

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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DRAFT MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, November 27, 2018

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

PLACE: Rooms 4/5, First Floor
777 North Capitol Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

CHAIR: Cindy Engelhart, VDOT

**VICE-
CHAIRS:**

Jeff Dunckel, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Karyn C. McAlister, Prince George's DPWT

Jamie Carrington, WMATA

Attendance:

George Branyan	DDOT
Stephanie Brodie	DDOT (by phone)
James Carrington	WMATA
Jeff Dunckel	Maryland Highway Safety Office
Cindy Engelhart	VDOT
Laura Ghosh	Loudoun County DOT (by phone)
Katie Harris	Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Oleg Kotov	City of Rockville (by phone)
Christine Mayeur	City of Alexandria (by phone)
Karyn McAlister	Prince George's County DPWT (by phone)
David Patton	Arlington County
Grace Polak	National Park Service – Mt. Vernon Trail
Adam Weigel	Prince William County DOT (by phone)
John Wetmore	Perils for Pedestrians

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COG Staff Attendance:

Michael Farrell
Sanghyeon Ko
Andrew Meese
Jon Schermann

1. General Introductions.

2. Review of the September 18 Meeting Notes

Approval of the minutes was delayed to allow more time for review.

3. Jurisdictional Updates

WMATA is having a major shutdown on the Yellow line, which has convenient bike alternatives. WMATA is moving ahead with its new capital program, which will include a number of improvements relating to bike/ped.

Ms. Engelhart congratulated WMATA for its role in getting the Amazon headquarters.

The Capital Trails Coalition had its annual trails symposium. Ms. Harris thanked those who had participated on the panels. The WABA holiday party will be on December 12. For 2019 plenty of classes are planned. DDOT is happy to share information on its trail ranger.

National Park Service is working on signage and outreach to teach trail users to be more actively responsible on the trails.

Arlington County is nearing the completion of its bicycle and pedestrian plan. On Friday the Washington Boulevard Trail Phase II will open. This section goes from Arlington Boulevard to Columbia Pike. On Thursday there will be two meetings on the Long Bridge project. The stakeholder meeting will be in the morning, and public meeting in the afternoon.

VDOT has been working with Arlington County on I-66. There was a hearing recently on the W&OD Bridge, which will be done in a more modern style than previous bridges. VDOT has also been discussing tree preservation in Bon Air Park. VDOT will work with COG on its pedestrian and bicycle count program. Ms. Engelhart said that the Dockless workshop recently held at COG was very timely for VDOT.

Mr. Branyan announced a rededication by the Mayor to Vision Zero, which will include three cycle track projects, including 6th and 9th streets in eastern downtown, and a crosstown cycle track on Irving Street near the Washington Hospital Center. Addition cycle tracks in western

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downtown on 22nd Street are being discussed. Travel or parking lanes will have to be removed. Construction could happen in 2020, and in eastern downtown as early as spring. The leading pedestrian interval will be instituted in all of Wards 7 and 8 on nearly all the signals as part of regular optimization and re-timing.

Episode 264 of Perils for Pedestrians is about Silver Spring and Purple Line related pedestrian improvements on State highways. Mr. Wetmore suggested that sidewalk gaps within half a mile of the station should be filled before the Purple Line opens.

Alexandria city council has approved a Dockless pilot. Permitting will start in December. Cameron Run Trail will go to design. Right turns on red will be banned in some locations as part of Vision Zero. City employees will be trained on cycling laws.

Prince William County is working on updating its comprehensive plan, including a multimodal system plan. The County has purchased a couple of automated bike/ped counters. Mr. Weigel asked Ms. Mayeur for more information on the legal aspects of the Dockless pilot. Ms. Engelhart asked if she could get that information as well.

Prince George's County has completed its transit vision plan, and a north county transportation action plan. 24 strategies relating to transportation.

4. Transportation Safety Trends in the Washington Region

Mr. Farrell spoke to a powerpoint.

Mr. Farrell briefed the Subcommittee on the newly released 2017 fatality and serious injury data, broken down by jurisdiction.

Mr. Farrell noted that while total fatalities in the region are up, nonmotorized fatalities and serious injuries are down. Maryland had a bad year. Maryland continues to account for a disproportionate share of fatalities and injuries, with more than twice as many traffic deaths, and more than twice as many pedestrian deaths, as Northern Virginia. Within Maryland, Prince George's and Charles Counties had a high and growing number of fatalities.

Mr. Branyan suggested that at the future meeting the bike and pedestrian fatalities and injuries could be shown as a rate per population, not just the raw numbers. However, even looking at the raw numbers it's obvious that some jurisdictions have much higher fatality rates than others. Mr. Farrell promised to calculate the per population fatality rates in a future presentation.

Mr. Schermann noted that while the feds require that the overall fatality and serious injury targets be expressed as rates per VMT, there is no way of doing that for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Mr. Schermann spoke to a powerpoint on the National Capital Region highway safety targets.

USDOT has dictated what the performance measures shall be, and mandated data-based goals, to be based on five-year rolling averages. One of those performance measures is a 5-year rolling average of pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries. Since our fatality numbers are going up, our fatality targets are also increasing.

Fatality data is standardized around the federal FARS reporting system.

There are some issues with definitions of serious injuries, and the reporting, varying over time and between states. A “serious injury” is often a judgement call, made by a police officer at the scene, not a medical professional. Eventually the serious injury reporting will be standardized around a federal standard, but for now the five-year averages contain a lot of non-standardized state injury data.

The data show regional fatalities and five-year rolling averages increasing, but serious injuries decreasing.

We are exceeding the five-year rolling average targets for fatalities that were set last year.

Mr. Dunckel and others expressed concern that with rising fatalities, a data-based approach caused us to have regional fatality targets for the future greater than the current fatalities. Mr. Schermann replied that the term “targets” is unfortunate, since the federal government’s goal was more to show realistic projections of future fatalities and serious injuries, not aspirational goals.

5. TPB Response to the Bike-Ped Subcommittee Recommendations

Mr. Farrell discussed the TPB response to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee’s recommendations at the November 16 TPB meeting, in particular the recommendation to expand the scope of the National Capital Trail initiative to cover the entire region, using the work of the Capital Trails Coalition as a starting point.

Mr. Farrell informed the Subcommittee that the TPB Chair had asked Mr. Srikanth he felt confident he would have the staff capacity to take on work activities to expand the National Capital Trail from a loop to a network and to help identify priority rail stations for walk/bike access improvements, on behalf of TPB. Mr. Srikanth said he felt confident that the resources could be made available to complete those work activities.

Mr. Farrell noted that this endorsement was not a formal vote by the Board, but there were no

objections, and that we have done work in the past, such as identify a Bicycle Beltway/National Capital Trail route, based on a suggestion from the Chair at a meeting. However, it's likely that there will be some sort of formal resolution put forward at the December 7 TPB meeting.

Ms. Harris asked if it would be helpful if people signed up for public comment at the TPB meeting to support such a resolution. Mr. Farrell replied that it couldn't hurt, but expressed confidence that this was likely to go through regardless.

After the resolution is adopted we would need to develop a work plan and time line for completion, which would likely be calendar year 2019, though it could be by the end of FY 2019.

6. Other TPB Program Updates

- **Commuter Connections Bike Route Finder**

Commuter Connections has released a bicycle route finder. The on-street routing is a bit rough, since it does not take into account on-street bike facilities, or apparently traffic speeds or volumes. But it works well for identifying trail routes, and it has some useful features, such as identifying a multi-stop itinerary, and enabling users to block certain routes due to construction or other undesirable characteristics.

- **Potomac River Crossings**

- **Nice Bridge**

The TPB has sent a letter to the Maryland Transportation Authority endorsing a barrier-separated bicycle and pedestrian path on the Governor Harry Nice Bridge. The MDOT representative thanked the TPB for its comments. Mr. Brenner (?) mentioned that he thought the MDTA needed to be made more accountable to other parts of MDOT, and polices for bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, since in the future it may be responsible for more toll-financed roads.

- **Chain Bridge Bike/Ped Access**

Mr. Farrell spoke to some hand-out Google maps aerials showing current and possible future bike/ped connections near the Chain Bridge.

Mr. Farrell noted that since there is a lot of interest in bridge crossings, and since we are asking MDTA to spend \$60 million for a bike/ped path on the Nice Bridge, that he thought we should think about access on other Potomac River bridges. Chain Bridge has notably poor bike/ped

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access, and it also fall between the cracks in that it is near the DC/Montgomery County/Arlington County/Fairfax County border. With users split between three states and three counties, it is sort of an orphan facility, but it has the potential to be an important inter-jurisdictional connection. The Glen Echo Trolley Trail in NW DC just got a TA grant, so it might happen. There is also a proposal to connect the future Glen Echo Trolley Trail to the Capital Crescent Trail at Arizona Avenue.

Mr. Farrell suggested that a direct connection from the Chain Bridge to the Capitol Crescent Trail could have a large benefit, since users trying to get from one facility to the other need to first go down to the C&O towpath trail, which is not lighted or paved, and then ride have a mile to the Capitol Crescent Trail bridge over the towpath, where they can carry the bike up stairs to get from the towpath onto the Capitol Crescent. It's an inconvenient and low-quality connection.

Mr. Farrell suggested that crosswalk should be installed across Canal Road at the Chain Bridge path, with a staircase and a long ramp leading up to the Capitol Crescent which runs above Canal Road. The ramp would be ADA accessible. Riders coming from the far North Arlington/Mclean area would then have a high-quality, paved connection to Bethesda or the Georgetown waterfront. With the Arizona Avenue connection, they would then have a high-quality connection to the Georgetown University campus and hospital as well.

Will Handsfield of the Georgetown Business Improvement District has expressed support for such a connection.

Mr. Branyan said that it was possible, but that it was an awkward size, and it might be better from a contracting point of view to wrap it into a larger project. Mr. Branyan also noted that since it would need to use National Park Service property, and involve some loss of trees, the project would require National Park Service support, and the environmental statements might be onerous. Lastly the local residents are lukewarm to concerned regarding attracting long-distance through bicyclists to the area. This connection probably couldn't count on a lot of local support. DDOT would have to pay for it, and right now they have other priorities.

Mr. Branyan said that a spiral staircase might reduce the loss of trees. Mr. Farrell replied that such a structure would have a significant visual impact, while a staircase built into the hillside and trail connection would be mostly shielded from view by the adjoining trees. A staircase would be helpful as a shortcut for pedestrians approaching from the west or from the neighborhoods above, giving them direct access to the views from Chain Bridge that they do not have now. Joggers might use it.

Ms. Harris said that this connection wouldn't rank high for the Capital Trails Coalition, since all the neighborhoods it serves are affluent, and equity is a major consideration.

Mr. Farrell said that he and Mr. Handsfield thought that there was significant ridership potential

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in this connection. It would knit together many potentially bikeable areas that are currently separated by geographic barriers, and connect them to major employment centers. Mr. Farrell suggested that even if it can't be done soon, it would be good to have some sort of feasibility study done, just to get the ball rolling, and get the answers that would be needed in order to unlock further funding.

- **Long Bridge**

DDOT and Federal Railroad Administration will hold a public meeting on Thursday, where details on proposed bike/ped accommodation will be announced.

- **November Street Smart campaign**

The November campaign is nearly finished. The Virtual Reality events are the most significant innovation over previous years.

- **November 15 Capital Trails Symposium Highlights**

Ms. Harris said that the panel on e-bikes was the most popular, along with the fireside chat by former Mayor Tony Williams. Over 100 people attended. The story boards were a big hit.

7. New Chair for 2019

Mr. Branyan announced that DDOT was volunteering him to serve as Chair for the Subcommittee in 2019. It's DC's turn to Chair.

8. Announcements and Other Business

9. Adjourned