

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, May 15, 2007

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

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

CHAIR: Kristin Haldeman
Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority

**VICE-
CHAIRS:** Charlie Denney
Arlington County DES
Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation
Jim Sebastian, DDOT

Attendance:

Fatemeh Allahdoust	VDOT/NOVA
Shaheer Assad	Loudoun County
Charles Denney	Arlington County
Dennis Frew	Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling
Eric Gilliland	WABA
Kristin Haldeman	WMATA
Michael Jackson	MDOT
Carol Kachadoorian	WMATA
Yon Lambert	City of Alexandria
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Bicycling Federation
John Wetmore	Perils for Pedestrians

COG Staff Attendance:

Andrew Austin
Michael Farrell

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Andrew Meese
Gerald Miller

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the Minutes of the March 20, 2007 Meeting

Minutes were approved.

3. Safety Element of the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan

The new long-range transportation plan must include a Safety element. In order to help create a Safety element, we will hold a transportation safety summit on Wednesday, June 6. The goals for the meeting will be first to develop a consensus as to what safety emphasis areas should be incorporated in the long-range transportation plan and second, to determine whether or not there are safety problems that require some sort of regional coordination, through a safety advisory committee consisting of safety professionals, possibly law enforcement and public health as well. We will be inviting DOT officials, law enforcement, public health, as well as bicycle and pedestrian staff. Public health has an interest in pedestrian safety and safe routes to school. Michael Farrell distributed a Save the Date announcement for the meeting. An agenda will be developed and distributed at a later time. Stephen Read will be the representative from VDOT, Mary Deitz will represent MD SHA, while Carole Lewis will speak for DDOT.

Fatemeh Allahdoust noted that VDOT had a safety action plan. The presentation on the action plan is available on the web site, and it includes six pages of actions on pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Charlie Denney asked if people from this committee could be given time to speak about problem areas in his or her jurisdiction. Michael Farrell replied that the agenda was looking tight. We need to hear from the three State representatives on the State plans, then I would discuss the safety problems of the Washington region, and then we will discuss which emphasis areas should be included in the Safety element of the long-range plan, and the possible formation of a Safety advisory subcommittee to the TPB. And there will be lunch.

Andrew Meese added that we do not have a history in our organization of focusing on Safety, so it is important to bring safety officials into our planning process. The new subcommittee would report to the TPB. Charlie Denney asked about the structure of the subcommittee. Will each jurisdiction send a representative? That might be a topic for the meeting. Andrew Meese replied that it would probably be OK to have diverse participation in the committee, even if we have an official roster. Membership issues usually shake themselves out over time.

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Eric Gilliland asked about the status of the State plans, especially DC's. Michael Farrell replied that DC had just released a Strategic Highway Safety Plan, and that Virginia and Maryland had finished their plans some time ago and were now developing action plans, which are probably at a greater level of detail than what is needed for the Safety element of the long-range transportation plan.

Shaheer Assad asked if this plan already existed, and we are being called upon to update it. Michael Farrell replied that there is already a long-range transportation plan, the CLRP, but that not until SAFETEA-LU was passed last year, was it required to have a Safety element. All regional plans must be SAFETEA-LU compliant by this Fall.

Fatemeh Allahdoust noted that the State plans did not deal much with transit safety. Transit agencies such as the Virginia Department of Public Rail Transportation should be involved. Michael Farrell agreed that the Washington region has more transit than the State of Virginia as a whole, so transit agencies should probably be involved.

Kristin Haldeman asked what goals should come out of this process, and how the meeting will be structured, given the large number of possible participants. Michael Farrell replied that he would write an agenda and a time budget. The Safety element of the transportation plan does not have to be very long; we only have to identify the safety emphasis areas for the Washington region, such as drunk driving, not identify exactly how those areas are to be addressed. We are looking to decide what areas are areas of importance, and secondly to look at what safety areas might be profitably addressed at the regional level. If the different States have programs for addressing, say, intersection safety, is there any need to coordinate those programs?

We welcome input in advance as to what the emphasis areas should be, but we will draw emphasis areas from the State plans, and they can also be brought out at the meeting. We will provide a matrix showing the commonalities between the State plans.

Charlie Denney suggested that our efforts should be data-driven. Andrew Meese replied that the State Strategic Highway Safety Plans already have a strong emphasis on data, and improving data quality. It is not likely that we will uncover completely neglected areas, but we may discover areas where the region acting together can make a difference that the States and localities themselves cannot. Charlie Denney replied that Street Smart was a good example. Andrew Meese noted that we can also find counter-examples, for example as important as driver's license procedures are, it probably does not make much sense to spend a lot of time discussing it at the regional level. John Wetmore added that sometimes States safety activities have a motorized bias at the State level. We should also counteract the idea that the best way to promote pedestrian safety is to get rid of pedestrians. Michael Farrell replied that the States emphasize pedestrian safety, and making walking safer, rather than banning or discouraging walking.

Carol Kachadoorian asked if we had studied the process of other regions. Michael Farrell replied that we had gone to a meeting in Baltimore, where the State plan was presented, along with a number of safety topic such as roadway safety audits. We will be taking a somewhat different approach.

4. Status of Electronic Bicycle Route-Finding

Eric Gilliland has spoken with Jack Hirt, the GIS data contractor. He has been provided with data from COG, the National Park Service, Arlington County, Alexandria, and the District of Columbia, and he is on track to integrate that data. Thus far Prince Georges', Montgomery, and Fairfax have not provided data. The project is on track, but more data would be helpful.

We might make this the topic of a progress report to the TPB Technical Committee. It might end up looking bad if the system goes live with only DC, Arlington, and Alexandria, even though UPWP funds paid for the project.

There is no geographic limit to what we can cover, other than the data we can get our hands on, but we decided it made sense to start with the urban core.

Fatemeh Allahdoust said that she might be able to get WABA GIS data for Northern Virginia. Shaheer Assad asked what kind of data was needed. Functional classifications, speed limits, and traffic volumes would be useful.

COG will eventually acquire the Navtec data, which is fairly high-quality data, which could eventually help support the system. In the meantime, since the end of the fiscal year is coming up, the program will proceed according to plan. The COG data given so far has been helpful.

5. On-line Bike/Ped Plan Project Database and Plan Update

Andrew Austin, COG/TPB

Michael Farrell, COG/TPB

Michael Farrell introduced Andrew Austin. The bicycle and pedestrian project database is available on paper in the bicycle and pedestrian plan, and on-line. Andrew Austin has recently created a version of the web site intended for the general public.

Andrew Austin noted the database was not yet publicly available, since it is still in the demonstration mode. You can search by project name, agency, state, or jurisdiction. Andrew Austin demonstrated. The public database will have a more limited set of fields than the full database. By clicking on any project ID you can see the full information on any project. Once we get some of the bugs fixed, we will send out an e-mail asking for comments. We may remove some columns such as comments. This is not an editable database; it is read-only.

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We should note that project cost is in thousands of dollars. Once everyone is comfortable with the labeling and the data that is displayed, we will make the location public.

Allen Muchnick said that he could not always tell what a project is from the index view. Andrew Austin replied that he had taken out the project description column because it was too large to fit into the index view, as well as the columns showing length of multi-use path, length of bike path, etc. Creating new fields may not be easy. Andrew Meese asked if it would be possible to include a truncated description field, which would give the reader a flavor of the project.

Kristin Haldeman suggested that the agency ID could be removed. Secondary agency could also be removed from the index view.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was adopted by the TPB in July of 2006, so this information is over a year old. For now we are only asking the subcommittee to review the presentation of the data, not the data itself. VDOT provided information for Loudoun County projects. Shaheer Assad noted that the private sector is constantly adding new pedestrian and bicycle projects in Loudoun County. Should these projects be included in this database? Allen Muchnick suggested that a regional plan did not have to include every project. The suggested cut-off point was \$200,000 in cost or one mile in length, so as to avoid including every tiny project.

Shaheer Assad asked about adding new projects to the database. Michael Farrell replied that the plan as approved was one thing, the database something else. The plan will be updated every four years, but the database can be updated more frequently than that.

Charlie Denny asked if we will be able to track hits on the database. Andrew Austin replied that we could.

Length of Project label could be changed to length in miles.

Carol Kachadoorian asked if projects that are in the approved plan would be identified among the projects in the on-line database.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan includes projects that are not in the TIP or the CLRP. Andrew Austin asked if it would be useful to have a filter on the public interface to show what projects are in the TIP or the CLRP. Charlie Denney replied that that was more of an internal issue than an item of public interest.

Eric Gilliland said that the plan might be useful for selecting priorities when we pick top priority projects for inclusion in the TIP – this could show us projects that are in the plan but not in the CLRP or TIP. Funding status is not in the index screen, and that is a piece of information that

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would interest the public; they might want to sort on that list. Projects that are not in the TIP or CLRP might still be funded, through private funding for example.

- TPB staff will make changes and send an e-mail link to the public, non-editable database, so that members can comment on the format.

In terms of updating the database, we still have the ability to direct people to an editable database. One issue is the mechanics of tracking when and what changes are made. Right now the database has record-level tracking, so it will note whenever a change, no matter how trivial, is made. Michael Farrell asked if it might be beneficial if people sent him changes, which he could then enter. Andrew Austin noted that we could also run a query to show fields that have changed, and compare with the previous entries. For entering large numbers of new projects it might be easiest to let the agencies make the changes directly. It might also be possible to import data from a spreadsheet, if there are a lot of projects. Charlie Denney noted that the fields that will change that the public will care about are project completions, and whether it is funded.

Those are the changes he would be likely to make. Charlie Denney suggested that we provide hard copies at a meeting every six months or so, to make changes. Most of those changes are likely to be pretty simple. Andrew Austin suggested taking a print-out and marking it up.

In terms of schedule, Michael Farrell suggested that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan can be changed once every four years, like the CLRP, but it would be good if the data in the database could be updated more frequently. It will be more useful to the public, and if a database sits too long the institutional memory disappears, and it becomes difficult to update. It would be good if at least the critical elements of the database could be updated annually. Allen Muchnick said that it would be useful if we could create a list of completed projects by year. It would be useful if one could sort projects completed since a certain date, or all completed projects, separately from active projects.

Fatemeh Allahdoust asked about the relationship between the TIP updates and updates of these projects. Could the information from the TIP updates be fed into the database of bicycle and pedestrian projects? Andrew Austin said that he would examine the possibility. We get weekly TIP adjustments from VDOT, and it could be lot of work. Over the next year or so we could look into marrying these two databases.

6. Best Practices in Bicycle and Pedestrian Wayfinding

Michael Farrell presented the white paper on Best Practices in Pedestrian and Bicycle Wayfinding in the Washington Region. Michael Farrell has given a powerpoint on the topic at a previous meeting; the materials are similar. The chief recommendation is that we hold a pedestrian and bicycle wayfinding summit. The region largely follows the MUTCD for bicycle signage, but for pedestrians there is not a uniform standard. Since Alexandria and Arlington are

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both thinking of changing their sign designs and their standards for placement, there might be scope for these efforts to inform each other.

VDOT has state bicycle routes, but they are not always well-signed. Once comment has been that there is not so much a lack of standards as a lack of implementation. In the case of pedestrian signage only five of the responding jurisdictions had programs.

Eric Gilliland asked if input was wanted on this draft, and what the next step would be. Michael Farrell replied that the next step would likely be a report to the TPB Technical Committee. Michael Farrell will put this copy up on the web site, and comments are welcome. Comments should be provided within two weeks if possible, though it is not certain that it will go to the next TPB Technical Committee meeting.

Charlie Denney asked if he could show the draft to Jay Fisette. Michael Farrell replied that it was a draft. Andrew Meese suggested that we try to create a few more recommendations. We should be able to agree on a few things to recommend, such as to say that signage is a good thing. We have jurisdictional autonomy on pedestrian signs, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. Charlie Denney suggested that we might be able to create some broad recommendations on the type of information that should be included in a pedestrian wayfinding sign, rather than details. What are the characteristics of the most successful pedestrian signs? It could be the type of content, or the scale of the map, or the level of detail provided. We should identify the features of successful signs.

Andrew Meese suggested that we go one more round of revisions before we show it to Jay Fisette. Eric Gilliland said that he understood the effort as being the documentation of Best Practices, not to create guidelines. Michael Farrell said that the mandate was to document best practices, and to explore the creation of guidelines. We are now grappling with the latter task.

Eric Gilliland said that the region had a wealth of resources in the Embassies, and we might be able to draw on them for expertise.

Michael Jackson suggested that a table of contents would be useful. Also, there are no MDOT signs. Not all the photos that Michael Jackson sent appear in the white paper.

Michael Farrell noted that there has been a lot of push-back in the past on the topic of creating regional standards or regional guidelines. Would it be beneficial to create a looser set of best practices for pedestrian wayfinding? Charlie Denney said that some research would be useful to determine what works best for people.

Michael Jackson asked if this group could come to a consensus on guidelines in a reasonable amount of time. Michael Farrell replied that that was a concern, and that he hoped that a summit could clarify possible guidelines.

Eric Gilliland added that one thing that is missing from the report is the inconsistency in trail signage, and that some of the practices are not good at all, on the Anacostia tributaries, for example.

Allen Muchnick suggested addressing trail signage and mileage markers. Wayfinding at Metro stations would also be useful. Kristin Haldeman asked that the group e-mail any further comments.

The signage summit could take place in the Fall. It could be any time after July 1st, but summer is generally not a good time.

7. Street Smart Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Campaign FY 2008

- Status of 2008 Funding

Street Smart will now take place twice annually. WMATA will provide \$150,000 for FY 2008. The budget for a one-month campaign in FY 2007 was \$400,000. In FY 2008 two three-week campaigns will take place, one in November 2007 to coincide with the change in the hours, and another in the Spring. We will use the FY 2007 materials for the Fall 2007 campaign.

- RFP for Street Smart Consultant

We will have to re-bid the contract for Street Smart. We will need a selection committee, which will rate the proposals on a numerical scoring sheet. The major changes will be an emphasis on web design capability, and expertise on obtaining private-sector sponsorship. We would like to get a new consultant on board by September 30, 2007.

Michael Jackson suggested that we add to the selection criteria the ability to respond to changes. Fatemeh Allahdoust agreed. Michael Farrell replied that we will put in such a criterion, but we should also flex the other way, and start the planning process in November rather than December in order to allow more time. At some point the consultant does have to call time and stop accepting comments.

Charlie Denney asked about the status of funding. Michael Farrell replied that not a lot of additional funds had come in, and that there had been no responses to the challenge grant from Arlington except for WMATA. Funding status will be presented to the TPB tomorrow, which might lead to addition funds being pledged. Montgomery County is now contributing its full suggested amount. Prince Georges is not participating.

Carol Kachadoorian asked if we could solicit funding at the planned Safety Forum on June 6 and invite the media. Michael Farrell replied that the Safety Forum participants would probably be

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mid-level technical people rather than politicians who can make funding decisions. We are not ready for the media yet; this is a staff-level meeting to develop a work program item.

One complication of private sector fund-raising is that it might conflict with other efforts, even within our own agency.

8. Announcements

- New ADC Bike Map 7th Edition. The ADC Map company is interested in doing a new edition. The schedule has not been worked out yet. It is timely, since we have had a lot of changes to the bicycle network. Eric Gilliland asked if the royalty amount could be renegotiated. Carol Kachadoorian suggested that ADC be invited to the wayfinding summit.
- Bike to Work Day will take place on May 18.
- A Bike to Work Employer Seminar will take place on May 21. Bike to Work Day participants could be sent a flyer to give to their bosses.
- TPB is also required to produce a public participation plan. We are currently developing it, and we need to reach out to as many stakeholders as possible. TPB staff will present on this topic at the next meeting of this subcommittee.
- WMATA Bus Operator Training. Jim Sebastian and George Branyan provided content.

9. Jurisdictional Updates

Michael Jackson is working on an adult bicyclist safety video.

Fatemeh Allahdoust announced that VDOT has trained 160 people on sidewalk and path design at various sessions, both internally and from consultant firms.

Alexandria will release a new bicycle map.

Arlington will carry out a community bike ride on Sunday, June 3. Arlington is revising its bicycle map, which should be ready by Bike to Work Day.

Peaches George at WMATA, the bike locker coordinator, has been laid off as part of the cost-cutting measures. Temporary staff are filling her responsibilities for now.

Loudoun County is updating its transportation plan, including the bicycle section. Loudoun County and VDOT are working on marking bike lanes on Route 15 from Whites Ferry Road to Leesburg.

The Virginia HOT lanes may eliminate pedestrian and bicycle access across the beltway.

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Fatemeh Allahdoust said that the facilities that would be provided were still being negotiated. If you are concerned about maintaining bicycle and pedestrian access across the beltway, please let VDOT know. VDOT NOVA has recommended maintaining access, but those facilities could become victim of cost-cutting measures. Now is the time to provide input. John Wetmore said that every beltway crossing should have bicycle lanes. Write to the project manager, RogerBoothe@vdot.virginia.gov, or send your comments to Fatemeh Allahdoust.

Adjourned.