

SOUTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA BICYCLE ISSUES TASK FORCE

Minutes of May 23, 2007 Meeting

The quarterly meeting of the Task Force was held from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. in Conference Room 11A (on the 11th floor), SEPTA Headquarters, 1234 Market Street, Philadelphia. An agenda and list of attendees are attached.

The meeting was called to order by Matt Bochanski, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator, PennDOT District 6, with a round of introductions.

PennDOT District 6 Update – Matt Bochanski

Matt reported that the District intends to replace all missing BicyclePA route signs by Memorial Day each year. Route E signs will be installed by the deadline. “Begin” and “End” signs will be installed at route origin and termination points. “JCT” (junction) signs will be installed at the junction of routes S and L in Warwick Township, Chester County, but this installation is not subject to the deadline. Responding to a question by Joe Stafford as to how sign placement is determined, Matt explained that the system should work so that users don’t get lost; the system includes approach, turn, and confirmation signs, just like standard highway route signage systems.

Matt reminded attendees that the best way to report road problems is to use the Pothole Hotline, 1-800-FIX-ROAD. The greater specificity of location given by the caller, the better the response will be.

The “Yield to Pedestrian Channelizing Devices” (YTPCDs) are going like hotcakes. The supply will be depleted in a week or two. Another order is being processed under the current Fiscal Year contract.

Matt reported that bike/ped safety reviews of project designs, which he has conducted alone, are now done by a team of reviewers. In addition, the bike/ped checklist must now be used in all projects. In response to a question by John Boyle, Matt explained that safety reviews differ from road safety audits in that they are project-based, and are used prior to the design phase to establish design criteria.

Matt announced his imminent retirement, and introduced his replacement, Steve Dunlap. Steve has been with PennDOT for 10 years in the highway design department, where he will continue to work. His projects include the planned reconstruction of I-95.

Hans Van Naerssen, on behalf of the Task Force, thanked Matt for his years of service to bicycling and walking, and presented him with a token of appreciation.

Montgomery County report

Dave Clifford, Montgomery County Planning Commission, reported the following:

- A four-mile extension of the Schuylkill River Trail from Oaks to Montclair (half of which will be multi-use trail; the remainder on shared roads) will be completed in early 2008.
- A two-mile section (one mile paved) of the Wissahickon Green Trail will be dedicated at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, June 5 at the Philadelphia Cricket Club in Whitemarsh Township.

- A section of the Cross County Trail from Conshohocken (junction with the Schuylkill River Trail) to the Metro Plex shopping center is complete. The trail, 12 feet wide, terminates at the Barnes and Noble book store. The next phase, to begin soon, will take the trail east to Germantown Pike. Following that, extension to Fort Washington will begin next year.
- Construction of a four-mile paved section of the Chester Valley Trail is scheduled to begin early next year. Some right-of-way issues await resolution.
- A half-mile extension of the Perkiomen Trail to Green Lane Park, on a steep grade, will also begin next year.

Mike Szilagyi, Campbell Thomas & Company, reported the following:

- Tredyffrin Township, Chester County, is installing sidewalks leading to the Daylesford SEPTA rail station.
- Campbell Thomas is working with Upper Providence, Delaware County, and Whitemarsh Township, Montgomery County, on bicycle and pedestrian plans. Turnouts to the initial public meetings were 70 and 47 people respectively, proving that there is great public interest in improving the bicycling and walking environment.
- Thanks to the attention brought to a resurfacing project by Campbell Thomas and DVRPC, a newly resurfaced Germantown Pike in Whitemarsh Township now has bike lanes.

Delaware County report – Tom Shaffer

The Wilson Group has been selected as the lead designer for the Chester Creek Branch Trail, 13 years after inception of the trail.

Delaware County will hire the firm Ray Ott & Associates to design a section of the East Coast Greenway from Darby Creek south to Flower Street in Chester.

Delaware County Bike to Work Day was held on May 17. Nine county employees and several Bicycle Coalition members were in attendance.

The County bike plan will be placed on the county council agenda sometime in the next few months.

Northeast Trail – Glenn Graham

Glenn is a participant on the Poquessing Creek Watershed Committee, where he hopes to address access to the proposed Northeast Trail.

Chester Valley Trail – John Burkhardt, Arora Associates

Arora is involved in the design of the trail. Bob Falwell, who has overseen the project in his capacity as head of capital programming for the Chester County Parks Commission, is leaving to work for the Schuylkill River Development Council.

Pat Fallon – Montgomery Co. Health Dept.

Preparing for a “helmet blitz,” Pat is looking for geocoded data for juvenile bike injury and fatal crashes. PennDOT currently keeps such data, but only for crashes on the state highway system.

A discussion on helmet laws followed. Joe Stafford volunteered to lead an effort to increase the age below which helmets are required to 16, if provided with research assistance. The task force, on a show of hands, voted to move forward with an effort to change Pennsylvania's helmet law.

PennDOT Central Office – Dave Bachman

Dave explained that the “should-to-shall” memo mandating the use of the bike/ped checklist does not apply to maintenance jobs; but that it does cover all new capital projects introduced into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) after May 15, 2007.

The PennDOT Design Manual II (Highway Design), also known as DM2, used by design engineers, is undergoing thorough review and revision.

Dave asked the group if anyone has ever tried to obtain a Highway Occupancy Permit for a trail crossing or along a state highway right of way. This unwieldy document is being replaced by four documents each applicable to one of four categories of trails: DCNR-sponsored footpaths, non-DCNR footpaths, rails-to-trails, and bridge crossings.

A big bicycling race is scheduled to cross the state next year. The Tour of Pennsylvania will run June 24-29 from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia along the historic Forbes Road. Sponsored by American Eagle Outfitters, the event will be the last major bike race before the Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Dave described an effort by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to develop a national system of bike route corridors. A special task force has just released its report. Pennsylvania's BicyclePA routes are included in the national network. More information, including the report, can be found at <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/trans/usbikeroutes07.html>.

Hopewell – Big Woods Project – Julie Bell, National Park Service

Julie described a major conservation planning effort by the National Park Service centered on 15,000 acres straddling the border of Chester and Berks counties – the largest remaining forested tract in southeastern Pennsylvania. The tract includes French Creek State Park. This project is the result of a major piece of federal funding legislation, a congressional “signature” project. The Philadelphia NPS office is developing a trails concept plan which includes the Schuylkill River and Horseshoe trails as spine routes.

Bicycle Coalition update – John Boyle

The Coalition is working on a suitable detour around the 1.5 mile section of the Wissahickon Trail currently undergoing reconstruction. The reconstruction project is way ahead of schedule, and may be completed in as soon as one month from now.

A draft Request for Proposals (RFP) has been developed for the Bicycle Ambassadors project, which may begin by fall. The project will cost \$450,000 and will last for three years.

Recently John observed that the new fare gates on the PATCO High Speed Line do not permit bike passage. John wondered whether the complete installation of this new system would effectively ban bikes from PATCO. Subsequent conversations with DRPA, which runs PATCO, assured him that ADA-compliant gates, when installed, would permit bikes.

The City of Philadelphia has deferred implementation of the Adopt-a-Rack program until next year. The Bicycle Coalition plans to “raise hell” about the deferral.

During a recent public meeting for the Scudder Falls Bridge project in Ewing, New Jersey, spontaneous opposition to the walkway was voiced by some in attendance, who believed that the costs of the walkway should be spent on sound walls instead. Hans’s reply that “we should have both” received applause. The Coalition is leading a grassroots letter-postcard campaign in Ewing, and has drafted a municipal resolution in support of the walkway. The Coalition plans to bring the campaign to Lower Makefield Township, Bucks County, on the other side of the river.

John announced a major event in the works for September, called Bike Philly. The ride, along a 20 mile course closed to traffic, will take place on Sunday, September 9.

Amtrak has recently changed its policy regarding folding bikes. Through the efforts of one passenger, Amtrak has clarified its policies to permit passengers to carry on folding bikes.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission update – John Madera

Three on-road bikeway projects were initiated about six years ago, the result of a DVRPC planning study completed in 2000. The three projects – one each in Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties – are in final design, and are hoped to go out for construction bids in the fall.

During the past two years, DVRPC has been working with District 6 to identify opportunities for, and implement, bikeway retrofits incidental to surface treatment projects. Productivity has been hampered by a department policy requiring municipalities to take over maintenance of the portion of the roadway striped for bike lanes. Municipalities are reluctant to assume that responsibility. A meeting will be held at District 6 in June to resolve this problem.

John presented, with Chris Linn, DVRPC environmental planner, a “mobile workshop” on developing a regional trails network at the American Planning Association National Conference which was held in Philadelphia in April. Presenters included John Wood, Montgomery County Planning Commission; Stephanie Craighead, Fairmount Park Commission; Noel Weyrich, former president of the Bicycle Coalition; Joe Syrnick, Schuylkill River Development Corporation; and Tom Branigan, formerly of the Philadelphia Streets Department. Originally planned as a bike tour, the workshop, which took place during a “nor’easter,” was changed to a transit and walking tour, with about a dozen planners from across the country participating.

Hans announced that DVRPC now requires all TIP project proposals to include details regarding bike/ped accommodation.

There was no old or new business. The meeting was adjourned.

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Bicycle Issues Task Force
Meeting
Wednesday, May 23, 2007, 9:30 a.m.
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)
Conference Room 11A, 11th Floor
1234 Market Street, Philadelphia**

AGENDA

**David Bachman Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, PennDOT
Central Office, Harrisburg**

- Call to order
- Introductions
- Approval of February 22nd meeting minutes
- PennDOT updates

Matt Bochanski Bicycle Coordinator, PennDOT District 6

- District 6 update
- Introduction of new District Bike/Ped Coordinator Stephen Dunlop

Dave Clifford Montgomery County Trail development update

- Schuylkill River Trail
- Chester Valley Trail Extension
- Wissahickon Green Ribbon Trail
- Cross County Trail
- Green Lane Loop

Other County Updates

Julie Bell National Park Service

- Hopewell Big Woods project

John Boyle Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

- Coalition update

John Madera Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

- DVRPC update

Old/new business

Adjourn

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May 23, 2007

ATTENDANCE

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