

MINUTES

Howard County Bicycle Advisory Group (BAG) Quarterly Meeting, 04/17/18

Columbia/Ellicott City Room, George Howard Building, 1:30pm to 3:15pm.

In Attendance

BAG Members

Jennifer Biddle (Dept. of Public Works)
Jessica Bellah for Jane Dembner (Columbia Association)
Kevin Dolan (Howard County bicycle retailers)
Jack Guarnieri (Bicycling Advocates of Howard County)
Larry Schoen (Multimodal Transportation Board)
Peter Sotherland (MDOT State Highway Administration)
Jen Terrasa (County Council)
Paul Walsky (Dept. of Recreation and Parks)

Non-Members

René Alonso
Marlene Hendler
Sally Ryder
Yan Zhang
David Zinner

Office of Transportation Staff

Allison Calkins
David Cookson
Chris Eatough Eatough
Albert Guiney Engel
Clive Graham
Brian Muldoon

The meeting was called to order by Jack Guarnieri at 1:39 pm.

1. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (audio 0:55)

Albert Guiney Engel reviewed the minutes of the January 25, 2018 meeting. Ryan Channel moved that the minutes be approved, Peter Sotherland seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved. Jack then requested that everyone present introduce him or herself, as there were new people present. This was done, with Ryan introducing himself as attending for the first time and Jessica Bellah stating that she was representing Columbia Association as a proxy for Jane Dembner.

2. BikeHoward Express (audio 4:49)

Chris Eatough gave an overview of BikeHoward Express, explaining that it is an accelerated 3-year plan to complete a connected network of bicycle facilities, and that it comprises projects selected from the Bicycle Master Plan.

Jen Terrasa asked for more details on which specific projects were included in BikeHoward Express, and Chris showed a table that enumerated the included projects and their respective anticipated timelines and costs.

Jen then asked if individual project mileages could be added to the table and if the table could be published online, and Chris agreed that the Office of Transportation would do so.

Jen then suggested that BikeHoward Express be codified as an addendum to BikeHoward via the County Council to ensure it would persist past the upcoming elections. Jen requested that the BAG be made aware of public meetings for BikeHoward Express projects at the prior BAG meeting. Chris explained that this was not always possible, as public meetings are sometimes scheduled such that there is not an intervening BAG meeting between the time the public meeting is scheduled and the date of the public meeting. Nevertheless, he agreed that when possible, he would make the BAG aware of BikeHoward Express public meetings. Jen then offered her expertise in selecting the best group or location for a public meeting so as to reach as many community members as possible, not just those interested in bicycling.

Finally, David Zinner asked if the table could be hyperlinked online to a map that showed project locations, and Chris stated that this was a good idea and the Office of Transportation would look into it.

3. Trends in bicycle retail, Kevin Dolan (audio 34:10)

Kevin gave an oral presentation on the state of the bicycle and bicycle retailing industry, and the current state of the business in and near Howard County. He stated that the locally owned bicycle dealers (LBDs) accounted for about half of the approximately six billion dollars in bicycle sales in recent years, with the other half comprising sporting goods and outdoors stores as well as online retailers. He stated that the industry has remained approximately at the six-billion-dollar level for about fifteen years, but that LBDs were seeing growth in the bicycle assembly and service sectors.

He related that gravel bikes—with road-style frames but more rugged components and wider tires—were a growth area within the bicycle industry, as well as E-bikes—which help the aging population remain active in bicycling. He added that the increasingly-mechanically-complex bicycles (with hydraulics, electronic shifters, and electric motors) meant that bicycle shops were placing increasing emphasis on the training of service staff.

Kevin stated that there were about 7 major bicycle retailers within Howard County—while noting that Princeton Sports on Little Patuxent Parkway would be closing soon—and about 4 just outside the County. He noted that locally, competitive groups such as Baltimore Youth Cycling and the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) were driving growth in the older-children age range, and helped to keep those youth engaged in bicycling even after they earned driver licenses.

Sally Ryder concurred that bicycle education for children was key, and suggested that one strategy is to conduct bicycle safety quizzes with prizes such as bells to encourage safety learning among children.

4. Ideas for biking events in Centennial Park (audio 49:44)

Paul Walsky stated that he is not involved in Recreation and Parks programming activities, so this topic was deferred to a future meeting. Jack commented that Anne Arundel County had supported the Lifeline 100 century ride, and that this could be a model for a new signature Howard County bicycling event.

Jack commented that the NICA and Baltimore Youth Cycling programs served the affluent populations well, but that to reach all youth within Howard County it was necessary to work through the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). He stated that HCPSS owned about 60 bikes, but they were not being maintained and that only one physical education teacher was actively using them to teach. He added that in the District of Columbia, every second-grader received bicycle education, and suggested that HCPSS bicycle education be a topic for a future BAG meeting.

5. MD 32 bike alternative, update from SHA (audio 51:02)

Peter Sotherland explained that according to Maryland law, when the State Highway Administration removes bicycle access from a bicycle route, it must provide an appropriate alternative. He stated that Ten Oaks Road has been identified as an alternative to MD 32, but SHA recognizes that improvements are necessary for Ten Oaks Road to be a safe alternative route. He relayed that SHA had begun a consultant task order to identify needed improvements in the two distinct sections of Ten Oaks Road – east and west of the roundabout at Brighton Dam Road, and added that Kandese Holford of SHA would be managing the project.

Larry Schoen commented that this seemed to have been an afterthought and asked if in future projects, the process of identifying and improving a bicycle alternative would occur concurrently with the primary project. Peter responded that he did not anticipate that this situation would occur frequently, and added that in this case, the MD 32 dualization project was bid as a design-build contract, and was expedited by the Hogan administration, which did not provide a great amount of lead time for the bicycle alternative process.

Peter closed by stating that the report from this phase of the project should be ready in late summer, so he should be able to present it at the September 20, 2018 meeting of the BAG.

6. Old Guilford Road/Patuxent Branch Trail (audio 1:03:55)

Chris introduced this issue by stating that the developer had told the County that it was impossible to work out site access from Guilford Road, and thus the County had requested that the developer provide a ten-foot shared-use pathway separated by a five-foot landscaped buffer. Jen responded that the developer had stated he would not provide that facility but that he was still willing to work on trying to achieve access from Guilford Road.

Clive Graham acknowledged that some balls had been dropped during this process, but stated that this was a by-right development, and thus the County had limited ability to require the developer to make changes to a proposed development.

Larry then stated that, in his view, the development process had inadequately assessed the importance of this site to pedestrians and bicyclists. He added that he felt

that both the during-construction and proposed post-construction conditions pose a hazard to life and limb, and proposed a motion that the BAG advise the County Executive that the project should be stopped immediately by executive action, and that the developer should be required to relocate access to Guilford Road. There was then discussion about the technical feasibility of this, including issues of slope and sight distance along the horizontal curve of Guilford Road.

Members then agreed on a motion to resolve that the Advisory Group believes that the approved plan for a self-storage facility along Old Guilford Road would result in a diminution of safety in the short term and in the long term, and that the BAG advises the Office of Transportation, County Executive, and all appropriate County offices to work proactively with the developer and the Columbia Association to move access to a physically feasible location along Guilford Road in as rapid a manner as possible.

Jennifer Biddle, Ryan, Jessica, Kevin, Jack, Larry, and Jen voted in favor of the motion, no one voted in opposition, and Peter abstained, stating that the State had no interest in this location. Thus, the resolution was approved (see BAG Resolution 2018-1).

The meeting was adjourned by Chris at 3:20 PM.

Clive Graham

Clive Graham
Executive Secretary

6/19/2018

Date