



AD HOC PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2

City of Alexandria | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Thursday, October 9th, 2014 | 7:00-9:00 pm
TC Williams High School, Rotunda Room | 3330 King Street

MEETING NOTES

Committee Members in attendance:

- Jennifer Hovis, Committee Chair
- Kevin Posey
- Stephen Wenderoth
- Mollie Danforth
- Dave Brown
- Dr. Ayne Furman
- Scott Anderson
- Pablo Torres
- Dr. Dan Kulund
- William Schuyler
- Steve Beggs

Project staff in attendance:

- Steve Sindiong, City of Alexandria
- Carrie Sanders, City of Alexandria
- RJ Eldridge, Toole Design Group
- Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group

Welcome and Introductions

- Committee Chair Jennifer Hovis welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Ad Hoc Committee members and project staff introduced themselves.

Ground Rules

- Jennifer Hovis described the ground rules for the meeting.

Debrief on the Public Meeting

- Jennifer Hovis gave an overview of the meeting.
 - There were multiple stations, including a large wall map where people could note their favorite and least favorite street. The conversations in the break out groups were very interesting.
- The Committee brainstormed ways to increase the diversity of plan participants.
 - Diversify the locations of meetings and hold them in places with excellent transit service. The Beatley Library or somewhere in Arlandria would be good locations for future meetings.

- The meeting was publicized in Spanish but there are other populations that may need targeted outreach and translation (for example in Vietnamese).
- There should be some activities in the future that happen during the day and that will take place at other locations or events such as festivals – this may help bring out more types of people who don't always participate in traditional outreach methods.
- The culture of civic engagement is less prominent in Latin American culture, so informal gathering/feedback opportunities will be very important.

Key Issues and Opportunities

- Project Consultant RJ Eldridge (Toole Design Group) gave an overview and led a discussion of the key issues that have come up in the public meetings, and through the online interactive map and the online survey. Key topics discussed include:
 - Targeted intersection improvements, safety concerns, improved access for people with disabilities, desire lines, connections to schools, parks and other destinations, East/West and North/South connections for bicyclists, transitions at trail start/end points, and connections to neighboring jurisdictions, among others.
 - There is the need to also look at the interface of public spaces with private shopping centers, to ensure that the entire trip is safe for all transportation system users.
 - There is a need to educate all transportation system users on how to safely travel in Alexandria. This includes tourists – perhaps there is the opportunity to work with hotels or tour buses to educate out-of-towners.
 - Reasonableness of rules. There is a need to ensure that the rules of the road are reasonable; i.e., if the crossing time is too short for pedestrians, they will cross illegally. If there are unreasonable number of traffic control stops along a bicycle route, bicyclists are less likely to stop along the way.
 - Bike share stations information panels are a location where rules of the road can be written to educate tourists and visitors.
 - Consider handing out pedestrian and bicycle safety rules at hotels for visitors.
 - More education on bicycle symbols / markings is needed.
 - Transitions at trails are very important – too often they stop abruptly or it is unclear where both pedestrians and bicyclists are supposed to go.
 - There is going to be a lot of population growth in the region and we need many more bicycle and pedestrian facilities if we want to see increases in walking and bicycling.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Goals and Objectives

- The project team will use the vision, goals and objectives from the 2008 Transportation Master Plan as a basis for the new vision, goals and objectives for this plan. RJ Eldridge led a discussion about the pedestrian and bicycle goals and objectives and the group discussed opportunities to revise/adapt them for this new plan. Committee and public comments about the vision, goals and objectives include:

- Make it clear that people with mobility impairments who need to drive will still be able to drive (“automobility”). We need to emphasize increasing transportation choice for people and making different travel choices reasonable options in terms of time and convenience.
- If the goal is to reduce driving, we need to be very clear about this. This change will take targeted investment.
- There is the need to reduce vehicle speeds citywide. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) submitted a statement recommending a reduction of the standard speed. This will be emailed to the committee.
- Emphasize walking in all parts of the City.
- Consider car-free zones
- Do not emphasize walking over bicycling.
- Keep in mind reasonable distances for walking. The distance people are willing to walk is different from the distance people are willing to bike.
- The focus on Safe Routes to School may be too specific when education efforts need to target three groups: children, City residents/workers, and visitors. That said, federal programs like Safe Routes to School are important to incorporate because they are backed by funding.
- Work with private schools to provide group transportation, such as buses, so that parents don’t need to transport individual students.
- Recognize that personal safety and stranger danger is a factor in children walking and bicycling.
- Increase education and awareness about new facilities and what they mean (e.g. green bike lanes), including education in schools.
- Improve reporting of crash data and near misses, possibly through partnerships with hospitals.
- Make the overarching bicycle goal stronger and more bold – parallel to the pedestrian goal. Emphasize connecting destinations and building a system that meets the needs of bicyclists. Overall the pedestrian goal and objectives are much stronger than the bicycle ones.
- It is important to connect pedestrians and cyclists to transit.
- Incorporate protected bike lanes.
- Don’t over-rely on enforcement. Enforcement must be one of many strategies, not the only one.
- The Bicycle Goal statement should incorporate recreation and focus on making bicycling more enjoyable.
- The extent that the City can fund improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure through developer contributions should be looked at, as many residents do not want their tax dollars increased to pay for improvements.

Summary of Existing Conditions

- RJ Eldridge showed a snapshot of the online interactive map and current responses on the online survey. So far, people indicate that they want to see better and more sidewalks, trails and bike lanes, as well as lower vehicle speeds and less traffic. He also shared data on transportation mode share, current bicycle and pedestrian mode share, trends in commute mode over time, commute trip length, pedestrian and bicycle count data, crash data, bikeshare data.
- The committee discussed other focus areas and topics that will be important to the planning process. Committee member and public comments included:
 - Landmark Mall is an example where this is opportunity to improve both physical conditions in that location and also the process for private development to ensure that places like this are designed to be walkable and bicycle friendly. City needs to be more aggressive when working with private developers to include adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
 - Other shopping centers like Bradley need on-site improvements - this will be enhanced through a partnership between the City and private landowners. A committee members recommended that the City “be bold” with other future private developments.
 - The needs of people with disabilities are very important. It needs to be easy and comfortable for them to travel in the City, and if they need to drive, they transportation system must accommodate them.
 - TC Williams High School is an important focus area for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.
 - Sidewalk maintenance is important and needs improved, and maintenance of vegetation that encroaches on sidewalk is also needed.
 - Access around schools and Northern Virginia Community College is important.
 - Dr. Ayne Furman shared photos and documentation of conversations/observations in the Old Town Alexandria neighborhood. These will be emailed to the committee.
 - The Plan should be flexible and add new focus areas as things change over time.
 - Redevelopment areas like Pickett and Van Dorn are important.
 - Bike parking is important and needs to be increased, especially at shopping areas. D.C.’s bike parking program is a model because they install bike racks on private property upon request.
 - Consider different routes for thru cyclists and Alexandria residents.
 - Plan should consider development and construction along the waterfront and on Union Street
 - Vehicle parking requirements cause spillover onto the street in Old Town. The City is undergoing an evaluation of its parking policy.
 - This plan should align with the Planning Department’s near and long-range land use plans. For example, we need to start planning to accommodate growth coming to the Waterfront area of Old Town.
 - This plan should improve transit access including buses, Transitway and trolley.

Vice Chair Nominations

- Following nominations and voting, Scott Anderson was elected as a Vice Chair of the Committee.

Next Steps/Wrap Up

- The next Ad Hoc Committee meeting will be in winter with the date to be determined. The Committee requested that it occur in early winter so as to maintain the momentum of the plan.
- Jennifer Hovis reminded everyone that Sunshine Laws dictate that the Committee not hold discussions or meet outside of noticed public meetings like this one.
- The project staff and committee chair thanked everyone for their participation. It is important that the Committee reach out to their groups / constituents to give updates on the plan and encourage participation in the project.

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