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October Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2016

Attending were Mark Deshon (chair and resident), Karl Hassler (resident), Susan Grasso (resident), Karen Rosenberg (resident), Al Porach (resident), Brian Bahnson (resident), Ban Phommachanh (University of Delaware Parking), Heather Dunigan (WILMAPCO and Newark Bike Project), Paul Moser (DelDOT), John Bare (Bike Delaware), Joe Charma (Downtown Newark Partnership), Leland Barker (University of Delaware Police), and Taras Gerasimov (Newark Police).

Regrets: Barb Hughes (resident)

Guests present: Ben Lee (UD student), Steven Nickel (UD student), and Andrew Major (UD student)

- *Brief status/progress reports on/from*

- *Cleveland Avenue pave and rehab project*

Susan Grasso reported that on October 5 there was a site visit, followed by a four-hour meeting of the Cleveland Avenue Improvements Task Force in City Council chambers, during which DelDOT presented its analysis and the Task Force then voted on recommendations (option by option).

The following is a summary of the key recommendations that were agreed upon and sent to the Newark Traffic Committee for approval.

- Eastbound and westbound bike lanes from New London Road to Kirkwood Highway
- Pedestrian scramble phase at North College Avenue intersection
- Crosswalk improvements at the Wilbur Street intersection, including a pedestrian refuge island and left-turn lane
- Removal of parking with appropriate accommodation for the two existing HC spaces
- Addition of a crosswalk near the McKees Lane intersection, location dependent on potential reconfiguration of Kirkwood Highway intersection
- Changing the travel direction on Margaret Street to one-way, northbound

- A “road diet” between Paper Mill and Kirkwood Highway (reducing two travel lanes each direction to one travel lane each direction plus a middle left-turn lane)

Karl Hassler asked about the parking recommendation, because he got an entirely different impression from reading the *Newark Post* article about this session. Susan assured him that this specific recommendation was inaccurately portrayed by the *Newark Post*.

Subsequent to this meeting, the Newark Traffic Committee approved all ten of the Task Force’s recommendations during an 80-min. meeting. These recommendations will now be sent to City Council for discussion and subsequent vote.

- *Delaware Avenue cycletrack project*

Heather Dunigan summarized the intent for those at the meeting who may not have been familiar with the two-way protected bike lane project—that is, taking what is currently illegal bicycling behavior and making it legitimate and safe.

She continued by reporting that the project stakeholder committee had met the previous Friday, mainly to discuss two signalization options—“protected” and “protected/permissive”—as a follow-up to a meeting during which various options were discussed. “Protected” signalization would mean completely separate phases for bicycles with no yielding to other users. “Protected/permissive” signalization would be somewhat of a hybrid with some bicycle yielding time needed. Each option would likely mean slower trips for bicyclists—five to seven minutes, depending on the option over the length of the Delaware Avenue corridor.

Paul Moser shared that all signal phases would be shorted to 60 seconds with the exception of the South College Avenue intersection, which would be set to 120 seconds. He also said that DelDOT is trying to minimize the requirement for experimentation, which would require permission.

There was no unanimity of opinion among those gathered as to which option would be better. Officer Barker said that, from an enforcement standpoint, “protected” is better, and he also suggested that a bike scramble wouldn’t be a bad idea. This type of signalization would allow somewhere between a 5- to 10-second delay for bikes to go in any direction across or through an intersection. Among residents, Karl, Susan, and Brian Bahnson each thought that the “protected/permissive” signalization would be better from a bicycling standpoint, indicating that it would at least be more like the way conditions are now with respect to flow.

Mark Deshon noted that, while there was no clear consensus among the stakeholder committee members, they agreed to aim for “protected” signalization, which is DelDOT’s preference, noting that it could be changed later if it wasn’t working well (i.e., if compliance is a problem). Susan suggested that signalization needs to undergo a thorough 6- to 12-month trial period with evaluation.

Heather indicated that ample stakeholder and public feedback sessions need to occur before any final decisions are made.

- *“The Big Jump” grant submission*

Susan reported that she, Heather, and Mark have been helping City of Newark Community Affairs Officer Megan McNerney write the application for this grant, which is due on Oct. 28. If chosen for this project, Newark would be one of ten cities nationwide to receive \$750,000-worth of technical assistance for helping our community design and implement a low-stress bicycle network.

She also mentioned that UD’s College of Health Sciences has promised \$150,000 in support funding for this project, should the city be chosen.

Ban Phommachanh asked Susan if she had approached Highmark Delaware or SevOne about support funding. She replied she hadn’t. Ban suggested that she ask Michael Smith [who is on the project leadership team] if either company will help “overfund” such a project.

- *NBC as an organizational entity*

- *Review of City Council vote with regard to its relationship to NBC*

On Monday, September 26, the Newark City Council heard public comments on and deliberated about its relationship with the Newark Bicycle Committee. With two members of Council absent (Jen Wallace and Mark Morehead), Council ended up voting 4-1 to maintain its current relationship with our committee going forward, including being able to send appropriate staff to our meetings.

- *Discussion of ideas for organization/administration going forward (legal, membership, decision-making, etc.)*

Ideas presented:

- Consider becoming a 501 (c) (3) organization.
- Consider becoming a local affiliate of Bike Delaware.
- Incorporate as a nonprofit.
- Consider Newark Bike Project as a fiscal partner (agent) for us.
- Look into what options there may be with the Delaware Community Foundation.
- Create a structure of officers.
- Have a tiered relationship with other groups with common goals.
- If we decide we do want to take in and spend money, consult with legal counsel.
- Because potential liability is an issue of concern, look into insurance providers and have participants sign waivers for First Friday Rides.
- Use City of Newark communication dept. to post agendas, minutes or simply link to us (Heather currently posts meeting dates; new website will have all this).

Having heard several ideas and none having really elicited instant consensus of opinion, Mark asked that an *ad hoc* subcommittee be formed to research our options and come back to the full committee with an organizational recommendation and implementation details. Brian, Susan, Karl, and Paul indicated they would serve in this way.

- *Quick subcommittee updates*

- *Communication subcommittee*

Karen Rosenberg reported that the First Friday Rides postings on NBC's Facebook page have increased our traffic substantially. Heather said that when we post with a photo, it always gets a great number of views. Mark added that whenever we can share an NBC post or re-tweet, it increases traffic as well.

Mark added that an NBC website is being developed. He informed Bike Delaware's John Bare that the technical link-up as "BikeNewark.org" needs to be worked out before the site can go live. John said that, unfortunately, he has no knowledge of what that involves on their end. Mark said he'll investigate and maybe contact WordPress support for some procedural answers.

- *Education/Encouragement subcommittee*

Susan reported that there were 63 who attended the October First Friday Ride, with 33 gathering afterward at Klondike Kate's. The next First Friday Ride is on November 4. This will be the first "dark" ride. Bike Line and Wooden Wheels have each agreed to install bike lights that day for riders at a 10% discount. The after-ride gathering place will be Iron Hill Brewery.

Susan said that the October "Bike Central" safety checkpoint on Delaware Avenue at The Green was very successful. Nine bicycles were registered during the two-hour event, and two students signed up for one-on-one guided rides. The next such event will take place in the spring.

As far as the Downes Safe Routes to School project, UD's student chapter of Engineers Without Borders will come and talk about building out low-stress ways to the school.

In addition, some of UD's Visual Communication students are working with the subcommittee on a bicycle "civility" campaign this fall. Also being explored is the idea of a bike ride for interested UD Summit students.

Al Porach suggested that might be fun to put on a bike ride to and campout at Lum's Pond as a community event.

- *Safety and Enforcement subcommittee*

No report

- *Engineering subcommittee*

Mark reported that at our last subcommittee meeting, we examined low-stress connectivity and identified network streets from central Newark outward. In addition to what we're calling the "Old Newark" bikeway (Orchard Rd., Winslow Rd., Apple Rd., Ritter Lane, and Chrysler Ave.), the following roads were suggested as low-stress connectors:

- Winslow Rd. to Veterans Blvd. through the shopping center parking lot
- Ray St. (contraflow lane EB, sharrow WB) and Corbit St.
- Thompson Lane conduit to W. Main St.
- UD farm road to Sincock Lane on South Campus
- Dallam Rd. to Baylor Dr.
- Briar Lane
- Wyoming Rd. into UD Central Campus
- Lovett Ave. into UD Central Campus
- Pomeroy Connector to Fairfield Crest
- Country Club Dr., Windsor Dr., Delrem Dr.

The following specific issues were brought up:

- Main St. signalization at Pomeroy needs attention, consult with Tom Coleman
- Need for a refuge for bicyclists at Wyoming and S. Chapel intersection
- Sidewalks too narrow along Lovett Ave.

Paul gave a presentation on the planning progress with the Newark-Wilmington trail, explaining that there are five segments in the shortest alignment plan (at a length of only 12.5 miles), which closely follows the White Clay Creek and Christina River. During the presentation, he highlighted the westernmost segment—from Windy Hills to Old Paper Mill Road. This is very encouraging in light of some of our connectivity options, namely the upcoming Library Ave. improvements, possible McKees Lane treatment (part of the Cleveland Ave. pave and rehab project), and the city's potential plans to extend a trail from McKees across White Clay Creek toward Old Paper Mill Rd. Together, these would help solve the bicycling conundrum that is the western end of Kirkwood Highway.

Karl suggested that, during its next meeting, the subcommittee should address the potential use of bike boxes (see note on bike boxes below).

- *One talking point to feed Mayor Sierer for October City Council meeting*

It was suggested that Mayor Sierer highlight submission of the application for The Big Jump project grant, particularly the promised support of \$150,000 toward The Big Jump project from the University of Delaware College of Health Sciences, should the City of Newark be one of the ten winning grant recipients.

- *Old or new business / announcements*
 - *Formation of an Evaluation subcommittee*

Karl suggested we first ask the question, “What do we want to know?”—the idea being here’s what we set out to do, and then summarize the impact of what was done. Heather said that the *Newark Bicycle Plan* actually forms a good baseline for our goals, saying that we should ask, “To what extent is the *Newark Bicycle Plan* being followed and what has been accomplished?” Karl asked if these questions are being applied to the Delaware Avenue cycletrack project.

Heather insisted that she indeed has lots of data but isn’t the one who will drive this subcommittee. Susan said she thinks we should be more tuned in to what UD’s T² group is doing and start with what our goals are from the *Newark Bicycle Plan* and review them together.

Brian said that, with respect to the Delaware Avenue project, we ought to be able to compare pre- and post-project data.

No definite plans for forming this subcommittee were decided upon at this meeting, but seeking volunteers to serve will be on our radar in the near future.

- *Bike boxes*

Good news. FHWA has granted interim approval to DelDOT for the use of green bike boxes in Delaware.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, November 17, at 4 p.m. at WILMAPCO.
Call-in #302-737-6205 x126.