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BALTIMORE COUNTY PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Sheldon S. Epstein, Chair

--APPROVED NOVEMBER 14, 2017--

MEETING NOTES
Tuesday, September 12, 2017
4:00 p.m.

Attendees: Chair Sheldon Epstein, Jared Barnhart, Harry Bhandari, Ted Levin (arrived late), Allysha Lorber, Charlie Murphy, Francis Taylor, Mike Filsinger, Linda Grossman (arrived late), Pat McDougall

Absent: Grace Bristol, Nate Evans, Jim Kelly, Robert Barrett

Department of Planning staff present included Jessie Bialek, Kathy Schlabach and Janice Graves.

1. Introduction of Members and Announcements

Mr. Sheldon Epstein opened the meeting at 4:02 p.m. Mr. Epstein asked the members to introduce themselves. There were no announcements.

2. Review of Today's Agenda

Mr. Epstein stated that there were no changes to the agenda that had been previously sent to the committee members.

3. Approval of Meeting Notes of April 25, 2017 Meeting

Mr. Epstein called for a motion to approve the meeting notes from the April 25, 2017 meeting. Mr. Fran Taylor made the motion and Mr. Harry Bhandari seconded. The approval was unanimous.

4. Special Presentation: Proposed Bike Spine Network, Peter Sotherland, MDOT/State Highway Administration Acting Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

Mr. Epstein invited Mr. Peter Sotherland from the Maryland State Highway Administration to present on SHA's Bike Spine Network.

Mr. Sotherland explained that SHA is attempting to integrate existing and planned bike routes in the state, with the goal being to connect a variety of routes as well identify critical gaps in those networks. This project began in 2015 and after internal review went out to the public for comment. They received over 150 comments from the public and local jurisdictions, finding greater interest in bicycling for tourism rather than commuting. They have just finished incorporating the comments into the spine network plan. Mr. Sotherland stated that they are hoping to have the initial project finalized by winter of 2018 and are now looking to partner with the local tourism boards to put together an inclusive bike map, which will provide regional connections to local towns and recreational facilities. The end goal of the process is to have a web based interactive bike map that can highlight local routes. SHA will also be printing a paper map by region. Specifically for Baltimore County, Mr. Sotherland stated that they are interested in exploring east-west connections especially in the northern area of the County.

During the discussion, committee members made the following points:

Ms. Allysha Lorber wanted to know if priorities are going to be made for any gaps, such as a north-south connection from Baltimore County into Baltimore City and if this plan will prioritize or provide any help to get projects moving forward. Mr. Sotherland answered that as of now there is no funding associated with this project, but that if there is an established plan, then that gives them some leverage and that the ultimate hope is to make a list of priorities for state dollars for both on and off road facilities.

Mr. Fran Taylor asked whether communities have or will have the chance to comment on the plan. Mr. Sotherland responded that they sent letters to advocacy groups and local governments to solicit comments and that the comment period has passed.

Mr. Charlie Murphy wanted to know what the plans were for Baltimore County. Mr. Sotherland explained (using a map) that it is hard to find routes on the east side of the County as well as in the northern areas and trying to link up with Harford County. He also stated that there is a small missing piece of trail connecting Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City.

Ms. Lorber then asked if the Spine Network is currently intact today or is it an aspiration to find routes that will need a lot of improvement. Mr. Sotherland answered that they would like to publish a document on where people riding bikes would like to go and what would be the safest and most direct way of getting there.

Mr. Ted Levin asked if pedestrian safety was a factor. Mr. Sotherland replied that this is mostly a plan for bikes, but that the State does have programs focusing on pedestrian safety. Mr. Levin then asked if the web based map and the paper map will have the same information on them. Mr. Sotherland replied that they would not due to the nature of print maps--if there is too much information on the map it becomes illegible.

Mr. Harry Bhandari asked if they were working with the bicycle safety committee. Mr. Sotherland answered that yes they are on a committee along with the Office of Traffic and Safety.

5. Special Presentation: Analytical Sidewalk Model for ADA Compliance, Doug Adams, Baltimore County Department of Public Works GIS Program Manager

Mr. Epstein invited Mr. Doug Adams from the Baltimore County Department of Public Works to give his presentation on a sidewalk model for ADA compliance. Mr. Adams began his presentation by stating that DPW is conducting a study on sidewalks in Baltimore County that are most in need of improvement. He stated that they conducted a pilot study in Towson and found that 85 to 90% of the sidewalks were noncompliant. After this study they decided to make an assumption that the majority of Baltimore County sidewalks are non-compliant and that this study will be used to identify high priority areas in need of improvement. He has been using survey data gathered from Baltimore County citizens to assist with prioritization. Mr. Adams stated that so far they have had about 50 clean responses and that the next steps are to send the survey out to advocates.

During the discussion, committee members made the following points:

Mr. Levin wanted to know what the recommendations for ADA compliant sidewalks are and if there have been many complaints. Mr. Adams explained several factors used to determine compliance including cross and running slopes, warning surfaces at the bottom of ramps and sidewalk widths of at least 5 feet. He also answered that most of the complaints are trip and fall complaints and go to the Bureau of Highways.

Ms. Lorber wanted to know if the data is being used to prioritize projects and if crosswalks are included. Mr. Adams replied that there is very little funding for sidewalks and that this model will hopefully help in deciding which sidewalks need the most attention. Mr. Adams also stated that crosswalks is a GIS layer, but that Mr. Mike Filsinger's group is in charge of them. Mr. Filsinger stated that there are very specific requirements for crosswalks and most requests get denied.

Mr. Taylor stated that he would like this information to be shared with the Board of Education.

6. Updated Staff Report on Comparison of Bicycle Facility Funding in the Baltimore Region

Ms. Jessie Bialek gave a brief presentation on the updated staff report table showing the surrounding jurisdictions' funding sources for bicycle improvements. All jurisdictions except for Harford County and the City of Annapolis reported back.

During the discussion committee members made the following points:

Mr. Lorber thanked Ms. Bialek for her report and stated that she didn't think this was a project that needed to be continually updated.

Mr. Levin asked where Baltimore City's funding comes from. Ms. Bialek replied that it's mostly from MD Bikeways and some is a match from the City.

Mr. Epstein called for a motion to accept the updated staff report. Mr. Levin made the motion and Mr. Taylor seconded. The approval was unanimous.

8. Other Business

Mr. Epstein stated that there will be a Roundtable hosted by the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee on October 20th and asked if anyone would like to attend and represent the PBAC. Ms. Bialek said that she would send out the information to the committee.

Mr. Epstein asked the staff if anyone had signed up to speak. Mr. Scott Pappas, a representative of the Fort Howard Community Association had signed up to speak about the proposed North Point Heritage Greenway Trail. He stated that he was very concerned with the safety of the citizens and that the State has proposed two street crossings that could be very dangerous due to the fact that there have been car accidents along that stretch of North Point Road.

Mr. Taylor read an e-mail from a constituent urging the County to look at the lack of sidewalks in front of Sparrows Point Middle and High Schools.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Epstein asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Taylor made the motion and Mr. Levin seconded. The approval was unanimous and the meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m.