

MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, May 15, 2001

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

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

CHAIR: Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation

ATTENDANCE:

Shaheer Assad, Loudoun County Transportation
Paul DeMaio, City of Alexandria
Kathy Graham, VDOT Transportation Planning Division, Central Office
Suzanne Grobbel, Loudoun County PRCS
Brian King, VDOT Transportation Planning Division, Central Office
Allen Muchnick, Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Jenny Pate, Fairfax County Parks Authority
Jim Sebastian, DC DPW
Kenneth Todd, National Center for Bicycling and Walking
Ritch Viola, Arlington DPW
Heather Wallenstrom, VDOT NOVA
Steven Waters, Walk DC
John Z. Wetmore, Perils for Pedestrians TV

COG STAFF ATTENDANCE:

Charlene Howard
Don McAuslan
Andrew J. Meese
C. Patrick Zilliacus

ACTIONS:

1. Welcome and Minutes of the March 20, 2001 Meeting

Chair Michael Jackson was unable to be at the May 15 meeting, so Jim Sebastian of DC DPW chaired on his behalf. It was noted that the Subcommittee had discussed and agreed to change the date of the September meeting to September 11. The minutes were accepted.

2. Presentation on Mobility in Cities in Finland and Sweden

Patrick Zilliacus of COG staff traveled to Finland and Sweden in Summer 2000, and presented many photographs he had taken on that trip of bicycle, pedestrian, and related facilities. It was noted that separations such as underpasses were more commonly provided for bicycles and pedestrians in Scandinavia than in the U.S., but that bicycling and walking rates were curtailed compared to other European countries due to the severe Scandinavian winters, including shortness of daylight.

3. Report on National Bike Summit

Allen Muchnick reported that the summit was successful, with about 300 people in attendance. Support was expressed at the summit for Congressman Blumenaur's bill to extend to bicycle commuting tax credits such as those given for transit passes. Other emphases included asking Members of Congress to join the Congressional Bicycle Caucus, support of potential "safe routes to schools" legislation, and reauthorization of TEA-21 funding.

4. Northern Virginia Bike Plan

Heather Wallenstrom reported that VDOT was still working on signing contracts with the consultant team for the plan. When the contracts are signed, they were to begin scheduling meetings to get input from jurisdictional representatives, and will also schedule a public meeting.

In response to a question, Heather noted that the plan was to cover bikeways and trails, and would not cover all sidewalks or pedestrian issues. In response to a question, Heather noted she had talked to VDOT staff using new handheld technology to record infrastructure issues, some data will be available from these systems, but not in the time line of the study.

Jim Sebastian noted the success of the bicycle level-of-service training that Heather had arranged. This training brought together bicycle and pedestrian planners, highway and traffic engineers, and others to discuss the issue, and the exchange of ideas was good. Shaheer Assad noted Loudoun County would like to see additional training to address issues of exclusive (as opposed to mixed traffic) bicycle facilities.

5. Draft Montgomery County Bike Plan and Map

Neither Gail Nouri nor Tom Robertson were able to attend to report on these.

6. Pedestrian Safety Public Outreach

Jim Sebastian and Andrew Meese noted that Ester Bowring of Montgomery County had suggested expanding the Montgomery County pedestrian safety ad campaign regionally, perhaps on an at-cost Metrobus/Metrorail ad campaign. They advised waiting until COG had a new bicycle and pedestrian planner on board in the summer. Heather noted she would like to see more than just Metro ads, perhaps also radio ads. The group moved to Item 8, "Other Business", before returning to Item 7.

8. Other Business

The group questioned Andrew Meese about whether the bicycle and pedestrian planning position could be expanded from one-half of a staff person's time to a full person's time or more. Andrew noted that the Subcommittee might want to propose what additional activities would need to be accomplished with this additional staff time, for forwarding to the TPB Technical Committee and TPB in the fall, at which time the FY2003 Work Program will be under consideration. This suggestion was to be reported to Michael Jackson. Heather noted that safety outreach should be on this list, and Steven Waters noted walk-to-school day October 2. Allen also suggested that state bicycle, pedestrian, or safety grants could be applied for.

The group discussed the success of Bike-to-Work day May 4, 2001. Over 1,200 persons officially registered to participate, which exceeded the goal of 1,000. DC Mayor Williams and Alexandria Mayor Donley were among participants.

Charlene Howard and Don McAuslan were introduced as new COG staff persons who were to be working on geographic information systems (GIS). Charlene previously had worked on a study of bicyclists' preferences in Phoenix, and she hoped to be involved in similar work here.

Brian King noted that VDOT was accepting submittals for hazard elimination until a deadline of June 30.

Jenny Pate was participating in National Trails Day June 2.

7. Pedestrian Safety Legal and Regulatory Issues

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Kenneth Todd presented graphics showing three hypothetical intersections with potential vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. The first showed a typical intersection of a major road and a minor road, with only the minor road having stop sign controls. He noted that cross vehicular traffic did not have the right-of-way, but cross pedestrian traffic did, and this had safety implications. The second scenario showed where a left-turning vehicle at an intersection was in conflict with a pedestrian crossing in the same direction, often either forcing the vehicle to cut off the pedestrian or stop and block traffic. This means that the driver faced more than one conflict, which is recommended against in good traffic engineering. The third scenario showed the difference between a intersection-based and a mid-block pedestrian crossing. The group was asked to consider these examples in preparation for a further discussion of the issue at the July meeting.