

ECC Bike Plan Subcommittee (BPS)
Meeting Minutes, February 5, 2008

1. News & Updates

A. YBB (Yale Biology Building) site reviews

The city is currently reviewing Yale's plans for a major new building, the Yale Biology Building, which will be built on the west side of Whitney Avenue between Sachem and Humphrey. The project is not on the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) 2/12/08 agenda, but ECC anticipates that it will be up for approval by the BZA and City Plan in March, April or shortly thereafter. Of these two upcoming meetings, BZA is unrelated to site planning issues; city site plan review is more relevant.

The impending project and the need for bicycle connectivity had been mentioned at both the East Rock CMT meeting and ECC general meeting in January, which brought it to our attention.

The subcommittee discussed the nature of the project:

The corners of Whitney/Humphrey and Whitney/Edwards are the primary "gateways" to downtown from the eastern side of New Haven, which includes East Rock, Fair Haven, and parts of Hamden where many Yale employees and students live. The Farmington Canal Greenway, which connects directly to all of the bicycle routes that go downtown and to the western two-thirds of New Haven, lies just a couple of blocks away on the other side of Science Hill. Because of topography, the only viable "bridge" for bicyclists to get from one side of New Haven to the other is to go down Whitney Avenue for a block and then along Sachem Street (or vice versa). This is why this route has long been designated as a city bicycle route -- continuing from the Orange Street and Humphrey Street lane -- and is very heavily used by cyclists.

Unfortunately, despite being one of the most critical bicycle connections in the entire region, the section of Whitney Avenue from Edwards to Humphrey to Sachem has very heavy traffic, causing many cyclists to ride illegally on the sidewalk, and greatly limiting the opportunity to expand non-motorized commuting as a viable option in the city.

ECC is not sure exactly how Yale is proposing to accommodate the flow of cyclists around Science Hill and the new YBB, but would like to point out that it is an enormous concern for the hundreds of bicycle commuters in New Haven, and therefore, for the city as a whole. Site planning for the YBB should include the provision of a secure, visible and attractive route for cyclists to traverse this section of Science Hill and continue on their journeys throughout the region.

This is a clear concern of students, local residents and ECC members. The BPS agreed that this is a high profile concern for local cyclists and finding a good solution should be a priority for ECC.

Next Steps:

- Find out about hearing dates/times (done - BZA and city plan reviews scheduled for March, April or soon thereafter) (Mark A. will update group as new info is available)
- Discuss with Yale students including Allison G. (Melinda T., also will work with Erica M. on this)

- Set up meeting with Yale University representatives such as Holly Parker to discuss issues (Mark A. to contact them, meet with group when appropriate)
- Committee discussed potential specific steps to take in the event that plans did not adequately address cyclists' concerns.

B. Route 34 / Downtown Crossing / Union Station Developments

The Mayor is personally making community presentations all across New Haven regarding the future of the Route 34 area. This is a high-profile project for the entire city, as it involves potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in new development and tax revenue for the city. The next few public presentations are: Feb. 13- Celentano School library, Feb. 27- Edgewood School library, and Mar. 18- Martinez School library, all at 6:30PM.

ECC should provide input as the planning process moves forward, to ensure that the city's bicycle plan is implemented in the area. Specifically, adequate bike storage is needed at Union Station and in all new buildings, traffic must be calmed appropriately, and safer bicycle/pedestrian routes must be developed between downtown New Haven and Union Station.

Next Steps:

- Draft letter to Mayor and City Plan on ECC position, to be issued in early or mid March (Mark A. to send to BPS list for discussion)

2. Agenda Items (referenced from January meeting minutes)

A. Plan Implementation & Measurement Types

- Next steps for working on implementing the city's bike plan will be discussed with the city after the LAB application goes through (see previous minutes)
- Possible measurement types were reviewed, and should be included in all discussions of reviving the city's bike plan. It was decided that this should be the responsibility of the city, with the city incorporating bicycle counts into all traffic counts conducted. (Tom H. to look into existing data on cycling in New Haven).
- Develop list of main speaking points regarding reviving the Share the Streets committee's advisory role, including the need for measurement & goals, and suggestion of full time bike/ped coordinator. Compile a list of participant organizations from original share the streets committee and determine potential contacts within these orgs. (All committee members are encouraged to draft up their ideas on for our next meeting)

B. Community Groups

- Need to work with communities already organized around the need for safer streets
- Andrew S. discussed Whalley/Edgewood/Beaver Hills meeting and Whalley Avenue improvements, a long term city project. (Tom H. to forward streetscape design specs for Whalley group)

- Look into Safe Routes to School history in New Haven, and possible use for them as routes to area schools, including 2 new elementary schools planned in East Rock area (Andrew S.)
- Interface with ECC Neighborhood Initiative

C. Web311 System

- Was discussed at East Rock CMT meeting by Alderman Lemar
- Good feedback system for any current problems with infrastructure, such as debris and potholes
- Send reminder to ECC list about how to use the system, and encourage its use (Mark A.)
- All committee members are encouraged to try the system out before next month's meeting.

D. Bike Maps

- Call Mike Piscitelli to ask for maps (5,000) to be reprinted and distributed to appropriate locations citywide (Melinda T.)

E. Safer Routes to West Haven as part of Bayer Site development (Holly P. item, tabled to next meeting)

3. Procedural items

- YBB issue is main concern. Once LAB application goes through, working on plan implementation with City will be the top priority.
- Create a running list of all active and pending Committee projects (Tom H)
- Recommend posting minutes on ECC website when approved, and posting hyperlink to document via email to ECC listserv.