

Minutes from January '08 ECC meeting

Present: Hunter Smith, Andrew Sewell, David Streever (facilitator), Bill Kurtz, Matthew Feiner, Mark Abraham, Allison Gorsuch, Jo Kremer, Grace Johnston, Hua Tan, Melinda Tuhus

Guests: Andria Matthews and Mike Piscitelli

Subcommittee Reports

LAB certification as a Bicycle Friendly Community:

Hunter (and others) worked on the proposal and submitted it to the city's transportation director, Mike Piscitelli. A few ECC members met with Mike, who brought along several members of the City Plan department and the city engineer, as well as his new intern, Lauren Goers, who has been assigned to work with us. Subcommittee members were asked to answer a few more questions, so they'll send out a request for that information to the ECC list. Through the process we have set initial benchmarks, and getting this designation (undoubtedly one of the lower level ones) will guide us toward future improvement.

Bike Plan

The committee met last week to review the city's 2003 Bike Plan and the mayor's 2006 proposal for a bike-friendly state when he was running for governor. These two plans (esp. the city's) are quite comprehensive but lacking in implementation. Next step is to write a letter to Mike Piscitelli urging him to reconvene the committee (including city officials and cyclists) that came up with the 2003 plan.

The Bike Plan subcommittee will be sending out it's minutes to the list shortly for anyone interested in following the process.

Arts & Ideas Festival

Andria Matthews, Manager of Community and Ideas Programs for the Arts & Ideas New Haven festival, came to do some brainstorming about how to incorporate ECC even more deeply into this year's festivities, which run from June 14 to the 28th.

(For years, members of Elm City Cycling have led a myriad of bike rides for all ages and ability levels during the three weekends the festival runs.) She suggested that in addition to the annual mainstay tours, cyclists might make some rides more reflective of the festival programming. A major theme this year is spirituality, so a possible ride might take in sacred spaces within the city - houses of worship, historic cemeteries, and the like. Since the festival is international in scope, someone suggested a ride that would visit points of international interest (the Amistad story comes immediately to mind).

Andria said she'd let ECC know if others involved in the festival planning had exciting, creative ideas for ride destinations, which ECC members could then lead. And she suggested that we might want to be involved in a collaborative with the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange around the questions, "When is action a form of prayer?" and "When is prayer a form of action?" People seemed intrigued, and she'll get back to us with more info.

She asked us to participate again in the Village of Villages on the Green, minimally with a table and information about safe cycling, perhaps with a bike jamboree if that's feasible. She asked if we could have our proposals for dates, times and destinations for this year's rides ready by early February, for inclusion in the festival's program. Bill Kurtz, who has coordinated the rides in the past, volunteered to do it again.

Car-Free Day

Many cities around the world hold an annual car-free day, so why not New Haven? It was suggested that it might be incorporated with the festival, since so many people are downtown then, but since almost all of them drive in, that might be a very difficult time to do it. Andria said she will discuss it with other A&I staffers and get back to us. She also said that it's possible that one of the themes of next year's festival might be sustainable transportation and it might fit in better with that, and give us a lot of lead time. Mike mentioned that the city was virtually shut down during the summer filming of the new Indiana Jones movie, and everyone survived (although not all happily) - perhaps smoothing the way for an official car-free day.

Some other ideas that were brought up include the Aeolian ride: <http://www.Aeolian-ride.info>. The theme for next year is "The Future of New Haven", so it seems that some of our larger plans may be more appropriate for next year. The Aeolian Ride is something that could go on this year in and of itself. A member reported (via e-mail) that the Aeolian Ride would be willing to come here, and would need about 2 months notice. Note: The Aeolian Ride consists of 52 riders wearing wind-filled white costumes. See the website for more details.

MLK-Peabody Event

ECC will have a table both Sunday and Monday, Jan. 20-21. David is coordinating. We'll have info on safe cycling and some modest safety training activities for kids.

Mike's Report

He is working with Holly Parker at Yale to create a bike lane link through the Kline Biology Tower parking lot which will help commuters get from Whitney Avenue to the Rail Trail. He asked us to send any specific proposals on this to his intern, Lauren.Goers@yale.edu. Mark and Allison said they will follow up, but anybody else is welcome to also.

Elm City Cycling has been asked to contact Yale directly—via public relations channels—to strongly support the notion of maintaining a safe path through the new building site. The old path will be covered by the footprint of the building. The suggestion was that members could take a ride up there now & see ways that a crossing could be achieved.

He said the discussion around making Route 34 more cyclist and pedestrian friendly is the most important transportation initiative in the city right now, and urged us to attend the meetings being held to get community input, on four consecutive Wednesday nights. The first meeting was attended by David Streever. Future meetings are on the following dates: February 13th in the Celentano School Library, February 27th in the Edgewood School Library, and March 18th in the Martinez School Library.

New Police Chief

We think it's important to have some conversations about the importance of cyclist and pedestrian safety as the city considers hiring a new police chief (sometime this spring). Hunter will draft a letter to the public safety committee of the Board of Aldermen, asking for a meeting. We will also contact the Public Safety Commission and the mayor. We would like to propose that the NHPD assign an official liaison with ECC.

Community Management Teams

Andrew attended a recent meeting of the WEB (Whalley, E, Beaver Hill) CMT, which was discussing possible improvements to Whalley Avenue (including a bike lane). He participated in the discussion and felt his presence was helpful for putting forward cyclists' perspective.

We would like to visit all ten of the CMT meetings at some point, perhaps pass out the short questionnaire from the LAB concerning attitudes regarding bike commuting (what are the disincentives for people, and what would make them give it a try?), and generally talk up the idea of bike and ped transportation and safety. David will send a note to the ECC list giving times and locations of meetings to see who would like to attend.

Respectfully submitted,

Melinda Tuhus and David Streever