



www.wilmapco.org/bikenewark

November Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2015

Attending were Mark Deshon (chair), Heather Dunigan (WILMAPCO), Mike Fortner (City of Newark Planning), Karl Hassler (resident), Kirsten Jones (UD student), Joe Spadafino (City of Newark Parks & Recreation), Brian Bahnson (resident), and James Wilson (Bike Delaware).

Guests: Al Porach (resident), Tim White (UD student), Amy Roe (representing NAACP), Bridgit Chadwick (advocate), and Gayle Hoffman (resident)

Regrets: Susan Grasso (resident), Jeff Riegner (resident), Ban Phommachanh (UD Parking), Jonathan Kirch (American Heart Association), Michelle Bennett (UD Sustainability), Paul Moser (DelDOT), and Karen Rosenberg (resident) sent regrets.

- *Review of November joint campus safety checkpoint*

No report was given on the November 5th event.

- *Report on Cleveland Avenue pave/rehab project proposal*

– Site meeting on Monday, Nov. 16, with representatives from the City of Newark, James Wilson (one of the DBC's funding award judges), and Councilman Stu Markham

Mark Deshon reported that he, Mike Fortner, and the city's Tim Filasky met with Councilman Stu Markham and James Wilson to discuss the Cleveland Avenue/Paper Mill Road/North Chapel/Margaret Street intersection and the city's upcoming application for funding from the Delaware Bicycle Council. Councilman Markham seemed open to suggestions for improvements but said the better solutions would be ones that did not negatively impact the already enormous volume of traffic that moves along this corridor daily.

A few ideas were discussed during that meeting. Pie-in-the-sky solutions like a Pomeroy Trail tunnel or an overhead bridge were quickly dismissed as impractical, prohibitively expensive, or impossible to implement.

The concept of a roundabout was suggested. Councilman Markham felt local travelers would not be comfortable with such a configuration at this intersection, but the benefits would be that it would keep traffic from all directions moving. Apparently, the area is large enough for such a solution. Tim Filasky agreed to resubmit the city's grant application for funding that might help pay for a feasibility study for a roundabout at this intersection. This might increase the city's chances of being the application chosen for the grant funding, though it doesn't preclude the city's investigation of other engineering alternatives.

Discussion:

Mark asked about the overall "character" of Cleveland Avenue and commented that there are at least two distinctively different sections to this corridor. Mike Fortner said he expects the sector between North Chapel Street/Paper Mill Road and New London Road to become more pedestrian-oriented as plans for development are realized. Mark said that he thinks this puts greater pressure on us to foster a better transition at the intersection at North Chapel Street/Paper Mill Road. Karl Hassler, though, insisted that the transition is already there.

Brian Bahnson stated that Cleveland Avenue still lacks functionality as an east-west corridor for bicycling and also wondered what the future of the train line is. Heather Dunigan said the CSX rail line "isn't going anywhere." She also added that she imagines something like a new tunnel at mid-block within the section between Capitol Trail and North Chapel Street/Paper Mill Road. Heather mentioned that Dave Gula, one of her colleagues at WILMAPCO, is on the Newark Traffic Committee and that the City will take a leadership role in the corridor study.

– Approval of letter to Mayor and City Council, outlining our committee's input on potential improvements to the Cleveland Avenue corridor

Mark introduced the draft letter and recommendations table that Susan Grasso had written on the committee's behalf. Most everyone liked the content of the letter, but James Wilson and Karl felt that something was lacking. They suggested we include in the letter an action item in the form of a request that the City Council appoint a task force that comprises stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve bicycling and pedestrian experiences along the Cleveland Avenue corridor, as a possible precursor to future such task forces. Potential stakeholders include the NBC, City of Newark, DelDOT, University of Delaware (administration and student representation), Downtown Newark Partnership, NAACP, Bike Delaware, Christina School District and local private/charter schools, Newark Bike Project, White Clay Bicycle Club, and Trail Spinners.

Mark asked Amy Roe, who was present as a representative of the NAACP, if the letter addressed its concerns well enough. She said she was happy that this was included, as there will potentially be hundreds of new residents in the Alder Creek development very soon. Their needs have to be considered as plans for the pave/rehab project are developed.

Mark agreed to work with Susan to edit the letter again and share it with the committee for final comments before finalizing it and sending it to the Mayor and City Council.

- *Progress on UD-City bikeshare project*

Ban Phommachanh emailed the following notes on the project:

“Karl Hassler has redone a review with the vendor ensure compliance with data security.

“Working with Michelle Bennett to get more sponsors. At her suggestion, [Ban] will be sitting down with the UD Grounds Committee to discuss bicycle racks for the program, including signage placement and color, after [he] get[s] back into town.

“The biggest hurdle, depending on perspective but which may slow us down, is waiting for final approval of the agreement from General Counsel. With so many eyes on this project, wording changes such as the one requested by Gotcha regarding contract termination is being scrutinized.”

Mark reported that Ban, UD’s Michael Smith, and a representative from the bike company had made a nice presentation about the bikeshare project to City Council on October 26th. Mark also said that during a subsequent meeting, he had heard from Councilman Stu Markham that City Council had not been prepared for the trio to ask if the city would like to participate in (i.e., support) the program in some substantial way. Mike Fortner also mentioned that he thought City Manager Carol Houck and staffer Ricky Nietubicz were surprised as well. This may have been a slight political misstep, in that the City Council probably should have been made aware that there was going to be an “ask” at the end of their presentation.

Brian, who with Mark was also at the City Council meeting to support the UD presentation, said that some of the Councilpersons didn’t understand that a bikeshare has a “business impression” and that this case has to be made to City Council.

Heather said she thinks Ban expects more community use, rather than UD student use. Brian said that, because the first four hours would be free of charge, there is a real incentive for him to use a bikeshare bike.

Karl asked if we have to correct a situation of communication with respect to the City Council. We concluded that it wasn’t a deal-breaker, but Mark stated that we, as a committee, have to be cognizant of this in our dealings with City Council, particularly if we want to count on the city’s partnership going forward.

- *Progress on coordinating Bicycle Community Meetings*

Heather summarized her vision for Newark Bicycle Community Meetings as follows:

She sees this endeavor as a partnership of the Newark Bicycle Committee, Newark Bike Project, White Clay Bicycle Club, and Trail Spinners, though she said she still needs to contact the Trail Spinners to get them on board. The Newark Bike Project would host these meetings on either a Tuesday or Wednesday evening every other month.

Heather envisions the format to comprise a guest speaker, short updates by each of the partner organizations, and time for community comment and Q&A.

Some of the potential topics for speakers could include the Newark BikeShare, "Delaware Avenue Cycletrack," "Lessons for Newark from Copenhagen," and "Bicycle Commuting 101," among others.

Mark asked Heather if it was feasible to expect the first meeting to happen in January. She said that this is what her thinking is.

Kirsten Jones asked if the purpose of these meetings is educational or social or both. Heather said there will certainly be elements of both and that she'd like Kirsten to give her presentation at one of the early meetings.

- *Old or new business / announcements*

- *"Bike to Work, Newark" brochure*

Mark introduced and passed out a draft of a legal-sized, local-bicycle-commuter information brochure for comment. Several months ago, Karl had suggested that it would be good for our committee to have something simple to pass out that would not only address the "why?" of commuting by bicycle, but the "how?" as well. Mark and former committee member Linda Smith from UD worked together over the summer to conceptualize this piece (see attachment to minutes).

Mark hopes that we can approach many or all of the groups listed on the back of the brochure to obtain funding for printing this piece and envisions it being distributed during Community Day and First Night and being made available to employees on the UD campus, within the city government, at Newark Bike Project, Newark Bike Line, Wooden Wheels, and other local businesses. He also sees potential to repurpose this brochure for UD students, including the English Language Institute population.

- *New Paper Mill pedestrian bridge*

Joe Spadafino said that grant funding has been acquired and plans are underway for constructing a pedestrian bridge parallel to and just west of Paper Mill Road. This bridge would help connect those from downtown area and Pomeroy Trail directly to Paper Mill Park and indirectly to the park at the Newark Reservoir and Mayor Redd Park trails.

- *Other comments*

Karl wants future trail planning as a topic for one of our future meetings. We can ask Dave Bartoo of State Parks to come and make a presentation. Brian mentioned that his son, Jeff, did much of the work for Bartoo recently in terms of signage for the Mayor Redd Park trails.

Guest Bridgit Chadwick, who is familiar with the Bicycle Coalition for Philadelphia, said she wants better coordination of area and regional TIP projects—a real push for complete streets. Heather said that the Cleveland Avenue pave/rehab project is a portion of a TIP project. James Wilson said that there’s “no magic formula” to get things to work with TIP. Heather agreed that issues in and around existing conditions mandate proposed improvements, involving public participation; and, therefore, work must be approached on a project-by-project basis.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, December 17, at 4 p.m. at WILMAPCO.