

Minutes of the PBAC meeting of July 24, 2014.

Present:

Steve Kruse, David Cohen, Deanna Stockton, Carolyn Sealfon, Anita Jeerage, Laurie Harmon, Liz Lempert

Visitors

Dan Rappoport, April McElroy, Abi Allen, James Floyd, Earl McQueen, Lisa Serieyssol, Steve Hiltner

### **1. Accident report**

Steve Kruse raised the issue of recent traffic accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians. There have been two accidents involving pedestrians and two accidents involving cyclists. One of the accidents involving cyclists occurred in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood. Sam Bunting reported that this accident had been discussed in the Traffic and Transportation Committee and involved a 15-year old boy who had disregarded the stop sign on John Street and involved in a collision with a vehicle continuing along Birch Street.

Steve Kruse showed the latest version of the GIS map (developed by Dr Marci Meixler) showing the locations of accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians in the former Borough. This map will be updated to include accidents in the former Township, with the goal of finding ‘hotspots’ where accidents occur more frequently.

**Action item:** Sam Bunting to provide Township accident data from Sgt Murray to Marci Meixler to update GIS map.

### **2. Letter to the editor in ‘Town Topics’ about cycling**

Steve Kruse raised the issue of the recent letter in ‘Town Topics’ from Mr. John Frederick. PBAC has made a response detailing our ongoing cyclist education efforts, and welcomes further public input. More generally, PBAC is working within the framework of the “5 E’s” (Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, Evaluation and Engineering) to advance the cause of safe cycling in Princeton. Engineering local roads to be more conducive to safe, orderly cycling may represent the area which is most likely to be effective in this regard.

### **3. Comments from neighbors**

Bicyclist behavior & safety practices in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood:

James Floyd suggested that ESL programs at the Y and within the School System might be an appropriate venue where certain cyclists could be instructed in safe cycling, perhaps through a Powerpoint presentation.

Laurie Harmon observed that West Windsor Bicycling and Pedestrian Association has prepared a Powerpoint presentation in Spanish which we might be able to use for this purpose.

April McElroy told the committee that it is frustrating for her as a driver to see cyclists riding to destinations including the University or otherwise without using turn signals. She has observed cyclists 'darting in and out' and is worried that somebody is going to get hurt.

Deanna Stockton advised the committee that, in association with the Safe Neighborhoods Unit of the police, the town is putting together a packet containing relevant safety information and information about safe cycling. This document will be distributed to the neighborhoods by the Police Safe Neighborhoods Unit and at Community Night Out (at Community Park Pool, August 5). Police have been considering a bicycle registration system, although there is a question about whether cyclists would be comfortable providing information regarding their address. One possibility is that a registration scheme might better be addressed through a national database instead.

Mr Floyd suggested that the committee ought to reach out to Peter Crawley at the Princeton Chamber of Commerce, to make local employers aware of the fact that many of their employees are riding to and from work in an unsafe fashion. Mr Floyd observed that he had spent time in Guatemala and Mexico City where he said 'there are no roads', and suggested that this might be a factor relating to why some cyclists around Princeton were not familiar with the rules of the road.

Abbi Allen told the committee that she was familiar with cyclists who cycled every day to work at places taking them across town and/or just outside of Princeton, for example, Forrestal Village, , and for whom cycling is their only means of transportation to and from work. She suggested that these cyclists may have two or more jobs and don't have time to go to classes, and they not be getting info about such meetings/classes due to language and info access differences. Ms Allen suggested that employers could give out a helmet, lights and safety information in Spanish. She further observed that it was more difficult to educate kids, and suggested that the best way to get the message to them about safe cycling might be through their parents, particularly if we can get their parents to regularly wear helmets while cycling. Furthermore, on Leigh Avenue and Birch Avenue, people are driving too fast, and here is also a big problem with jaywalkers in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood, particularly on Birch Avenue, where there is significant traffic, which raises the risk of conflicts with pedestrians traveling between local dense residential areas and nearby recreation facilities.

Deanna Stockton reminded the committee that Jerry Foster, of the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association (GMTMA) had distributed cycle helmets

directly to employees at workplaces in Princeton and Montgomery Township, and he also gave out safety information at the same time.

James Floyd raised the issue of cyclists traveling against the one-way system on John Street. He perceived this to be a major issue, and proposed that the University needs to educate students not to cycle the wrong way up John Street. He asked why is there no pathway from the Merwick Stanworth redevelopment into town, which could give cyclists and alternative route that avoided John Street?

David Cohen noted that PBAC had made a strong recommendation that a [bike?] path be provided through the Merwick site to town, and the University had also been in favor of this. However, it was not implemented, because the Y wouldn't let the path run through their property. There was a consensus that this was unfortunate, and it might be worthwhile to see if this possibility could be reexamined.

April McElroy concluded by encouraging members of PBAC to take a ride through the Witherspoon Jackson neighborhood because it's a good way to get to know the issues. Several members of the committee said that they regularly cycled through the Witherspoon Jackson neighborhood.

Pedestrian issues:

Jim Floyd mentioned the conflict between pedestrian and vehicular traffic at the intersection of Witherspoon and Nassau and suggested that he had observed a traffic light control scheme in Cleveland under which alternately all cars were stopped from all directions to allow any and all pedestrian crossing in any direction and all pedestrians were stopped while motor vehicle traffic flow was routed through the intersection without having to manage through pedestrian traffic. Members including the Engineering dept rep said that a similar traffic light control pattern was being considered at the intersection of VanDeeventer/Washington & Nassau, and possibly would be implemented at other intersections as well (noting that Route 27 is under state/county rather than municipal jurisdiction for such traffic control management).

Abbi Allen noted that Birch Avenue is of particular concern for pedestrian safety due to a combination of factors, including (1) Birch Avenue is the only non-interrupted (by traffic light controlled intersections) cut through between Witherspoon and Rt 206, (2) residential density is significantly higher on and near Birch than other areas in Princeton, and the development of both the Merwick Stanworth site and the old hospital site will increase both the residential density and the auto vehicle traffic cutting through town on Birch, (3) half or more of the residences on the "Nassau" side of Birch Avenue do not have on-site parking and further there is no street parking on that side of Birch creating much pedestrian crossing when residents go to or from their cars (and there is much "jaywalking"), (4) Birch Avenue itself is the divide between a very densely residential neighborhood and a significant number of pedestrian utilized town resources, including (i) the Community Park soccer fields and tennis courts, (ii) Community Park school, (iii) Community Park playground, (iv) the municipal and police buildings.

Liz Lempert suggested that we ask the police to step up vehicle speed enforcement in the neighborhood. She also explained that the municipal policy on ‘Complete Streets’ is a new framework for ensuring that future street design takes into account the needs of all users, and that this approach would be something that might play into the W-J conversation. PBAC is actively involved in working with the municipal engineering team to implement Complete Streets to try to minimize conflicts between motorized vehicles and other street users.

Steve Kruse noted that there are other agencies in the town, including the Y and the Recreation Department, who could be more involved in cyclist education.

*Discussion points to consider for future action:*

- Reach out to Y to discuss possibility of providing cycling safety instruction at their ESL classes, and to potentially reopen the conversation about a bike easement from the Merwick site through to Paul Robeson Place.
- Consider setting up sub-committee to liaise with other groups to improve education of cyclists.
- Consult with Human Services / LALDEF to attempt to find out how best to address the needs of Princeton’s Spanish-speaking cycling community.
- Discuss with Princeton Chamber of Commerce how employers might assist with providing safety training / equipment to local cyclists, particularly those using bicycles to commute to work.
- Ask WWBPA about their education efforts, particularly those involving the Spanish-speaking community.
- Continue conversation with Witherspoon-Jackson neighbors, also including the Traffic and Transportation Committee and police, to improve enforcement and street design in the neighborhood.

#### **4. Easements for potential bike path on Snowden**

Steve Kruse noted that the municipal long-range Master Plan calls for a multi-use sidepath on Snowden Lane between Franklin Avenue and Herrontown Road. A resident (Steve Hiltner) had asked the committee if it might be worthwhile investigating the possibility of collecting easements for the trail from local neighbors, several of whom were positively inclined toward providing an easement on their properties. Deanna said the construction of the sidepath as a part of the Snowden Lane roadway improvement projects is on the 6-year plan, but it is currently unfunded. Although the approval for the development at the northwest corner of Van Dyke and Snowden has expired, the developer is ‘coming back in to talk’. The original approval required a 25-ft right-of-way from the centerline of Snowden, and a 6-ft sidepath to be constructed by the developer.

**Action item:** Deanna and Liz will raise the issue of obtaining easements with the relevant municipal staff and advise Mr. Hiltner regarding progress on this matter.

## **5. Capital Projects involving new Bike Facilities on Prospect Avenue and Hamilton Avenue**

Deanna has put information about the projects on the municipal website, including plans and design options. Sam is going to put out information on the email list and hopefully in partnership with Sustainable Princeton, with the goal of letting the public know what is happening. Deanna will also share this topic with residents at Community Night Out on August 5.

Liz noted that she had received pushback about the proposed design of the Prospect Ave 'bike boulevard'. She will work with members of the committee to discuss these perceived issues with the neighbors.

## **6. Paper Bike Map project**

Steve Kruse presented the latest draft of the map, which had been mailed by our consultant, Nat Case of InCase, LLC. The committee agreed that the latest map looked good, and that the geographical area represented was correct; however, the consensus was that the current color scheme could be improved. Agreement was reached on the following four issues relating to the map design.

a) 'Comfort Levels'. The committee agreed that the map should indicate three 'comfort levels' for roads for cycling. The highest-risk roads will be marked in red. The committee agreed that the following local roads fell into this category:

- Route 1, including Route 1 on/off ramps at Alexander Road
- Cherry Valley Road
- Route 206 – 3 sections: between Mountain Road and Paul Robeson; between Hutchinson and Quaker Road, and north of Cherry Hill Road.
- Quaker Road

Most other arterial roads will be marked as yellow, for medium risk. The committee agreed that the following road should be added as 'yellow' in addition to those marked in the current version.

- Drakes Corner Road

Other roads and streets will be left as white, designating the lowest level of risk.

b) Cycle Amenities. Cycle amenities, to include sidepaths, bike lanes and off-road dirt trails will be indicated with one color. This should not be red, as it is on the current map. The committee preferred green, because it draws the eye toward facilities that potentially make cycling easier. Different types of amenities will be indicated using either solid, dashed or dotted green lines. The sharrow network will be indicated as dashed lines on existing streets. For example, where sharrows exist on a road marked as 'yellow' for

comfort (such as Nassau Street), the presence of sharrows will be marked by a dashed yellow line instead of a solid yellow line for a similar street where there are no sharrows.

c) Network layer. The committee agreed that certain roads will be indicated as ‘connector streets’, which are routes considered most appropriate for transport around the town. The streets making up this network are currently indicated with pink dotted lines. The committee agreed that this might not be the best color, and that a different color might be considered- potentially blue. The committee agreed that the final color could be proposed by Nat Case, to fit in with other colors on the map.

d) Wayfinding for off-map destinations. The committee agreed that at the edges of the map, arrows indicating destinations such as trails, Carnegie Center, etc should be added so that users could use the map to learn the appropriate route to reach these destinations.

Action item: Steve Kruse to liaise with Nat Case to implement committee recommendations, with the goal of bringing a new draft to the committee before the end of August.

## **7. Update on Improvements on Cherry Valley Road.**

At the request of the committee, Deanna Stockton explained a project to make improvements to Cherry Valley Road that was recently presented by Princeton and Montgomery Township engineers to the public. The project area is several hundred feet of Cherry Valley, from a point 100-200ft west of the intersection with Cherry Hill Road, past the intersection with Birchwood Drive, to a point where the existing sidepath ends just west of the new County bridge. The construction will not start before 2016, subject to permit approval and funding. The improvements will include widening the road to accommodate two 12 ft lanes, with 5-ft painted shoulders, curbing and a 6-ft sidepath on the south (Princeton) side.

In response to a question from Dan Rappoport regarding why T&T is not discussing this project, Deanna responded that the design and planning started two years ago in accordance with the Master Plan improvements completed on the eastern section of the road. Deanna said that the only other Master Plan improvement currently under consideration is the Master Plan extension of sidewalk on Poe Road from Random Road to Rte 27 in conjunction with a New Jersey American Water Company project on Poe and Random Roads.

*(Continued on next page.)*

## **8. Planning for Mayor's Ride**

It was agreed that a sub-committee comprising of Laurie, Carolyn, Anita and Lisa would work to organize the annual Mayor's Bike Ride, which would be modeled very closely on what PBAC did last year. Other members of the committee will help as required.

## **9. All other business**

Sam is organizing group rides around Princeton, aimed at families and safe cycling, through the Princeton Freewheelers bike club. The next rides will be on Aug 9 and Aug 23. More information is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/princetonfunride> or through Princeton Freewheelers.

Lisa Serieyssol said that the Nassau Swim Club was organizing a series of triathlons, to include cycling, running and swimming, and she would let the committee know about details.

The next PBAC meeting is on September 25. The regular meeting in August is cancelled.