pauley said that the advance warning signs included the name of the W&OD Trail. Mr. Jackson suggested adding standard street signs in addition to the advance warning signs.

A field view of the Belmont Ridge Road will take place after this meeting

5. Results of the FY 2012 Street Smart Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Campaign and Planned Activities for FY 2013

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Mr. Farrell spoke to a powerpoint. 30% of our fatalities are pedestrians or bicyclists. Absolute numbers of pedestrian and bicyclist deaths have been flat while motorized fatalities have declined significantly. Pedestrian deaths vary significantly by jurisdiction. Divide the numbers by population to get the rate. You can also adjust for exposure, using the American Community Survey walk and bike to work mode share, or the COG household travel survey. The household travel survey accounts for all users but takes place every ten years. Prince George's County accounts for a disproportionately large number of pedestrian fatalities.

Street Smart exploits economies of scale, as "one media campaign for one media market". Funding is largely federal, with a major contribution for WMATA. For FY 2013, \$62 thousand has been incorporated into the COG dues, in place of local voluntary contributions.

Mr. Farrell discussed the results of the evaluation survey of the Spring 2012 campaign wave. The survey was directed at drivers. There was a question about the internet methodology, which Mr. Farrell could not answer, and the consultant was not present to answer.

Law enforcement data was gathered through the advisory group members, which included law enforcement contacts. Ms. Elkins said that MHSO, which funds law enforcement, could assist with data collection.

Long term results over ten years of surveys showed decreased in self-reported dangerous driver and pedestrian behaviors, increased awareness of enforcement, and increased recognition of the common campaign messages.

On the other hand, as we have already seen, deaths and injuries have not improved significantly over the last ten years. Virtually everything is improving except pedestrian and bicyclist deaths and injuries.

We have hired a new firm for FY 2013, Sherry Matthews Inc. This was a scheduled rebid. Eight proposals were received in response to the RFP. We have confidence in Sherry Matthews, Inc. based on their proposal in traffic.

For FY 2013, we need to take a fresh look at our demographic data, some of which is fairly dated. We expect Sherry Matthews will bring some new creative ideas and media approach to the table.

The Street Smart program fills a niche; it does things which the jurisdictions cannot do in a cost-effective way themselves. To bring the fatalities numbers down, we need either more and better jurisdictional and State engineering, education, and enforcement efforts, along the lines of Montgomery County's pedestrian safety initiative.

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The Fall 2012 press event will take place at Belmont Ridge Road crossing of the W&OD Trail in Loudoun County. This is the first time Loudoun County has hosted the event. The host jurisdiction chooses the site. The site typically includes both hazards, but also improvements, either recent or in the near future. It should have parking and good sight lines. If enforcement is part of the event, there should be suitable locations to pull people over.

The date has not yet been set, but there is only a two-week window, Tuesday-Thursday, between election week and Thanksgiving. Within that, host jurisdiction VIP availability drives the schedule.

Ms. Elkins suggested that fire and rescue could be good partners for a pedestrian safety campaign.

6. Other TPB Program Updates

Mr. Farrell briefly presented the list of top priority unfunded bicycle and pedestrian projects, which the Subcommittee approved by voice vote.

Mr. Farrell discussed the status of various follow-on actions to the regional Complete Streets policy, including incorporation of Complete Streets information into the call for projects for the Transportation Improvement Program, and a grant recently received by MWCOG for a study of Complete Streets access improvements for rail station areas in the Washington region.

The lead staff person for the grant is on maternity leave, so nothing will happen with it until she returns. Ms. Haldeman said that this study would provide an opportunity to extend pedestrian planning further into the communities surrounding the rail stations. This study will allow us to expand on the work WMATA has already been done. At \$200,000, and a one-time thing, the work will likely be hired out to a consultant.

The regional bicycle and pedestrian project database has been pushed back due to Ms. Engelhart of VDOT being on short-term disability due to an injury. Due to the number of projects VDOT has, there is no point in having other agencies work on it until VDOT is in a position to do so.

The Complete Streets survey is ready to be sent. At 23 questions, it is not too hard to complete. It covers both policy adoption and implementation.

For FY 2013-2018 Transportation Improvement program information sheet, we ask whether a project advances your agency's complete streets policy goals, if you have a complete streets policy.

We will organize a Complete Streets implementation seminar after the survey results are complete.

7. Adjourned