

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, November 18th, 2014

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

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

CHAIR: Jim Sebastian, District Department of Transportation

**VICE-
CHAIRS:**

David Goodman – Arlington Department of Environmental Services
Jeff Dunckel, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Kristin Haldeman, WMATA
Carrie Sanders, Alexandria Department of Transportation and
Environmental Services
Fred Shaffer, M-NCPPC, Prince George's County

Attendance:

Michael Alvino	National Park Service
Kevin Belanger	City of Rockville (by phone)
Greg Billing	WABA
Jeff Dunckel	Montgomery County DOT (by phone)
Cindy Engelhart	VDOT- Northern Virginia
David Goodman	Arlington DES
Will Handsfeld	Georgetown BID (by phone)
Michael Jackson	MDOT
Bill King	Loudoun County (by phone)
Adam Lind	NVRC (by phone)
Philip Koopman	BicycleSPACE
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Bicycling Federation (by phone)

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Hillary Poole	City of Alexandria
Jim Sebastian	DDOT
Bill Sadler	Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Fred Shaffer	M-NCPPC Prince George's County (by phone)
Molla Sarros	Maryland Department of the Environment (by phone)
Debbie Spiliotopoulos	Northern Virginia Regional Commission
Tammy Stidham	National Park Service
Andrea Sweigart	AECOM
Pat Turner	BikeLoudoun (by phone)
John Wetmore	Perils for Pedestrians

COG Staff Attendance:

Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese
Jessica Mirr

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the September 16th Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved.

3. Planning for NPS Paved Recreational Trails of the National Capital Region

Ms. Stidham spoke to a powerpoint. This plan will be an update to the 1990 plan. The consultant is AECOM. The original 1990 plan was prompted by an increased demand for bicycle use of trails, for transportation purposes. Reduction of conflicts among users, making connections to local trails, interagency cooperation were priorities. The existing trails were in poor condition, and often not well connected. The plan issued seven different areas of recommendations, including wayfinding, maintenance, and key construction projects. A loop route was proposed.

The 1990 plan needs to be updated. Many of the needs identified in 1990 still exist. Currently the NPS has 140 miles of trail in the national capital region. Broad mix of users, including fast and slow bicyclists, and child bicyclists. The plan will identify the gaps in the system, safety issues, performance measures, and funding opportunities. Improvements need to be made within the context of policy changes since 1990. Coordination with the various jurisdictions needs to be improved.

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The project was kicked off in October 2014. Right now the project is in the data gathering and data analysis phase. The plan will be completed in January 2016.

Ms. Spiliotopoulos said that there is a lot going on in Northern Virginia that does not show up in the 1990 plan. Ms. Stidham agreed and said that the new trails and plans would be included in the update, as well as connections of those trails to the NPS trails. This plan will look at paved trails only, not horse trails or hiking trails. However, a follow-up plan will examine the unpaved recreational trails. Ms. Stidham encouraged Ms. Spiliotopoulos to provide information for the update.

Mr. Jackson noted that the 1990 plan was called the recreational trails plan. But many of these trails are commuter routes, and during the shutdown they were closed, even though the GW Parkway remained open. Will the plan include operational issues? Ms. Stidham said that both would be addressed.

Mr. Wetmore suggested that when looking at possible connections that utility corridors should be considered. Ms. Stidham asked how receptive the utility companies were. Mr. Wetmore replied that it varied, but Pepco is currently in merger talks, which provides opportunity for comment.

Mr. Shaffer said that Prince George's County supports the extension of the Suitland Parkway Trail and hoped the update would address that. The County will also sign the on-road Potomac Scenic Heritage Trail. There is also interest in extending the Oxon Run trail. The section in DC needs some maintenance. Mr. Shaffer offered to put Ms. Stidham in touch with the people at the county responsible for long term parks planning. The timing is good in terms of the parks department updating its plans.

Mr. Sebastian said that the Oxon Run trail on the DC side would be improved, and look at other possible connections with Prince George's County parks.

Mr. Handsfeld asked about the project development process. Ms. Stidham said that project development will come from these kinds of conversations.

Ms. Engelhart said that the latest parks trails plans in Northern Virginia emphasize commuting and transportation use as one of their purposes.

Mr. Koopman asked about opportunities for public involvement, and suggested that the trails should be open 24 hours. Ms. Stidham replied that they were doing a series of small stakeholder meetings with the jurisdictions, which will be followed by a larger meeting.

4. Draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the National Capital Region

Mr. Farrell spoke to a powerpoint. A hard copy of the draft was distributed. The plan has been presented to the CAC and the TPB Technical Committee. We are actively taking comments and

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technical corrections. The draft will be presented to the TPB tomorrow, with an emphasis on what has changed since 2010.

The regional and agency plans are much more ambitious than they were in 2010. At the federal level we now have the Transportation Alternatives Program, which is partially administered by the TPB. Bicycle and Pedestrian funding in the TIP has increased from 1% to 2%. WMATA has done a great deal to promote walk and bike access to its stations. There is a regional voluntary Complete Streets policy, plus new and revised State and local policies. Bicycling has increased.

The plan will be followed up with an on-line visualization, based on the maps. We anticipate that the on-line visualization will be far more accessible to the public.

5. Other TPB Program Updates

Top Priority Unfunded Projects

Top Priority unfunded project list is not yet complete. It's no longer time-critical, since we have a rolling TIP. But it's still a good way to bring projects to the attention of the TPB. Mr. Goodman asked if the projects in this plan actually get funded – the Arlington Boulevard has never been funded. Mr. Sebastian said that the purpose in this case is to get the attention of VDOT, who might fund it.

If the list is not useful, we can get rid of it. Ms. Engelhart noted that funding requests come through the County Supervisors – this list does not have a huge impact per se. Mr. Sebastian said is that the purpose is to get the attention of the people who can fund it.

Mr. Meese said that the purpose is to get a list that the regional body thinks is important, not necessarily the top priorities of the individual jurisdictions. We're getting pushed by the CAC to do more of that type of planning, rather than just incorporating what the jurisdictions propose. These projects should be selected with certain regional priority factors in mind, such as enhancing inter-jurisdictional connections, access to transit, etc. which correspond to the goals of the Regional Transportation Priorities plan.

Being on this list gives a projects proponents one more point in their favor when arguing for funding.

For the Freight Subcommittee, it did not make sense to have a purely unfunded list, since partially funded projects are often the most important.

6. Update on the Use of GIS for Interactive Mapping and Visualization

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Ms. Mirr demonstrated the on-line visualization maps. Mr. Goodman suggested adding absolute numbers of people walking and biking to Metro, not just percentages. Ms. Mirr promised to do that.

The on-line visualization embeds other web sites such as the US Census and Street Smart, so users can access that information without leaving the visualization.

Mr. Sebastian asked if updates to the database would automatically appear in this visualization. Mr. Farrell replied that it was not automatic, but it was not difficult. The information would need to be downloaded to an Access file, converted to an Excel file, and sent to Jessica, who can use the unchanging COG ID for each project to associate the new information for the map.

The anticipated process is that we will update more often, based on suggestions from users.

The Visualization is not yet accessible to the public, but it will be after it is presented to the TPB. End user is both the public and staff, but more the public.

Mr. Sebastian praised Ms. Mirr's work, and asked that she not leave COG without training a replacement. This is an ESRI project.

Ms. Engelhart asked if injuries could be broken down by State. Ms. Mirr said that we showed what was in the plan. Mr. Farrell said that the jurisdictions were probably more interested in the jurisdictional numbers. Ms. Mirr said that the State-level numbers could be added to the text. It would be a matter of adding up the jurisdictional numbers.

Mr. Farrell asked about whether we could do a service-area analysis, such as a query to ask, for example, how many people live within half a mile of a major multi-use path, etc. Ms. Mirr said that we could. Ms. Engelhart concurred, and said that such queries could be useful to document why funding is needed for a given project. Mr. Farrell said that jurisdictions should send us requests, and we will endeavor to respond within the limits of our resources.

In the December presentation we will mention the visualization but not demonstrate it. We can present it to the TPB later.

Mr. Jackson suggested under recommended Best Practices that we include automated bicycle and pedestrian counts. The maps seem crowded with interstate highway shields. People of color should be shown in the plan document. Under encouraging people to walk and bike, we should add bike to college day. Mr. Jackson promised to send the comments in writing. Mr. Farrell agreed that written comments would be best. Our official comment period started at the CAC meeting, so we should get comments within three weeks, by December 13th.

Mr. Goodman suggested that rate of implementation might not pick up in the future, due to the resources and documentation needed to comply with Chesapeake Bay water quality

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requirements. Even tiny bike ped projects have to go through the same scrutiny as larger projects. For stand-alone bike and ped projects, the environment review and permitting is getting harder. Mr. Shaffer agreed.

Mr. Farrell had been saying that because we have more and more effective Complete Streets projects, we will get more facilities added routinely.

Ms. Engelhart said that Fairfax County just passed an \$85 million bond referendum for pedestrian and bicycle projects.

So the funding and Complete Streets policies are getting better, but the review for the stand-alone projects is getting harder.

This observation is in the powerpoint, but not in the plan.

Mr. Jackson said that “Bicyclists may Use the Full Lane” signs raise awareness.

7. Selection of a new Chair for the Subcommittee

Ms. Haldeman at WMATA has declined to be the 2015 Chair. Mr. Sebastian said that National Park Service might consider providing a Chair. Mr. Farrell explained the role and time commitment. The Subcommittee nominated Ms. Stidham. Ms. Stidham agreed to consider being the 2015 Chair.

8. Other TPB Program Updates

- Street Smart - November 7th press event went well. The Annual Report from FY 2014 is available. We have more funding in FY 2015.
- Mr. Sebastian suggested that the Bike to Work Day report should be presented to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee.
- Mr. Sadler gave a brief overview of the October 28th Safe Routes to School Annual meeting. Sixty people attended from around the region. Mark Fenton was the keynote speaker.
- The group discussed aspects of the NACTO guide which might make a good workshop. Hillary Poole suggested a training focusing on pop-up public spaces. The group liked the idea.

9. Adjourned