

Bikeway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

May 10th, 2006

Members Present: Michael Hayes (representing the community at large) presiding, Bernice Cage (representing Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission), Gordon Renkes (bicyclist), Chuck Waterman (representing Rails to Trails Conservancy), Brad Westall (representing City of Columbus Department of Recreation and Parks)

Members Absent: Lelia Cady (representing Columbus City Council), Charlie Pace (bicyclist), Mike Meeks (representing Franklin County Engineer's Office), Steve Studenmund (representing Franklin County Metro Parks), 3 Vacancies (bicyclist), Vacant (representing local bicycle organizations)

Others Present: Dale Hooper (City of Columbus Transportation Division) and guests John Gideon of COBAC, Steve Hardwick

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began around 4:05.

Minutes of the March Meeting

The minutes of the March meeting were accepted.

Report on the Columbus Bicycle Plan

Hooper gave a status report on the plan. The City is still searching for funds. Once funds are available, the City will work with the consultants to develop the Digested Scope. Copies of the Original and Expanded scopes of services have been distributed. The Committee provided numerous suggestions for members for the Stakeholders Group. The City is concerned that this is too large and should be limited to about 12 people. The issues of the scope and Stakeholder membership will be resolved, after funds are available. The Committee asked when funds would be available. Hooper stated that this was unclear.

In a new development, John Sliemers was appointed manager of the Bike Plan development project. Still, Hooper will be heavily involved in the project. With the plan moving into a public relations phase, Hooper indicated that Sliemers was an excellent choice. Gideon questioned the sincerity of Hooper's statement.

Somehow, discussion of joint pedestrian and bicycle plans arose. Ann Arbor's joint plan was mentioned. Hooper stated that Columbus' plan was primarily for bicycles. However, the Community Mobility section had a significant pedestrian orientation.

Someone had heard rumor of the Community Mobility presentation to the Division on May 4th. The Committee asked for a similar presentation.

The Downtown Bikeway Connector is Revived

Hooper stated that Burgess & Niple had started work on the Downtown Bikeway Connector. Staff of the City, MOPPC and consultant were to meet tomorrow for the project's kick off meeting. The Committee requested maps of the current proposed alignment, preferably in electronic form.

The Committee also asked about connections to downtown bikeways. Hooper indicated that these cannot be defined yet. The City is waiting for ODOT to finish its I-70/71 study. Afterward, it can define its new downtown street system. Once the street system is defined then the bikeway system can be finalized.

Bikeway Development Fund

The Bikeway Development Fund contains \$ 85,000 to buy bicycle racks and lockers and post bike route signage.

Hooper reported that the City was preparing to order bicycle racks and lockers. An order for 50 inverted U racks was being prepared. Six bicycle lockers (to store 12 bicycles) were also to be ordered. The City was going to test 3 different materials. Two lockers would be of plastic (same as milk jugs), two are to be fiberglass and two of galvanized steel. The Committee asked where these lockers were to be installed. Hooper envisioned installing these downtown, but exact locations had not been determined.

At the Committees request, Hooper listed the next bike routes to be posted. These projects are:

- Complete an interim Downtown Bikeway Connector linking the Olentangy-Scioto and Alum Creek Path systems. This would post signs on Nationwide Boulevard, Neil Avenue, Mt. Vernon Avenue and Naughten Street to link to the I-670 path (Bikeway 420 West).
- Complete the another east-west bikeway, linking the I-670 and Olentangy Paths. This would roughly follow: First, Second and St. Clair Avenues (Bikeway 440 West).
- Post a route linking Whetstone Park to Upper Arlington. This is an upgrade of old Honton route 2, roughly following: Markview and Rudy Roads, Pegg Avenue and Highland Drive (Bikeway 480 West).
- Post Bikeway 535 (originally proposed by Honton) roughly following: Maynard and Hamilton Avenues, Huy Road, Walford Street, Northtown and Sharon Woods Boulevards.
- Post Bikeway 540 (old 54) an east to west bikeway across northern Columbus. This approximately follows: Kanawha and Lincoln Avenues, Sandalwood Place, Tamarack Circle, Edmonton Road and Bretton Woods Drive and Valley Park Avenue. Recreation & Parks Department had already built a bridge and path in Parkridge Park . They were preparing to build a bridge at Broad Meadows Boulevard.

Bike Routes Discussion

Hardwick asked if the old OSU to downtown bike route could be reposted. Hooper was surprised. That route was closed when the Harrison Avenue Bridge was removed during the rebuild of I-670.

Other members of the Committee described problems with bike route signage. For instance, Columbus had no distinctive logo for bikeways, such as San Francisco. Cage mentioned complaints that people wanted to know where the routes go. Hooper had hoped that electronic maps on the City's website would tell people where routes go. Unfortunately, the bicycle web page is unfinished and is difficult to find. He agreed that improvements were needed. Recently he has started installing signs listing where routes go. Columbus' bike route signs were a big improvement when these were developed around 1994 (Only signs saying BIKE ROUTE were available at that time), but maybe it's time to go to the next level.

Hooper agreed to bring examples for bike route signage to the next meeting. The Committee wanted to discuss bike route signage. Hooper said that years ago, it was difficult to get new sign designs. However, this is no longer a problem.

Clintonville Streetscape Project

Mention of bike racks resurrected the Clintonville Streetscape problem. Hardwick indicated that this project's bike racks were of an unsuitable type and insecurely mounted. The racks appear to have been selected for aesthetic rather than functional reasons. It seems that these racks result in bicycles hanging in the freely in the air. The bicycles can be damaged when people bump the bicycles into each other. Further, the racks are bolted in place. Someone with a crescent wrench could remove the bolts, stealing both racks and bicycles. During project design, both Hooper and Renkes had supplied examples of suitable bike racks, but these were ignored. Hooper had not seen these racks yet. He indicated that this was on his list of future field investigations.

Peak Oil

Hooper gave the Committee a presentation on the Peak Oil problem. He indicated that any statements were his observations and extrapolations. The City has not taken a position on this issue.

For the last 150 years, world oil production has generally trended upward. A variety of petroleum geologists warn that sometime within the next 10 years, production will peak. After that production will decline, while demand continues to increase. Shortages of oil, high prices and volatile prices are predicted. Economic recessions are a likely result.

Significance of this problem is such that the US Department of Energy commissioned a report. This Hirsch report outlines the Peak Oil problem and explores solutions. Its focus is on the supply side, seeking substitutes for petroleum. Little attention is devoted to conservation. While the Industrial, Residential and Commercial sectors will be affected, its chief focus is transportation. The transportation sector consumes 2/3 of our nation's petroleum, of which 60% is imported. Over 90% of the energy for transportation comes from oil. The report's greatest concern is a shortage of transportation fuels.

Hirsch explored various substitutes for oil: Enhanced Oil Recovery, CAFÉ' Standards, Alcohol from Corn, Biodiesel from soybeans, Oil from tar sands-shale-coal or natural gas, electric vehicles, hydrogen, and fuel cells. Enhanced Oil Recovery will speed oil depletion. Since the average vehicle lasts 20 years, CAFÉ' Standards and electric vehicles will take decades to implement. Production of substitutes from corn, soybeans, tar sands, shale, coal and natural gas is too small to have significant impact. Hydrogen is not a source of energy. Fuel cells are not ready. No single petroleum substitute will fill the gap between supply and demand. Other experts say that all the substitutes together may make a significant dent in the gap. However, these cannot fill the gap.

Many goods and products are transported long distances. Much of our household products come from China. Most of our fruits and vegetables come from California. Because of this other experts say that our prime strategy should be localization. By producing most goods and services locally, we reduce the distances traveled. Local production can reduce our dependence on transportation and petroleum.

Even our food supply is highly dependent on petroleum and natural gas, which is in short supply. Crop yields depend upon nitrogen fertilizers made from natural gas. Pesticides are made from oil and gas. Tractors run on oil. Conventional farmers are most dependent on fossil fuels. Organic farmers are better off, but still highly dependent. Amish and Menonite farmers seem to be in the best position, for they use draft animals.

The presentation was interrupted and the effects on bicycling were never presented. The Committee seemed to have little interest in the subject.

Inclusion of Bicycling in Projects

Cage asked for details of the Hamilton Road study. Hooper had heard of it (this was to be the next Morse Road project), but had no details. She asked who had details on all the projects affecting bicycles. Hooper indicated that he was involved in most projects, but not all.

Someone asked about Cassady Avenue. Hooper said that the northern portion would have a shared use path on the west side. The southern portion would have bike lanes. However, he had few other details, since he was only peripherally involved in the project.

ODOT Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Gideon stated that the new Federal Highway Act requires states to develop Strategic Highway Safety Plans. He is on the newly created Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee.

Livingston Avenue

Cage related a problem for bicyclists on Livingston Avenue. Bicyclists use the Alum Creek Path to reach Livingston Avenue. Once there, many try to travel westbound to Alum Creek Drive. These people are used to travel on shared use paths and are totally unprepared for a multi-lane arterial. Many panic and become stuck under the bridge carrying I-70. She asked the City to correct the problem.

BAC Letter

The Committee was greatly concerned about being left out of the process, when the Short North’s traffic calming median projects were developed. Copies of a draft letter, requesting inclusion in the process, were distributed to the Committee.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned about 5:50.

Future Meetings

Future meetings are tentatively scheduled for July 19th, September 20th, and November 15th. Meetings are usually held at the Department of Recreation and Parks offices at 200 Greenlawn Avenue. Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month (in the odd months). Contact the Bikeway Coordinator at 645-8079 for confirmation.

Prepared By: _____

R. Dale Hooper, Bikeway Coordinator

Approved By: _____ Date _____

_____, Acting Executive Secretary

Transportation Division Administrator