

Notes from the SPC Pedestrian-Bicycle Committee Meeting

November 12, 2008

In attendance: See attached

Welcome and Introductions

- Sara Walfoort of SPC welcomed the attendees, and asked those in the room to introduce themselves.

SPC Transportation Update

- Sara Walfoort provided a brief update on transportation issues and initiatives in the SPC region.
- Key work elements in 2009 will be the Update of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation and Development Plan.

SPC Bike Suitability Mapping

- Ryan Gordon of SPC thanked meeting participants for having provided user comments to the first round of SPC Bike Suitability maps, which cover the central region of Allegheny County. These maps were presented to the Ped-Bike group at our last meeting (August 2008). Ryan then presented an update of 13 new map plates covering northern Allegheny County, and again asked meeting participants to provide comments on these draft maps.
- SPC is currently working with Doniele Andrus and a variety of user groups in Beaver County to identify Bike Friendly routes in that area. Beaver County will be the next county to be mapped under the SPC Bike Suitability Mapping Initiative. That effort should be underway early in the new year.
- The draft SPC Bike Suitability Maps for Allegheny County are available for review at: http://www.spcregion.org/trans_pedbike_maps2.shtml
- Comments and suggestions on the draft maps may be provided via the link on the above webpage, or via email to Rgordon@spcregion.org

Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (Smart Transportation)

- SPC presented an overview of PennDOT's new "Smart Transportation" Initiative. This program will provide \$60 million in transportation funding over the next two years. It is NOT a Transportation Enhancements type program, per se, but "complete streets" and other bicycle/pedestrian enhancing projects may be eligible.
- Planning or construction funding maybe available, but design projects are NOT expected to be funded through this program. Planning grants will be capped at \$300,000, and construction grants at \$5 million. All projects are to be completed within the two years of the program.
- This program is open to virtually any applicant: municipal, non-profit, etc.
- This is a *reimbursable* program, so project applicants will have to cash-flow the project, then seek reimbursement for eligible costs from PennDOT.

- State and federal funds are being used in this program, so projects will have to comply with PennDOT procedures on bidding, construction, inspection, etc.
- A copy of the ten themes of Smart Transportation Handout and other related material is provided in the handout packet. More information is available at www.smart-transportation.com. Sara Walfoort will serve as SPC point of contact on this funding opportunity.
- Applications will be accepted through December 15, 2008. Successful candidates will be notified sometime early in 2009 of their award.

Potential Transit Strike in Allegheny County and “Bike the Strike”

- The Port Authority of Allegheny County is facing a potential transit strike, with a likely cessation of transit service in Allegheny County on or about December 1, 2008.
- Many groups in the region are looking at commuter alternatives in the event of a strike. Ideas that are likely to be successful include: carpooling, especially with someone who already has a leased space in the downtown area (or other destination); increased telecommuting; and increased bicycle commuting or walking. Ideas that are likely to be unsuccessful include: new memberships in regional vanpools (they are operating at near capacity now); and “backtracking” to pick up transit from an outlying service provider such as Westmoreland County or Beaver County (these buses are already operating at near capacity). Buses operated by the transit service providers in the outlying counties are legally permitted to make stops in Allegheny County, but it is unlikely that they will do so, as they lack excess capacity upon leaving their home communities. Moreover, if capacity did exist, time considerations would limit their ability to make the additional, unscheduled stops.
- Many groups in the region are working to provide information on commuter options, and several websites have been created, including www.keppittsburghmoving.com and www.bikethestrike.org. The Port Authority of Allegheny County also provides information on their website www.pghtransitinfo.com.
- Bike Pittsburgh, the City of Pittsburgh and others stand ready to provide bike buddies at designated locations and times, and will utilize close-in suburban parking facilities for a “park and pedal” program. Bike Pittsburgh will also offer guidance for new bicycle commuters on skills needed to negotiate urban streets, and clothing and equipment suggestions for cold weather riding.
- Bicycle commuters should be aware that it is illegal to ride a bicycle on the Port Authority of Allegheny County’s three busways. Due to the continued use of these busways by emergency service providers and by suburban transit service providers, bicycle use on the busways will continue to be illegal in the event of a Port Authority of Allegheny County transit strike.
- Outside of downtown, others are also making contingency plans for commuters, including the major Universities in the Oakland area, and the UPMC Hospitals, also in Oakland.

Bicycle Parking in Downtown Pittsburgh

- Options to provide secure bicycle parking for commuters downtown are being pursued.
- The City of Pittsburgh is looking at the development of ordinances to require building owners to provide bicycle parking.
- SPC is encouraging the City and the Pittsburgh Parking Authority to provide fenced/gated areas in downtown parking garages to limit access to bicycle parking areas to registered users.
- The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership's Office Recruitment and Retention Committee recently reviewed the *Bikes in Buildings* policy recently developed in draft form by the City of Pittsburgh. In a review of downtown business practices, it has been found that many large buildings (such as US Steel) already follow the policy on an informal basis. Smaller buildings, and most notably those with lobby areas where bicyclists (and their bicycles) would have to interact with pedestrians, were less likely to permit bicycles in their building.
- PDP recommended that a survey of building owners be conducted to determine who provides bicycle parking, who does not, and why.
- Other recommendations include an assessment of secure bike parking options at key transit stops.
- Issues relative to the provision of safe bicycle parking include the identification of suitable locations, an assessment of the proper/best technology for the lock/access mechanism; and costs. In the case of the City of Pittsburgh, they have a contract with a fencing provider, who could *install* the fencing, but the question of what the locking mechanism is, how participants gain access to the program, and who administers the registration program (and identifies the need for periodic maintenance and upkeep) remain to be addressed.

Regional Updates

Ned Williams, Montour Trail Council (and other groups)

- Provided information on a potential project that could be submitted to PennDOT for the PCTI (Smart Transportation Program). This project would provide the safe bicycle connection from the Montour Trail to the passenger terminal at Pittsburgh International Airport. The access route currently calls for bicyclist to cross multiple lanes of traffic in the vicinity of the parking pay stations, where drivers pay their parking fees. The necessary infrastructure improvements include construction of the access road on airport property, traffic signals for cyclists, loop detection devices calibrated for cyclists, and flashing lights (as warning to approaching traffic).

Linda Gwinn, Blairsville, Indiana County

- Reports that they are still meeting with the community regarding truck issues.
- They are also completing a feasibility study to determine options to connect the Conemaugh Valley Trail from Saltsburg to the Hoodlebug and Ghost Town Trails.
- Are seeking opportunities to provide more transit routes between Indiana County and Pittsburgh. Recent service additions within the county have resulted in more bus routes and

increased ridership. The local tech school (Wyotech) pays for new routes that provide service between Blairsville and Indiana.

- A \$12,000 investment from PA DCNR has resulted in the completion of a US Army Corps of Engineers environmental review for trail development along the Conemaugh River. This project had been at a standstill for years, pending attention from the Corps, and with this minor investment, the project has been completed in fewer than six months.

Chris Ziegler, Butler-Freeport Community Trail

- A new bridge at Fellowship Crossing is scheduled for December construction, using volunteer labor.
- The Butler Freeport Community Trail group is working towards the design of a bike route from the northern trailhead in Butler through the City of Butler to Moraine State Park. The City of Butler is an active partner in this project.
- The BFCT group is also exploring options for the purchase of the old Harmon Station, an old railroad station/house located just 15 feet from the trail right of way. The property owner is willing to sell the property to the trail group for renovation/rehabilitation as a B&B, General Store, etc. The trail group lacks the resources to purchase the property at this time. They are exploring funding options at present.

Jeremy Smith, Riverlife Task Force

- Riverlife Task Force will be awarding the contract for Phase I of the Mon Wharf Landing project tomorrow, which will provide a trail connection from the Smithfield Street Bridge to the Fort Pitt Bridge Pier (which blocks access into Point State Park proper). A Notice to Proceed on this contract is expected to be issued on December 29, 2008.
- The causeway that will take the trail around this bridge pier and into Point State Park is expected to be under construction next spring.
- A switchback is needed to connect the Eliza Furnace Trail to the Mon Wharf. This is an expensive project, and Riverlife Task Force is currently seeking funding for this project. They are hopeful that they will have the funds in place to pursue this project in the fall of 2009.
- Riverlife Task Force is also partnering with the City and the URA on the development of a Master Plan for the Strip District, which will encompass the area between 11th and 62nd Streets (at Highland Park) along the south side of the Allegheny River. The project will also include consideration of bicycle and pedestrian access along Railroad Street.
- A December kickoff to this project is anticipated.

Jerry Greene, North Side resident

- Greene raised two concerns he has as a local cyclist. The first is the issue of the ineffective detour imposed around the Casino site, and the question of whether the trail will be reconstructed following the completion of the construction.
- Greene's second concern is the detour/lack of access to the South Side Trail in the vicinity of the City Maintenance garage.

Bill Evans, Beaver County Planning Department

- Work continues on the Beaver and Lawrence County Greenways and Trails Plan

Doniele Andrus, Trail Coordinator, Beaver and Lawrence Counties

- There have been several water trail developments since the last meeting. The Bevington boat launch is now open at the County line. Other boat launches are available along the Connequenessing Creek (4) as well as one on the ????
- CSX has given permission to access the South Beaver River across their tracks for a boat launch in that location.
- The Stavich Trail in Lawrence County will be closed on December 1 to fix erosion and sediment issues that threaten the integrity of the trail. A funding decision from DCNR to cover the costs of trail surface repairs is currently pending.
- A PA DCNR project is currently underway to connect Ohioville to Columbiana County (Ohio) and the trail network there. This trail would follow the eastern side of Beaver Creek, along the old Ohio and ___ Rail line.
- Is currently working on a water trail access program with DEP. The program would include access/maintenance funds for ten years, as well as a commitment for facility operations. The identified locations are mostly along Class II/III streams.
- At Bradys Run Park, funding is in place to rehab a portion of the west park area into a mountain bike route.

Elaine Zelmanov, Councilman Patrick Dowd's Office

- The City of Pittsburgh is working on the 2009 Capital Budget at this time. For the first time, the City budget will include a line item for the construction/maintenance of bicycling infrastructure.
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Amy Camp, The Progress Fund, Trail Town Program

- The Trail Town Program, which has been working to promote economic development along the Great Allegheny Passage, is now working with the Laurel Highlands Visitor's Bureau on a joint economic impact study. Approximately 1200 businesses and trail users have been surveyed to gain an understanding of the trail economy/economic impact. They'll conduct additional survey of businesses in the first quarter of next year, and the completed study will be available in May.
- Sign guidelines have now been developed for the Great Allegheny Passage, providing for crucial consistency in signage throughout the trail and trail communities (for trail related signs).
- The Progress Fund completed its public art program along the trail, and with assistance from Community Connections and Pittsburgh 250, have unveiled 14 sculptures and murals along the trail.
- The Trail Town Program is being expanded, and will soon include efforts in the Maryland communities of Cumberland, Frostburg and Old Town.

- The Progress Fund has entered into an agreement with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to undertake a joint sustainability program that begins in January. More details to follow.

Roy Weil

- Provided a reminder that a list of “quick hit” cycling improvements was submitted to SPC and City representatives late last year, and that some of those improvements may be viable candidates for funding under the new PCTI/Smart Transportation program.
- Roy also reminded the group of the volunteer assistance program grants that area available from www.theyworking.org. This program provides small grants, from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars to provide materials to be used by volunteers involved in trail construction or maintenance activities. To date, they have provided funding for materials to aid in graffiti removal, fencing installation and gate construction.

Ryan Gordon, SPC

- Ryan updated the group on the status of the SPC draft Bike Suitability Maps, which have now been expanded to encompass most of Allegheny County. Over the winter months, Ryan will be working with Doniele Andrus and a cadre of bicycle enthusiasts in Beaver County to identify bicycle friendly (and unfriendly) roads in Beaver County.

Chris Miller/Lynn Manion, Airport Corridor Transportation Association (ACTA)

- ACTA has recently completed a Mobility Study in the Robinson/North Fayette Commercial areas, focusing on pedestrian movements through the area. The focus is the movement of pedestrians in an intermodal environment as they make their way to and from shopping/work venues. They are doing pedestrian counts, as well as “connecting the dots” to see where pedestrians are walking to identify the need for new/additional sidewalks, paths or trails.
- ACTA initiated its Walk Challenge in 2008, an effort to promote behavioral change among participants to encourage walking as a mode of transportation. (This was a joint effort with the Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA). There were 900 participants in the program. This winter, they will be supporting a mini-winter walk program entitled “See a Smaller Shadow.” They plan to resume the full scale Walk Challenge in 2009, in cooperation with the OTMA and Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.

Lynn Heckman, County of Allegheny

- The Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan, Allegheny Places, was adopted last week, and is now final, although still subject to supplementation.
- Allegheny County is likely to submit an application for PCTI/Smart Transportation funding for the Active Allegheny Program that was presented at this forum earlier in 2008.
- The County is working to implement the recommendations of the County Greenways and Trails Plan.

Taris Vrcek, McKees Rocks Civic Development Corporation

- McKees Rocks CDC is working with Friends of the Riverfront, the County of Allegheny, the Montour Trail Council and others in an effort to connect the Montour Trail to the communities of Stowe and McKees Rocks, by linking the Groveton Trailhead with the roadway network in the Bottoms area of McKees Rocks. The McKees Rocks CDC is very excited about this opportunity, and reports that the municipal leaders are on board, and supportive.
- In a more general sense, the McKees Rocks CDC is working on a strategic plan that is centralized around pedestrians and community walkability.

Ron Steffey, Allegheny Valley Land Trust

- After a longstanding legal battle, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in the AVLTL's favor on a number of trail right of way issues, and the AVLTL now expects all litigation to end by August of 2009. (Members of the Butler Freeport Community Trail report that they are now seeing greater cooperation from former litigants as well, as early "fears" over trail use have been erased.
- Probation season is underway, and some community members sentenced to community service for their infractions will be doing tree trimming along the Armstrong Trail through March of 2009. The goal of the group is to maintain a 16 ft. clear height, with a canopy above.
- An active participant in the Healthy Armstrong Program, AVLTL reports that the group has slightly altered its strategy to encourage activity by area residents. The old strategy was to demonstrate that cycling is a part of life. The new strategy is to demonstrate that it part of *everyone's* life.
- SPC was one of the first groups to be provided a personal tour of the Armstrong Trail in 2007. The group is now doing tours on a regular basis to demonstrate progress on trail development, identify trail deficiencies, and to identify and build on opportunities for synergistic development along the trail. To date, tours have been given to school districts (students, parents and board members), UPMC and the Healthy Armstrong partners, the University of Pittsburgh's Institute of Politics, and the Armstrong County Commissioners. The tours have been an effective way to educate and engage many sectors of the local population and economy.
- Building on the work noted above, the Armstrong Trail (and supporting AVLTL) are now seemingly involved in everything that happens in the vicinity of their trail, from PennDOT road relocations to issues related to cooling water at a local generating plant. They are also working (indirectly) on the installation of fiber optic lines, and on issues related to water quality monitoring and enhancement.
- On the water quality initiative, the AVLTL has purchased 269 acres of property having a greater than 25 percent slope to preserve, protect and enhance the local environment. The group may consider harvesting some of the timber on the property as a future fund-raising scheme, but is committed to maintaining the environmental stability of this parcel.

Robin Kamen, Three Rivers Inline Skating Club (TRIC)

- Is pleased to attend this meeting, a first for her.
- Reminds participants that skaters used trails for transportation, not just for recreation. To be able to use the trails, the trails must be paved. They cannot skate on limestone surfaces.
- Many skaters, such as Robin, may skate 15 to 20 miles during a single outing, and may do so as many as 3 or 4 times a week.

Elizabeth Grosklos, PennDOT District 12

- She noted that PennDOT had received an inquiry regarding a paving project on State Route 519 in Washington County, and noted that the paving project had been halted.
- On the Memorial Bridge project in Connellsville, pedestrian and bicycling is a key consideration in bridge design, and PennDOT continues to work to resolve how to best accommodate bicycles and pedestrians on this facility. It should be noted that this bridge is located directly over a portion of the Great Allegheny Passage, and is in the immediate vicinity of a State Bicycle Route, making pedestrian and bicycle access crucial.
- She also mentioned that the Coal and Coke Trail is currently looking to acquire a railroad trestle.

Dave Wright, County of Allegheny

- On the Panhandle Trail, work is underway to advance drainage improvement needs.
- With the completion of the Joffrey to Burgettstown section, the entire stretch from Walkers Mill to Burgettstown is paved.
- The Montour Trail Council held a ribbon cutting recently at West Peters. They continue to work to correct drainage issues near McDonalds Trestle/Imperia. A stairway is still needed at Venice, PA due to a recent bridge removal (due to low clearance) by PennDOT. In the vicinity of Triphammer Road, superstructure salvaged from a steel mill will be refabricated to provide _____.
- The Steel Valley Heritage Trail recently celebrated the opening of the Riverton Bridge, which connects McKees Rocks (Locust Street) to Duquesne. The connection from the Riverton Bridge to Grant Street in Duquesne is complete (and paved) but is currently closed due to construction activities on the adjacent flyover ramps. The flyover construction will require the installation of a short tunnel to carry the trail.
- In other developments on the Steel Valley Heritage Trail, the American Textile property has been acquired for trail development, and the Union Railroad is assisting with design of a bridge to carry the trail across the Norfolk Southern railroad lines, through the Union Railroad underpass, and into the Union Railroad property, all in the vicinity of the Port Perry Bridge.
- The firm of DMJM Harris is working on the design of the new Whitaker connection. From there the trail is paved all the way to Guardian Self Storage in Munhall. From the Waterfront Property, the trail group has "an agreement in principle" for trail access through the Sandcastle property, and engineering/design for that section of trail is currently underway. The plans call for the existing service road to be moved away from the railroad, and the trail constructed

between the access road and the railroad tracks. A culvert collapse in the vicinity of Streets Run also needs some attention from DEP.

- On the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, the area between the existing trail end and Second Street (behind Modern Reproduction) is under evaluation. Forest City Enterprises owns the property. A proposal/push to remove trucks and parking from CSX to make room for cyclists is also underway.

Jim Vauter, PennDOT District 10

- Vauter noted that the District recently added him to the Safety and ADA Compliance committees recently. He'll be bringing those perspectives to future meetings!

Lucinda Beattie, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership

- Recent efforts have focused on preparations for a potential transit strike.

Ben DeVore, PennDOT District 11

- The new PennDOT ADA policy was expected to be released last week. It has been delayed pending the resolution of certain provisions that were found to be in conflict with their sidewalk policy.
- PennDOT, District 11 will be holding a Pedestrian Advisory Public Outreach session to promote pedestrian safety on November 26th. A press conference at Market Square will precede a driver compliance exercise.

Tom Baxter, Friends of the Riverfront

- Friends of the Riverfront is currently working to on fundraising for the construction of the Route 28 trail project, which will result in a permanent, official connection between Pittsburgh and Millvale.
- FOTR is also working on a multi-jurisdictional Community Trails Initiative that would extend the trail north from Millvale towards the Freeport area, and eventual connections with the Armstrong Trail (as part of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail) as well as the Butler Freeport Community Trail. DNCR is spearheading the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail concept/project.
- In the vicinity of the Carnegie Science Center on the North Shore, work will soon be underway on the construction of the new Riverfront Park. The subject of the detour that has been put in place around the Casino/Science Center during construction has already been raised here. If people have opinions about how the Riverfront Park is designed, or how it accommodates pedestrians and cyclists, the time to provide input is now.

Erok Boerer, Bike Pittsburgh

- The 2009 version of the City of Pittsburgh Bike Map has been released. The new version of the map includes instructions on how to take a bicycle on the "T" (light rail system). A rip-proof, waterproof version of the map is available from Bike Pittsburgh.

- Bike Pittsburgh is also working on a new Commuter Bicycle Guide.
- Erok also discussed the recent road diet experiment (removing a lane of traffic to slow travel speeds and make room for non-motorized users) along East Liberty Boulevard. He reports that 1.5 miles of new bike lanes have been installed, and that cars are now moving along East Liberty at just about the posted speed limit.

Steve Patchan, City of Pittsburgh

- Patchan congratulated the County on the signage along East Liberty Boulevard in association with the road diet/new bike lanes. Patchan also noted that the East Liberty Boulevard project is part of a larger project to link the parks of the East End. Key overall plan elements include improvements to Highland Avenue into Highland Park; The development of a shared use path through Reizenstein School as part of the Bakery Square redevelopment; and the installation of a shared use path to Mellon Park from the Beechwood Boulevard Bike Lane. The bike lanes on Beechwood Boulevard are also scheduled to be brought up to standards.
- Remaining unaddressed are issues between Frankstown Road and Penn Avenue.
- Over the winter, the City hopes to identify other bike lane needs in the City, as well as work on the development of several cycling oriented municipal ordinances, to include a Bike Parking Ordinance and a Detour Ordinance that address the needs/desires of cyclists, each of which is in an advanced state of preparation. An ordinance on the supply of bicycle parking racks in commercial areas is fully drafted, and is currently under review by the City's Law Department. Adoption in 2008 is anticipated.
- Soon to be underway is a Feasibility Study, partially funded by the Port Authority of Allegheny County, is a feasibility assessment of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Busway to determine what would be required to permit safe use of the (East Busway) by cyclists. (Right of Way and Structure width are the most frequently cited deficiencies.)
- The Commute 101 educational materials recently developed represent the first of what the City hopes are many such guides.

Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA)

- Will be participating in the "See a Smaller Shadow" program with ACTA this winter. They envision a lot of participation by hospital and institutional employees/students. They've created a map of indoor walking routes in the Oakland area, where hospital and university buildings are often interconnected.
- OTMA has been working with the Oakland community for some time regarding transportation options in the event of a transit strike, including promotion of CommuteInfo, and sending email blasts to their members and encouraging the creation of carpools/vanpools.
- PTMA is working with Bike Pittsburgh on elements of the Oakland Greenway project, which will parallel Forbes Avenue, and provide an alternate non-motorized route into and through Oakland.

Patrick Roberts, PennDOT District 11

- Roberts indicated that he provides agency and stakeholder coordination oversight on all state and federally funded road and bridge projects sponsored by the City of Pittsburgh and County of Allegheny. He is interested in coordinating future projects with this committee.
- He is responsible for stakeholder and agency coordination along with public involvement on the PennDOT sponsored Route 51 improvement project between the West End Bridge and the McKees Rocks Line. He's currently working with the McKees Rocks CDC, the City and others to identify the needs along the corridor. He's looking to engage any and all interested parties.
- The County of Allegheny is about to begin the design phase for the rehabilitation of the Three Sisters Bridges (Clemente, Warhol and Carson St Bridges) in downtown Pittsburgh. He is seeking input concerning those projects.
- The issue of the "tiger teeth" design of the expansion grates on these bridges was raised from the group, along with the question of whether there was a better option that could be put in place. Roberts' response indicated that the historic status of the individual bridges, and the fact that they are the only known example of three "matching bridges" presents challenges to innovative "modern" design solutions.
- As a follow up – the County of Allegheny will study cycling hazards and connectivity to the surrounding trails as part of the design of project. The results will be presented to the committee when available.

Tracy Stack, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

- Funding announcements for the most recent grant application window will be made next week (on or about Tuesday, November 18th).
- The deadline for the next round of DCNR Recreational Trails funding is April 22, 2009, at 4:00 p.m. This year, hard copy applications may be submitted by mail, but DCNR will also accept online applications.
- A new separate process is under development to run projects through the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) review process. It is thought that this new review process will ultimately make programs "greener." Among the considerations likely to be identified in this process are otherwise unforeseen impacts to protected flora and/or fauna.
- As a heads up, Stack warned that the DCNR Recreational Trails program has become increasingly competitive, which makes the commitment of local match funds a critical element of the application. Frankly, it is becoming harder and harder for DCNR to fund applications from non-profit groups, as those funds come (exclusively) from a smaller, separate program (Growing Greener). Therefore, non-profits are encouraged to team with municipal clients where possible in the solicitation of DNCR funds.
- DCNR plans to hold workshops for Recreational Trail fund program participants and applicants on February 19, 2009.

End.