

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Committee Meeting – DRAFT Minutes

TIME: 12:00pm

DATE: **Tuesday, June 13, 2023**

PLACE: Zoom Call

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Amy Watkins	Watch for Me CT
Bob Dickinson	Resident of Bloomfield
Bruce Donald	East Coast Greenway Alliance
CJ Ganza	City of New Britain
Craig Babowicz	CTDOT
Dave Palmberg	Town of Rocky Hill
Eric Anderson	Town of Andover
Eugene Nicols	CT Department of Public Health
Fran Gurtman	Bike Walk Avon CT
Jason Scott	Town of Rocky Hill
John DiBiasi	Town of Manchester
Kristen Levesque	CTDOT
Laurie Whitten	Town of Enfield
Lon Hultgren	Town of Mansfield
Martha Conneely	Riverfront Recapture
Michele Lipe	Town of South Windsor
Owen Deutsch	City of Hartford
Patrice Carson	Town of Bolton
Stuart Popper	Bike Walk New Britain / ECG

Tony Philpin

Resident of West Hartford

CRCOG Staff

Caitlin Palmer
Elizabeth Sanderson
Rob Aloise
Mike Cipriano

Roll Call

1. **Call to Order (00:00)** Caitlin Palmer called the meeting to order. Attendees were asked to introduce themselves.

2. **Approval of Minutes of the March 14, 2023, meeting (07:50)**

Caitlin Palmer asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Motioned by Patrice Carson; seconded by Eric Anderson. Motion was approved. Jason Scott and Laurie Whitten abstained.

3. **Public Forum (09:15)**

Caitlin invited any comments from the public

4. **Updates and news (10:05)**

Caitlin gave a summary about the East Coast Greenway Study and that we'll be moving into the screening process, and that the Interactive Map is available for users to submit any feedback on the study and mentioned upcoming public engagement activities in East Hartford and Bloomfield on June 17th and 18th respectively.

Caitlin also notified the group of more than \$36 million in LOTCIP funds awarded for 18 projects in 15 communities with a very competitive "Roadway Reconstruction" category. She also made the attendees aware that the top 4 projects awarded had significant complete streets aspects and that is a good way to help boost your project in the future.

She also touched on some of the Legislative Updates, especially H.B. No. 5917, H.B. No. 6746, S.B. No. 904, S.B. No. 1082, and S.B. No. 994.

5. **Bike Ped Count Program (15:15)**

Mike Cipriano gave an overview of the Bike Ped Count Program while focusing on the counts from September 2022. He described that the roughly 150 total counts in the region were divided up into 3 different groups to give us approximately 50 total counts per year to be counted on a revolving basis. User statistics, such as total numbers of bikes and pedestrians, user habits and safety information from this past year's counts were compared to the same group of locations counted in 2019.

Caitlin then jumped in and described that the data demonstrates a lack of consistency and that locations were counted for 2 hours, once every 3 years as well as unknown factors at play, such as some community event or weather that come into play. Caitlin also described the difficulty in securing volunteers and the sheer time spent on accumulating volunteers, counts, data input, and lastly, analyzing the data.

Caitlin put the question to the group if it was better to keep the counts as is, or if it was better to switch to more of a "service" model with municipalities reaching out to

us if they have a grant application and/or before/after counts (i.e. LOTCIP projects) where some benefits might be seen. She also described the municipalities and CRCOG can identify high-crash/safety concern areas and conduct Walk Audits. Lon Hultgren stated that it seems to make more sense to count locations every now and then as opposed to the current counting program. Lon also described that in addition, it might be beneficial to count for an hour as opposed to the current 2-hour format, as the difference between one hour and the second hour were not overly significant.

John DiBiasi agreed with the idea of possibly doing before and after counts of projects and gathering information in support of different applications.

Eric Anderson mentioned that we might get more accurate data from existing counters on trails, provide a better snapshot of total counts, even if they don't differentiate between a pedestrian or a cyclist.

Caitlin stated that with we can continue to further our partnerships with Riverfront Recapture and CT Trail Census to potentially get more automated counters for the region with Martha Conneely mentioning that a lot of the automated counters have the ability to distinguish between bikes and peds.

John DiBiasi mentioned that he is currently working with his vendor to set up virtual detection areas, which would give them data 24/7 at given locations in Manchester and would be able to provide that data to the region.

6. Presentation – Safe Routes to Schools, Kristen Levesque, CTDOT (36:50)

Kristen, who is a transportation engineer with CTDOT, stated the purpose of the Safe Routes to Schools program that was established in 2005 and revised in 2021 in accordance with the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is aligned with current CTDOT goals of Safety, Accessibility, and Sustainability.

Need – support programs and projects to increase walking and biking to school that promote healthier and safer students, reduced traffic congestion, reduced student absences and tardiness, cleaner air, and improved academic performance.

The CTDOT's framework is Education, Encouragement, Evaluation, Enforcement, Engineering, and Equity.

Safe Routes to Schools is now supporting K through 12th grade students within an area of approximately 2-miles of a school.

Kristen stated that this program has both infrastructure and non-infrastructure related improvements. Under this law, CTDOT is looking at sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bike crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bike and ped facilities, secure bike parking facilities, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools. On the non-infrastructure side, Kristen described that examples are, increasing public awareness and outreach, traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools, student sessions on bike and pedestrian safety, health, and environment, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of safe routes to school programs.

Kristen also described CTDOT's framework.
Equity

- Updated framework to include Equity
- Updated website including accessibility
- Include all students: with and without disabilities, high school students and tribal agencies

Education

- SRTS Bike/Ped Safety Working Group
- Goal of getting 50 schools involved in the program in the next three years

Encouragement

- Walk, Bike and Roll to School Day
- Bring your Child to Work Day
- Participation in other events around the state

Evaluation

- Toolkit and Checklists
- Technical Assistance
- Walk Audits
- STRS Plans
- StoryMaps
- Coordinated Active Transportation

Enforcement

- Safety Countermeasures
- Establishment of School Zones
- Dynamic Speed Feedback Signs

Engineering

- Crosswalks
- Raised Crosswalks
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons
- Bike Parking Facilities
- Sidewalks
- Pathways
- Bike and Ped Facilities

Kristen also stated that Safe Routes to School is aligned with Vision Zero and that students are vulnerable users.

Lastly, Kristen stated that the Bike/Ped Safety Education Working Group has a goal of implementing bike and ped safety education throughout the state, currently CTDOT is observing and collecting data and are also collaborating with other states on best practices.

Bob Dickinson described that a lot of side paths next to roads are built that are only 4 feet wide when an 8-foot-wide path might work better and that paths should be built to the maximum that they allow.

Eric Anderson said that one of the biggest impediments that we have is not the money for actual construction of projects, but the design money, to get the projects to where money is available. Eric was wondering if there was money available for the design, Kristen asked if he would be able to register for the program and they would be able to help determine if money was available for his particular project.

Michele Lipe said that South Windsor used the Safe Routes to School for two very successful projects roughly 10 years ago, however one of the projects is still ongoing because of State permitting issues. South Windsor was able to use it for handicapped ramps around schools, pathways put in to connect neighborhoods with schools and raised sidewalks at schools. She also stated that they used this program to bring in bike education programs into schools and have had very good success with that.

7. What's New in My Town (58:15)

- **Bolton** - Patrice Carson described continuing projects, first one that connects the Fire House area to Heritage Farm Barn and the trails that run off it, particularly the Hop River Trail and eventually to the high school. She hopes that the Fire House to the farm will be connected before the end of the year. An additional project that is continuing, Bolton is working with a business in Bolton to make a connection to the Hop River Trail to access a convenience store. Lon posed a question to Patrice asking about the schedule for the installation of new lights in the tunnel below Route 6, Eric Anderson and Bruce Donald described the process of being out to bid and there should be some movement this summer.
- **Andover** - Eric Anderson stated that an organization called the Hop River Trail Alliance has gotten off the ground, to promote the usage of the Hop River Rail Trail. Eric described that there are 7 towns and recently got a grant through the last DEEP Rec Trails to increase signage for safety and wayfinding.
- Eric mentioned has finished its access area and parking area on Lake Road for the ability for people to access the Hop River Trail and also getting ready to make the track at the athletic fields more handicapped accessible.
- **New Britain** – CJ Gandza noted that the bike rodeo got moved to the 24th where every student in New Britain can come, get a free helmet, get a safety check and have a chance to win a new bike.
- Stanley Loop Trail Phase 2 is currently in construction, on track to finish in the fall, Phase 1 has been previously completed with a Rec Trails Grant, and connects Stanley Quarter Park and AW Stanley Park, approximately a 3-mile loop.
- Beeline Trail Phase 1 is semi-final design, Phase 2 and Phase 3 are also in design.
- Bike New Britain is hosting a monthly slow roll, looking at Wednesdays and Thursdays throughout the summer to engage the bike community.
- **ECGA** – Bruce Donald gave a quick update on Rec Trails Grant, gave out \$9 million to 49 different grants. Bruce stated the bonding package passed for \$10 per year for both '24 and '25. Bruce hopes that they can give grants out quicker than in years past.
- **Riverfront Recapture** – Martha Conneely noted that they are making progress on the 60-acre new development on the north end of Hartford and south end of Windsor. She noted that they have permits in process and remediation to land that will connect Windsor to Hartford. She said they just put an RFQ for a park designer and received 29 different responses from across the country and will be requesting people submit proposals this summer. Martha added to the chat that they will also be hosting community walking tours of the park.
- **Watch for Me CT** – Amy Watkins stated that they are currently updating their website to offer more real time and relevant information.
- Amy also noted that they hopefully will be hiring a new staff member in the fall to work on outreach and community and involvement.
- **Bike Walk Avon CT** – Fran Gurtman noted that Avon applied and became a certified bronze level bicycle community.
- Started a bike education program using bikes that they received from Bike Walk Connecticut in their two elementary schools to educate 4th grade students on safe riding habits.
- Avon has funded SLR consulting to do a Bike Ped Master Plan Connectivity Study and is currently working with getting the public involved.

8. Other Business (1:15:20)

Mike asked the committee to let either Caitlin or himself know of any additional topics they might be interested in discussing in future meetings as well as any ideas to make the bike ped counts more useful for communities.

Eric Anderson asked if any of the new legislation that had recently passed, if they mandated complete streets plans for towns, and if so, what were the time frames? Bruce described that its part of the Vision Zero package and didn't believe that it was a mandate. Craig Babowicz from CTDOT said that it was pulled out at the last minute and therefore was not voted upon. Bruce also stated that one of the things that did pass was 998 which is tax abatement for trail corridors, where if a private land owner or business has a corridor, that they can apply to the municipality to give that ROW to the town in return for tax abatement.

9. Adjournment (1:18:05)