

Cecil County Bicycle Plan (CCBP)
Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
Draft
March 15, 2012

Attendees

Dustin Kuzan, 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
Bob Gaston, Elk Neck Trials Association
Tamika Graham, WILMAPCO
Danielle Haslup, Cecil County Parks and Recreation
Michael Jackson, Maryland Department of Transportation
Doris Miklitz, Citizen Advocate
Chris Rogers, URS
Terri Thomas, Town of Elkton
Betsy Vennell, Town of North East
Melissa Williams, MDTA

Review of Public Outreach

Since the last meeting WILMAPCO met with the Towns of North East, Chesapeake City, Cecilton, Rising Sun, and Port Deposit to give formal presentations on the countywide bicycle plan and solicit input for local routes. Overall, the outreach process has been positive and the plan has been well received. Ms. Graham reviewed with the group a handout that summarizes town staff and resident comments (see handout attached). There was discussion over some of the comments and concerns of the Town. It was noted that Cecilton's current trail is underutilized because it lacks connectivity to destinations, and improvements are warranted. There were suggestions to encourage the use of Chesapeake City's municipal parking lot as a launch point to conduct bicycle tours south of the canal, and to encourage visitors to park their cars and bike around the Town. The group agreed to add MD 310 (Cayots Corner Rd.), south of Chesapeake City, to the proposed countywide bikeways map. Reviewing a comment from the Town of Rising Sun led to group dialogue about the importance of safety education and proper behavior between bicyclists and motorists. Mr. Rogers inquired of the status of the Octoraro Trail through Rising Sun and the Town's interest. Both are still unknown and require follow-up. Several of the Towns expressed interest in additional opportunities to engage in the development of recommendations.

Committee members noted several upcoming spring events that WILMAPCO could attend to solicit further input such as an upcoming bike event at Fairhill and the Scottish Games. Port Deposit will host a transit study workshop on April 17th that will also serve as an opportunity to

share information about the plan and understand local bicycle concerns and ideas from Port Deposit residents.

Local Bikeways

Ms. Graham led the group through a series of maps showing potential local bikeways to improve. The draft maps were presented to the Towns and intended to be refined with their input. However, few changes were made as result of the public input process. Charlestown bike routes have not been proposed yet. Other WILMAPCO staff is working with the Town on another project to identify pedestrian and greenway routes—the two plans will dovetail. Maps for Elkton and Perryville were not included, but it was noted that their previously adopted bike routes would be shown in the plan's document.

In Port Deposit, proposed bikeways through the proposed Bainbridge site would remain, but exact roads to include cannot be firmed up at this point. The Bainbridge Development Corporation is experiencing major setbacks with any development in the near to medium future. In Cecilton, its small size does not yield a plethora of on-road options to choose from, but could also benefit from off-road connections, tying in with their existing trail.

In North East, a link was removed from Thomas Avenue between MD 272 and Cemetery Rd. connecting the Town to shared use trails. There have been longstanding issues with property lines that are unlikely to be resolved. Ms. Vennell inquired of the inclusion of Mechanics Valley Road as a proposed local bike route in North East. Ms. Graham pointed out that the speed limit is 35 mph, traffic volumes are moderate, and half the stretch of the road has wide shoulders. These traffic conditions are much less intense than using MD 272 into Town. Ms. Vennell stated that improvements, if any, to this road would be very far into the future. The group agreed with the implementation timing. Ms. Graham added that the proposed bike network does not imply that all included roads are presently suitable to accommodate bicyclists. The proposed network identifies roads that should be targeted for bikeway improvements in the near or long-term future. Ms. Vennell pointed out the MD 7 should be added to the Town's proposed bike network.

Mr. Gaston added that there is a 1.4 mile gap between the North East Park and Elkton. The segment travels through public property and discussions about closing the gap will begin soon. However, the trail may be suitable for pedestrians only and may not allow for bicycle usage.

Prioritization Discussion

Ms. Graham led the group through a handout of proposed prioritization criteria. The criteria would provide a process for the County and Towns to evaluate which project should move ahead first based on merits. One concern with developing specific weighting and scoring is that one Town may want to favor certain types of projects whereas another Town may want to assign criteria scores differently. However, the group noted the prioritization criteria could be much simpler such as a check list. There was agreeing that a simpler version would serve the best use.

Mr. Jackson suggested adding the consideration of private funding as part of the criteria of access to commercial areas. Mr. Kuzan suggested including in the category of ease of implementation projects that have the opportunity to receive state funding. The group agreed on tying in the costs of a project into the ease of implementation category also.

Mr. Dillman asked if there are tax incentives for bike racks. Mr. DiGiacomo and Mr. Rodgers agreed there are no provisions in the county's code that states densities would be increased for developers that provide those types of bike provisions. Ms. Vennell stated that North East does allow a reduction in parking if developers contribute to the Towns plan for transit expansion.

Mr. DiGiacomo emphasized the challenges that Cecil County faces with building new facilities for bicyclists while trying to achieve new urbanism goals. For example, while adding shoulders to roads would cater to cyclists, it would create more impervious surface in an area which has to deal with potential runoff into the sensitive bay area. He said the County welcomes innovative ways of designing facilities.

There was discussion and agreement that the plan should incorporate tools that Towns could use to implement recommendations. Mr. Jackson suggested that MDOT's Model Ordinance for Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities be included into the final plan either by reference or incorporation into the appendix.

Everyone agreed they needed more time to look over the criteria and would provide comments for adjustments to WILMAPCO within two weeks.

Schedule Update

The plan's process is on schedule and has reached mid-point. Ms. Graham asked the group to reach a consensus on the best way to conclude the plan in relation to public outreach. The scope of work includes holding two to three public workshops. June through August is not a good time to schedule a public workshop, so two more workshops would have to be during May and then a final in the fall. The past fall countywide public workshop was not well attended as expected, but local workshops have had very successful participation and engagement. The group considered the value of having two additional countywide workshops versus continuing to reach out to Towns and residents on a smaller scale. While the latter may be more ideal, time and staff resources are limited.

Mr. DiGiacomo suggested an approach that was executed successfully in the County many years ago. In preparation for the updates to the Towns' comprehensive plans a large meeting was held at the Elkton branch of the Cecil County Library. Each town had a station set up which functioned as a focus group. The group agreed this model could serve the bike plan as well for a second public meeting. The final workshop would be held at the County's Administrative building followed by a formal presentation to the County Commissioners.

The next meeting will be scheduled via email.

Other Business

There was none.