

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

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Item # 7

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** TPB Technical Committee

**FROM:** Michael Farrell, Transportation Planner  
Department of Transportation Planning

**SUBJECT:** A proposal to plan and implement a bicycle route-finding web site for the Washington region

**DATE:** December 28, 2006

### **Introduction**

This proposal has been prepared in response to a request from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee at its November meeting to investigate options for funding a regional bicycle route-finding web site. It reflects the wishes of a group of subcommittee members which met in December to explore funding possibilities. Copies of this proposal have been distributed electronically to all subcommittee members.

### **Background**

A major deterrent to riding a bicycle to work, according to a survey of participants in the regional Bike to Work Day, is a lack of safe and direct routes. Because safe routes often follow minor streets, many people have difficulty finding the viable routes that currently exist. A Mapquest-style web-based software would enable a potential bicycle commuter to enter origin and destination addresses, and get a detailed cue sheet and a highlighted route on the map, together with the trip distance and estimated travel time.

Until recently, the cost of building an on-line bicycle route-finding capability has seemed prohibitive. However, the ByCycle.org trip planner has done it at a reasonable cost in a number of cities, including Portland, Oregon and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee would like to see a web-based trip planner with the capabilities and features of ByCycle.org made available to the residents of the Washington region. The ByCycle.org trip planner can be found on-line at <http://bycycle.org/>

### **History**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee was briefed on the bicycle.org trip planner by a representative of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association at its September 19, 2006 meeting. The Subcommittee requested that TPB staff investigate the possibility of a bicycle trip planner being made

part of the Commuter Connections program. On October 27 the Chair of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee sent a letter to the Chair of the Commuter Connections Subcommittee requesting the addition of a bicycle route-finding capability in the regional Commuter Connections Transportation Demand Management Software System which is currently under development. The Commuter Connections Chair replied that a bicycle route-finding capability would be part of the TDM software project, but that the bicycle portion would not be implemented until FY 2009.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian subcommittee discussed the Commuter Connections reply letter at its November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, and it was agreed that representatives of interested jurisdictions would investigate possible ways of implementing a bicycle trip planner independent of the Commuter Connections program. The consensus of the subcommittee was that the end of FY 2009 was too long to wait, and the subcommittee was concerned about the possibility of further delays. On the other hand, the Subcommittee was optimistic that a stand-alone bicycle route-finding web site for at least the core jurisdictions could be created within six months, provided funding and a suitable institutional home could be found.

At subsequent conference calls between subcommittee members, other possibilities such as pooling of funds by the interested jurisdictions to get a bicycle.org trip planner for the urban core jurisdictions were discussed. The conferees agreed that a single-jurisdiction bicycle trip planner would not make sense, since there would be some fixed cost in setting up the web site even for a single jurisdiction, and a trip planner that worked in only one small jurisdiction would have limited appeal. A multi-jurisdiction web site supported by those jurisdictions willing to contribute would be administratively unwieldy, and would probably need to be housed at COG/TPB for contracting and administrative reasons. It was decided therefore to propose to the TPB Technical Committee that the planning and implementation of a bicycle route-finding web site for the Washington region be made part of the UPWP.

## The Proposal

TPB would contract with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association to create a bicycle route-finding web site for the Washington region. WABA would contract with ByCycle.org to use its software and web hosting services, work with the member jurisdictions to gather the necessary GIS data, and coordinate user/volunteer feedback. Project tasks would include GIS data formatting and alignment, data integration and web design, user feedback and testing, and hosting on the ByCycle.org server with quarterly updates and adjustments through July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

Project Budget	WABA	TPB Staff/Administration	Total
Phase I: 02/2007-06/2007	\$28,000	\$5,000	\$33,000
Phase II: 07/2007-06/2008	\$27,000	\$5,000	\$32,000
Total	\$55,000	\$10,000	\$65,000

Estimated total project cost is \$65,000, of which \$10,000 would be used for TPB staff and administrative expenses, and \$55,000 would go to WABA to carry out the project. The project could be accomplished in two phases. Phase I would be implemented from February to June 2007, and Phase II would be implemented by June 2008. Phase I would incorporate the jurisdictions of Arlington, Alexandria, and the District of Columbia and Fairfax County, which have already agreed to make the necessary data available. Estimated cost for Phase I is \$33,000, which could be incorporated as an

amendment to the FY 2007 UPWP. Phase II would extend the project to cover the entire TPB region, at an estimated cost of \$32,000, to be incorporated into the FY 2008 UPWP. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee would oversee the project.

Project maintenance costs after July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 would be covered by WABA through its own funding efforts.

WABA will be required to coordinate with the Commuter Connections software consultant to ensure that it obtains and processes GIS data in a manner that is compatible with the Commuter Connections project. The Commuter Connections web page will have a link to the WABA web site.

The WABA bicycle trip planning web site is envisioned as an interim service. It may be discontinued once the Commuter Connections web site offers an equivalent bicycle route-finding capability.