

NYSAMPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Working Group Meeting

Thursday March 27, 2014 – 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Hosted by ECTC at their offices at 400 East Church Street, Elmira

MEETING NOTES

1. Introductions

MPOS:

A/GFTC – Kate Mance (phone)

BMTS - Scott Reigle (chair)

CDTC – Sandy Misiewicz, Jen Ceponis (phone)

ECTC – Scott Shaw

GTC – Bob Torzynski (phone)

ITCTC – Fernando de Aragon

OCTC – Chad Wade (phone)

NYSDOT:

NYSDOT Main Office – Cathy Kuzsman (phone), Mary Harding (phone), Gerardo Mendoza (phone)

Region 5 – Chris Church (phone)

Region 6 – Jeff Spencer, Pauline Burnes

Region 8 – Lisa Mondello (phone), Jim Rapoli (phone)

Region 9 – Mark Bowers (phone)

NYBC – Josh Wilson

Presenters:

Andy Avery, Elmira DPW

Jim Pfiffer, Friends of the Chemung River

Ari Lavine, Ithaca City Attorney

NYSAMPO Staff: Corey Mack, RSG

2. Lackawanna Rail Trail – Elmira

Development of the Lackawanna Rail Trail was presented from two perspectives: public works and a bicycle / pedestrian / environmental advocate.

Public Works: Andy Avery presented.

The Lackawanna Trail is a 3.5-mile multiuse path along the former path of the historic Lackawanna Railroad. The trail has been in planning and development for 15 years, with 1/3 of the overall length constructed.

The existing trail section was funded in 2003 with TEA-21 Enhancement Funds. The trail will extend from the Chemung River north to Eldridge Park and east to Lake Street, largely making use of railroad corridors, City-owned Right-of-Way and property, and NYSDOT Right-of-Way. Construction of this section was completed in the fall of 2012.

A 5-mile extension, the Riverview Segment, is under development from the current trail terminus at Water Street. The trail will continue south across the Newtown Creek and along the Chemung River to CR8 / Lowman Road. The existing bridge over the Newtown Creek is being rehabilitated with local funds. The remaining Riverview Segment is partially funded with a Transportation Enhancement Program grant.

Landscaping and aesthetics are included in the projects, funded as a reimbursable project expense, county / city / local funds, or through private partnerships.

Bicycle / Pedestrian / Environmental Advocate: Jim Pfiffer presented.

Jim served as the primary trail advocate, forming the Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, advocating for enhancements to the river corridor, engaging and educating the public, and protecting the river and surrounding environment.

As a reporter for the local newspaper, Jim wrote about the Lackawanna Rail Trail Feasibility Study, and then saw the project shelved. He assembled a group of local community officials, and received funding from private donation. Now a well-developed organization with 1100 members, annual membership fees and private funds cover operating costs.

Path is unique for the variety of landscape: urban Elmira, industrial history, and natural riverscape south and east of the city. The path provides opportunity to engage the public – Earth Day volunteers picked up 6-7 tons of trash along the trail, and there is a program to “Adopt” a section of the path.

Future path amenities and plans include mile markers, changeable informational panels on history and natural environment, bike lockers, future spur trails and fishing access points, and a connection to the Catherine Valley Trail.

3. Ithaca Sidewalk Policy Presentation – Presented by Ari Lavine, Ithaca City Attorney

The City of Ithaca passed a law in 2013 to more fairly, equitably, and predictably raise funds for sidewalk construction and maintenance.

Under the former plan, landowners were responsible for maintenance and snow removal of sidewalk adjacent to their property. Building and repairing sidewalks was a requirement of building permits, but rarely enforced in residential settings. System was regressive; similar sized properties faced the same burden no matter what the use of property and pedestrian generation. When owners were required to repair, it would be a costly one-time bill for the owner. If a sidewalk was in disrepair, the owner was required to replace it; if the homeowner was notified by the city and didn't replace, the city could do it and was required to bill homeowner. In addition, residents / neighbors could complain about sidewalks in disrepair as a punitive measure to the responsible owner, and the city would become involved in personal disputes.

Objectives of the new system:

- Make costs fair and predictable
- Better, faster, more consistent repairs

- Continue to include tax exempt property owners (60% of city property is tax exempt, ensure these entities still contribute to system)
- Treat sidewalk as a shared resource
- Not collected as a tax

New system excludes Cornell University – they remain under old system. The University maintains the sidewalks adjacent to their facilities very well, and the city retains its ability to require new / rebuilt sidewalks.

The city was separated into 5 districts, attempting to equalize money raised in the district with the money needed in the district. These sidewalk funds are to be raised as special assessments, not a tax; money raised in district must be spent in district. Different districts have different funding levels, but the same assessment rate.

The assessment for each property is based on a formula using the statewide tax classifications. There are two rates:

- low foot traffic lots(one / two family homes) (low pedestrian generators) - \$70 flat rate
- other uses: \$140 plus:
 - \$0.015 / SF of buildings on lot
 - \$30 / 55 FT of frontage

New sidewalks are still required in the site plan review of building permits.

Credit is given to individuals required to replace sidewalk in the last 20 years. The sidewalk is depreciated over 20 years, and the remaining value can be applied towards the assessment fee. No reimbursements are given beyond the 20 year depreciation.

Use of the assessment funding is based on community selection processes. City crews and contractors can be used. Assessment rates can be adjusted by the community. Funds cannot be used for off road alignments or trails, but can be used for parks. Implementation of new assessment strategy is underway.

4. New York Bicycling Coalition (NYBC) 2014 Initiatives – Josh Wilson, NYBC

The NYBC is a partnership of bicycle advocacy groups, municipal committees, and bike shops around the state. With support from the Governors Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC), the NYBC funds education and safety programs; advocacy work is funded through membership fees, private donations, and other sources of income.

The primary GTSC programs and activities include:

- Development and implementation of a statewide bicycle safety plan as two concurrent campaigns
 - Traditional information based brochures and fact sheets
 - Statewide “See and be Seen” resource, bringing together local campaigns, the Department of Health, and directed at bicyclists and drivers

- Working with Marketing firm to develop a bicycle safety campaign, emotionally targeted techniques, advertising concepts to get attention, those types have been shown to have more of an impact on people
 - Encourage respect between cyclists and motorists
 - Humanize cyclists and pedestrians
 - Reinforce the cyclists right to the road

Educational campaigns include recent skills training with the CDTC; the free training included a full day of classroom learning, half day outdoor off-road practice, and a half day of on-road skills application.

Other educational materials and media campaigns will be primarily digital. There will be some printed materials; these materials will be customizable and updateable. The materials will be distributed to both motorists and bicyclists.

Enforcement campaigns include training with local enforcement agencies, most recently in Rochester and Westchester. The trainings can be expensive, and the Coalition is researching a more economical two-hour refresher course that trained volunteer advocates can provide to enforcement agencies. All officers should get the training; bicycle specific laws aren't specialized, all officers should be up to date.

NYBC Events (<http://nybc.net/events/>):

- Bike New York State Exhibit / Bike the Boroughs – bike trade show and convention to promote bike tourism, this year working directly with I Love NY.
- Roll-On Service on Amtrak Ethan Allen Express. As a member of an Amtrak Task Force group, helping implement a pilot project and collect survey data on amenities offered. The data will be used to develop a business plan with the intention of additional implementation on more Amtrak routes.

5. Review of Pressing Issues from Written Summaries

a. Best Practices for Online Maps and Apps – From Emily Dozier, PDCTC

How are others using online maps and apps to collect and use data?

Josh Wilson suggested using Map My Ride (<http://www.mapmyride.com/us/>), linking / downloading the data for use in other programs or blogs. For off-road / mountain bike trails, Mountain Bike Project (<http://www.mtbproject.com/>) has been compiling user trails and ratings.

b. Safe Streets Act

The Safe Streets Act requires each state to have in effect within two years a law, or each state department of transportation and metropolitan planning organization (MPO) an explicit policy statement that requires all federally-funded transportation projects, with certain exceptions, to accommodate the safety and convenience of all users in accordance with certain complete streets principles.

Fact Sheet Attached.

AMPO is tasked to monitor the progress and impact of this bill and other federal regulations through tasks in the Work Program.

c. Imminent Complete Street Projects

The City of Ithaca is preparing a plan to identify potential complete street applications, using data including bicycle and pedestrian volumes, transit routes, bus stops and shelters, sidewalk connectivity and inventory, and other factors. The plan will be an identification tool but not a prescriptive treatment program.

d. Potential Future Topics

The Working Group should compile a list of additional specific projects for discussion at these meetings, similar to the Lackawanna Trail presentation. **Web conference to share computer screen with remote participants is available through RSG.**

6. Work Plan Implementation

a. Review of 2014-2015 Work Plan

The work plan has been developed and distributed.

b. Survey of Past Funding Recipients

Received suggestions to revise cover letter to distinguish between Safe Routes to School projects, Transportation Enhancement Program projects, and projects funded through other sources. There were no additional comments on the survey itself. NYSDOT will not participate in survey. MPO Working Group members are encouraged to contact the survey participants to describe and introduce the survey. **Danielle and subcommittee will make changes to the cover letter and survey, send email to entire working group to describe process and how to administer.**

c. Questions on Driving Exam

The two questions that were developed were already in the driving test pool of questions. There were three questions initially propose, with two fully developed; the third question was not fully developed. From the June 2013 notes:

- *When a pedestrian is crossing at a crosswalk or intersection, a driver must:*
 - a. Yield the right of way until the pedestrian has crossed
 - b. ...(add other answer options)

Chuck DeWeese documented the process and timeline for including a question in the driver pool. **Scott Reigle to distribute email to the group.** Updates to the question pool take 4-5 months.

WG to decide if question should be developed further for inclusion in the driving exam question pool.

d. Bicycle and Pedestrian Counters

The NYBC has hired a part time staffer to compile statewide bike-ped count data. What are the agencies doing now?

- Miovision is a video based system, but sharing the equipment would be difficult due to conflicts with scheduling use, maintenance, and cost sharing. The units cost about \$5000 each, and analysis of the videos costs about \$7 per hour.
- Working Group could compile a list of contractors capable of video counting. PDCTC's contract for traffic counts, currently provides the ability to request bike-ped counts with Miovision equipment.

e. Develop Fact Sheet on Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws

GTSC / DOH / NYBC to develop a one page brochure on bicycle and pedestrian laws in traffic. The brochure will be available on their website and distributed to the Working Group. **Josh Wilson to distribute draft when available.**

7. NYSDOT Initiatives

a. Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – Mary Harding, NYSDOT Main Office

TAP grant workshops are underway. Sponsors and applicants are required to attend the TAP workshop and the Federal Aid 101 workshop. TAP applications are due June 11, with pre-review available May 7; pre-review can provide feedback on budget, schedule, and other grant items.

The NYSDOT regions will work with MPOs to score the applications by Sept 10; final decisions by October 8.

b. Complete Streets – Cathy Kuzsman, NYSDOT Main Office

The Complete Streets law requires the DOT to compile a report on the implementation of the law, modifications to current standards to meet the intent of the law, and best practices moving forward. This report is completed and sent to the legislature.

https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/completestreets/repository/Complete%20Streets%20Final%20Report_NYSDOT.pdf

A new draft of the bicycle and pedestrian checklist is being prepared. The bike/ped generator checklist will replace the pedestrian checklist. **Cathy to distribute to WG when available.**

c. Status of Bike Maps

Bike map printing is being discussed internally to develop a new approach. Lisa Mondello noted that some bicycle routes have changed recently; Gerardo stated that the DOT will reach out to the Regions to ensure the latest information is captured prior to printing.

8. Schedule of Upcoming Meeting

- a. Conference Call: Thursday, June 12 (10 AM – 12 PM)**
- b. In-Person Meeting: Thursday September 11 (10 AM – 4 PM) in Utica**

S. 2004 – Safe Streets Act

Official Summary

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Defines \"complete streets principles\" as federal, state, local, or regional level transportation laws, policies, or principles which ensure that the safety and convenience of all users of a transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, children, older individuals, motorists, freight vehicles, and individuals with disabilities, are accommodated in all phases of project planning and development.

Allows such law or policy to make project-specific exemptions from such principles only if:

- (1)** affected roadways prohibit specified users by law from using them, the cost of a compliance project would be excessively disproportionate to the need, or the population, employment densities, traffic volumes, or level of transit service around a roadway is so low that the expected roadway users will not include pedestrians, public transportation, freight vehicles, or bicyclists; and
- (2)** all such exemptions are properly approved.

Requires the Secretary of Transportation (DOT) to establish a method for evaluating compliance by state departments of transportation and MPOs with complete streets principles.

Requires the Access Board to issue final standards for accessibility of new construction and alterations of pedestrian facilities for public rights-of-way.

Requires the Secretary to conduct research regarding complete streets to:

- (1)** assist states, MPOs, and local jurisdictions in developing and implementing complete streets-compliant plans, projects, procedures, policies, and training programs; and
- (2)** establish benchmarks for, and provide technical guidance on, implementing complete streets policies and principles.