

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY GROUP

Wednesday, September 21, 2016
Baltimore Metropolitan Council
1:05 to 2:54 P.M.

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by the Chair, Ms. Caitlin Doolin.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Doolin welcomed attendees and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. APPROVAL OF JULY MINUTES

The minutes of the July meeting were presented with a motion to approve by Ms. Molla Sarros and a second by Mr. Chris Eatough. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. PRESENTATION ON UTILITY ROW TRAIL PROJECTS

Mr. Jim Brown began by presenting on his work with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), an organization with a thirty-year history building trails on former rail lines. Mr. Brown and RTC also have extensive experience building trails on utility ROW corridors, though this type of trail building is still relatively new. Utility corridors are becoming more important for trail building since the value of unused rail lines has increased, making property acquisition more difficult. The RTC provides a trail building toolbox which includes technical assistance and other resources, including a section specific to utility ROW trails.

There are three kinds of trails that exist within a utility ROW. The first is a pre-existing utility easement within a railroad corridor, with most utility ROW trails in Maryland falling into this category. For example, the Baltimore & Annapolis trail has power lines along it, with the utility having an easement prior to the development of the trail that was then carried over to the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks. The second is when the rail corridor is sold to a utility company. In this case, trail agencies have a chance to work with the utility as they prepare the corridor for utility use. The third is developing trails on non-rail trail utility corridors. Though relatively new, Mr. Brown identifies this category as the future of shared corridor trails. Benefits of these arrangements for trail agencies include earned revenue from utility easements, cost sharing in trail maintenance, and access

to a linear corridor. Utilities benefit by making the space more visually attractive, improved community relations, and easier access for maintenance vehicles.

Mr. Brown then summarized work up to this point on the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network. RTC and Bikemore, along with a group of local nonprofits, public agencies, and members of the private sector, are looking at how the existing greenways in Baltimore can be leveraged to create a 35-mile loop around Baltimore City, ultimately connecting 55 neighborhoods. Twenty miles of the loop are completed thus far. The planned trail includes Norfolk Southern Railroad ROW and a BGE utility corridor on the east side between the Canton Waterfront Park and the Herring Run Trail. The effort has primarily focused on coalition building thus far. Investing time and resources in getting to know the corridor and in coalition building is vital for getting trail projects off the ground.

The coalition recently had a productive meeting with BGE, with support from top level leadership. The fact that several subsidiaries of Exelon, BGE's parent company, have built trails on their utility corridors also aids in making the case for this trail. Barriers identified in conversations with BGE include an underground gas transmission line, BGE facilities, trail design characteristics, maintenance, and liability issues. As liability is concerned, Maryland's recreational use statute protects private property owners, including utilities, from any liability so long as they don't charge a fee to access the property. Many utilities are not aware of this statute, implying that education is an important component in encouraging the development of utility ROW trails.

Mr. Nate Evans talked about his experiences with utility ROW trails. These trails benefit communities by providing a multitude of connections for recreational trail use. In addition, he pointed out that these corridors are sometimes utilized for other uses such as community gardens. However, ADA compliance is often a challenge when designing these trails. He cited several local utility corridors that could provide important connections for local neighborhoods including the northeast trail in Baltimore City and a corridor in Perry Hall.

[PowerPoints: Utility ROW Trails and Utility Corridor Trail Access]

4. UPDATE FROM SHA ON FHWA REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF CONTROLLING CRITERIA

On May 5, 2016 the FHWA issued a revision to the 13 controlling criteria for design on roads in the National Highway System. The 13 controlling criteria has been reduced to ten on high-speed (≥ 50 mph) NHS roadways and to two on low-speed (<50 mph) roads. The reduced number of design criteria for lower-speed streets could potentially make it easier for engineers to implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements since fewer design exceptions would be required. For example, a minimum lane width on lower speed roads has been an impediment in the past, but the new FHWA guidance leaves more leeway for the professional judgement of engineers on low-speed roadways.

Mr. Tony Campbell provided an update regarding the State Highway Administration's (SHA) assessment of FHWA's recent revision to controlling criteria. He explained that no changes will take place at SHA in response to the revised controlling criteria.

Local jurisdiction members expressed that it would be useful for SHA to take a leadership role. If SHA expressed a willingness to be more flexible as a result of the reduction in the number of controlling criteria, particularly on low-speed roads, engineers would have increased freedom to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities in their designs. As it stands, some local engineers will not even ask for an exception to some of the controlling criteria. It was suggested that BPAG draft a letter to be signed by the BRTB and be sent to Mr. Gregory Johnson (SHA Administrator) about the revised controlling criteria. A draft will be sent to BPAG to circulate internally before being presented to the BRTB for discussion and signature.

5. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

- Mr. Jon Mayer indicated that the County had hired a Transit Officer to start October 3rd and that the application period closed on August 29 for the Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator Position. Mr. Jon Korin added that Phase 2 of the Broadneck Trail is in design and the budget for Phase 3 has been accelerated. Also, the South Shore Trail is in process and the Cape St. Claire spur trail is complete. The MOU for the Patuxent River Bridge portion of the WB&A has been signed by Anne Arundel County, Prince George's County and the state. Contractor selection is in process.
- Mr. Kwaku Duah indicated that Annapolis is investigating more bike racks in the downtown area to be placed just outside of the historic district. Mr. Korin added that Chinquapin Round Road repaving will include bike lanes.
- Ms. Mary Lane shared that design is underway for the Washington Road SRTS project. The MOU with SHA is in progress for the Johnsville Road SRTS project.
- Mr. Eatough said that the Ellicott City flooding has been the focus for Howard County over the last couple of months. The Columbia Bikeshare RFP is moving along, with bikeshare implementation anticipated in Spring 2017.
- Mr. Russ Ulrich stated that the Bike to Work Day kickoff meeting was held on Friday, September 16. B2WD 2017 will be the 20th anniversary of the event in the Baltimore region. The implementation of bikeshare in Baltimore City and Columbia combined with the 20th anniversary will be useful for promotion and publicity.
- Ms. Regina Aris shared that the Patapsco Regional Greenway RFP yielded several proposals. A small team evaluated the proposals, with Toole Design Group submitting the winning proposal. The UPWP includes money for local support for this project, so members should think about what their jurisdiction can bring to the table as well as what local stakeholders to include.
- Ms. Doolin indicated that Baltimore City will launch bikeshare sometime in October with approximately 20 stations. Approximately 30 stations will follow in the Spring. Outreach efforts included six public meetings. The downtown bicycle network is under construction and includes ten miles of bicycle facilities, six of which are parking protected facilities. The Maryland Avenue cycletrack, a major component of this project comprising a 2.6-mile two-way facility, is anticipated to be completed in October.

- Mr. Alex Rawls said that Harford County had completed a walkability audit on Joppa Farm Road in 2013. Harford County Public Works has been addressing some of the recommendations with crosswalk and sidewalk improvements. A feasibility study is in process for a shared-use path on MD 24. Bicycle access on the Hatem Bridge has been limited to weekends from dawn to dusk. Harford County is exploring complete streets guidance that could potentially be integrated into their design guidelines. Members agreed to share complete streets policies for their jurisdiction with Mr. Rawls. In addition, Harford County has hired a new planner that will eventually attend BPAG meetings.
- Mr. Anikwenze Ogbue offered to help with the proposed letter to SHA regarding the recent FHWA reduction in the number of controlling criteria for roadways. He expressed interest in exploring the intersection of bikeshare and equity.
- Ms. Sarros stated that air quality monitors in the region have recently shown violations of the EPA's 2015 ozone standard. EPA recently finalized their update to the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. The update focuses on nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from power plants and doesn't yet include anything regarding motor vehicle emissions. The MDE Alternative Transportation Group will hold a lunch to match interested employees with potential carpool partners.
- Mr. Scott Hansen said that the Maryland Department of Planning is starting conversations with the state regarding allowing employees to bring bicycles into their office.
- Ms. Noelle Smith shared that Baltimore County recently completed the Towson Loop and Edmonson Avenue bike routes. Construction is anticipated to commence soon on the Winters Lane bike route, Catonsville Short Line Trail, and the Dundalk bike loop.

MEMBERS SHARED UPCOMING EVENTS

World Car Free Day is September 22 – Harford Transit is participating

Healthy Harford is this weekend on September 24

Howard County will have an Open Streets event on October 1

Walk to School Day is on October 5 with a Baltimore City school participating

Anne Arundel County Lifeline100 signature bike event is on October 16 (www.lifeline100.com)

Save the Date (November 15) for a workshop at BMC titled “A Contemporary Approach to TDM”

ATTENDANCE

Members

Kwaku Duah - Annapolis

Jon Mayer – Anne Arundel County

Caitlin Doolin – Baltimore City (Chair)

Noelle Smith – Baltimore County

Mary Lane – Carroll County

Alex Rawls – Harford County (Vice Chair)
Chris Eatough – Howard County
Molla Sarros – Maryland Department of the Environment
E. Scott Hansen – Maryland Department of Planning
Tony Campbell – State Highway Administration
Anikwenze Ogbue – Public Member (Bicycle)

Staff and Guests

Regina Aris – Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)
Russ Ulrich – BMC
Jon Korin – Resident of Anne Arundel
Jim Brown – Rails to Trails Conservancy
Nate Evans – Toole Design
Fred Lippert – Mahan Rykiel Associates
Marieannette Otero – SRTS National Partnership