

Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force Minutes

June 16, 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

Attending: Janet Barlow, Terri March, Barb Mee, Meg Pigman, Inge Durre, Claudia Nix, Tom Redinger, Donner Lohwes, Billie Lofland, Tristan Winkler.

Facilitator: – Janet

Guest

Tristan Winkler, French Broad River MPO

French Broad River MPO Staff – Presentation by Tristan about MPO and its purpose, the prioritization of transportation projects in North Carolina and our region

Note that the projects being prioritized are large projects, not maintenance

Public Input needed; Survey available through next WEDNESDAY at www.bit.ly/losrc

Additional opportunity for public input on July 13, when NCDOT Division 13 holds a public meeting on prioritization. It will be 4 – 7 pm at Lake Tomahawk Park

Regular Updates

Asheville Police/Fire/Rescue – Meg Pigman reported that Watch for Me now does not require decoy operation; just commitment to education for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. She shared two memos from police command staff which are included as pdf file with these minutes, reemphasizing pedestrian safety and bicycle safety efforts. Traffic safety unit is leading effort with full support for command in doing education (not decoy operations at this point). Police have been getting info out along Haywood Rd in West Asheville and downtown.

Multimodal Commission – general updates, input from Task Force

There is some confusion about selecting replacement for Don Kostolec. We are not sure if we can recommend someone who does not yet have an application filed, but no one who has applied for MM commission (list of applications sent by Maggie Burluson) has been

attending Task Force meetings, or is known to the Task Force. There was a motion to recommend Billie Lofland, by Claudia, seconded by Tom, and unanimously approved by the Task Force members attending. Billie needs to submit application; Terri will talk to her more about details. Terri will followup with Maggie and others about process

MM Commission Updates

- Chad Bandy did a presentation on maintenance prioritization of sidewalks; under public works, backlog and issues with maintenance; Terri will send pdf to share in minutes
- Budget was approved by City and resources being shifted to increase \$\$ for transit; request for transit service to Reynolds High School, particularly a need for service for after-school activities which is still pending
- AIM was adopted as framework. How it moves forward will be on a future agenda
- Need for more diversity on city boards and commissions, concern about next transit contract to First Transit and issues with that

Asheville/Buncombe – brief updates

- NC Bike Summit - nothing new at this time
- Open Streets event (Terri) – visit openstreetsasheville.org website for info for Sept 18 event; Terri doesn't have final map yet, but mainly wall street, haywood, patton, church street; pilot year! Keep it affordable; MAHEC is the pass-through on those dollars; looking for sponsors, etc. Looking for organizations to be activity partners
- Ped/Bike Counts in September – reserve time for doing counts; will have an app to enter info this year
- Buncombe Bike Ed – has a new home at the Senior Opportunity Center at 36 Grove Street on 2nd Saturday of each month, 2 hour class, July 9th, \$15.00
- Collaborative greenways meetings – Claudia is representing us there

Open Discussion/Project Work

- Report from the Walk-Friendly Group about meeting with NC DOT. Notes from the meeting are copied at the end of the minutes

Announcements/Events

- **Next Bike/Ped Task Force meeting – Thursday, July 21, at 5:30 pm;**
- Agenda Items for next month?

Walk-Friendly Work Group
Asheville Bicycle & Pedestrian Task Force

Safe Crosswalks: Questions for NC DOT and City

Notes from discussion with NCDOT staff, Anna Henderson, Mark Gibbs, Jason Willis, and Kristina Solberg, on June 2, 2016

First, discussed the Asheville Pedestrian and Bicycle Study which should be available later in June or early July. The Asheville Pedestrian Study team was made of up NCDOT local, regional, and statewide staff, city staff, transit representatives and Engineering Consultant Staff. This study was requested by NCDOT to review information from a pedestrian report that listed Asheville as one of the highest locations in terms of pedestrian and bicycle crashes per capita. The study team looked at pedestrian and bicycle crash history and picked three corridors for Road Safety Audits (RSAs). The three corridors chosen were #1 Tunnel Road (very high boarding and alighting on bus route) between Chunns Cove Road and the Tunnel, #2 Patton Avenue between NC 63 and Regent Park Blvd., and #3 Merrimon/Broadway/Biltmore between Chestnut Street and Aston. The RSA teams were looking at overall pedestrian and bicyclist accessibility and safety, reasons or patterns of crashes, and potential fixes. Report will make some recommendations, but then will have to work out plans to fund improvements between city and NCDOT.

Our questions and answers:

1) *Crosswalk Markings*

- a) *What is the maintenance schedule for refreshing crosswalks and lane markings and how are priorities established?*
 - i) Basically, crosswalks are maintained on an as-needed basis; may get requests from citizen report, staff report, NCDOT web site has a 'contact us' form; added to running list; Citizens may request locations for crosswalk refreshing to the City. If the location is NCDOT maintained, then the City will report them to NCDOT.
 - ii) Crosswalks are often restriped if NCDOT Staff is in the area working on one crosswalk and notice another crosswalk that needs attention.
 - iii) Requests for adding crosswalks are considered on a case-by-case basis and need to be coordinated through city staff. Requests can come from different people, such as neighborhood organizations. Requests need to go through the city first because the city is responsible for the sidewalks. Any pedestrian facility change is coordinated with the city. Sidewalks are maintained by city and crosswalks on DOT roads are maintained by DOT.
 - iv) "DOT has very limited funds for pedestrian facilities". There are some funds that can be requested through MPO for STP-DA projects (Hendersonville Road sidewalk is being done under that funding).
 - v) City also got specific grant for Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) and crosswalks on Amboy. The City will be responsible for installation and maintenance.
- b) *How is it determined which type of crosswalk marking goes where?*

- i) Historically DOT has used transverse lines (two lines) at signals and hi-vis (continental, zebra, piano keys) at mid-block crosswalks. Probably transitioning as roads are resurfaced to put hi-vis at some locations where there's high pedestrian activity

2) *Mid-Block Crosswalks*

a) *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?*

- i) When requested by the City, DOT looks first at whether installing a crosswalk will enhance safety. There are safety issues with installing midblock crossings on multilane facilities so they're trying to keep them on roads with single lane in each direction, or ones with medians. NCDOT staff will look at a specific area to see if there's a safe place to add a crosswalk, but they are concerned about putting a crosswalk in and encouraging pedestrians to cross when it's unsafe.
- ii) May be some recommendations in the RSA reports that address these issues

3) *Additional Features at Crosswalks*

a) *Beacons: Would it be possible to add RRFBs at some crosswalks on streets such as College Street, Haywood Road, and Charlotte Street?*

- i) NCDOT, in coordination with the City, is looking at implementation of an RRFB on Merrimon near Beaver Lake, another one in Rutherford County which was requested and partially funded by the Towns of Spindale and Rutherfordton; SPOT safety funds can sometimes be used to fund RRFB's which cost approximately \$20,000 per crosswalk

ii) request locations with the city and they can be considered

b) *HAWKS on faster moving streets such as Patton and Merrimon?*

- i) No requests or plans at this time for HAWKS; task force members asked specifically about HAWK/PHB at Patton and Rumbaugh, and Merrimon and Annandale

c) *Raised Crosswalks: Is this feature feasible in Asheville? Are there plans to implement these in Asheville?*

- i) Not on NCDOT streets; NCDOT's Traffic Calming policy only allows for speed humps on no outlet subdivision roads where at least 70% of the residents are in favor of the devices and then agree to fund their installation and establish a bond to remove them if they are not well received.

d) *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?*

- i) May use curb extensions and bulbouts; have to account for trucks and traffic turning the corner;
- ii) will consider adding them with coordination with city; can be requested through the city and discussed, but the city would add them. Walnut and Broadway is an example

e) *Side discussion about brightness of pedestrian signals at Merrimon and Chestnut and concern;*

- i) Anna Henderson is checking to see if there is a way to adjust the brightness and is also looking at any backplate options for pedestrian signals;
 - f) *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?*
 - i) We only briefly discussed this question. Medians are possible in some locations, but it’s unusual for Asheville streets to have adequate right of way. Right-of-Way is often narrow.
- 4) *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?*
- a) We didn’t actually discuss this question, skipped it somehow. Can DOT staff provide us with a written answer? Please submit these concerns to the City. If they involve NCDOT signals, the City will refer them to NCDOT to see if any changes can be made. It would be best to prioritize any locations that need to be checked and then submit them one at a time and then the City/NCDOT can review each one and provide a response. If a list is submitted, it will take a long time to work through the list.
- 5) *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?*
- a) Same as above. Please submit these concerns to the City. If they involve NCDOT signals, the City will refer them to NCDOT. However, the locations will need to be prioritized and submitted one at a time.
- 6) *It is very important that Asheville’s crosswalks and their features are ADA-compliant.*
- a) *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.*
 - i) Adjustment is possible. Please send any requests to the City. If it is a NCDOT maintained signal, they will forward the request to NCDOT.
 - b) *What is the policy on placement of audible signal?*
 - i) These have been added to NCDOT Signals upon request from person who is visually impaired or blind; only on a case by case basis.
 - c) *Is there a maintenance routine for checking the levels of volume of audible signals?*
 - i) Basically respond to citizen concerns and complaints, so please report any problem locations you observe to the City. If it is an NCDOT maintained signal, they will forward the request to NCDOT.
- 7) *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? Any accessibility concerns need to be submitted to the City. Then the City can fund or work with NCDOT to determine funding options.*



MEMORANDUM



TO: Lt. M.W. Yelton
FROM: Sgt. S.C. Pruett
SUBJECT: Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan
DATE: May 24, 2016
CC:

Each year, numerous bicyclists and even more pedestrians are hit by cars on Asheville streets. The Asheville Police Department's Traffic Safety Unit would like to implement a comprehensive program in partnership with the community, aimed at reducing the number of pedestrians and bicyclists hit and injured in crashes with vehicles.

Purpose: Reduce the frequency and severity of bicycle and pedestrian collisions.

Time-Frame: May 30, 2016 through September 5, 2016

Methodology: Our plan will involve three key elements, that when used in conjunction, have been proven to increase safety on our cities roadways.

Education: Safety and educational messages directed toward drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists. This education will consist of PSAs, adding a section to the lesson presented to driver's ed classes in the local high schools, as well as utilizing the messages developed by Watch for Me NC. Officers will also attend community events and use these as opportunities to engage with the public about highway safety. TSU will also conduct driver / pedestrian awareness operations in highly traveled areas where both vehicular and pedestrian violators will be stopped and given an informational pamphlet designed and produced by the Watch for Me NC program. Members of patrol will also attend a one day training provided by Watch for Me NC to learn about the statutes that cover bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Engineering: Partnering with the city engineering department to evaluate methods to enhance public safety. TSU has been working and will continue to work with the engineering department to look at various crosswalks throughout the city and develop ways that we can make these safer for the public to use.

Enforcement: Lead enforcement efforts to help educate motorists of traffic safety laws concerning bicycle and pedestrian modes of travel. TSU will identify locations with high collision rates and target those areas as well as others to conduct high visibility patrol and also employ discreet methods of crosswalk observation / surveillance to detect "natural" occurring violations involving the public pedestrian. TSU will also focus efforts on enforcing violations committed by pedestrians. At this stage citations will be issued to the violators.



MEMORANDUM



TO: Lt. Yelton
FROM: Sgt. Pruett
SUBJECT: Pedestrian / Bicycle Safety Operations Update
DATE: June 16, 2016
CC: Capt. Gonce

Beginning May 30, 2016 members of TSU began a more focused effort in bringing the importance of pedestrian and bicycle safety to the attention of our community. This has been accomplished in the following manner in accordance with the "Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan". It should be noted as well that the "Watch for Me NC" grant that was applied for and granted to The City of Asheville Transportation Department and managed by Barb Mee, Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator.

Education:

In alignment with the "Education" element, Officer Adam Cabe has delivered a "Teen Driver Safety" course to driver ed students at TC Roberson. Officer Cabe has tailored his course delivery to include discussing the importance of pedestrian and bicycle safety by reminding the teens to be watchful of others using the roadways and providing them with what the law dictates when it come to yielding to both parties and how to also adhere to the law when they are pedestrians as well.

Members of TSU have distributed dozens of "Watch for Me" pedestrian and bicycle safety posters and hundreds of pamphlets to over 20 businesses along Haywood Road in west Asheville. These businesses are comprised of grocery stores, Latino establishments, bicycle shops and restaurants. Haywood Road was selected due to its ever increasing population of pedestrians and bicyclists alike.

Members of TSU have also distributed dozens of "Watch for Me" pedestrian and bicycle safety posters and hundreds of pamphlets to over a dozen establishments in the Biltmore Park / Hendersonville Rd area of south Asheville. These businesses are comprised of restaurants, running stores, Liberty Bicycles, Hilton Hotel and gas stations.

Sgt. Pruett met with met with Tom Roberson, Director of Visitor Services at the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce and provided him with both informational posters and pamphlets to be displayed on their center kiosk.

TSU Members distributed and displayed large soft vinyl banners to the west Asheville, east Asheville and downtown resource centers. Two banners were also placed in key areas within the CBD.

Members of TSU conducted an "Informational Blitz" in which an operation plan was drafted and executed where officers provided informational pamphlets designed by Watch for Me NC to motorists stopped at traffic lights at the intersections of Haywood Rd / Brevard Rd and Haywood Rd / Louisiana Ave. Officers, when possible, provided the pamphlets to willing motorists via the passenger side window so as to minimize exposure to traffic.

June 10, 2016 eight officers from the Asheville Police Department attended "Watch for Me NC" training at AB Tech.

Engineering:

Traffic Engineering is redesigning crosswalks within the CBD to make them more visible. Moving away from the standard "2 bar" marking and going with more hash lines within the walk. So far four crosswalks have almost been completed. The markings are the standard white paint but will then be accented with a border of black paint which make the markings more brilliant. Traffic Engineering has plans to redesign more crosswalks in this manner providing there is budget for same.

Traffic Engineering also discussed having private contractors maintain shrubbery at the traffic islands along College St at the Buncombe County Courthouse.

Enforcement:

In accordance with the Watch for Me schedule, no enforcement efforts have begun as public education is the goal. Enforcement is anticipated to begin late summer or early fall.