

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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DRAFT MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, May 15, 2018

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

PLACE: Room 1, First Floor
777 North Capitol Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

CHAIR: Cindy Engelhart, VDOT

**VICE-
CHAIRS:**

Jeff Dunckel, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Karyn C. McAlister, Prince George's DPWT
Jamie Carrington, WMATA

Attendance:

Marty Baker	MDOT
Eric Brenner	September 11 Memorial Trail
John Bolocek	VDOT (by phone)
James Carrington	WMATA (by phone)
Champ Burlow(?)	Virginia Bicycling Federation
Jeff Ciabotti	Toole Design (by phone)
George Clark	Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (by phone)
Henry Dunbar	BikeArlington
Cindy Engelhart	VDOT
Robert Gardner	WABA
Laurel Hammig	National Park Service
Katie Harris	Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Oleg Kotov	City of Rockville (by phone)
Karyn McAlister	Prince George's County DPWT (by phone)
Allen Muchnick	Active Prince William (by phone)
David Patton	Arlington County

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Will Pines	MDTA
Thomas Sullivan	MDOT - TSO
John Thomas	Montgomery County Planning (by phone)
John Wetmore	Perils for Pedestrians

COG Staff Attendance:

Lyn Erickson
Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese
Jon Schermann

- 1. General Introductions.**
- 2. Review of the March 20 Meeting Notes**

Approval of the March notes was deferred pending written comments by the Chair.

3. Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project

Ms. Erickson introduced Mr. Pines. The letter requesting Mr. Pines presentation is on the web site.

Ms. Erickson is Chief Program Director at COG, which means that she is heavily involved in anything related to the Board and the Long Range Plan. The Harry Nice Bridge has been in the long range plan since 2010. Last year MDTA was able to identify funding for it, so it went to the TPB for air quality conformity analysis, which requires public comment periods. When the Board took action to amend the plan to include the project, the Board had questions relating the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on the bridge. The Board asked the MDTA to brief the subject matter experts, such as this Subcommittee, be briefed. This presentation is the result.

Mr. Pines spoke to a powerpoint. Mr. Clark asked whether this presentation would differ from what had already been presented to the Council, and if the letter from Charles County was different from what he had already seen. Mr. Pines replied that it did not. Ms. Erickson clarified that the letter from Charles County dated from October.

The vertical clearance of the bridge would be unchanged from the current bridge.

Mr. Pines explained the structure of the Maryland Transportation Authority, which is an agency within MDOT. MDTA is an independent entity that is set up to run the toll facilities within the State of Maryland, and it is funded by tolls and bonds issued against the tolls. MDTA will borrow 30% of the bridge project cost and pay for the rest with tolls. The Maryland

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Transportation Authority Board is Chaired by Pete Rahn, the MDOT Secretary.

The Governor announced the full funding of the project in November 2016. It will be delivered with a design/build contract, which will be advertised on or before October 22, 2018. In early 2019 a draft request for proposals will be issued to a short list of candidates, and by Fall of 2019 the MDTA will select the design-builder. At that point the Board will know the project cost, and will vote to select the project design, including a decision on the bike path.

In response to a web video explaining the project, nearly 600 comments have been received, and 6,000 views.

MDTA continues to coordinate with VDOT, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other affected agencies.

Through the various public comment periods on the proposed navigational changes, the only one that received negative comment was lowering the vertical clearance, due to potential impact to tall ships. So now that is off the table; the existing clearance will be maintained.

The shipping channel will be shifted about 585 feet towards Virginia. By shifting the channel there will be a reduction of nearly 1000 feet in the length of the bridge structure without changing the grade on the bridge, a significant cost savings.

The horizontal span will be reduced to 250 feet, from 700 feet. The Woodrow Wilson Bridge has 135 feet horizontal clearance. The Coast Guard agreed that 250 feet is enough. This change will save roughly \$50 million.

During construction the existing bridge, which has a single lane with each direction, will remain open.

The new bridge will have four lanes, two in each direction, which ties into 4 lanes on either side.

The current two lane bridge is a choke point on summer week-ends, but is sufficient to handle normal traffic volumes, which are not very high.

The original NEPA document had 99' cross section with full shoulders and a 10' bicycle and pedestrian path. The estimated cost for that cross-section would be \$788 million just for construction, or roughly \$1 billion including the road work and inspections. MDTA did not have the budget to build it without toll increases.

To reduce the project cost, MDTA is looking at two alternate cross-sections:

1. A 61' foot wide bridge with four 12' travel lanes and 2' shoulders.
2. A 71' wide bridge with four 12' travel lanes, 2' shoulders, and an 8' barrier-protected bicycle and pedestrian path.

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The design-build proposers will submit prices for each option.

The cross section on US 301 on the Virginia side is four 12' lanes with 2' shoulders. The 61' cross-section matches what currently exists on the approaches on both sides of the river.

MDTA runs other four-lane bridges, including the Francis Scott Key Bridge on I-695, which has the same cross-section that MDTA is planning to build for the Nice Bridge. The Key Bridge carries 31,000 vehicles per day versus 18,800 per day for the existing Nice Bridge, without significant congestion. Crash rates on the Key Bridge are lower than the statewide average for bridges.

The Hatem bridge in Cecil County has a similar four lane cross-section. In response to bicycle advocate requests, MDTA has implemented a lane sharing policy on the Hatem. Working with the bike community successfully on lane sharing on the Hatem Bridge has opened the door to using that approach on the Nice Bridge.

The expected crash factor for the 61' bridge will be similar or better than the original 99' configuration.

MDTA forecasts that a four lane Nice bridge will be able to handle traffic for 100 years based on forecasts for traffic growth in the area.

The existing bridge will be closed and demolished once the new bridge is opened. The new bridge will use all-electronic tolling.

Mr. Wetmore asked how often breakdowns occur on the Key Bridge, blocking a lane. Mr. Pines replied that he didn't know how often breakdowns occurred, but since the bridge has four lanes it is possible to pass a stopped vehicle.

Mr. Wetmore added that on the Virginia side of the Nice Bridge there appeared to be a wide, grassy right of way, that might be able to accommodate a broken down vehicle. Mr. Pines replied that he could not comment on what VDOT's property could support.

Mr. Wetmore asked about the hours during which lane sharing would be allowed. Mr. Pines replied that the operational policies had not been set yet. Traffic volumes are lower on the Ince Bridge.

Mr. Wetmore asked what the steepest grade was on the Hatem Bridge. The Hatem seems relatively flat, and so might offer a different bicycling experience than the Nice Bridge. Bicyclists might have trouble maintaining high speeds on the uphill portion of the Nice Bridge.

Mr. Pines asked whether the grade issue would also affect a dedicated path. Mr. Wetmore replied that if a bicyclist is going 7 mph on the uphill portion, because that's as fast as they can

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go, cars are going to be catching up with them a lot faster than if they're riding 20 mph on the flat. It makes for a very different riding experience.

If there is a dedicated path the bicyclist can safely stop to rest, or enjoy the view. Having cars on your tail is a very different experience from a dedicated path. Mr. Pines noted that the uphill grade on the Tour de France is as much as 11%, versus 4% on the Nice Bridge. Mr. Wetmore asked if the expected user would be a world-class bicyclist athlete, or the family rider.

Mr. Pines replied that there was no decision made on the path today.

Mr. Wetmore noted that pedestrians would not be able to use the lane-sharing options.

Mr. Wetmore added that on the Hatem the bicycle community's preferred option would be to add a cantilevered shared use path. The preferred option is a separated facility that would provide 24 hour access to all levels and abilities.

Mr. Pines replied that a separated path would cost roughly \$60 million. The population around the Nice Bridge is barely 10% of that around the Wilson Bridge. Estimated use of the Nice Bridge would be 50 bicyclists per day based on census data around the bridge. MDTA owes it to its customers, who are the ones who will pay for it, to have a conversation about cost/benefit of bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. How well the need for bicycle access is going to be met will be a decision for the MDTA.

Mr. Brenner, who is on the Governor's Bicycle Advisory Board, said that the Governor had promised a barrier-separated bicycle and pedestrian path. Given that announcement, why is MDTA considered not providing a separated path? Virginia is planning for a bicycle path in on its side, the Dahlgren Trail. Saying that MDTA will only meet up with what is there today, versus what is in the pipeline, is very short sighted.

Mr. Pines replied that VDOT has no funded project in its Smart program for a bicycle and pedestrian path on the Virginia side of the bridge. Ms. Engelhart replied that just because a project is not in the Virginia Smartscale plan, which is a six year plan, does not mean that the project will not be funded. The locals may decide to fund the project. Mr. Pines re-iterated that there were no definite, funded plans to build a bike path connecting to the existing bridge.

Mr. Champ of the Virginia Bicycling Federation said that there was nothing funded because there is no bridge right now. If a path were to be provided on the Nice Bridge, based on conversations Mr. Champe has had with the owner of the Dahlgren Trail and others, he believed that funds to complete the Dahlgren Trail would certainly be found, "no question about that".

Mr. Champ asked about the vertical clearance over the river. Mr. Pines replied that it is and will be 135'. Mr. Champ said that on south band you start at less than 10', so there would be at 120' change in the road level. The sightlines are completely different from the Hatem Bridge, which

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is relatively flat. If a car comes along and pops up over the top of the arch at 65 or 70 mph, and finds a bicyclist going 10 mph in front of them, they won't be able to avoid a collision. With this current design people are going to die on this bridge. This design is unsafe; it's going to cost lives, and probably lawsuits. How will the MDTA Board take that into consideration?

Mr. Pines replied that the speed limit will be 50 mph, not 65 mph. MDTA cannot control speeding, but they will enforce it. The scenario that is being presented is fully within the statute, lane sharing, is fully within the statute, and even encouraged, up to 50 mph. This scenario is not too different from what we find in a lot of other places, such as the Conowingo Dam.

Mr. Champ replied that this is a 100 year facility, and over that 100 years a lot of people will die if they choose to use it.

Mr. Wetmore said that even if no one ever dies, there is a lot to be said for comfort and convenience as well as safety. The Conowingo and the Hatem Bridge are very uncomfortable places to ride; people use them because there are no good alternatives. Family riders are not likely to use them. Virginia is creating a statewide bicycle network, and as this network is completed the Nice Bridge could be an important connection, versus the Wilson Bridge which would be a hundred mile detour for people going to Southern Maryland.

Mr. Meese asked if there had been any consideration of the economic development potential of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, such as what had occurred at National Harbor and Alexandria. What is the potential of a bike/ped trail as a tourist attraction, and would that open up the possibility of other funding sources.

Mr. Gardner said that the area was very rural, and depended on the military bases.

Mr. Pines said that one of the benefits of the video outreach was the comments. Of the 6,000 people who watched the video, only 10% offered comments. Only 15 comments came from people living within 10 miles of the bridge, and some of those were opposed to the bike path, calling it a waste of money.

Based on the low local interest, MDTA does not think that a bike path will be a major commuter facility or economic driver. The people who will actually use this bridge don't care about a bike path.

In 2013 the trip count on the Wilson Bridge helped inform the MDTA forecast for bike trips on the Nice Bridge. Mr. Patton asked if there could be a spike on the week-ends. Mr. Pines replied that there numbers were an average. There was a question about the hours bikes are allowed on the Hatem Bridge; apparently it is daylight and non-rush hours. Bike usage on the Hatem Bridge is very low. The bike community has also been dodging the tolls by hopping onto the sidewalk.

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MDTA's trust agreement with bondholders requires charging all users, so bicyclists would have to be charged, which is another operational challenge. Mr. Wetmore asked if the bonds for this bridge could exempt nonmotorized users. Mr. Pines replied that the trust agreement covers all MDTA facilities, and revising it would require a new credit rating, and would be an unacceptable amount of effort.

Mr. Farrell mentioned that a toll bridge in Philadelphia, run by the Delaware River Port Authority, has a bicycle and pedestrian path, and does not collect tolls on nonmotorized users. The Delaware River Port Authority at one point considered and rejected collecting tolls on nonmotorized users because it would have required keeping the bike path open 24/7.

Mr. Farrell wondered if the effort of setting up a special toll collection for bicyclists and pedestrians might be more trouble than it was worth.

Mr. Pines replied that bicyclist and pedestrians pose some operational issues which are part of the benefit/cost considerations.

Mr. Wetmore asked what the discussion had been in the NEPA document regarding bicycles and pedestrians. Mr. Pines replied that in a NEPA document you want to analyze the worst-impact scenario, the widest bridge that was being considered. The FONSI document included the bike/ped path.

The most successful bike paths have had significant economic impact through long-distance tourism. What is the long-term potential for bike tourism between Virginia and southern Maryland? Mr. Pines replied that MDTA has committed to providing access, but exactly how that access will be provided is yet to be decided.

Mr. Brenner asked why, given that the Governor announced at one point that a separated bike path would be provided, MDTA was considering options that would not include a separated path. It's damaging to trust. Mr. Pines replied that he could not comment on what the Governor said or didn't say. And he's being transparent now.

The decision will be made after MDTA has prices for the two options. To make a decision, we need the real number, which Mr. Pines believes will be in the ballpark of \$60 million, in order to accommodate 50 bikes per day. The 50 bikes per day was based on the Wilson Bridge bike counts, scaled down for population within a reasonable commuting distance of the Nice Bridge. No significant pedestrian traffic is anticipated.

Mr. Bolocek asked if the bridge could be retrofitted in the future to add a bike path. Mr. Pines replied that nothing in the design would preclude doing that.

Another comment was that the 17 mile Dahlgren Trail in Virginia ends 1.1 miles from the Nice Bridge. It could be connected to the Nice Bridge with a shared use path on the north side of US

301.

Mr. Farrell noted that the AASHTO guide calls for more than 8 feet of width for a two way bike path. Mr. Pines replied that with a bridge of this length, every additional foot will add about \$6 million to the cost, so cutting two feet will save \$12 million. The lower cost will make the bike path look better. Mr. Wetmore asked if the design will include look-outs where people could stop and enjoy the view. Mr. Pines replied that the volumes would be low enough so that bicycles would be able to stop.

Mr. Meese asked if the toll had to be the same for all vehicles. He suggested that a smaller toll for bicycles, and a coin basket, as a workaround.

Currently many bicyclists on the Hatem Bridge dodge the toll. Counts on the Hatem are very low, just one or two riders per month. Mr. Brenner replied that if the accommodation were better, the counts would likely be higher. They are much higher on the Wilson Bridge, and the majority of the people are pedestrian, often tourists. Mr. Patton said that focusing on commuters was the wrong way to look at it. Done right, a bicycle and pedestrian path on a bridge can be a major attraction. It's mistaken to look at ridership under very hostile conditions as indicative of what ridership might be under better conditions.

Ms. Engelhart said that the HSIP money for pedestrians is allocated under conditions which Mark Cole or Stephen Read at VDOT can explain.

The selection date for the bidders has not been set yet. The State is continuing to work on some right of way issues. Likely selection date is October of 2019. Michelle Shrumshire in the VDOT Fredericksburg District is Mr. Pines' VDOT liaison. She can answer additional questions. Exact dates will be posted on the MDTA web site.

4. Jurisdictional Updates

I-66 is proceeding. There are no standards for bike/ped tunnels. Clearance for lighting and drainage are an issue.

Next Perils for Pedestrians deals with Milwaukee.

Arlington is updating its Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Coordination with the Park Service, DDOT, Arlington Cemetery, and the Pentagon are needed.

National Park Service hosted the recent Capital Trails Coalition. Mr. Farrell promised to post some the recent Park Service presentations from the Capital Trails Coalition meeting on the web site.

WABA is working on Bike to Word Day, staffing the DC Bike Ride, Vision Zero in Wards 7 and

8, and the Capital Trails Coalition. WABA continues to work with DC and various jurisdictions with bike projects.

5. Maryland State Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

Ms. Baker spoke to a powerpoint. The requirement for a State Bicycle and Pedestrian is set by statute. It is a 20 year plan, and must be updated every five years.

The plan is coordinated with the Statewide transportation plan. The plan is a policy plan, and is delivered on annual basis along with the Consolidated Transportation Program, as well as an attainment report.

Both plans are scheduled to be presented to the legislature in January.

One round of public meetings has just been completed, and there will be another public meeting on June 7. There have been two trail workshops.

Two other statewide plans are underway, "A Better Maryland" from the MD Department of Planning, and the Department of Natural Resources is working on a land conservation and recreation plan.

The Statewide survey had 6,000 responses.

The Bike safety task force is continuing its work. It has produced 39 recommendations.

Feedback over the last year echoed previous themes from the previous plan, but included some new themes.

A statewide bicycle level of comfort map is being developed.

Each region in Maryland is different, and the goals are different. Western Maryland is not much interested in increasing mode share, for example. MDOT wants to provide a variety of tools to serve regions that have different priorities. Bike Level of Comfort does not include trails.

The soft surface trails include mountain biking trails.

Maryland has identified areas suitable to become bicycle and pedestrian priority areas, based on the likelihood of being able to increase bike trips, as well as crash data.

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In September the draft plan should be released.

The MD Department of Health is represented on the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. MDOT recognizes the need for encouragement and education.

Mr. Patton asked if the short trip opportunity areas had been developed by MDOT. Short trip opportunity areas are based on techniques developed in Massachusetts and elsewhere. Techniques for identifying such areas vary from state to state. Wisconsin focuses on tourism opportunities, while other states focus on land use and the potential for utilitarian transit.

10% of the land mass of the State of Maryland is included, which also captures 80% of the crashes. We don't want to make the safety element too strong, because we want to capture latent demand.

There may be an opportunity for the MPO's and others to capture demand for short trips in their travel demand models.

Mr. Wetmore asked about changes in active transportation. AASHTO has recently convened a council on active transportation, with which MDOT is involved. The MD Department of Health has been helpful with the pedestrian aspect of the plan.

6. Commuter Connections Bicycle Routing Map

Mr. Edgar demonstrated his on-line bicycle route-finding tool. This tool will be rolled out with Bike to Work Day. The tool was developed in response to some comments on the bike routing offered by Google. The tool uses information on bike routes and facilities from our inner jurisdictions.

This map is a mash-up of Esri and some of our in-house GIS information. Mr. Edgar gathered data from local jurisdictions, and cleaned it up. Many of the paths are useable only for recreation, and they may not connect to the street network. To verify connections, Mr. Edgar used geo-referenced aerial photography. Mr. Edgar made the connections manually. Data has been received for the inner jurisdictions, and will eventually be extended to the outer jurisdictions.

The current design tends to keep you on bike paths. You can customize the routing by dragging and dropping.

Ms. Engelhart suggested that we give out an award for longest daily bike commute.

Mr. Edgar said that the assumed speed of bicyclists was 20 kph or about 12.5 miles per hour.

You need a Commuter Connections account to use this tool.

Mr. Farrell asked that when calculating speed do you take into account Stop signs? Mr. Farrell suggested that we use a more conservative speed than 20 mph. People would rather be early than late. Mr. Farrell suggested 8-10 mph for on street, and maybe 12-14 mph on the trails, which won't have Stop signs, stop lights, or other interaction to traffic flow. Stop signs slow you down, even if you don't come to a full stop.

Mr. Edgar said that you could also look at posted speed limits and terrain, with more work.

7. Announcements and Other Business

- **TPB Work Program**

Bike to Work Day coming up. The TPB is being briefed.

A Dockless Bikeshare workshop will take place May 31.

Transportation Land Use connections project for FY 2019 will be announced tomorrow. This has been a good crop of applications, so a good set of projects.

Mr. Farrell will be presenting to the TPB on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Element of Visualize 2045, which is the financially constrained element plus the two aspirational bike ped initiatives.

- **Maryland Highway Safety Summit**

The presentations from the Maryland Highway Safety Summit are posted on line.

The big take-away is that the opioid epidemic is killing a lot of people, and is causing traffic deaths as well. Maryland has some of the best data in the country on opioid addiction thanks to a partnership with Hopkins.

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One issue with opioids is unreliable reporting of the cause of death. The data, probably incorrectly, showed an increase in deaths from heart disease in people over the age of 50 last year, after many decades of steady progress. But in many counties, if you are found dead and you are over age 50, they will just assume that it was a heart attack and skip the toxicology to save resources.

Many people over age 50 got addicted through the medical system, and suffer opioid overdoses which go undetected.

One particular pharmaceutical company, owned by the Sackler family, was very aggressive in marketing opioids such as Oxycodone.

As opioid prescriptions have been cut back, addicts have turned to heroin, which is cheaper than black-market Oxycodone. And then came the last of the four horsemen, Fentanyl. Fentanyl is a synthetic elephant tranquilizer much more potent than heroin, which is now routinely mixed with heroin, causing numerous overdoses.

Opioid addiction has really taken off since 2015, and it is starting to affect other things, including our line of work.

Mr. Wetmore asked what we know about the effects of marijuana legalization. Mr. Farrell replied that that was even tougher, since we don't know if someone was high when they crashed, since it stays in the system so long.

That said, alcohol is still by far the biggest factor in impaired crashes.

Mr. Patton announced that Arlington has applied for federal funding for a low stress bicycle network planning.

8. Adjourned