

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, November 16, 2021

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

PLACE: VIRTUAL

CHAIR: Jamie Carrington, WMATA

**VICE-
CHAIRS:**

Laurel Hammig, National Park Service

Attendance:

Bryan Barnett-Woods	City of Rockville
George Branyan	DDOT
David Edmondson	City of Frederick
Nate Evans	MDOT
Alex Freedman	Takoma Park
Annaly Galeas	Montgomery County Parks
Laura Ghosh	Loudoun County
Charles Grymes	
Tiffany Jennings	Prince George's County DPW&T
Matt Johnson	Montgomery County DOT
Joe Kelley	Frederick County
Sean Lowery	Ecopia
Karyn McAlister	DDOT
Charlene Mingus	
Heidi Mitter	VDOT/Northern Virginia
Allan Muchnick	
David Patton	Arlington County

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George Phillips	Prince William County
Michael Trinh	VDOT
Francine Waters	MDOT
Allan Yu	Prince William County

COG Staff Attendance:

Michael Farrell
Charlene Howard
Andrew Meese
Jon Schermann

- 1. General Introductions.**
- 2. Review of the July 20 meeting notes**

The July meeting notes were approved.

- 3. Jurisdictional Updates**

Prince George's County participated in the regional Street Smart launch event in Oxon Hill. It was well attended and got good exposure. Coming up, the lives shatter on impact wall will be presented at Prince George's Plaza.

Frederick County has started on its Complete Streets guidelines, and is finishing its Vision Zero Action Plan. The New Design Road sidepath phase I is starting its 100% design phase.

In September MDOT awarded funds to sixteen projects across the state, including projects in Prince George's, Montgomery County, and Frederick. MDOT has had a successful Walktober, with four Walkinars and numerous other events. MDOT had over 40 partners for their campaign.

The public comment period for the MDOT P3 project has been extended until the end of the month.

City of Frederick has passed a Vision Zero resolution. The city is convening an interagency working group for implementation. The bicycle and pedestrian plan has 128 miles of bike infrastructure, as well as other programs to help make Frederick a bike friendly city. The city is applying for various grants for walk and bike projects. East Street is also undergoing a full redesign, including new sidewalks and bike infrastructure. COG provided funding for that project.

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Rockville is implementing its bicycle master plan, with numerous projects under way. A Pedestrian Master Plan has just been kicked off as well.

Prince William County provided updates. Street Smart will display the testimonial wall soon at a county building. The mobility chapter of the comprehensive plan is under development, including a number of proposed trails. Connectivity, safe routes to school, missing links. The County has a trails and blueways advisory committee.

Loudoun County has kicked off an equity study of sidewalks and missing links against disadvantaged census blocks. Eleven new projects will be added to the Capital Improvement Program. They County has also received a grant to study bikeways in the county, and determine what types of facilities should be provided.

DC's budget for walking and bicycling has increased substantially, with high goals for the protected bike lanes and trails plan, with a goal of ten miles of protected bike lanes per year. Total protected bike lanes are now 22, with 100 miles of bike lanes of all types. New trails are under development as well, including new sections of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. DDOT is advertising for two additional planners, including one bike lane planner and one trails planner. Mr. Branyan currently has a team of seven, which will increase by four, to 11 total.

The city also aims for 100 intersections to receive safety upgrades. Forty new safety technician positions (crossing guards) will be hired. Signal optimization continues, with more leading pedestrian intervals, and pedestrian signal recall so pedestrians don't have to push the button to cross. Signals will also be retimed to reflect the new 20 mph default speed limit. The Rock Creek Trail is nearly complete and will open early in the new year.

4. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Database

The database is complete, and the buffer analysis has just been completed. The full plan review is being kicked back to January.

Ms. Howard is the head of the GIS department, and she has prepared the buffer analysis.

Ms. Howard wondered if the type of projects included could be more standard, with clearer criteria for what should be included.

Issues with the database has included getting GIS layers for all the projects that needed them, as well as clarifying the project types in some cases. We have 1650 projects in total, including 1700 miles of shared use path. Criteria for inclusion are not hard and fast; we have provided guidelines but we've been flexible about what we will accept.

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The buffer analysis was done on the high quality, low street facilities that are potentially eligible for the National Capital Trail Network, i.e. shared use paths, protected bike lanes, and bicycle boulevards.

We're serving nearly all of our equity emphasis areas, activity centers, and transit access focus areas. In addition to the 1650 mapped projects, we have about 100 projects that are not mapped, mostly because they are areas projects that are not suitable for mapping.

Projects that aren't mapped aren't part of the buffer analysis.

Ms. Mitter asked about the time line of the plan – when will it be presented to the TPB? Mr. Farrell replied that we'll have a finished plan ready for this Subcommittee in January. Then it will need to go to TPB Tech and to TPB. There will be a map in the written plan. It won't be very different from the one you've already seen.

We may want to do an update of the plan late next year following the Fairfax County plan update, as updating the National Capital Trail Network.

Ms. Howard mentioned that we still need to check the National Capital Trail Network information in the PIT against what we have for the National Capital Trail network, to be sure the PIT information is correct. There was a question in the database about whether a project was in the National Capital Trail Network, but we'll need to check to make sure that information is accurate.

There was a question regarding the nature of the update for the end of next year. Would it be a GIS bulk import update, or a PIT update? It will be a PIT update, but the GIS mapping needs to be entered through the mapping tool. There are some glitches with the mapping tool, but we're working with the consultant to resolve those by the end of next year. The on-road mapping capability works fine. The lack of off-road or new facility mapping capability is unfortunate, but we're on a waiting list for that upgrade.

The way the PIT functions there is no back-end access to do a bulk import of data. This is oriented more as a TIP database, with projects entered one by one. It doesn't have every feature that we might like, but we are using it because it is our TIP database, and we want those two to be integrated. We're not sure about the difference in access between COG staff and agency staff; we'll have to clarify that. COG staff can generate reports. Mr. Farrell asked Ms. Ghosh to send us the question by email.

Mr. Muchnick asked why the City of Manassas was excluded from the list of activity centers? Ms. Howard replied that the city doesn't have the kinds of high quality facilities located in proximity to high capacity transit.

5. Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Mapping Using Artificial Intelligence.

One item that has been on our wish list for a long time is a successor to the regional ADC bike facilities map. One obstacle has been getting consistent, up to date GIS data on existing facilities. Ecopia's approach, using artificial intelligence analysis of aerial photography, has the potential to give us uniform, regional GIS layers for various bicycle facilities.

Mr. Lowery spoke to a powerpoint. Ecopia partners with Hexagon for aerial photos. Ecopia trains AI algorithms by including humans in the process. In 2016 Ecopia mapped all the building footprints in Australia.

Ecopia is working on the first sidewalk inventory for the United States. They can also map imperious surfaces, and numerous other features. It can show 3D features. Ecopia also re-maps to show what is new, based on new images as they become available. Travel lanes, turn lane, street trees, crosswalks – all these can be pinpointed. An accurate inventory of existing facilities is helpful to governments at all levels.

Ms. Mitter asked how you would accurately capture sidewalks and trails that are under trees, or have leaves on them etc. Ecopia extrapolates from what is visible. It won't be 100% perfect just from the aerials. Other data can be combined to confirm the aerial data. Ms. Mitter asked if lines on parking spaces can be mapped, as well as things like occupancy data for parking lots. Mr. Lowery replied that it can be done, but timed photos rather than random shots cost more. If you have high resolution imagery at your disposal Ecopia can use it.

Another possible use is the identification of obstacles in the sidewalk that might reduce the effective width of the sidewalk, such as a telephone pole. With sufficiently high resolution photos that can be done. If you can see it on the photo, it can be mapped.

One foot resolution imagery is currently widely available. Full automation of the analysis is very close. Currently analyzing a six or seven county size region is about a one month job.

There was a question on the chat about how Ecopia interacts with what Google is doing, and how this relates to Open Street Maps. Google doesn't do GIS products. Ecopia doesn't work with Open Street Maps.

Mr. Meese asked about the exportability of the Ecopia data to the platforms COG is used to using. Also about time series data – we're interest in the the delta, the degree of change since the last analysis. One of the challenges we have is that criteria keep changing – we need to distinguish real change from a change in the parameter determined by a computer.

Ecopia is working along the lines Mr. Meese suggested, and the inter-operability of the data Ecopia collects with what we have.

Mr. Farrell said that he was interested in something that can reliably identify facilities from the air, determine the width, even the materials, as well as obstructions, sidewalks, crosswalks, even types of crosswalks. Regarding people picking up imagery on the flat, that sort of data could end up being patchy. The appeal of aerial imagery is that it covers nearly everything, from an eye in the sky

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view. Mr. Lowery replied that that was achievable within a relatively short time frame. Mr. Farrell mentioned that urban forestry might be another application, spotting vacant tree boxes, etc.

6. VDOT Northern Virginia Bicycle and Pedestrian Initiatives

Ms. Heidi Mitter spoke to a Powerpoint.

VTrans, Virginia's transportation plan, includes a number of goals relating to walking and bicycling.

Northern Virginia has a 1400 mile road network. The transportation planning section houses the bike and ped program.

Northern Virginia has a trail and bikeways study, and works with COG do counts. Northern Virginia has over 650 miles of shared us path.

Virginia has bicycle and pedestrian accommodations policy, since 2004, as well as a Complete Streets policy.

Numerous construction projects, like the I-66 trail, are underway, as well as ped/bike bridges, and improvements around Metro stations. VDOT's paving program has added 267 miles of bike lanes and shared lanes from 2009 - 2021, to help implement local bicycle and pedestrian plans. Other projects like lane conversions have been done. AI is being used to analyze motorists/pedestrian interactions at intersections and produce recommendations.

There was a question from Allen Muchnick of lead pedestrian intervals? Ms. Mitter replied that VDOT was, and Mr. Muchnick could contact her for more information. Will lead pedestrian intervals be implemented as a matter of course in signal upgrades. Ms. Mitter replied that it was often considered, along with other treatments.

Mr. Farrell asked about rest in walk, and the absence of it in suburban jurisdictions. Another concern is that some jurisdictions will only give the minimum green time to the pedestrian, no matter how long the cycle length is. What is VDOT's approach to reducing unnecessary pedestrian delay, as opposed to just meeting the minimum access requirements? Ms. Mitter replied that VDOT is aware of the issue and is studying it actively.

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Mr. Edmondson asked whether there were standards for what kind of bike lanes go onto what kinds of roads? Frederick uses NACTO. Ms. Mitter replied that request for bike lanes comes from localities, so it is vetted at that level. VDOT itself has no strict standards, though it does examine the requests and analyzes them from a traffic engineering perspective. Bike lanes and road diets also go through a public outreach process.

Mr. Edmonds asked about right of ways that are not roads? Is VDOT involved in that at all. VDOT doesn't currently separate out the curb to curb from what is beside the curb.

7. Other TPB Program Updates

The committee rotates its Chair on an annual basis. The outgoing Chair is Jamie Carrington, who was not able to attend. Mr. Farrell has asked Ms. Tiffany Jennings, Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager with Prince George's County DPTWT to serve as Chair in 2022, and she has agreed. Ms. Jennings runs the bike share program. She will Chair the January meeting.

The Street Smart program is underway this month. This week the wall will come to Union Station. We are also doing a series of "enforcement activations" which are scheduled enforcement events. Last week we held a Best Practices in Pedestrian Enforcement webinar. We have ads running through the month of November. Without major competing news this month, we hope for good results. In December we will do an evaluation survey. Our materials are available at bestreetsmart.net.

Mr. Schermann asked Mr. Farrell to speak to the Safety Subcommittee in December on Street Smart.

Adjourned