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County Executive

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Department of Planning

Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee
Sheldon S. Epstein, Chair

—Approved on March 13, 2012—

MEETING NOTES
January 10, 2012
4:00 p.m.

Attendees: Chairman Sheldon Epstein, Ray Bahr, Ted Levin, Jim Kelly, Jay Burman, Gene Bertoni, Carol Silldorff, Linda Grossman, Stephen Weber, Pat McDougall, Kathy Schlabach

Absent: Mr. Jesse Fields
Mr. Thomas Henry, Jr.
Mr. Myron Williams
Mr. Bob Barrett

Department of Planning staff present included Jeff Mayhew, Kathy Schlabach, Jenifer Nugent and Janice Graves.

1. Opening Remarks

Mr. Sheldon Epstein opened the meeting. After introductions Mr. Epstein made the following announcements.

- A technical committee meeting is to be held on January 25, 2012 to develop a Complete Streets policy draft.
- The Department of Planning will hold two citizen input meetings for the Western Baltimore County Bike & Pedestrian plan on January 18 at Banneker Museum and January 25 at West Towson Elementary School.
- Baltimore County was awarded a \$30,000 grant from the SHA's Recreational Trails Program for a trail at Indian Head Park.

2. Approval of the Meeting Notes from November 8, 2011 Meeting

Mr. Kelly made a motion to approve the meeting notes of November 8, 2011, seconded by Mr. Bahr. The meeting notes were approved unanimously.

3. Special Presentations on Funding Programs

A. Presenters:

1. Don Halligan, Director, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
2. Greg Slater, Director, Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering, Maryland Department of Planning, State Highway Administration
3. Steve Carr, Land Trails Planner, Land Acquisition and Planning, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
4. Nate Evans, Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner, Baltimore City Department of Transportation

B. Summary: A combined summary of the presentations and discussion is provided for simplicity.

MDOT FUNDING

- a. **MD Bikeways Program:** A new program created because MDOT saw the pipeline of bicycle projects was starting to diminish as the easier projects have been completed. This program will target the more expensive and difficult projects, or projects that don't have a local sponsor. It will fund both project development and construction at a 30/70% split. While the priority will be on smaller projects quicker to implement, it may not pan out that way. The program funding level is about \$2m/year, with \$10m over the next 6 years. MDOT is developing a pipeline of potential projects. A local government must sponsor the grant, but could give the funds to another entity (i.e., non-profit) to implement.
- b. **MD Bikeshare Program:** A second new program that will fund local government programs where citizens are able to rent bicycles to use, similar to a Zip Car concept. Baltimore City is close to starting one.
- c. **MD Capital Improvement Program:** a third source of MDOT pedestrian and bicycle funding. This year, the funding level is \$23 million, with \$140 million available over the next 6 years. These figures don't include some types of projects such as roadway reconstruction projects that could include bike/ped improvements. MDOT would like to see Baltimore County take advantage of this program.

SHA POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE ACCOMMODATIONS

SHA's focus is to give people transportation choice. While the transportation budget is down 30%, bike and pedestrian funds have increased each year for last five years. New policies have been implemented to improve the incorporation of bike/ped accommodations into state projects:

- a. **Bike waiver policy:** Now applies to non-capital projects as well as capital ones. For all road projects, if bike improvements are not included, there must be a waiver. This provides more accountability.
- b. **New Bicycle Library:** Will include an inventory of all bike facilities provided on state roads, assisting maintenance people to incorporate bike/ped facilities as part of their operations.
- c. **Development of a Complete Streets policy:** This will bring it all together, requiring program managers to think beyond “safe accommodations” and toward multi-modal approaches to address all users. The policy is about 95% developed.
- d. **Bike design team and multi-modal team leader:** will focus on design criteria and improving bike guidelines, making bike/pedestrian accessibility part of the way SHA does business.
- e. **Bike committee:** The District Traffic people will work with, and have joint accountability, with the design team.

SHA FUNDING SOURCES FOR BICYCLE PROJECTS

- a. **Bike Retrofit Program:** Designed to fill in small gaps, this state program uses federal dollars. The program is limited to state roads and funds bicycle improvements such as pavement markings and signage. It requires a local request, and must be in a Priority Funding Area. It is managed by Office of Highway Development and reviewed by the Office of Traffic and Safety. Projects are scored in a matrix, with priority given to requests that demonstrate a community need. No match is required. There is a queue of projects awaiting funding, but the waiting list is open.
- b. **Bikeshare:** Similar to ZipCar concept, this program will assist jurisdictions in setting up a program for bicycle rentals.
- c. **Bikeways:** Because this is a state funding source through MDOT, funds can be used on local streets and for projects that don't meet the requirements of federally funded programs. This competitive grant program is more flexible and will help to fill gaps in funding programs, and includes items such as storm drain grate replacements, signage, sidepaths, and bike parking.

SHA FUNDING SOURCES FOR PEDESTRIAN PROJECTS

- a. **ADA Retrofit Program:** This program provides and upgrades sidewalks to comply with current ADA standards.
- b. **Pedestrian Access to Transit:** This new program will provide safe connections to transit. Priority will be given to projects within 500 feet from an intersection with a bus stop. Local jurisdictions must provide the right-of-way, and agree to maintain.
- c. **Sidewalk Retrofit Program:** Projects eligible for funding include sidewalk gaps, bringing sidewalks up to current standards, and curb ramps. SHA will build but the locals

are responsible for maintenance, or they may pass the responsibility on to the adjacent property owner.

SHA FUNDING SOURCES FOR BOTH

- a. **Community Safety Enhancements** (formerly Streetscape Program): Includes improvements that are focused on economic development/revitalization and making places, such as Main Streets. Prior projects are York Rd. in Towson and Reisterstown Road. Improvements take a complete street approach, incorporating amenities such as landscaping, brick paving, etc.
- b. **Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP)**: part of federal SAFETEA-LU¹ transportation authorization, this program provides \$8-10million/year. Eligible projects include trails, archeological or historic projects, visitor centers, scenic preservation, environmental mitigation, and storm water management. The state has spent about 50% of the funds on bike/ped projects in past. The grant requires a 50% match to ensure a real commitment from the locals, although only 20% must be a cash match. The remaining 30% can be soft match, e.g. a right-of-way contribution. The match can be from any source other than another federal transportation fund. Eligible projects must focus on transportation rather than recreation. The project design must be 30% completed. The MD Bikeways could be used to complete the 30% design. SHA is usually able to fund eligible submissions. This program is under scrutiny at federal level—the legislature is looking at grouping or pulling funding.
- c. **Recreational Trails Program (RTP)**: Funds recreational trails that are not eligible for TEP funding. Requires a 20% match. Usually used for smaller projects. Unlike TEP, the grant has no ADA requirements.
- d. **Safe Routes to School (SRTS)**: The purpose of this program is creating primarily pedestrian (but also bicycle) connections to schools from surrounding neighborhoods. The eligible area encompasses one mile from a school zone. The program is difficult to implement; schools often prefer using buses for safety. In addition to construction of sidewalks, the program funds educational brochures, bike racks and bike “train” (group riding) events.

DNR FUNDING SOURCES

- a. **Program Open Space** comes from the state transfer tax. Baltimore County gets a percentage of what is collected based on its population. At least 50% of the funds must be used for the acquisition of land, but the remaining 50% can go to other projects such as trails. Many trail projects have received at least some funding from POS. Each year, the county gives DNR a list of priority projects.
- b. **DNR Capital Improvement Program**: DNR has very limited funding. They work with MDOT to close key gaps that link public lands to where people live, work, shop and play, meeting once a month to discuss what local governments are doing.

¹ Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF STATE PROGRAMS:

- a. There are different levels of ability among bicycle riders—it is difficult to meet all users' needs in one project.
- b. Competition is all other locals—and is stiff. Montgomery County and Baltimore City have been successful because they are organized in delivering product. A champion at the local level is needed.
- c. SHA can build a trail for a local, but the local or other entity must maintain it. The NCR Trail was built by SHA, but is maintained by DNR
- d. CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program) funding is related more to transit, but can be used for bike/ped projects.
- e. For large, complex projects, the best approach is to implement in bite-size chunks that are readily doable and can demonstrate success. Most projects are cobbled together, using a variety of funding sources.
- f. Be creative: make money from salvaging old steel rails, follow utility corridors, approach businesses for donations such as Walmart, REI, etc. who could fund small enhancements like signage.
- g. All projects need to address community and environmental issues.
- h. Grantors must understand why a project should be a priority.
- i. Federal programs must follow federal bidding procedures.
- j. Bond bills not generally used to fund trails. Might be better to have a design and a match and then request a bond bill.
- k. Consider maintenance—it has a considerable cost. Use “friends” groups like schools, scouts, and community associations to help with maintenance.
- l. Most important: Projects must have political support at agency, county executive, and state levels.
- m. Look to adopted plans for the jurisdiction's priorities, such as the County's Recreation and Land Preservation Long Range Plan.

BALTIMORE CITY EXPERIENCE

- a. In the city, 35% of households have no auto access. The city is seeing a return with a small amount of investment--over the last 2 years, there has been a 40% increase in bike commuters.
- b. Programs the city uses are:
 - Transportation Enhancement Program used for big projects: Gwynns Falls Trail, Jones Falls Trail—seeing being used as commuter routes, future extensions will make even more
 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ): used for BikeShare investigation, bike parking
 - Transportation and Community System Preservation Program: The city has applied for a \$1.6 million grant for improvements to West Baltimore that includes making

- roadway connections to trails and replacing 4-way stops with mini-roundabouts. The City has also applied for a sidepath on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
- BMC's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): an annual application for jurisdictions in the Baltimore Metropolitan Region, this grant is useful for projects that don't need design or construction, including feasibility studies, safety programs, maps, and publications. It can also fund staff positions to work on transportation projects. The project needs regional focus; it is especially good for connections to adjacent jurisdictions.
 - Grants from private sources: Bikes Belong (a coalition of bike industries) can fund a variety of projects such as bike lanes, parking etc. IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association) can assist with maintenance and education activities. They are using REI grants to improve trails at Loch Raven.
 - City Capital Improvement Program: For FY13, \$500,000 will be available for bike/ped projects. CIP funding can provide the local match for other funding programs, extending the city's capability for implementing projects.
- d. No cost improvements include policy shifts, changing how they use the funding they have, and refocusing police and health educational programs, organized bike rides, walking/biking "school buses," and programs
 - e. Hopes to make connections with Baltimore County—Catonsville at Edmondson Avenue, Gwynns Falls, signed route from Towson to downtown, and other locations where city improvements end at county line. Show projects are great like the Jones Falls Trail are great but take a long time, concentrate on the low cost on-road improvements to start.
 - f. Traffic calming program helps environment for bicyclists.
 - g. It has taken a lot of political will to implement the city's bike plan, including strong support from citizens and elected officials.

4. Priority Projects Discussion:

- a. A number of ideas were discussed as a way to determine priorities:
 - Use the approved Western plans and Eastern plans especially the priority one projects.
 - Feed off of Baltimore City's existing routes (the City's priorities may not match the county's).
 - Focus on low cost "paint" projects, particularly those that could be accomplished through normal operations, such as road resurfacing projects.
 - Red Line and Short Line trails were mentioned as potential priorities.
 - Projects in Regional Long Range Transportation Plan (for trail projects).
 - Utilize recommendations from Council Advisory Committees.
 - Determine one priority project in each of the council districts.
 - Look at where a network could be created with low cost, less complicated projects.
- b. Bond funding: It is too late to be on the county's list of priority projects for bond funding. Delegates can submit bond bills independently, but when approved, they

usually require a 50% match and provide less than the amount needed to implement, requiring another funding source.

- c. It was suggested that the focus of the committee could be on revising county policies so that portions of the plans can be accomplished through its normal operations. The county could re-organize its operations and the way it funds projects. Agencies could work together, in concert with the city, to carry out the plans. The PBAC could change the philosophy of how the county does things and enable it to take advantage of opportunities that may develop over time.

5. Other Business:

- a. Mr. Fran Taylor spoke on the War of 1812 Committee committee's efforts for the upcoming bicentennial. The group is partnering with the County, National Park Service and DNR on developing a "Star Spangled Banner Trail" for this event. A second project, the North Point Heritage Greenway, would provide an off-road trail providing access to area schools, parks and waterfront. Development of trails such as this are very important for keeping older communities such as North Point vital. Many people in the community are depending on the PBAC to support the project. Mr. Taylor offered to come back and make a full presentation to the committee.
- b. Carol Silldorff announced that BikeMaryland is sponsoring an annual State Symposium from 8:30 to 4:30 on February 22 in Annapolis at the Senate Building.

6. Adjournment

There was a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Epstein announced that the meeting was adjourned.