

ECC Bike Plan Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2008

Agenda Items

From December to January, the Bike Plan Subcommittee (BPS) primary tasks were to:

- A. Discuss and approve the draft infrastructure platform, which was created at the December meeting.
- B. Review 2003, 2004 and 2006 bicycle plans created by the City of New Haven and suggest possible actions going forward.

Discussion of Item A: The BPS brought the draft infrastructure platform before ECC's December meeting and posted it to the ECC listserv for discussion. ECC was in approval on the platform, recognizing that infrastructure was the #1 concern among city cyclists, and the BPS approved it as a working document going forward. The draft platform will be used to outline our concerns and provide evidence that bicycle activists are actively working on improving infrastructure in New Haven.

Discussion of Item B: Individuals on the BPS conducted a thorough review of the City's bicycle plans, particularly the City Plan Department's comprehensive 2004 "Plan for Greenways and Bicycling Systems" which was essentially adopted as policy by the City of New Haven. The plan was written by a "Share the streets" committee which included representatives from the City of New Haven, Yale University, Southern CT State University, and several bicyclists including Bruce Crowder, Melinda Tuhus, Matt Feiner and others. The BPS concluded after reviewing the 2004 plan that it is highly comprehensive and open-ended enough to address ECC's entire infrastructure platform (and more). The plan is very long, but all of the essential points, including thorough annual reviews of engineering policy for traffic signals, routes, signage and lanes, are included. The BPS recommends that ECC push for the complete implementation of the plan as originally adopted.

Next Steps

1. Implementing the Plan

Hunter Smith and Mark Abraham noted that the City is committed to completing the LAB accreditation application within the next two months. Because it involves answering many difficult questions about cycling infrastructure in the City, the LAB application will help drive renewed efforts to make the city more bike-friendly. Following completion of the application, ECC should work with the City to ensure that such efforts are renewed and placed on a schedule. A list of 12 improvements should be taken out of the 2004 Plan and placed on a prioritized list which ECC can work with the City to implement. At some point, ECC will also recommend that the City pursue a particular accreditation level, e.g., commit to achieving "Silver" or "Gold" within 4 years, when the application can be submitted again.

Following completion of the LAB application, the BPS recommends reconvening the original "Share the streets" committee which worked with the City of New Haven to develop the plan. Essential to the plan is some form of community oversight. This committee or commission should meet monthly to review all progress and set timelines for the

adoption of each designated improvement.

The BPS decided that the next step should be drafting a letter to the City asking for the following items to be considered. Mark Abraham agreed to draft this and/or otherwise contact Mike Piscitelli with the goal of submitting a formal request over the next two months, following completion of the LAB application.

- While we recognize great progress by the City, the 2004 Plan has not been fully implemented.

- The BPS re-affirms that the 2004 Plan is very comprehensive in its overall goals and strategies, but believes that more oversight is needed to ensure that it happens as quickly as possible.

- Oversight is needed on a monthly basis to ensure that items in the Plan are moved forward on a more specific schedule, and that all items in the Plan, including further research into engineering options and the evaluation of the Pilot Bicycle Route created on Orange Street, are carried out.

- The City may need a full-time bicycle and pedestrian coordinator in order to ensure that progress is made quickly, to research available options regarding new engineering strategies (e.g., bicycle boxes, zoning changes, etc.), and to ensure that all infrastructure improvements are evaluated for their effect on bicyclists and pedestrians.

- The "share the streets" committee must be reconvened in some form and should include representatives from ECC, as well as engineers, architects, city officials and representatives from major local employers. ECC is open to discussion with the City as to how best to accomplish this. ECC notes that there is no official bicycle/pedestrian/transit "commission" as part of the city municipal code, and would like to look into the creation of one, seeing that if done properly it could help move transportation improvements along more quickly.

2. Developing Measurement Techniques to Evaluate Cycling in New Haven

The BPS strongly recommends developing measures to evaluate the effectiveness of newly installed or improved bicycle facilities, as initially recommended in the 2004 Bicycle Plan. Several potential methods were discussed. These methods should be incorporated into ECC and the City of New Haven's efforts to implement the 2004 plan going forward. Potential evaluation techniques include:

- Annual polling of the ECC membership. This is done in several other cities, for example, Transportation Alternatives conducts a poll and issues an annual "report card" on bicycling.

- Open surveys conducted through the New Haven Independent website

- Targeted surveys of defined groups within the city, including community management teams, city employees, and students at local universities

- Evaluation of U.S. Census data, which is published every few years

- Direct measurement of cycling volume on major streets

- Tracking of requests to New Haven's 311 service

3. Broadening ECC's involvement with community groups

The BPS discussed Andrew Sewell's attendance at the WEB community group and how CMTs (community management teams) are one of the major bases of political power within the City of New Haven. The BPS strongly recommends that ECC create a plan for members to attend each of the city's CMT meetings on a regular basis, perhaps beginning with

a presentation circuit, in order to gather input from the community and encourage the elected officials and community leaders who attend these meetings to be more aware of ECC's concerns. In addition to neighborhood CMT meetings, the BPS discussed the need for members to speak out at other meetings at the state, regional and local level, particularly those related to long-term planning issues.

4. 311 Service

The BPS noted the new 311 service and how certain items in the bicycle plan, such as the City's commitment to keep bicycle routes free of debris and potholes, can be accomplished only if citizens complain about them. The BPS encourages ECC members to use the 311 service whenever they run across these and other problems along bicycle routes.

As one example, the lower Whitney Avenue bicycle route is currently in very poor condition. Because this corridor has been designated as a bicycle route, ECC may want to mount a campaign of submitting 311 requests and other complaints regarding the fact that the route is currently unfit for cycling. Based on its 2004 Plan, the City has an obligation to correct this problem.

5. Bicycle Maps

The BPS would like to encourage the City to distribute bicycle maps more widely, in order to make local residents more aware of bicycling resources in the area.

6. Safer Routes

In preparation for eventually working more closely with Yale University on long-term cycling issues in the area, Holly and the BPS will research potential safe routes to the West Haven campus of Yale University. Holly noted that Yale University employees heavily use transit, walking and cycling as opposed to private automobiles, and that therefore there is a strong impetus to create transportation networks connecting the new West Campus with the Main Campus (and major points in between).

Next Meeting

Tuesday February 5, 6pm at City Hall.