

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, November 18, 2008

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

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

CHAIR: Fred Shaffer –
MNCPPC, Prince George's County

**VICE-
CHAIRS:** Kristin Haldeman
Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority
Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation
Jim Sebastian, DDOT

Attendance:

Fatemeh Allahdoust	Virginia Department of Transportation
Tim Davis	Frederick City Planning
Jeff Dunckel	Montgomery County
Melissa Esposito	Arlington County DES
David Goodman	Arlington County DES
Kristin Haldeman	WMATA
Patrick Holway	BTI
Michael Jackson	MDOT
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Bicycling Federation
Tamara Redmon`	FHWA Headquarters
Jim Sebastian	DDOT
Fred Shaffer	Prince George's County
John Thomas	Frederick County Planning
Chris Wells	Fairfax County
Stephanie Yanowitz	MDSHA

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COG Staff Attendance:

Ross Edgar
Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese
Jim Yin

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the Minutes of the September 16, 2008 and July 15, 2008 Meetings

The minutes were approved.

3. Member Jurisdiction Updates

Mr. Shaffer announced that the bicycle and pedestrian plan as part of the master plan for transportation will be released for comment in December. New maps of the Henson Creek Trail are available. Mr. Shaffer explained that MNCPPC is a bi-County organization between Montgomery County and Prince George's County. MNCPPC is separate from Public Works and other county agencies though it works closely with them.

DC has completed forty miles of bike lanes, and the bike station is under construction. Bike sharing is going well, with about 900 members and 150 trips per day when the weather is good. For such a small system that is a good result, and DDOT is exploring expansion opportunities. In Fairfax countdown pedestrian heads have been installed at every intersection in the County, over 500. There are now more countdown signals in Fairfax than in the entire State of Virginia. WMATA has 300 racks on order. WMATA is looking at installing grate covers that combine seating and bicycle parking. The covers are intended to prevent flooding. MDOT held a summit on October 6th. On October 23rd MDOT hosted a Complete Streets workshop.

Arlington is promoting a bridge over the GW Parkway to connect a park being developed north of Crystal City with the Mt. Vernon Trail. The National Park Service lists this project on the Mt. Vernon Trail section of its web site. Arlington is also evaluating pedestrian risk at its intersections to help prioritize infrastructure projects. The Four Mile Run connection will open in the Spring. There will also be a pedestrian and bicycle connection from the trail to Shirlington. Mr. Goodman was able to attend the Walk21 conference in Barcelona and see their Bicing bike-sharing program. Next year the conference will be held in New York, in October. Bicing has 6000 bicycles.

Mr. Jackson announced that Montreal will have a bike sharing program that will roll out in April

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2009. The bike stations are modular, placed in platforms of five that are not permanently fixed to the ground. They are also solar-powered so they do not require utility hook-up. They will accept credit cards or a subscription. The parking authority is running the system. There is no advertising sponsor; it will be supported by subscriptions.

Mr. Jackson announced that Maryland might put out an RFP for bike sharing. Mr. Sebastian noted that DDOT had never issued an RFP for a bike sharing program. It was included as a sentence in the bus shelter RFP. The contract is on the web under "DC Bus Shelter contract". Mr. Sebastian suggested using San Francisco, Portland, or Chicago as a model for an RFP for bike sharing. Arlington will also put out an RFP within the next few months.

The Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee is trying to get Montgomery College in Rockville in becoming more bicycle-friendly.

Ms. Allahdoust announced that one of her staff members was asked to participate in a pedestrian safety research project sponsored by FHWA. There will be a public meeting on the Telegraph Road widening project, one of the few major capital projects in Northern Virginia. It will have a shared-use path, sidewalks, and bike lanes. VDOT does not have full funding for the project.

Mr. Lambert announced that a trail project on Holmes Run to connect with the Fairfax County trail along Holmes Run. Alexandria is partnering with Arlington for a design competition for a bridge over Four Mile Run between Commonwealth and South Eads. That design competition will take place next summer and fall. There will be a trail project near Eisenhower Avenue along Cameron Run, which will start in early Spring. Alexandria will soon install a second HAWK signal. The existing HAWK is on north Van Dorn street near Seminary Road. Early reports have been positive. Alexandria did a request to experiment. Mr. Lambert asked for an example of a bicycle push-button to get a green. The W&OD trail in Leesburg has one at the crossing of Catoctin Circle. Alexandria has also installed 6.2 lane-miles of bike lanes and sharrows.

Mr. Sebastian asked how people were measuring miles of bikeway – two-way or one-way? On one-way streets bike lanes are typically installed only on one side. In Fairfax most streets are two-way, so a mile of road with bike lanes on both sides is counted as one mile of bike lanes. DDOT does the same. Maryland also measures street-miles rather than lane-miles of bike lane. Baltimore measures lane-miles.

Mr. Thomas announced that Frederick County had just developed a draft roads ordinance which provides for provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Staff attended a Safe Routes to School Training in Maryland. More bike parking will be added in the City of Frederick.

Mr. Sebastian asked how the current fiscal crisis is affecting people's programs. Mr. Wells said that the contribution to Street Smart might be at risk for FY 2010, and money for bus stops was

being cut. Layoffs are possible. Arlington may also face cuts after the new tax assessments come in. Prince George's has been hit hard, and will have less money for sidewalk retrofits, etc.

4. Bicycle Route-Finding Demonstration

Mr. Holway spoke to a presentation on the bicycle route-finding web site, and demonstrated the Beta version. Working with the data was the greatest challenge in putting this together. There are not a lot of such systems in the country, because the data is inconsistent. RidetheCity.com is a system used in New York, which is only available in the city.

The point and click function will be enabled today. The "safest path" will always attempt to use a bike path, while the "shortest path" will take the shortest route, marking streets with a speed limit over 30 mph in red. Streets with speed limits of less than 30 mph are considered safe for bicycling. Bike lanes, paved shoulders, and traffic volumes were not used to choose between routes. Data available to us gave us choices of 10 mph increments. Limit-access highways such as the beltway have been removed from the network. The speed of the system will improve soon. Mr. Farrell added that all the major trails from the ADC map had been traced by hand, using Google pedometer. The available trails data was not very accurate, so we created a new trails layer for the region.

The system comes with a disclaimer. It is far from perfect, but neither is Google maps.

Mr. Wells asked how this system could be improved given limited resources. The system can be improved, but it will take resources.

Right now we cannot store routes with a user profile, although if it is fully integrated with ridematching user profiles that could be made to happen.

Google adds functions regularly to Google API, which is the free public version that we use. For example, Street View is not currently available, but it may be in the future.

The system can be made a little faster, probably less than a minute, within the current budget. To make it really fast will require more resources. The road network covers the greater region, but trails were only digitized for the TPB members. Adding streets is easy, and we can always digitize more trails. However, the digitizing takes some time.

Adding information to the existing roads has proven difficult. In trying to absorb GIS files from the jurisdictions we were forced to give up because it was incompatible with the Navtec street data that we were using. So adding GIS data to this system can be difficult. With BiketheCity, they used only one data source, but it still took nine months to clean up all the data problems.

Metro stations can be seen on current Google API. You can locate Metro stations visually, then

point and click.

The underlying Navtec street data is priority and can't leave the building. The trails layer was created by COG and can be shared freely.

Mr. Sebastian asked if traffic volumes could be added. Mr. Farrell replied that they had looked into that and found the information to be incomplete or difficult to integrate. But traffic volume data could greatly improved the routing. And the data is likely to be higher quality than the bicycle-specific data, which goes out of date rapidly and will never be consistent.

Mr. Wells suggested that Fairfax might be willing to digitize additional off-road trails and sidepaths, since they are more important in Fairfax. Mr. Sebastian suggested single-jurisdiction systems. Mr. Holway recommended against that approach due to the proximity of the three states. Mr. Goodman noted that his GIS department had corroborated the Arlington trail data with aerial photos, so the data is accurate. Mr. Goodman suggested that the jurisdictions work to improve their data quality. Mr. Holway replied that making the street connections with these off-road networks was difficult, as are connections with neighboring jurisdictions.

Ms. Allahdoust suggested that the process may need to end for now, and restart at some later date. Mr. Holway said that he could provide a data specification to the jurisdictions in the form of a table, which they could then provide. However, it would mean time and resources on both ends.

Adding links to local bike maps is easy. Route-finding functionality is hard.

Mr. Meese suggested that the system so far seemed to be delivering tolerably good routes. The group should try the system and see if the routing is acceptable.

Mr. Farrell reviewed the history of the program, including the contract with WABA, who was supposed to contract with Bicycle.org. Bicycle.org folded, but Commuter Connections agreed to incorporate the project into a ridematching software update. Staff costs both in the Department of Transportation Planning and with Commuter Connections and its consultant have exceeded expectations. DTP has used planning funds for this project, but planning funds cannot be used for ongoing maintenance, which will be carried out by Commuter Connections. The on-line presence will be on the Commuter Connections web site, and it is integrated in their software, so it makes sense for them to do the maintenance.

Mr. Sebastian thought that it was better to integrate bicycling into other forms of transportation through Commuter Connections. The more the TDM people are aware of bicycling as an option, the better .

5. Bike to Work Guide Update

Commuter Connections will do an update of the current guide. Committee members were invited to take a copy and e-mail their comments to Mr. Farrell by December 25. A new version is scheduled for February. This is not a major overhaul, just an update for accuracy. Mr. Sebastian suggested that the pictures and graphics look dated. At some point we may want to hire a graphic designer and a photographer to do a major overhaul. Mr. Sebastian thought the colors were good, but the design, art, and photos should be upgraded.

Mr. Farrell replied that Commuter Connections was not looking to do a major upgrade, but that if the Committee's feedback was that one should be done. The bicycle commuter act should be mentioned in this guide. We should have the bike sharing program, as well as perhaps links to the Bike to Work Day.

Mr. Jackson suggested that if the Baltimore Metropolitan Council does a statewide Maryland version of this Bike to Work Guide, then there might be some possibility for joint hiring to do a new version of our version.

6. Other TPB Program Updates

- Street Smart

A press conference took place in the freezing rain at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. The ads are currently running. Soon we need to start developing new materials for the Spring campaign. And we are missing funds; many people have not paid us yet. We need a firmer commitment from DDOT in order to go forward with the Spring campaign.

Mr. Meese suggested that letters for FY 2010 should be sent soon. However, the new Chair won't take office until 2009, and we may want to send these letters under the signature of the new Chair.

We have a TPB resolution providing that letters requesting funds should be sent every year. The only way to change the amount requested would be to ask the TPB for a new resolution. Mr. Farrell suggested that we should simply plow ahead with the existing procedure, regardless of the financial problems of our members.

Ms. Haldeman suggested that additional requests for funds might not be well-received.

Mr. Sebastian suggested that the Spring campaign can be the "Year of the Bike" in terms of stepping up the bike message, perhaps at the expense of the pedestrian message.

The cover letter may need to make a gesture to the economic realities, even if it is too cumbersome to change the amount requested.

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- Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Database

This has hit a technical snag. The remote data entry function is not working.

- Transportation-Land Use Connection

Jurisdictions in need of planning assistance may want to apply by December 19th. It is all consultant support for TOD planning. If you are a large jurisdiction that already does this sort of thing well, you may not need it.

- Possible Education/Training Events for 2009

We will likely have another pedestrian enforcement seminar associated with the Street Smart campaign. If the 2010 Highway Capacity Manual is far enough along, we may have a seminar on it. Other ideas are welcome.

7. Adjourned