

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, November 20, 2007

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

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

CHAIR: Kristin Haldeman
Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority

**VICE-
CHAIRS:** Charlie Denney
Arlington County DES
Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation
Jim Sebastian, DDOT

Attendance:

Fatemeh Allahdoust	VDOT/NOVA
Charlie Denney	Arlington County
William Doane	Harford County, MD
Dennis Frew	Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling
Kristin Haldeman	WMATA
Jeffrey Hermann	Fairfax County DOT
Michael Jackson	MDOT
Yon Lambert	City of Alexandria
Rich Metzinger	National Park Service
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Bicycling Federation
Jim Sebastian	DDOT
Fred Shaffer	M-NCPPC, Prince George's County
John Thomas	Frederick County

COG Staff Attendance:

Michael Farrell

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the Minutes of the September 18, 2007 Meeting

Minutes were approved.

3. Selection of a New Chair

Kristin Haldeman's term as Chair will expire at the end of the year. It is Maryland's turn to Chair the committee. Mr. Farrell asked the group to consider nominees.

4. Presentation on Walkit.com

Walkit.com is a pedestrian route-finding web site, currently based in London. Walkit.com is trying to expand into the Washington region.

Walkit.com representatives spoke to a powerpoint via conference telephone. Walkit.com launched in London in October 2006, and is now in several British cities. Use has grown, users tend to be young and female. The site provides origin to destination directions, including distance, calories burned, and a route map. An option for following routes along water or avoiding high-traffic streets will be available. Functionality on mobile devices is a priority. Feedback from users is incorporated into the web site.

Cost for a one-year sponsorship is about \$50,000, which is enough to launch the site for a city and maintain it for one year. The web site can be started up in about 12 weeks.

Mr. Farrell asked to hear more about the technical basis for the web site.

The Navtec data is the base information for the web site. However, that does not give any coverage of pedestrian-only paths, parks, pedestrianized streets, etc. Aerial photography supplements the Navtec data, along with local pedestrian knowledge. Once the web site launches, user feedback is critical.

Mr. Farrell noted that MWCOG has some data on multiuse paths, but nothing on sidewalks, which is a particular problem in suburban areas where sidewalks may be missing.

The Walkit.com software will work best in older urban areas which have sidewalks.

Mr. Jackson asked if walkit.com was profit or nonprofit, and whether security was considered in route-finding, given that many users were young women. Walkit.com is currently nonprofit, but could become for profit. Security is not currently considered when selecting routes.

However, all kinds of data can be incorporated, including security or aesthetics, if it is available. Data on things such as lighting can be difficult to obtain.

Mr. Farrell asked about the scalability of the system, whether it would be cost-effective for a single jurisdiction to deploy on its own.

It is possible to limit the availability of routes to a particular area, and have high-quality data for a target location. The Navtec data provides some coverage for a wide area at low cost.

Mr. Sebastian asked what kind of financial or other relationships with the municipalities are needed to make this happen. The options are public funding or corporate sponsorship. Advertising on the site would pay for maintenance. Public funding would not be needed beyond year one.

Mr. Farrell noted that MWCOG was already doing a regional bicycle route-finding web site, so COG will probably not want to take on a Walkit.com web site until the bicycle route-finding site is finished. Interested members of the bike-ped subcommittee may follow up with Walkit.com individually.

5. Top Priority Unfunded Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects

Mr. Farrell discussed the list for the FY 2009-2014 TIP. Montgomery County has not responded so the Fall Road trail has been removed from the list. If they do contact Mr. Farrell their project will be put back on the list. Mr. Sebastian noted that the Metropolitan Branch Trail has been partially funded.

Mr. Muchnick asked why Loudoun County Parkway was being planned as an incomplete street unless special funding is received. Ms. Allahdoust replied that the Parkway was built before the complete streets policy was put into place. No progress has been made in building the trail, but it remains Loudoun County's top priority unfunded bicycle and pedestrian project.

Prince William County has fully funded its project from the December 2006 list, but it has not nominated a new project.

Mr. Farrell requested that the Subcommittee endorse the list.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee
Notes from the November 20, 2007 Meeting
Page 4

Mr. Muchnick suggested that for Virginia this list would be more useful in September than in December. Mr. Farrell responded that we could adopt a list earlier if the Subcommittee prefers. Mr. Denney and Mr. Sebastian suggested that the Subcommittee adopt a list in June to get to the TPB in January, since the municipalities do the 2009 budget in the summer of 2007.

Mr. Farrell suggested that the Subcommittee adopt this list now, then adopt another one in June, to push the process forward.

6. Electronic Bicycle Route-Finding Web Site.

Mr. Farrell announced that the contractor, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, had completed Phase I, gathering data for the District of Columbia, Arlington, and Alexandria. WABA was planning to use a subcontractor, bicycle.org, for Phase II. However, bicycle.org is no longer interested in completing this work, so using WABA to complete this task is not a viable option.

Fortunately, Commuter Connections staff and their consultant, Base Technologies, have expressed willingness to take up this task. Commuter Connections has acquired the Navtec data, which is necessary for routing. Accordingly, MWCOG has decided to terminate its contract with WABA by mutual consent, and add an amendment to the Base Technologies contract. Commuter Connections staff have expressed willingness to finish this task, even if it requires significant Commuter Connections staff time in addition to consultant help. Additional data should be gathered from jurisdictions outside the three central jurisdictions. Another issue is the Z-levels, or intersection between trails and roadways. The bicycle and pedestrian coordinators may have that information, and google maps satellite also show where a trail goes over, under, or across a road. The most important information is whether an intersection is an intersection for routing purposes. If the access is circuitous we may want to map the actual route.

Ms. Allahdoust asked if Commuter Connections had already committed to do this formally. Mr. Farrell replied that they had not; nothing has been signed yet. Mr. Farrell has kept the committee chair and co-chairs apprised of the situation, and today is bringing this plan to the full Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee for its approval. Ms. Allahdoust agreed that we could not use a nonresponsive consultant. However, Ms. Allahdoust expressed some concerns about the quality of the data, such as whether routes have steep grades, and whether trails go under or over roads. Mr. Farrell replied that data gathering was part of the scope of work.

Mr. Lambert said that Google might be doing a bicycle route-finding web site for the Washington region, and we might want to hold off until we find out what they are doing. Mr. Farrell agreed to follow up if Mr. Lambert could provide him with his contact at Google.

We have until the end of FY 2008 to complete this project.

Mr. Shaffer said that Prince George's County may have new GIS information on trails soon.

Ms. Allahdoust suggested that a more detailed scope of work be prepared to indicate who is going to do what, and what the consultant will do. Mr. Farrell replied that we are close to determining the allocation of responsibilities. TPB staff would gather GIS data from the jurisdiction, and information on Z-levels, by examining the aerial photography where necessary. Commuter Connections has volunteered to devote staff time to this project. The consultant would customize the software to use that data to generate routes. However, the google lead should be followed up before we proceed with this project. We may schedule a follow-up conference call to discuss the scope of work if necessary.

Mr. Sebastian expressed a desire to move this project forward. It would be great to have something working by Bike to Work Day. This project can only be made as good as the available data. We have committed to doing this project for a certain budget, it is in the work program, and Commuter Connections has offered to take it on within the available budget even though it may well cost more, so we should accept that offer. Incorporating bicycle route-finding as part of Commuter Connections TDM work is a good thing.

Mr. Denney agreed with Mr. Sebastian. The goal is to get a route-finding web site up and running by Bike to Work Day 2008. If we keep revising the scope of work, we are not going to meet that goal. We should implement this project sooner rather than later.

Mr. Farrell promised to follow up with Google and set up an interim conference call if needed.

7. Video: "MDOT Competent and Confident Guide to Bicycle Safety"

Mr. Jackson announced that this safety DVD would be mailed out within the next few weeks. The Subcommittee viewed the video. The Subcommittee responded favorably, pronouncing the video a "home run", and a product that could be used throughout the region. Mr. Farrell felt that the amount of lycra was excessive.

8. TPB Program Updates

- **Street Smart**

An event was held in the Montgomery Police Training facility. It was bitterly cold, and there was a presidential motorcade in Alexandria, so press coverage was light, unfortunately. The November campaign ends on Thanksgiving. This fall wave re-uses the materials from Spring. DC did not carry out enforcement in November, though Arlington did have an enforcement event. DC has done

considerable training of police officers.

We have more money this year, \$748,000 versus \$428,000 in FY 2007. We will hold planning meetings for the Spring campaign in December.

- **ADC Map 7th Edition**

A proof will be available December 3rd, and we will have one week to comment. We still need a cover photo because National Park Service has vetoed our first choice. Mr. Farrell expressed skepticism that that position was compatible with the first amendment, given that National Park Service land is all public property. We have no options for pretty trail photos in this region that are not on National Park Service land. Mr. Metzinger explained that the illegal crossing is a sore spot with the National Park Service. Mr. Farrell suggested that the illegal crossing could be digitally erased. Mr. Metzinger offered to send alternate photos that could be used. The map will probably be printed in February.

- **On-line Bike/Ped Project Database**

Mr. Farrell demonstrated an on-line database of bicycle and pedestrian projects from the plan. The database is searchable. This information was approved as part of the bike plan, though it provides more detail than the printed bicycle plan. Mr. Farrell proposed publicizing it. Mr. Sebastian praised the database as a major step forward. The information is a year and a half old, but once it is out in the public eye we should consider scheduling an update. Ms. Allahdoust added that making it available to the public might force the agencies to update it. Mr. Farrell suggested renewing the data in June or July, which will mark the two-year mark since it was created.

- **Bike-Ped Subcommittee Listserv**

TPB and Commuter Connections plan to use Sharepoint software for our committees, which will provide not so much a listserv as a pass-word protected on-line bulletin board. Nothing will happen until after the first of the year.

- **Trails Seminar**

The Trails seminar will take place at the end of January, when room and personnel availability will make it possible. It will take place in the Board Room.

9. Jurisdictional Updates

Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee
Notes from the November 20, 2007 Meeting
Page 7

Mr. Jackson announced the latest version of the Maryland State Bike Map.

Mr. Thomas of Frederick County introduced himself. He will be responsible for Bicycle and Pedestrian planning, among other things. The Bicycle and Pedestrian program has been mostly housed at Parks and Recreation, but Planning will be taking an interest in it again.

Mr. Shaffer announced that Prince Georges has several transportation planning efforts under way. A number of new trails will be built as part of new development. The County will also do a comprehensive trails plan.

Ms. Allahdoust announced that the Stringfellow Road project has been approved, with wide curb lanes for bicyclists.

Mr. Denney announced that he was leaving Arlington County's employment, and will be joining Alta Planning and Design.

Ms. Haldeman announced that Metro would install 300 new racks. Bicycle access to WMATA's stations is up by about 60% in the 2007 Rail Passenger survey. WMATA is also studying MetroAccess origins and destinations, and looking at the closest fixed-route transit. MetroAccess is an expensive service, and many disabled passengers would prefer to use fixed-route transit, but cannot due to lack of accessible routes.

The next meeting will be January 15, 2008.

10. Adjourned