

Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force
Minutes
May 19, 2016

Vision: *For Asheville to be a community of connected pathways that is healthy, safe and accessible for people of all ages.*

Mission: *To educate the public about bicycle and pedestrian transportation. To advocate for the development and maintenance of safe, convenient and inter-connected facilities. To promote the benefits of walking and biking for individuals and community health.*

Introductions & Administrative Details

Barb Mee, Jeff Moore, Billie Lofland, Tom Redinger, Bruce Emory, Claudia Nix, Grace Curry, Janet Barlow (Minutes), Meg Pigman, Til Dohse, Tristan Winkler

Guest:

Jeff Moore, City of Asheville Traffic Engineer, responding to our questions of pedestrian crosswalk criteria. Note – Jeff has no control over DOT roads

Our questions are in italics

What is the maintenance schedule for refreshing crosswalks and lane markings and how are priorities established?

- The City is developing a schedule for maintenance, estimate 5 years for painted markings.
- Planning to remark all downtown crosswalks. Will use thermoplastic with dark markings beside white bars to improve contrast; moving to hi-vis/continental/piano keys as standard marking (Janet asked questions about low vision and ladder markings; Jeff asked for email regarding that issue)
- Asheville has about 300 miles of road, 54 miles of painted markings, 13 miles of thermoplastic. Crosswalks can be repainted by city crews, they can respond to requests for repainting; Request to Jeff by email is probably best.

How is it determined which type of crosswalk marking goes where?

- Transverse markings (two lines) are used outside city business district, or at signalized locations;
- mid-block or around schools use high visibility/piano keys/continental; note this is for city-controlled crosswalks only;
- Mainly volume of vehicles; want to see curb ramps there first before marking crosswalk, but can mark if there's a plan for installing the ramps;

Mid-Block Crosswalks. What are the possibilities that the City and NC DOT add mid-block crosswalks in locations where there are long blocks? Could consideration for mid-block crossings be given to the block of Biltmore between Hilliard Ave & Aston and the section on Charlotte St. between Chestnut and Hillside?

- Ramps need to be added when crosswalks are added; city is supportive of mid-block crosswalks. Biltmore is DOT street so ask DOT about them. Will consider Charlotte Street location above, but need to look at the traffic patterns and whether more is needed than just marking a crosswalk.
- Jeff noted that he is looking at some speed reductions throughout town, including Charlotte Street. Also looking at some other changes at Charlotte such as adding all way stop at Macon, making changes at Kimberly and Edgewood.

Additional Features at Crosswalks. Beacons: Would it be possible to add RRFBs at some crosswalks on streets such as College Street, Haywood Road, and Charlotte Street, and HAWKS on faster moving streets such as Patton and Merrimon? Raised Crosswalks: Is this feature feasible in Asheville? Are there plans to implement these in Asheville? Bulb-outs/curb extensions: Can we request them at some crosswalks? Is there a reason they aren't installed at all crosswalks with on-street parking?

- An RRFB is going in at the Adventure Center on Amboy Road and they could be considered at other locations.
- Raised crosswalks are possible; they are used in some locations now. Fire department and ambulance response times need to be considered as they are for speed humps.
- Bulb-outs and curb extensions – City is doing some now and will consider other locations; send email with request to Jeff or Barb. Bulb-outs are being installed at Broadway and Walnut.

Asheville has some long crosswalks. Examples are the intersections of South Charlotte, Southside and Biltmore; and, Meadow, Bryson and Biltmore Avenue. With both of these intersections it is difficult to get across before light changes or even know who has the right of way at a given time. How can we make such intersections and long crosswalks safer? Would adding medians as pedestrian refuges, where possible and implementing “no right on red” signals help increase pedestrian safety?

Jeff stated that he is supportive of pedestrian refuges as a good way to improve safety at long crossings, but there are a number of issues that have to be considered, such as lane width, etc. Adding medians is difficult; Adding No Right Turn on Red (NRTOR) is a little simpler for city signals and can request them at other locations

Some pedestrian signals seem to stay on the “walk” signal for a while before starting a countdown, other change quickly from the “walk” to the countdown. In some cases, pedestrians don't have enough time to start or complete crossing the street. How is the best

timing for walk signals determined? It seems like the wait time at signals has gotten longer leaving cars and pedestrians frustrated and reducing compliance. Have NC DOT and the City observed this? What is the policy for the length of time for traffic signals?

- This may have to do with the coordination of signals through downtown to keep traffic moving; NC DOT manages that. Will be looking at different ways to time the signals to allow more walk time; working with NC DOT on timing and trying to make walk timing more flexible.
- Jeff emphasized that the City wants to make downtown more pedestrian friendly and encouraging people to park and walk to destinations around downtown.
- Signal project is in progress with DOT, coming to redo all the signals in downtown, and Jeff is meeting with DOT staff about timing. Emphasis is typically on moving vehicles and he's emphasizing that the City's goal is to move all traffic, including pedestrians and bicyclists, not just vehicles.

Attendee follow-up question - What traffic signals does Asheville control vs DOT signals?

DOT has control over SR, US, NC roads, but other downtown signals are tied into the coordinated system managed by DOT

Attendee follow-up question - How are speed limits set?

In general, speed is set at what 85% of cars are traveling, but staff also look at other roadway attributes, such as location of sidewalks, parking, curves, etc.

It is very important that Asheville's crosswalks and their features are ADA-compliant. Audible signals: Many of Asheville's intersections do not have audible signals and it seems that some of the audible signals "crossing messages" have a low volume. What is the policy on placement of audible signal? Is there a maintenance routine for checking the levels of volume of audible signals? Wheelchair accessible signal buttons: What is the City of Asheville's and NC DOTs policy for making signal button meet ADA standards for wheelchair accessibility?

Newly installed signals will have accessible pedestrian signals (APS). He said that he responds to citizen input in terms of adjustments and maintenance, so call with concerns. All pushbuttons are supposed to be installed to meet ADA requirements.

Attendee question - How to determine when all-way Stop sign is installed?

Determined based on volumes and traffic patterns; sometimes in response to neighborhood concerns; may be installed for sight distance concerns; Task force members asked about Forest Hill at Sherwood and Rumbaugh at Sulphur Springs; Jeff will check on Forest Hill at Sherwood.

Other questions and discussion

- South Slope is Innovation District and not yet considered CBD;
- Billie expressed concerns about downtown expanding north up Merrimon and Charlotte, and the need to consider those areas as more pedestrian oriented.

- Still considering and reworking on Pace Car program; looking at designating some roads as “shareways” (neighborhood streets with no sidewalks and looking at encouraging sharing roadway)
- Slow Down Signs – put out by Minnick Law, State Farm, violated sign ordinance so they cut the ads off and have done a reprint since then without the ads; Can be requested; Thank them for the signs

Regular Updates

Asheville Police/Fire/Rescue – general announcements - Watch for Me NC 2016

- No longer allowed to do pedestrian decoy operations; allowed and encouraged to do education and enforcement operations,
- May not be able to do Watch for Me NC if that continues since that’s a requirement of the program
- Contact City Manager, Mayor, City Council, Chief about need for more work, safety, etc.
- develop letter from bike ped task force for next month, limits city’s ability to participate in Watch for Me NC program
- Seven members completed Police Memorial Ride last month; congrats to Meg for it. Billie will email meg about it and add some info on the Bike/Ped Task Force website.

Multimodal Commission – general updates, input from task force

- Reviewed AIM plan
- Some concerns from MM commission were expressed and will be addressed
- new management of bus company coming
- new project to connect greenways on south slope and improvements, possibly parking, in that area
- Opening for members – one is Terri, one is Bruce, one is Jim Grode; deadline for applications is June 8th
- Janet asked about bringing, adopting PROWAG as city standard to MM commission, Janet will write something up and Till and Bruce will bring it up as a request from Bike Ped Task Force at next meeting; Janet will write note to Till about it

Asheville/Buncombe – brief updates (Barb)

- League of American Bicyclists certified Asheville as Bronze level for the next four years; still need us to work at mode share, and ridership, and the connectivity issues;
- Celebrate the bike corral on Haywood
- Review list on agenda for other issues to consider, be aware of
- Ped/Bike Counts in September
- Open Streets event (Claudia) – planning ongoing – Sunday September 18, chosen area and hoping for approval, downtown and South Slope

- NC Bike Summit info (Claudia) – Sept 16 & 17, looking for homestay locations, class all day on 15th also

French Broad River MPO (Tristan)

- counts on French Broad River greenway at Karen Cragolin Park 4500 bicyclists or peds over a week; 3400 on west end in a week
- talking about projects that aren't I-26, Division 14 has a resurfacing project in Canton to add bulb-outs, curb ramp repairs, storm water improvements; division has been accommodating and working with the town on making it more pedestrian and bicycle friendly
- alternative 4B was chosen for I-26 which moves interstate traffic off the Jeff Bowen bridge; A widened as planned; C section chose F1, the smallest footprint
- Prioritization process ongoing now; MPO is working with local government on projects and will be deciding soon, will be out for public comment in late May or early June, **may** be important to have on the agenda for next meeting
- MPO will be talking about standalone bike and ped projects in the Fall
- Ccurrent call for projects that Asheville is putting in projects

NC Planning Association conference – no report

Buncombe Bike Ed – general updates – no report

Open Discussion/Project Work

- Report from the Walk-Friendly Group – meeting with DOT on May 25

Announcements/Events

Next Bike/Ped Task Force meeting – Thursday, June 16, at 5:30 pm

Tristan will present prioritization plans for projects