

Date: November 30, 2011

To: Charlie Strunk

From: Dan Goodman and Bob Patten, TDG
David Jackson and Stacy Cook, CS

RE: Meeting Notes – BAC Meeting #3
Countywide Bicycle Master Plan
November 16, 2011



Meeting Attendees

BAC Members: Brandice Elliott (Herndon), Aaron Frank (Mason Dist.), Steve Still (FxTAC), Randy Dittberner & Cindy Englehart (VDOT), Liz Cronauer (FCPA), Fionnuala Quinn (FABB), Anne Mader (Bike Shop Owner), Bruce Wright (WABA), Peyton Onks (Burke Dist.) Lindsey Smith (Braddock Dist.)

Guests: Erik Backus (GMU), John Hoopes (FABB)

Consultant Team: Dan Goodman, Bob Patten, David Jackson,

FDOT Staff: Charlie Strunk

Overview of Work Completed to Date

Clifton area

Key issues - bicycle safety on narrow roads (mostly recreational/weekend cycling), better trail access to Ox Road sidepath, improved signage with better details/information for cyclists and motorists.

- VDOT staff raised concerns with use of non-standard MUTCD signs. New signs can be developed as long as it includes descriptive text; making up non-standard symbols or borrowing symbols from other sign uses can be a problem.
- It is expected that in some ways signs can be designed to be more descriptive in order to better accommodate specific issues, which is not completely outside the MUTCD.
- VDOT used uphill grade bike sign for Wakefield Bridge – trails do not have to follow MUTCD protocols especially if trail ownership is not VDOT. VDOT also notes that a bike next to car sign is not-preferred (particularly on narrow roads <12' lanes).
- Example - in Oregon and other locations, drivers are given warning if a bike is in a tunnel through a warning light activated by cyclist prior to entering tunnel. This is a possibility as well to inform drivers in uphill/curvy road areas.
- Many locations without ability to add full shoulders, bail out areas in up-hill segments are a possible solution.

Reston-Herndon area

Key issues - access to Metro, trail crossings, wayfinding needs, difficult roads – many w/o an obvious solution, access to destinations (Target on Sunset Hills Rd. as example), coordination between master planning and bike planning

- BAC members noted that the safe routes to school discussion was a critical element of the public meeting. There is additional need for coordination on this topic. (potential for a thematic group meeting)
- Fair Oaks is an important part of this area – less well served, county crossroads, major barriers in this area that needs to be highlighted, supervisor participation not yet active. Chantilly/Centreville and Central Fairfax will also cover this area (maybe as a specific focus area at these future meeting's).

On-line mapping tool

- This point forward – looking for comments on Draft recommendations.
- GIS technical staff will investigate editing tool issues and follow-up as needed.
- Google map references are ok. Fairfax County provided some information to Google in the past.
- Future programmed or planned trails/improvement locations should be entered. All details included in a municipal or county capital programs will be mapped.
- Consider a smaller, working meeting focusing on trails with the objective to identify their role within the master plan and the priorities.
- The on-line mapping tool can be updated at anytime – key as always is to provide a comment so it can be understood by consultant team, tracked, and followed-up on as needed.

VDOT meetings

Outcomes - Better understanding of resurfacing process (inputs, constraints, rolling schedules) and communication channels between VDOT HQ and NOVA District.

- Discussion at the meetings identified that there are at least 9 potential funding sources to support bike infrastructure investment.
- 2-way understanding of what Fairfax County is trying to accomplish is important. VDOTs 2% resurfacing policy for bikes is one of the largest opportunities in county (2% is a significant investment for bikes as a proportion of the total VDOT resurfacing budget) – the outcomes of this plan will help VDOT be more logical with implementation of the policy in Fairfax County
- There are 2 primary components of the annual paving program
 - Repaving curb to curb gutter lines – look at narrowing lanes to add bike lanes in negotiation with county
 - Build shoulders to benefit paving program and safety – direct \$\$\$ to places where bike routes/bike need is high
- 2' shoulder widening is the minimum, more can be added (see VA 123 work) – widths of 4'+ require more extensive VDOT review.
- There appears to be misunderstanding on what counts towards providing 2% (for example, if a repaving project provides a 2' shoulder should that be counted toward the 2% as a cycling improvement?). Per VDOT, the program started with the idea that any new shoulder is an improvement.

- In many cases the white outside lane line actually uses part of the 2' shoulder, making the usable space less. The shoulder design does not typically require full depth excavation.
- Overall, it is a challenge to determine where best to do this work to meet the resurfacing policy. An outcome of this plan is to help VDOT make this determination. A broad scope of variables including speed and volume are currently considered in making a determination.
- Roads with graded shoulders are very good candidates.
- Nothing in the VDOT policy says we can't improve a shoulder on a road even though the entire road is not being repaved at the same time - economies of scale prefer that it is done at the same time, but it is not a policy or directive.
- Only limited access facilities and rural road shoulders trigger rumble strip requirements.

Field work update

- Whenever road closures are done for traffic calming purposes – should include bike/pedestrian connections.
- Considering needs for cul-de-sac connections (may elect to use on-line mapping tool to seek responses)
- Evaluate findings from recent planning processes, for example the Reston Metro access group report
- Connecting stubs that have been abandoned and given to property owners, look for easement opportunities here
 - This process includes a request to VDOT ROW for abandonment – many states have legislation, before you can return any land (ROW), must consider opportunity for non-motorized usage
 - County also processes these – staff is very careful in the consideration of any opportunity for bike-pedestrian connectivity
- Informal connections (for example there is a trail, but no easement) - some have public access rights, some do not – if it is a critical connection, the county can start the acquisition/easement process – an outcome of the plan should inform the County of these locations
- Fairfax Pkwy trail connections – Sunrise Valley/Sunset Hills, Dulles Toll Road (ongoing project to reconfigure trail crossing at Dulles Toll Road eastbound on-ramp)

2) Discussion Points

Bike related programs/organizations

- The plan hopes to describe a baseline of bicycle-related programs currently active in the county, this will help determine how to get people to work together/coordinate/build programs, and provide a starting point for future performance measures.
- Idea for a Fairfax Bike Summit has led to an initial listing of organizations (prepared by FABB) with ongoing support/education programs and event sponsors.

- As part of planning for holding thematic group meetings, the initial listing has shown good connections for areas of safety, health, youth, and to some extent economic development.
- George Mason as a positive link between the County and Fairfax City, with the link to Vienna Metro as the consistent focus area. George Mason also has a campus master plan that can inform this plan.
- George Mason also has an on-campus, student led group, developing orientation sessions for bicycling on campus. Tyler Orton at George Mason teaches a traffic skills course based on Florida's "Cycling Savvy" program. On-campus bicycling strongly sponsored by Oasis Bike Works (Bike to Mason Day).
- County park staff suggested that there are many organizations where primary focus is trails, environmental protection or land conservation, but members are active/interested cyclists – Friends of the W&OD Trail, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, hiking/trails clubs, other conservation groups.
- Request to BAC to continue to add groups that are not on the list, also other county agencies with responsibilities relevant to cycling themes. Project team will send BAC a follow-up reminder for these inputs.

Upcoming thematic meetings

- Multicultural – complicated issue to strategize, still considering the right approach.
- Need law enforcement contacts – Charlie S. will develop this list.
- Bicycling and safe routes to school the most significant concern – the focus of this group should be on middle-school, high-school and colleges (elementary school is mostly walking).
 - Safe routes to school program technically stops at the 8th grade, so should the focus group's name be changed.
 - Access to schools is not only for kids, also staff – scale is also very notable in county (significant trips to schools – also the biggest employer in the county).
 - Bike education is supposed to happen in 5th grade but typically does not.

3) Next Steps

On-line mapping tool:

1. Starting to process ideas for the network. In January, all field work will be entered, and a proposed network for each area will be developed for the BAC to comment on.
2. Each subarea network will be fully drafted before setting up review.

Consideration of plan timeframe:

- Funding and implementation limitations make it difficult to identify real and specific implementation timeframe's – only so much can get done by utilizing existing programs in short term.

- To get more done sooner, there is going to need to be another county source of funding in order for the county to pursue new projects.
- VDOT is promulgating policies – every VDOT project will be looked at in terms of how it helps bicycling – plan can inform these VDOT decisions.
- The plan can build a network and a planning level estimate of total investment required. For example, if this amount of \$\$\$ is dedicated every year, it would take this long to implement the plan.
- Note, when the Board of Supervisors ultimately adopts the Plan, it will become part of the Comprehensive Plan (so it will be legally binding). Under VA code the County is supposed to update it every 5 years.
- VDOT will take this into consideration with every project (Comp. Plan. is the guidance to VDOT – there is a very high bar to cross if VDOT chooses to not address a county request).
- In Tysons – we came up with short, mid, long recommendations – good tool for county to help prioritize investments and live within our means.

Consideration of costs and funding:

- The Plan should not be constrained by what we think we can fund (complete agreement).
- The BAC should brainstorm ideas for dedicated funding for bicycles, and develop concepts for the most realistic options.
- Do we want to show big \$'s – could attract negative media attention. Part of the BACs strategy to help communicate the need.
- Per Charlie, cost estimates are not high on the County's list of what the plan should provide and are not typically included in a Comp. Plan document.
- Based on the level of detail expected for Plan recommendations, costs can be generated at a planning level only.
- The Plan should inform future requests for funding, particularly for low hanging fruit/near term projects with example costs (appears most helpful to county).
- Also important to focus attention on the big projects that will serve as the backbone of the County network.

Consideration of Plan outcomes:

- Help VDOT recognize on all projects where allowances should be made for bicycle travel.
- The bike network is a proactive approach, while the resurfacing approach is reactive (an important element of the Plan will be a matrix that provides more detail for VDOT Bike Policy Plan applicable to Fairfax County).
- The Plan should establish specific guidance for all roads (difficult for the plan process to cover every facility).
- Upfront the Plan should also market why biking is important for all road users, even drivers—media will pick this up, needs to be articulated.

Next BAC Meeting:

- Next meeting is Wednesday, April 11, 2011, 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm.
- The project website and on-line mapping tool will be a key component of communication over the next months.

Handouts –

- Meeting agenda
- Fairfax Countywide Bicycle Transportation Plan factsheet
- Profiles (Clifton, Mt Vernon, Great Falls-McLean)
- Public meeting survey
- November and December public meeting notices