



SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION

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Southwestern Pennsylvania Active Transportation Forum

May 11, 2016
Meeting Summary

Attendance:

Adam	Mattis	DCNR
Andrea	Elock	Port Authority
Betsy	Zang	McCormick Taylor
Darrell	Rapp	Swissvale Borough
David	Wohlwill	Port Authority
David	White	Pittsburgh Bike Share
Doniele	Russell	Lawrence County
Donna	Green	Regional Trail Corporation
Elias	Gwinn	Velodoxi
Eric	Boerer	Pittsburgh Bike Share
Jeff	Grim	IUP
Jerrold	Green	Northside Bike-Ped Committee
Jina	O'Neill	Oakland TMA
Josh	Krug	Indiana County Office of Planning & Development
Joy	Ruff	McCormick Taylor
Kathleen	McCaig	Cranberry Twp
Kathryn	Power	PennDOT
Kathryn	Schlesinger	Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group
Kristin	Saunders	City of Pittsburgh/DCP
Laurie	Lafontaine	C & I Trail Council
Linda	Gwinn	Blairsville Community Development Authority
Mark	Magalotti	University of Pittsburgh
Marla	Myer Papernick	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Mary	Shaw	Trail Volunteer Fund, Free Wheeling Easy
Richard	Feder	University of Pittsburgh, Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition
Ron	Steffey	Armstrong Trail, EPTA
Roy	Gothie	PennDOT Statewide Bike/Ped Coordinator
Roy	Weil	Trail Volunteer Fund, Free Wheeling Easy
Scott	Bricker	Bike Pgh
Ryan	Deto	City Paper
John	Buerkle	Pashek Associates
Kimberly Bellora	Maltempo	Institute of Politics
Lydia	Yoder	G-Tech Strategies/Northside
Adrienne	Buka	Friends of the Riverfront

Melissa	Troutman	Public Herald
Joey	Franze	IUP

SPC Staff:

Andy	Waple	Transportation Program Development Manager
Chuck	Imbrogno	Models & Data Analysis Manager
Daniel	Alwine	Project Development Specialist
Darin	Alviano	Project Delivery Specialist
David	Totten	Transit Planner
Doug	Smith	Transportation Planning Director
Kathy	Stefani	ATWIC Program Manager
Ken	Flack	Transportation Planner
Leann	Chaney	Transportation Planner
Lisa Kay	Schweyer	CommuteInfo Program, Program Developer
Matt	Pavlosky	Public Involvement/Outreach
Tom	Klevan	Manager, Multimodal Planning

1. Welcome & Introductions

Leann Chaney opened the meeting and asked for introductions by those in attendance.

2. Administrative

Leann announced that May is National Bike Month and asked those in attendance to let her know if they wanted us to help promote a biking-related event, as we are more than happy to do so.

Leann also announced that the City Bike Ride will be held after today's scheduled lunch for the Active Transportation Forum meeting. She expressed her thanks to Bike Pittsburgh (Eric Boerer) and the City of Pittsburgh (Kristin Saunders) for help in planning and leading the ride.

3. Planning

Bicycle Friendly and Walk Friendly Designations

Leann reminded the group that the League of American Bicyclists offers Bicycle Friendly designations for communities, businesses and universities and that the Bicycle Friendly Community applications are due August 9 –it's not too early to start on the application and SPC is available to provide technical assistance. Leann also stated that the only "Bicycle Friendly Community" in the SPC region at this time is the City of Pittsburgh.

Spring 2016 awards for BFBs are expected to be announced on May 16. SPC applied for this designation and expects to learn next week if the agency is being awarded the Bicycle Friendly designation.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) offers a Walk Friendly Community designation and will be holding a webinar about the program next Wednesday, May 18. SPC is available to provide technical assistance if interested in applying for this designation.

Leann said that at this time, Indiana Borough (Indiana County) is the only community in the region that's been officially recognized as a Walk Friendly Community.

Best Practices in Active Transportation Planning

SPC has secured consultant services from McCormick Taylor to conduct a national best practices report in active transportation planning to better inform our planning process as we move forward with development of the region's ATP.

Betsy Zang, Environmental Specialist from McCormick Taylor, highlighted project goals and said that she is seeking help with this research effort from Active Transportation Forum participants. She provided a comment form for submission of ideas.

4. Capacity building

Urban Bike – Healthy Ride

David White (Executive Director, Pittsburgh Bike Share) provided an overview of Pittsburgh's bike-share system (Healthy Ride) to-date.

- Healthy Ride's one year anniversary will be celebrated on May 29th.
- There are 25,000 people who have signed up on the system with 80,000 trips logged thus far.

David stated that Pittsburgh Bike Share was able to take advantage of the City's technology; during the Healthy Ride rollout, only a few minor tweaks were required. Now, the bike-share system is working great. Given the current technology that's available, it's really more of a policy decision than anything else in terms of how Pittsburgh's system functions. From Pittsburgh Bike Share's perspective, there could be bikes on every corner, in every neighborhood if that is what the City wants. An individual rider could simply input his/her PIN number, pay for ride, etc. – the necessary technology is already HERE!

Darryl Rapp commented that he was going to ask about expanding the number of stations across the city, but, based on what David had just said; it seems we may not actually need stations. Is that correct?

David responded by saying Pittsburgh Bike Share wants to seek community input and possibly work with the City on the development of a master bike-share system plan. Through the implementation of different ideas and then an assessment based on what works and what doesn't, the City could determine which ideas to move forward with and which ones to eliminate altogether. What's important to know is that the Healthy Ride bikes themselves have the capability of gathering all kinds of useful data.

Tom Klevan made the point that, similarly, the Healthy Allegheny initiative is all about data gathering as well. And, while the bike-share initiative and the Healthy Allegheny initiative may not be considered a 'natural marriage', there are many parallel goals between the two efforts.

David indicated that, yes, bike-share data for every Healthy Ride trip taken is stored on their website. Opportunities exist where bike-share is just one component of a multimodal trip and, ideally, this particular mode will be included in "best trip option" apps. For the Healthy Ride system, the biggest constraint for expansion is the amount of funding available to purchase equipment.

In terms of the operational budget, Healthy Ride does not receive any subsidy; rather, its revenue comes from advertising sponsorships and rider fees. All in all, Healthy Ride is a pretty efficient operation.

Scott Bricker suggested that Healthy Ride explore the idea of "bike corrals", especially as a form of a hybrid-type bike-share station.

David White reiterated that Pittsburghers need to express exactly what it is they want bike-sharing to be in the City and then get behind the policy decisions that will bring their vision to fruition. At the present time, Pittsburgh Bike Share is somewhat reluctant to forge ahead on its own.

The discussion came to a close with David saying that we should structure future discussions around policy development.

Trail - Answering the Call: a trail documentary project

Elias Gwinn (Owner/Director, Velidoxi) and Melissa Troutman (Co-Founder /Executive Director, Public Herald) showed a video trailer they created that is intended to "shine the light" on local community heroes.

Their video focuses on the Hoodlebug Trail located in Indiana County, which, without the fortitude of local heroes, would not be going into Blairsville.

Elias made the comment that some people think things just appear when, actually, they do not. There are often many obstacles and struggles that have to be confronted first. He wanted this video to show that everyday common citizens are getting things done.

The video provides a "roadmap" of sorts. While not a lot of money is being poured into active transportation efforts, Elias and Melissa see people all the time who are successfully effecting change and, through this type of video, hope others will realize they too can bring about positive change in their communities.

The aim of this particular documentary is to follow the journey for creating bikeable and walkable communities.

In a sense, the documentary is a “Call to Action “. Anyone interested in participating in this project or aware of potential funding resources were asked to contact Elias and Melissa. Contact info: ATCseries.com; ATC@velodoxi.com; 347.687.2237.

Urban Bike – Pittsburgh Counts!

Kristin Saunders (Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, City of Pittsburgh) spoke about the City’s bicycle and pedestrian counting efforts. Currently, the City only has one year of bicycle/pedestrian count data. Kristin stated that, in terms of safety statistics, the City’s numbers come from specific crash data, Pittsburgh Counts’ spot-specific site views, and via the 311 app, which provides a mechanism through which bicycle and pedestrian concerns can be reported. The app allows problematic bike/pedestrian street locations to be passed along to the City for review.

The Penn Avenue bike lanes, which accommodate 800 to 1,000 trips per day (24,000 in one month), are now being used as a benchmark against other bike lanes in the city. On Penn Avenue, the City has only two data points to look at and, between the first and second set of counts, these lanes saw as much as a 300% increase in bike trips. It’s also exciting to see that the Open Streets events held in the City over the past year are experiencing continued growth in the number of participants with each successive event.

Kristin expressed the City’s desire to have a more connected bicycle network downtown. On a typical weekday, bicycle travel during the A.M. rush is a little mild with the P.M. rush being much more vibrant. Through the Envision Downtown initiative, more counters are being added and, therefore, additional counts are being conducted. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a resource that can provide a “snapshot” of how people in a certain locale travel to work on a typical day.

Kristin said that the City is in the process of conducting bicycle and pedestrian counts at 36 intersections using about 100 volunteers to do the counting. The next “count day” is Tuesday, May 17th. At today’s Active Transportation Forum, Kristin indicated she is looking for volunteers to help with this counting effort.

Thus far, the intersection at Forbes and Murray has the highest daily pedestrian count whereas the intersection at Ellsworth and Aiken has the highest daily bike count. It’s important to note that this is just an initial snapshot of what’s happening.

David Wohlwill asked if the City is counting people who are getting on and off buses at these intersections, to which Kristin responded, “Yes. In fact, transit riders are one of most important user groups, because they’re also pedestrians.”

Darryl Rapp asked if the intersections studied get a higher ranking if they’re within a quarter mile of a bus stop. He also wondered if traffic cameras could be used for counts. Kristen said she will need to look into that further.

The City is also working with a CMU student, through Traffic 21, to do before- and after-counts; essentially, the City is pulling data from all different resources.

5. Engineering/Projects

Planning for Bikeable and Walkable Communities

Roy Gothie (Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, PennDOT) talked about the future of bicycle/pedestrian efforts at the state level. PennDOT's last updated bicycle/pedestrian plan was completed in 2007. Presently, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is conducting a study in preparation for developing a new bicycle and pedestrian plan for Pennsylvania. The current bicycle/pedestrian policy is only about 10 pages in length.

The TAC set out to identify issues and, in the end, came up with 43 problem statements, which have now been reduced to 13 statements. The TAC developed a Core Policy Statement, which is intended to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian initiatives are no longer viewed as just "icing on the cake". A "Recommended Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy" fact sheet was provided as a handout.

There are five policy objectives:

1. Establish bicycle/pedestrian goals, performance measures, and policy and program evaluation processes.
2. Formalize a statewide planning approach.
3. Develop a planning methodology with which to identify and prioritize projects.
4. Ensure that all bicycle and/or pedestrian projects are included in pre-scope costs.
5. For project implementation, develop design guidelines, identify program funding, assess performance measures and targets, ascertain policy exemptions, and classify roles and responsibilities.

An Implementation Task Force, which is envisioned as being long term, will be formed. Roy indicated he has leadership support for this from both Secretary Leslie Richards and Multimodal Deputate Toby Fauver. Recommendations being made include: regionalization, compile regional plans, update checklist, etc. The Bicycle Occupancy Permit was pulled out of the TAC study because it needs to be addressed now.

A Pilot Program, which will help identify specific bike routes for bike lanes, will be rolled out in the future. PennDOT anticipates turning to MPOs for help with this effort.

PennDOT made it clear that it will fund maintenance on only a limited number of bike lanes.

For full implementation of a statewide bicycle/pedestrian plan, prioritized funding will be needed. PennDOT has a \$3 million, 5 year open-end contract with a consultant who will be responsible for updating the statewide plan, developing PennDOT Bicycle Design Guidelines, and creating a project implementation checklist.

Questions/Answers

The question was asked, "How will these trickle down to local areas/departments?" to which Roy responded, "Engineers have guidelines and a limited number of pegs in unlimited number of holes. Training, such as planner training, will help a lot."

When asked if this plan will also include recreational trails, Roy said he envisions a secondary bicycle network, which will be part of a non-motorized network across the state. He noted that this is an economic development issue and there needs to be more than just biking on roads and streets.

Roy was asked if and how PennDOT and DCNR monies could be combined to get more things done, to which he replied, “Some discussions are happening across departments about trying to combine grant application processes.”

Roy said that the TAC study report is expected to be approved this week and, once approved, it should be available on the PennDOT website.

An attendee wanted to know if engineers, planners, and others will have to continue to justify the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian projects or if a different approach will be pursued in the future. Roy responded, saying they’ll be looking at this more closely during the development of design guidelines. For example, if a bicycle and/or pedestrian project is an identified need, the onus will be on project sponsors to explain why they don’t want to do this or that project.

Another attendee said it’ll be interesting to see what happens when decisions are being made about what to do with, let’s say, a 100-year old bridge. Will engineers, planners, etc. look only to past bridge usage data or will they consider newer, smarter, and more innovative uses for this old bridge? For example, with P3 bridges, the question about sidewalks being wide enough for bicycles is now always asked; where, in the past, it rarely came up in design discussions.

Expressing some concern about the two-year design guidelines process, an attendee asked why PennDOT couldn’t just rely on ‘best practices’ from bicycle/pedestrian design guidelines already in place elsewhere. Roy said, “In a word, CULTURE.” He then went on to say, in defense of PennDOT, local municipalities need to be open to new ideas and practices as well.

When the question, “Will anything helpful be included in training for local governments?” was posed, Tom Klevan pointed to a pilot project on ‘corridor planning’ that he’d worked on with the PennDOT Catalyst Team. Working with 23 municipalities, they discovered that only seven of these municipalities had comprehensive plans.

In terms of recreational trails and gaps, Roy said that bicycle/pedestrian advocacy needs to happen early in the planning process.

When asked about the level of public involvement that will occur during the development of the statewide bicycle and pedestrian master plan, Roy responded, “Early and often.”

6. Funding Opportunities

Information about the following funding programs was provided at the sign-in table:

- CFA Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program

- CFA Multimodal Transportation Fund
- PeopleForBikes: Community Grants

7. Education & Advocacy

Roundtable updates:

- Kristin Saunders informed the Forum that the City is developing a Complete Streets Policy.
- The Northside Leadership Conference reported that it is behind the City's SmartCities efforts; they also invited everyone to come out and enjoy the Northside Sandwich Ride on May 21st.
- David White (Pittsburgh Bike Share) announced that they would be rolling out a reduced Healthy Ride annual membership rate (\$15/year) for low income individuals.
- Betsy Zang said that McCormick Taylor is working on a Smart Transportation project at Neville Island, which is just now getting underway.
- Doug Smith from SPC informed everyone about the 11 TIP Review public meetings that are now scheduled and on SPC's website. He also pointed out that the Hoodlebug Trail project, which will finally close that trail's gap, is on this latest TIP.
- G-Tech is conducting a project on the North Side, which is aimed at branding and connecting trails; two public meetings will be held next week.
- OTMA talked about its involvement in Bike to Work Week as well as a Walk Pittsburgh event that will take place at the Music Festival in June. Bike lanes in Greenfield are being suggested by bicycle/pedestrian advocates. Additionally, with all of the development happening in and around the CMU and Central Catholic campuses, consideration is being given for adequate biking facilities (lanes, etc.) in Panther Hollow.
- Bike Pittsburgh mentioned that their biking map is being updated. Also, this year's first Open Streets Pittsburgh will take place on the last Sunday in May and then again in June and July. The August Open Streets event will take place on the same day as the UPMC Pedal Pittsburgh event. Bike Pittsburgh continues its support for biking accessibility at the Three Rivers Arts Festival.
- Lawrence County is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan.
- Highmark is supporting plans to provide Healthy Ride bicycle rentals free on charge on Bike to Work Day (May 20th).
- Darryl Rapp (Swissvale) spoke about the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT), which comprises the contiguous first ring suburbs of Pittsburgh. He wondered if it might be worthwhile addressing policy issues through collaboration with CONNECT.
- Mark Magilotti said that the University of Pittsburgh is looking at sidewalks and will soon be assessing the benefits of TAP-funded projects.
- Ron Steffey (Armstrong Trail) brought up the subject of self-built trails and the realization of great savings as a result with one example being the Brady Tunnel trail.

8. Upcoming events

Information about the following webinar was provided at the sign-in table:

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) webinar: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 from 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM –“Walk Friendly Communities: Inspiring and Celebrating your City's Vision for Walkable Streets”

9. Future meeting dates

- September 7, 2016
- November 9, 2016

10. Networking lunch

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