

MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, July 17, 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
John Carroll, ACT
Charles Denney, Sprinkle Consulting
Kathy Graham, VDOT Transportation Planning Division, Central Office
Kristin Haldeman, DC DOT
Jim Hudnall, Oxon Hill Bicycle and Trail Club
Michael Jackson, MDOT
Bill Kelly, College Park Bicycle Coalition
Debbie Mayer, City of Rockville
Randy Mardres
Patricia McManus, City of Alexandria Department of Recreation
Karen Nozik, Alta Transportation Planning
Jim Sebastian, DC DPW
Lois Thibault, U.S. Access Board
Cindy Todd, RBA Group
Kenneth Todd, National Center for Bicycling and Walking
Ritch Viola, Arlington DPW
Sharonlee Vogel, WMATA
Heather Wallenstrom, VDOT NOVA
Steven Waters, Walk DC
John Z. Wetmore, Perils for Pedestrians TV
Linda Whitaker, RBA Group

COG STAFF ATTENDANCE:

Charlene Howard
Don McAuslan
Andrew J. Meese
Daivamani Sivasailam

ACTIONS:

1. Welcome and Introductions, Introduction of the new COG Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator.

Participants introduced themselves. Michael Farrell introduced himself and described his background in planning in Pennsylvania and Oregon, and his personal interest in cycling.

2. Review of the Minutes of the May 15, 2001 Meeting

Minutes were approved without comment.

3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Crash Data for D.C.: 1997-1999

Kristin Haldeman reported the results of her study of bicycle crashes in D.C. from 1997 to 1999. Introducing her, Jim Sebastian explained that this study was carried out as a result of a promise made by the Mayor to WABA to get better information on bicycle crashes. Kristin got the data in paper form from the Police Department, entered it into MS Access, and produced GIS-based maps showing bicycle and pedestrian crash locations. Numerous bicycle and pedestrian crashes occurred downtown and in the central area north of downtown. The worst intersection for bikes was Connecticut Avenue and L Street. The worst intersections for pedestrians were not the same as the worst for bicyclists. Age 26 – 35 experienced the most bicycle collisions, age 1 – 15 experienced the most pedestrian collisions. Cyclists tend to be male, pedestrians evenly split by gender. Most reported pedestrian incidents were straight-on collisions. A high percentage of hit and run accidents involved bicyclists and pedestrians. Police recorded no fault in most incidents. Overall, cyclists account for 1% of trips but 3% of crashes. Kristin's results will be available some time this fall in report format.

Michael Jackson asked how the age results, especially the fact that most pedestrian and bicycle accidents involve adults, might affect D.C.'s education strategy. Jim Sebastian replied that the District had a helmet give-away program, but that these preliminary results had not yet affected D.C.'s education strategy. He said that the District would like to address the general public through COG. Andrew Meese asked how fatalities had been dealt with. Jim Sebastian replied that since there were only one to two fatalities per year in the District, mapping them would not be useful. Andrew agreed, noting that COG's consultant had found that fatalities were fairly random, and often related to alcohol. Daivamani Sivasailam asked about accidents on trails and other bicycle facilities, and whether accidents were related to poor engineering. Kristin replied

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that the District had very few bike lanes, and that since the trails were mostly on National Park Service land, they did not have data for trails. Analysing the relation between engineering and accidents is made more difficult by the lack of information on the cause of accidents in the police reports. Kenneth Todd asked how it came about that there were so many “no violation” accidents. Kristin replied that “no violation” was a description taken from the police reports.

In response to a question from Michael Jackson, Jim Sebastian said that the District was hoping to do this safety analysis every year, but that the unwieldy nature of the paper police reports required hiring a consultant to do the data entry. The long-term better solution, he said, would be to have the police enter the data directly into a database using mobile computers, eliminating the paper reports entirely, and making it easy to retrieve up-to-date data.

4. Briefing on Air Quality Conformity Status and Transportation Emissions Reduction Measures (TERMs), including Bicycle and Pedestrian TERMS

Daivamani Sivasailam presented a briefing on activities on the 2001-2007 Air Quality Conformity plan. The preliminary finding was that in 2005 NOx emissions will exceed allowed emissions by eight tons/day. This will put the region out of conformity with air quality standards. Eight tons is such a large number that it is unlikely, Davaimani said, that the adoption of any TERMS (Transportation Emissions Reduction Measures) will be sufficient to bring the region back into conformity. COG staff has produced estimates of the emissions reduction benefits of the various TERMS. A hand-out listed the various TERMS and their emissions reduction benefits. All the TERMS together would yield only two tons of emission reduction.

Bicycle-related TERMS included bicycle racks on all Metro buses. This TERM was submitted too recently, so it has not yet been analyzed.

No new TIP (Transportation Improvement Program), according to Daivamani, is likely to be adopted, since it would be out of conformity with air quality standards. Since it is probably impossible to meet the air quality goals, the region may not do any TERMS.

Participants expressed concern about the possibility that “Because we can’t do enough, we’re not going to do anything”? Jim Sebastian noted that it was possible to do emissions-neutral or beneficial projects even while not in conformity. Daivamani noted that the decision belonged to the Transportation Planning Board.

Michael Jackson asked whether the region could impose emissions standards on light trucks and SUVs. Siva said, No, although he noted that the State of California had its own emissions standards, and States have the choice of adopting either national standards or California standards. Gerry Miller pointed out that the existing TIP (year 2001) is in conformity, but the new TIP (year 2002) would not be. He noted that the region could look for emissions reductions

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elsewhere, such as from power plants, since since the region could not make up an eight ton shortfall through TERMS.

Sharonlee Vogel noted that the number of buses WMATA owns is greater than that described in the TERM for bus racks on bicycles. She also noted that management at WMATA had no objection to racks, with the caveat that they would all have to be installed at once, for consistency. WMATA cannot add racks for just one division, since buses get swapped around between divisions.

5. Pedestrian Safety Public Outreach – General Discussion

Michael Farrell noted that in past meetings there had been some interest in a regional pedestrian safety outreach program. Jim Sebastian added that the interest was sparked by Montgomery County's Pedestrian outreach program. Funding was an issue; COG does not have money, but the individual jurisdictions do. D.C. was thinking along the lines of a campaign on Metro with the theme "Drive with Care, Walk with Caution". D.C. plans to proceed with this campaign with or without COG. Billboards, TV, and radio are also possibilities. Michael Jackson suggested tying the outreach to the research on pedestrian crashes. Alcohol was sometimes a factor in the crashes. Maryland Highway Safety Office has funds for outreach. Bill Kelly noted that there is a strong resistance to spending money on pedestrian safety despite the large number of accidents. We should spend more money on pedestrian safety, he said. Jim Sebastian noted that the subject of the discussion was pedestrian projects. We should put more money and staff time, perhaps with a consultant, into figuring out what kind of outreach will work. Steve Waters suggested that billboards might do a better job reaching drivers than ads on transit. Another person noted that according to one survey pedestrians were at fault 50% of the time. Jim Sebastian reiterated that staff and perhaps a consultant should work on putting together a program. Heather Wallenstrom suggested that staff put together an agenda to suggest what the committee needed to do, what the dates are for getting a program into the various programming documents, how we would get support for funding, and any further necessary steps. Michael Jackson suggested forming a subcommittee to take a closer look and come up with some suggestions. Heather agreed, but argued that the committee should still be involved. Michael Jackson concurred, but noted that there were people not currently at the table who should be involved. Michael Jackson then passed around a sign-up sheet for those interested in being part of the pedestrian safety subcommittee. Another person suggested that any outreach effort involve public safety officials. Andrew Meese mentioned the need for coordination with the police chiefs committee. Michael Farrell suggested using CMAQ funds for outreach, which would entail the provision of only 20% local match funds.

6. Pedestrian Safety Legal and Regulatory Issues – Discussion with Kenneth Todd

Kenneth Todd summarized his paper on pedestrian safety. On major roads, motorists have the right

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of way over motorists on the side street, but not pedestrians. Crossing mid-block, he argued, is safer than crossing at the intersection, since the number of conflicts are fewer at mid-block. Median refuges should be provided to enable pedestrians to focus their attention in one direction at a time. All the safety programs tell the pedestrian not to rely on his legal rights, but to behave at a crosswalk the same way that they would when crossing without one. So the crosswalk serves no purpose.

Kenneth Todd suggested that the committee provide written questions and comments regarding the paper. Michael Farrell asked Kenneth Todd what he wanted the committee to do. Contemplate, he replied. Michael Jackson noted that seven remedies were listed in the article, and that many of them were the responsibility of the State. He suggested that Mr. Todd look at who would be the logical agencies to consider these remedies, since they go beyond this subcommittee's scope.

Bill Kelly agreed that mid-block crossings made sense where intersections have more lanes than the road at mid-block, and medians were an idea that he had been pushing for in College Park. Michael Jackson pointed out that directness of travel requires crossing at the intersection. Mr. Todd said that in Europe there are sometimes barriers at the intersection that guide the pedestrian to a crosswalk with a refuge, about 20 feet away from the intersection. Michael Jackson replied that with any transportation system there is a trade-off between safety and mobility. Rich Viola cited a study which found that there was the same incidence of crashes whether there was a pedestrian crosswalk or not, but that medians significantly reduced the crash rate, especially for wide highways with large volumes of traffic. Another study found out that without crosswalks motorists were less likely to yield to a pedestrian if there was no crosswalk. Crosswalks alone are not sufficient, but every little bit helps. Kenneth Todd replied that a campaign to enforce crosswalk laws in Switzerland increased fatalities, due to an increase in rear-end collisions. Phoenix, he said, put in median refuges as an alternative to installing traffic signals.

Michael Jackson suggested that, for a future meeting, Kenneth Todd elaborate on how his ideas on pedestrian safety might be implemented.

7. Discussion on Updating the Regional Bike Plan

Michael Farrell discussed the update of the regional bike plan. Michael would be building upon the work of his predecessor Jim Sebastian, and requested input on things committee members might like to see included. Andrew Meese proposed that an outline be distributed at the next meeting, and urged committee members to give some thought to the content and format they would like to see in the plan. June 30, 2002 would be the target date for full completion. Heather Wallenstrom asked what the scope of the plan was to be, and how it was supposed to be used. Andrew Meese replied that the previous two bike plans had two components, the first of which was a policy component discussing things that were to be promoted in the region. The second part was a compendium of projects that people in the region would like to do. This was not a fiscally constrained list. The plan should also include a list of funded projects. The bicycle, Andrew said, is the only mode for which we provide a specific plan, rather than just an overall multimodal transportation plan. The bicycle

plan is primarily an educational and analysis tool for bicycling and bicycle projects.

The question was asked whether there was a systematic schedule for updating the plan every five years, to which Andrew Meese replied that there was not a set schedule. Our last update was in 1995. Andrew suggested that we may be able to provide GIS maps of existing facilities, current projects and planned projects. Michael Jackson added that Phase 2 of the Maryland statewide bicycle plan, which would be finished by December 2001, would include an inventory of the level of service for most of the 5000 miles of the Maryland State Highway system. That would include the COG Maryland counties, plus a policy and a vision statement that might be useful. John Wetmore asked if it made sense to do a regional pedestrian plan. Andrew replied that staff and the subcommittee should consider this. The subcommittee has expanded into pedestrian issues. Michael Farrell added that while regional pedestrian plans did not generally outline regional pedestrian networks, they did include such elements as design guidelines, accident data, census data on the distribution of walking, and general importance of the mode. Someone named the Portland, OR and Cambridge, MA pedestrian plans, both of which are on the Web, as good examples. Andrew Meese asked if our member jurisdictions had pedestrian plans. Michael Jackson replied that Maryland was working on one. Davaimani Sivasailam asked whether the level of detail in a typical pedestrian plan was comparable to a bike network plan. Someone replied that pedestrian plans typically did not contain that level of detail. Heather Wallenstrom said that VDOT is doing an inventory of crosswalks in Fairfax County. A staff-level goal at VDOT would be to look at activity centers and come up with a plan, but that is still in the future. ADA issues were discussed. The disabled will be represented on the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee.

8. Notice of Mid-Atlantic Governors' Conference on Greenways, Blueway, and Green Infrastructure Sept. 17-19

The application and conference program is listed on their Web-Site. Bike rides and mobile workshops will be available. Theresa Moore and the State of Maryland are the lead person and agency pulling the conference together.

9. Update from the Member Agencies on Ongoing Activities

Bill Kelly described the efforts to re-design US 1 in College Park. He also requested color coordination between bicycle maps.

Heather Wallenstrom described her progress on the Northern Virginia Regional Trail Plan. A kick-off meeting took place June 13. Six to nine months expected for completion of the study, which is to indicate what exists and to make recommendations for connections.

Michael Jackson indicated that trail/roadway intersection design was a concern in Maryland. Better crosswalk visibility and warning signs were a concern. Bicycle destination signs at the roadway intersections, and regular street signs identifying the trail itself were installed on the

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Northwest Branch Trail in Hyattsville. The intent is to make the trail work better as a transportation facility.

A preliminary design for the Metropolitan Branch trail near New York Avenue has been completed. It will be an elevated next to the Metro tracks at New York Avenue. The trail will connect to L Street and to the streets near FedEx. It will allow people to avoid crossing New York Avenue and Florida Avenue at grade, and provide access to the New York Avenue Metro station.

Shaheer Assad reported that Loudoun County's new Comprehensive Plan would include language relating to bicycles and pedestrians. Some opposition to trails in Leesburg was mentioned.

Randy Mardres asked Michael Jackson to explain Maryland's policy on expressway shoulders. Michael Jackson reported that Maryland is reexamining the policy of banning bicycles from limited-access highways, due to the lack of alternatives in some areas where the road is being converted to limited-access. The State is allowing bicycles on some of these highways on a one-year trial basis. Some local officials have been concerned about allowing bicycles on US 29. Concerns included perceived incompatibility, difficulty getting cyclists through construction zones, and lack of consultation by MDOT.

Ritch Viola reported that Arlington County was about to have a final hearing on Arlington's Bike Lane plan.

John Wetmore taped a Dan Burden presentation and planned to show it on cable. Times were to be announced later.

Michael Jackson adjourned the meeting at approximately 4 p.m.