

Cecil County Bicycle Plan (CCBP)
Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
Draft
December 15, 2011

Attendees

Eric Beckett, SHA
Brigitte Carty, Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway
Rob Chirnside, Cecil County Health Department
Tony DiGiacomo, Cecil County Office of Planning and Zoning
John Dillman, Upper Shore Regional Council
Michael Garrity, Elk Neck Trials Association
Robert Gell, Town of Charlestown
Tamika Graham, WILMAPCO
Dave Gula, WILMAPCO
Michael Jackson, Maryland Department of Transportation
Mary Ann Lisanti, Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway
Doris Miklitz, Citizen Advocate
Jeanne Minner, Town of Elkton
Chris Rogers, URS
Dennis Simpson, MDTA
Terri Thomas, Town of Elkton
Betsy Vennell, Town of North East
Sharon Weygand, Town of Chesapeake City

Public Workshop and Outreach

WILMAPCO attended the Fairhill Mountain Bike Jamboree on October 23 with boards, comment sheets, and maps. The purpose was to interview attendees on their bicycling experiences and to comment on the draft plan. While the event was for recreational riding, the intention was to also seek out comments from bike commuters as well. A general consensus among local riders is that they prefer to ride off-road than on-road because they feel safe.

With media coverage preceding the event, a public workshop was held on November 1 to seek public input on the plan. Several comments were received from the public such as the desire for safer and separated facilities to bike and more bike parking at public buildings. Generally, attendees were supportive of the plan and expressed expectation for local governments to take ownership of the plan. Following the workshop, a formal presentation was made to the Cecil County Commissioners.

Efforts will continue to attend community events and reach more residents.

Town Assessments

Local Bikeways

Ms. Graham led the group through a series of Town maps showing potential local bikeways to improve. Information from municipal comprehensive plans was used in addition to destination points, and roadway data. These draft maps will need to be refined as more local input is received. The idea is to have something to bring to the Towns as a conversation starter that they can make changes to.

Cecilton - The Town has expressed interest in an off-road path through Cecilton Park connecting MD 282 and MD 213. Mr. Dill stated that there is a need for better signage within the area. A closer look is needed for other routes through Town, especially MD 213 approaches into Town. Mr. DiGiacomo mentioned that there could be some scenic byway funding opportunities with MD 213, and asked Mr. Jackson to share other opportunities for state funding.

Charlestown – Charlestown is difficult for biking as most roads in Old Charlestown are very narrow and don't offer many options for bike improvements. The on-road East Coast Greenway alignment will serve the Town well, and should be implemented to accommodate cyclists. On-road bikeways in Town will coordinate with the Charlestown Trails Plan that is beginning.

Chesapeake City – Chesapeake City is currently working to advance the C & D Canal trail and an off-alignment adjacent to MD 213 that would connect the Town with the Bohemia school complex. Other routes connect into the downtown area.

Elkton – Elkton's Bike Plan identified proposed routes through Town. This countywide plan will not supersede those recommendations, but rather incorporate them into the larger bike network.

North East – Ms. Vennell expressed concern with routing cyclists along Mechanics Valley Rd, from south of US 40 to connect into Town. Traffic volumes have grown considerably along the corridor and shoulders and are not continuous throughout. Mr. Rodgers pointed out that shared use trails shown on the map are not accurate as some sections are not complete, some travel through private property with current disputes, and trails blazes are not consistent throughout. Mr. Garrity with the Elk Neck Trails Association extended their support for working directly with the Town.

Perryville - The group agreed that the Perryville map from their recent Greenways Plan should be updated to show both on- and off-road routes on one map.

Port Deposit – Developed areas in the Town are served by existing networks, except the Bainbridge/ Tome School Properties. Mr. Rodgers suggested we contact Port Deposit about Bainbridge to ensure they are in support of biking facilities with future development of the site, and agree to these recommendations within the bike plan. He also inquired of the incorporation of the Octoraro Trail that travels through Bainbridge and continues north into Pennsylvania (shown on the map as the LSHG, as the two overlap). Mr. Jackson stated he would look into the development of that trail.

Rising Sun – Many bicyclists are already using MD 273 in and around Rising Sun for scenic riding. Proposed bikeways would connect a school and commercial areas just south of MD 273, and improve approaches into Town.

For each Town, Mr. Jackson requested that a series of photos be shown for proposed routes.

Town Focus Groups

In addition to using the advisory committee for local input, project staff will establish focus groups to flesh out details for each town. Presentations will also be scheduled for the Towns. Focus groups for the Towns of North East, Charlestown, and Port Deposit will utilize the steering committees of separate planning work underway.

Additional System Improvements

The group discussed bike parking design, location and placement and installation policies. Mr. DiGiacomo also suggested working with the County's Parks and Recreation Department to install bike racks at parks.

The group reviewed an excerpt from Cecil County's existing zoning ordinance (Section 278- Bicycle Accessibility, Mobility, and Parking) that contains provisions for bike parking within employment and residential mixed-use districts and business districts. The County's language could be adopted by the Towns, so that having similar requirements for bicycle parking would level development opportunities for the County and each Town. Both Chesapeake City and Elkton are currently updating their zoning code and will try to include bike parking provisions. Ms. Vennell inquired about having off-site provisions that would allow the installation of bike parking in alternate locations. Mr. DiGiacomo agreed that this change could strengthen the County's existing ordinance.

Ms. Lisanti shared that Harford County has been successful in adopting zoning changes that allow pedestrian and bike paths to be constructed through buffer lands. Also, she shared that Harford County is organizing an advisory committee to help develop a Harford County Bike Plan.

Mr. Jackson explained a new bike share program that MDOT is providing grant funds for feasibility studies or implementation. Operating funds are not included in the program. Ms. Lisanti from LSHG offered to provide the local match for a feasibility study for Cecil County (deadline has been extended to December 22). Mr. DiGiacomo will work with Ms. Lisanti to assemble the application and funding commitment.

Existing transit service was discussed and how biking and transit could be integrated. A map was shown that included three operating routes in the County and a one quarter-mile buffer around existing transit stops. However, the one quarter-mile buffer is more useful for walking access,

and can be extended up to 1-3 miles in this case for cycling (esp. to rail stations). All existing Senior Services and Community Transit buses are equipped with bicycle racks. Mr. Gula shared that there has also been a delay with operating buses across the Hatem Bridge, and this progress will be monitored.

Next Steps

WILMAPCO will reach out to each Town to formally collect their input, and following, schedule a presentation to their Mayor and Commissioners Boards. Mr. Gula added another round of field work will also be conducted within the Towns, and locals will be encouraged to complete field worksheets. Mr. Jackson suggested that White Clay Bike Club be used for input and Chesapeake Spokes for possible fieldwork in the western portion of the County. Project staff will continually look for and attend more community events that can be utilized for public input.

Other Business

Ms. Lisanti shared that the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway is gradually expanding their focus to the Upper Bay area rather than the Susquehanna River corridor. They've also been focusing on national efforts such as the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Historic Water Trail and the Star Spangled Banner Historic Trail. LSHG sees the Cecil County Bike plan as another way to support connecting Cecil and Harford counties.