

Notes from the SPC Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee
Meeting of August 11, 2010

Attendees

Tom Prezel, Montour trail Council
Ned Williams, Montour Trail Council
Bob Dudash, URS Corporation
Roy Weil, Cyclist
Mary Shaw, Cyclist
Adam Marshall, Ped-Bike Coordinator, PennDOT District 10
Ryan Gordon, SPC staff
Amy Camp, the Trail Towns Program
Mary Beth Kim, Airport Corridor Transportation Association
Hannah Hardy, Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Steve Patchan, City of Pittsburgh Bicycle Coordinator
Jerry Green, North Side resident
Rachel Roche, CommuteInfo
Joe Stafford, Bicycle Access Council
Chris Goswick, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
Bill Evans, Beaver County Planning
Doniele Andrus, Beaver and Lawrence County Trails and Greenways Coordinator
Chris Ziegler, Butler Freeport Community Trail
Dave Wright, Allegheny County Department of Public Works
Gene Slevinski, TRIC and National Skate Patrol
Bill Degufferoy, Indiana County Office of Planning and Development
Mike Gezo, Allegheny County Department of Public Works

Announcements

The Friends of the Riverfront Reports that the Millvale Trail connection is almost complete, and a ribbon cutting is tentatively scheduled for the week of August 23rd. More details will be forthcoming shortly.

PennDOT District 11 reports that they will be incorporating enhanced pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in the design of the Route 51 Viaduct/West Carson Street project. They will provide an update on the specifics of the proposed design improvements at the SPC Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting on October 13, 2010.

The second round of Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative funding has been announced, with \$24 million available over 2 years. Planning funds will be limited to \$300,000 per project, with pre-construction and construction projects capped at \$1.5 million. As a reminder, this is a reimbursement program, with significant federal contracting responsibilities on the part of the awardee, etc. Application deadline is 5:00 p.m. September 15, 2010.

Active Allegheny: Presentation by Max Heckman of Michael J. Baker, Jr., Inc.

Michael J. Baker, Jr., Inc., is the consultant on Allegheny County's Active Allegheny project, a planning exercise designed to assess, integrate and promote active transportation in the County. The project is now about three quarters complete. (Gina DeVecchio of Michael Baker did a presentation on the project scope at the May 2010 meeting of the SPC Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee.)

The Planning effort will include several components of particular interest to this group, including:

- Commuter Bike Plan
- Pedestrian Plan
- Complete Streets Pilot
- Action Plan
- Multiple Maps

The common unifying theme of these component pieces is the integration of transportation and land use.

An online survey was completed, and more than 700 responses were received. About half of the respondents lived in the City of Pittsburgh (as opposed to other communities in the County). Of that number, more than 20 percent indicated that they were bicycle commuters; about 20 percent indicated they used public transit for their commute, and six percent identified themselves as pedestrian commuters. These numbers are significantly higher than Baker has seen in other similar studies they have completed elsewhere in the US, but caution that these are indicative of the survey respondents only, not the population at large.

The Consultant is currently working to identify three locations for which Complete Street prototype/pilot plans could be developed. The Consultant has identified a dozen or so such locations, and the Project Steering Committee will be offered the opportunity to provide additional input before the three candidate locations are finalized.

The next steps will be to solicit additional public input at the Green and Innovation Festival at Hartwood Acres this weekend (Saturday, August 14th from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.), write the draft report, and then have the core committee and the steering committee members review the draft document before wrapping the project up later this fall.

In response to questions, the consultant indicated that response to the survey, and overall participation by local municipalities was not great, although actual input ranged from ambivalence (we don't need that here) to encouraging (how can we get more bike racks) to surprise (there are cyclists in our community? How do they enjoy the experience in our community relative to other areas?) There were no real anti-ped/bike comments made by any of the communities. The consultant was also reminded that the Allegheny County Parks are working to find ways to connect their parks through means OTHER than the Orange Belt, such as through trail connections (Great Allegheny Trail to Round Hill Park), Montour Trail to South Park, etc. The question of how to implement the study recommendations was also raised, but left for future discussions.

SPC Activities Update

Ryan Gordon gave an update of SPC efforts on the development of Bicycle Suitability Mapping for Armstrong County, including a recap of a bicycle community meeting in Kittanning that attracted 6 or 8 local cyclists. Ryan will present the first of the draft suitability maps to that group later today.

SPC has also prepared, in draft form, a Guide to Bicycle Parking for downtown Pittsburgh. There are approximately 50 bicycle racks for public use in the Golden Triangle, with a capacity of just under 300 bicycles. Observations on use of those facilities will be used to develop “occupancy rates” over a period of weeks, or months.

In coming weeks, SPC will be kicking off the update of the 2035 Transportation and Development Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania, otherwise known as the regional long range plan. SPC will be looking to enhance the consideration of pedestrian and bicycle transportation in the plan. This will require the identification and recommendation of specific goals and objectives for pedestrian/bicycle planning in the region, the identification of Performance Measures, or Metrics that will permit an assessment of how well these goals and objectives are being advanced, and the design of an implementation plan.

Today’s handout package includes a number of items related to these “tasks.” A copy of the Pedestrian/Bicycle specific Goals and Objectives from the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan was provided, as was a copy of the overall goals and objectives for the 2035 Long Range Plan. That document also included some preliminary thoughts as to what useful and meaningful performance measures might be for the various goals and objectives. A copy of the 2007 Pennsylvania Bicycle Plan, which includes some discussion of performance measures, was also provided. It was noted that the regional plan should be consistent, to a large extent, with the State Plan.

The range of possible performance measures is wide. They could be qualitative, or quantitative. They could be numbers oriented, or program oriented. They could measure intent, or they could measure outcome. Within these broad typologies there can be any number of performance measure options. The most useful and meaningful performance metrics will utilize reliable and routinely available data sources....a key consideration in the identification of specific metrics for use in the 2040 Long Range Plan.

Sara called for 6-8 volunteers from the SPC Pedestrian – Bicycle Advisory Committee to assist in the development of a performance metrics discussion framework, and potential performance metrics to be used in the 2040 Plan. This information would then be presented at the October 2010 meeting of the SPC Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee for consideration by the entire group.

Reports from Around the Table

Tom Prezel, introduced himself to the group. He serves as co-chair of the Montour Trail Council’s Engineering and Construction Committee.

Ned Williams, Montour Trail Council, indicated that the MTC was able to get funding through DCNR for a trail improvement project in northern Washington and Allegheny Counties, which will result in 9 miles

of trail being rebuilt. The MTC also continues efforts to advance 9 new bridges in Washington County, as well as the Library Viaduct, which will close some key gaps in the Montour Trail. MTC also plans to apply for a TIGER II grant for a project in Washington and Allegheny Counties. Ned also provided an update on activities relative to renewed interests in creating a pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Panhandle Trail and downtown Carnegie, PA. A distance of about 3 miles separates the eastern trailhead on the Panhandle Trail (at Walkers Mill) and the Borough Building/West Busway Transit Station at Carnegie. The community would very much like to see a pedestrian/bicycle friendly route between the two. The Borough of Carnegie and the County of Allegheny are currently exploring routing options between the two locations. In response to comments it was noted that ATV traffic is a problem on the Panhandle Trail, especially in Washington County, and that local law enforcement may be getting more involved to address this issue.

Bob Dudash, URS Consultants, reports that they are working with Bike Pittsburgh and the City on the development of on street bike lanes/sharrows/etc. Current efforts include the placement of pavement markings on East Liberty Boulevard to the Mellon Park trail, and between Friendship and Oakland along Millvale and Neville Streets (slight jog on Center Avenue required). URS is also working with the Township of Cranberry on the identification of pedestrian and bicycling routes in that community, as a prelude to the development of a full ped-bike plan.

Roy Weil reminded everyone that the Trail Volunteer Fund is currently accepting applications for funding for materials, supplies, etc., that facilitate volunteer efforts along local trails. The current application deadline is September 1, 2010. The application is simple and painless. Relevant information is available at www.theyworking.org.

Mary Shaw revealed that she and Roy Weil are working on an update to the Freewheeling Easy book.

Adam Marshall, PennDOT District 10-0, indicated that they are working on the completion of an Indiana Pedestrian Safety Program, and two projects in Butler, the Pillow Street project and another at Pullman Park. The Safe Routes to School Program in Homer City is set to go to construction soon, and the community of Blairsville received PCTI funding in round 1 for final design of pedestrian and bicycle and streetscape enhancements to the Market Street/Diamond area of Blairsville. A spring construction schedule is anticipated. PennDOT District 10 is also working with the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development to identify how and when the PennDOT Pedestrian/Bicycle Checklists are completed, and how the information is used. He also reminded everyone that the PCTI was NOT a grant program, but a reimbursement program, and that the PCTI program carried certain obligations relative to bidding, contract specifications, reporting, etc., and that this was perhaps not a program for inexperienced grantees.

Ryan Gordon of SPC presented a summary of efforts to date in the preparation of Bike Suitability Maps for Armstrong County. The maps packet for each county is slightly different, with the Butler County package including City of Butler Inset Map, and the Indiana County maps including a series of Loop Routes or Rides. The specific design of the Bike Suitability Maps package for each county is determined in consultation with our planning partners in each County, and is designed to meet their specific needs

and objectives. The success of the Bike Suitability Maps is, in large part, due to the really good input that we have received from local cyclists.

Amy Camp, the Trail Towns Program, reported on a number of community planning processes that they are currently engaged in or are monitoring, including a Multi-Municipal Plan in the Connellsville area, a Joint Municipal Plan at Ohiopyle, and the streetscape improvement program currently underway in Meyersdale. These communities are looking to enhance the gateways between the trails and the trail towns as part of the PCTI program, and The Trail Towns program continues to encourage Amtrak to provide “roll on/roll off” options for bicycles on the Capital Limited service that parallels the GAP. Currently, bikes must be boxed for transit on Amtrak in PA, although roll on/roll off service is available elsewhere on the Amtrak network. They also continue to do trail counts (electronic and manual) on the GAP between Boston and Cumberland, with 10 electronic counters in place. The Trail Towns website, which is currently very business oriented, is currently being redesigned.

Mary Beth Kim introduced herself as a new employee with the Airport Corridor Transportation Association (ACTA).

Hannah Hardy, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, reported that PEC was successful in getting a TIGER I grant for trail development in eastern PA (Schuylkill Trail/East Coast Greenway connections to New Jersey and Delaware), and intends to submit a TIGER II grant for additional trail development in efforts in PA. The bulk of the requested funds will cover trail improvements along the Great Allegheny Passage. Montour Trail, a much needed Garrett underpass, the Mon Wharf Switchback to the Smithfield Street Bridge, portions of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, and several projects in eastern PA. The pre-application has been submitted, with the final application (for \$34 million) due on August 23rd. For projects located in urban areas, they are required to provide local matching funds. Projects in rural areas have no requirement for local match.

Hannah also asked that everyone save the date of October 22, 2010, for the Western Pennsylvania Trail Symposium, which will be held at the Regional Learning Center in Cranberry. Agenda development is underway, and a draft agenda/program is anticipated on or about September 1st. Registrations are currently being accepted (as of this writing...)

Hannah also serves on the Board of the Steel Valley Heritage Trail, and was able to report that an April ribbon cutting was held for trail improvements in McKeesport. With improvements to the 15th Street Bridge, trail users who used to start/end their trips in Boston may find that McKeesport provides a comparable quality trailhead. Two other projects saw significant progress recently, although they are not yet open to public use. Two new pedestrian bridges were put in place (by crane) at Whitaker and at Duquesne. The placement work could not have gone more smoothly, Ramp construction and trail connections remain to be completed before this new section of trail will be opened to the public (probably in early Spring 2011). In conjunction with the coal/gas pipeline project, which continues to advance, the trail will soon extend all the way from the community of Duquesne to the Waterfront Development in Homestead.

Tracy Stack, DCNR, reports that they are on schedule to announce their trail development grant awards in September of 2010. She also indicated that DCNR has spent a lot of time and energy over the past few years in mapping trails, and that these maps can be found at www.explorepatrails.com. The site is becoming very popular. If you have a trail, and you don't find it on this website, you may add the information yourself by following instructions on the website. Among specific project accomplishments over the past few months are the Ohioyle Complete Streets project which was funded through PennVEST. The bid opening for work at the community park took place last week, and the Route 382 rehabilitation project (PennDOT) is underway. An application for the construction of improvements at the Visitors Center has also been submitted.

Steve Patchan, the City has kicked off the MOVE PGH plan, which is the transportation element of the larger City Comprehensive Plan. This multimodal transportation component of the City Comp Plan will create a 20 to 25 year vision for the City, with a goal of enhancing transportation efficiency and safety. The development of a pedestrian and bicycle plan is an effort supplemental to the larger MOVE PGH task, as is the development of a Street Design Manual. The Bike/Pedestrian Plan will be an update of the 1999 City Bike Plan, to which a pedestrian element will be added. Three interns have spent the summer inventorying sidewalk infrastructure in the City, noting the location and condition of sidewalks, signalized intersections, etc. They are also identifying and mapping on street parking areas, one way streets, snow routes, bus routes and bike routes. Within the City, an Open Space/Recreation Plan is also underway, with two community meetings already having been held. Among the components of this plan will be a discussion of trails, as well as access to parks. The common theme through all these plans is the desire to provide modal choice to various destinations and for various purposes.

The City's new Street Design Manual will take a Complete Streets approach, reviewing the elements of Complete Streets and making recommendations for the formal adoption of some or all of the various elements. The most difficult task will be to determine where Complete Streets elements can be added retroactively to an existing street pattern.

The City of Pittsburgh also has a new Bike Route and Sign Plan under development. This plan will make recommendations on where the signage should be installed – citywide. The first public meeting on the Bike Route and Signage Plan will be held on September 23rd. The public will be provided with an opportunity for comment on the routes and the preferred destinations, as well as the appearance of the various signs.

Jerry Green, North Side resident, finds good progress on the Convention Center trail, and appreciates the update on the schedule for the opening of the Millvale Trail Connection.

Rachel Roche is new with SPC's CommuteInfo program and introduced herself at this meeting.

Joe Stafford, Bicycle Access Council, noted that issues in Western PA are different from those he hears about in Central and Eastern PA. His focus is statewide, and takes a more policy oriented direction. He did raise the question of the region's experience and stance with electric assist bikes. His interest stems from a single user in York County, PA who was told that according to Title 75 of the PA Code, a vehicle registration and driver's license is required to operate any motor driven vehicle on a public road in PA.

This could be a growing issue, given the number of retailers who have emerged in the electric bike market in recent years. Many trails are also restricted to non-motorized vehicles, resulting in a similar “illegal” status for electric bikes. In response to this comment, Hannah Hardy noted that the GAP has a new policy on this – they call it a “pedal assist policy.” She noted that the City of McKeesport and the State of Maryland are not yet signatories to the Pedal Assist Policy.

Chris Goswick, Allegheny County of Economic Development, provided an update on the Ohio River Trail Council’s efforts in the Allegheny County Communities of Crescent, Moon and Coraopolis. She noted that a feasibility study is being finalized, and that the Allegheny County communities affected by the South Shore alignment are all on board. A recent change of Council in Crescent has made that community perhaps a little less bike-friendly than it was, and she suggested that perhaps some targeted outreach or an open house in Crescent would be a good way to build community support. She also reports that she has met with Tim Volk, who is working to revive the Chartiers Nature Conservancy and efforts associated with the Greenway along Chartiers Creek.

Doniele Andrus, Trails and Greenway Coordinator for Beaver and Lawrence Counties, Followed up on Chris Goswicks’ comments about Crescent Township and the Ohio River Trail Council work in Beaver County. She noted that the South Shore feasibility study, including the proposed routing, is being finalized, and will be presented to the steering committee in a couple of weeks. When ready, the mapping of the trail will be shared with the Active Allegheny project team. With regards to the Chartiers Conservancy group, they are currently considering a merger with the Ohio River Trail Council. In other parts of the County, Doniele reports that they are wrapping up a TE funded project for a half mile extension of the Beaver River Trail in Beaver Falls (behind Geneva College), and that they are looking for a possible connection from Beaver Falls all the way to Rochester, although they will end at the Veterans for the time being. Efforts are also continuing to extend a trail connection from Beaver Falls to Bradys Run Park. On the North Shore of the Ohio River Trail project, Brighton Township has now become a signatory to the project. The ORTC is the recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the Port of Pittsburgh Commission for water access construction.

In Lawrence County, Doniele met with members of the Beaver Area Bicycling Enthusiasts (BABE) and the Lawrence County Cycling Club to discuss needs and opportunities in Lawrence County. They are now looking at the establishment of a new Century Trail option, which would effectively connect the Great Lakes to Greenway Trail in Ohio, the Ohio River Trail, and the Montour Trail to create a great trail loop option. She is also working on the development of a new mountain biking trail (2 miles) at the West Park Nature Center in Lawrence County.

Doniele is working to address some maintenance issues along the Stavich Trail this year, including graffiti removal, and vandalism/damage to some bollards and berms. Volunteers have put in 300 ft. of new plantings, and an Eagle Scout project on the trail is looking at remediating some of the Beaver damage to the marsh. The Neshannock Trail, which runs from New Castle north to Mercer County is somewhat revived as a project, with outstanding right of way issues currently being addressed by the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s office.

In Center Township, Beaver County, a \$1 million Safe Routes to School program is being implemented from the Park to the Elementary School, a route that will also pass in front of the Community College of Beaver County, the Penn State Beaver County campus, and the Intermediate Unit. The engineering and environmental work has been let, and a promotion event will be held on September 4th, which will include a walking school bus event and a bike helmet donation program.

Doniele also reported that she has been in contact with Peggy Pings of the US National Park Service regarding the Technical Assistance program that they offer, with the idea that Beaver County may submit an application for technical assistance on the implementation of the North Shore and South Shore components of the Ohio River Trail.

Chris Ziegler, Butler Freeport Community Trail, reported that the BFCT trail group has donated a bike rack for the City of Butler rack program, and it is now in place – the first of many, we hope. The new City rack standard will call for racks made from bike parts (to aid recognition). Also underway is the design of new mile marker signs. The group created the template for, and painted, 60 Share the Road symbols on Penn Street all the way from town to Alameda Park, and through Memorial Park. More symbols will be painted when road paving work that has been previously scheduled is complete. A local communications firm has volunteered to donate the corresponding Share the Road signs.

Also in Butler, City Council is poised to appoint a 5 member Bicycle Committee.

On the trail, regular rides are occurring that take participants from Laneville to Butler, with a stop for lunch in Butler before returning to Laneville/Freeport. Planning is also underway for a half-marathon that is scheduled for October 16th. Revenue from the half-marathon will go to trail maintenance. A rough half mile of trail still exists, but should be fixed by mid-October. A new historic Geo Trail has been a big success for the trail, attracting lots of kids and families to the trail. At Herman Station, the old general store has been purchased by a couple from California, and they have a four year plan to convert it to a bike shop/café.

Dave Wright, Allegheny County Department of Public Works, reports that Allegheny County may assume ownership of portions of the Steel Valley Trail, as well as responsibility for maintenance of some sections of the Montour trail near Noblestown and North Star Roads. The airport connection project has been “approved in concept” and the fabrication of the necessary signs is complete. The next project will be to prepare bids/solicitations for the curb cuts, and other small construction elements needed to implement the project.

In the implementation of Active Allegheny, the project team was reminded that the County Parks department has several “connections to the Montour Trail” in the planning stages. These include the 72 acre Sports Legacy development in the immediate vicinity of the Groveton Trailhead, and a connection from the County Fairgrounds in South Park to Corrigan Drive. They are also looking at ways to enhance the North Park lake trail to be safer.

Gene Slevinski, Three Rivers Inline Club and National Skate Patrol, reports that the local inline skaters hold six weekly skate outings, as well as Wednesday night lessons. Full information is available at

www.skatepgh.com. The implementation of *paved* trail surfaces is of key interest to the skaters, as is the maintenance of those surfaces. At present, the walkway surface over the Eliza Furnace Trail was noted to be very bad, especially at the Greenfield end. The skaters are currently working with the Friends of the Riverfront to address this concern.

Bill Degufferoy, Indiana County Planning and Development, provided an update on their efforts to develop a county-wide pedestrian and bicycle plan, as well as work that is on-going to connect the trails and parks in Indiana County. The Hoodlebug and Ghost Town trails are now interconnected, and extend 42 miles from Homer City to Ebensburg. A Trail Connectivity Assessment is also underway to identify ways in which other key trail connections can be established in Indiana County.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the SPC Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee will be on **Wednesday, October 13, 2010**. (Second Wednesday in October).

Subsequent meetings are scheduled for the second Wednesday of March, May and August:

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

Wednesday, August 10, 2011

All meetings will be held on the 23rd Floor of the Regional Enterprise Tower, 425 Sixth Avenue, in downtown Pittsburgh unless notified otherwise. Meetings begin at 10 a.m.

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