

**PaTHs 4 Bethlehem
Meeting Summary
November 30, 2009
Town Hall Room 101**

Present: Steve Downs, Mark Jordan, Dan Lewis, Anne Benware, Julie Sasso, Mark Lewis, Henry Peyrebrune, Scott Iewendon, John Schonberg,
Town of Bethlehem Staff: Jason Gallo, Rob Leslie, Erik Deyoe

No Comments on October Meeting Summary

Bike Expo, Saturday May 8, 2010 – Parks & Recreation Program/Special Event

Jason is looking at expanding the Bike Expo event to include other stake holders and add some additional skilled techniques for participants. Potentially incorporate pedestrian safety as well. There will be more to follow on this event at future meetings.

Albany County Rail Trail Update

Scott discussed how the pre draft design report was reviewed by FORT, and some design issues were identified. Two main issues: funding gap of 4.5 million. Work on bridges being the largest cost. Ways to reduce the overall cost of the project were also discussed. Access points were the other main issue. Only access points listed in Bethlehem are Font Grove Road, along Kenwood Avenue (across from the Slingerlands Firehouse), and Adams Street. Scott also thought that an area in which the Town may be of assistance would be with the allocation of irrevocable easements from adjacent Rail Trail property owners. FORT will work with the County regarding some right of way issues, as needed. Dan said that the purchase of the property is very close. Aspects of the development of the trail may be an issue, in that the county will look to the Town(s) in which the Rail Trail travels through to incorporate maintenance /development as part of their budget. The PaTHs committee may be important in making recommendations regarding access and or development of parts of the Rail Trail in the Town.

Rob stated that at the November Development Planning Committee meeting, the developer of the former CVS site (located at Elsmere Avenue and Delaware Avenue) presented a conceptual site layout plan for a new pharmacy/medical building. The developer was encouraged to build in the traditional Hamlet style, with the building located in front and parking in the rear of the site. Access to the Rail Trail from the site was encouraged.

Ann mentioned that the Delaware Avenue Hamlet Enhancement Study is another arena where Rail Trail access is being considered and that the Rail Trail is recognized as a center piece.

Rob mentioned that Jack Madden, representative from the FORT group, requested to walk portion of the rail right-of-way with the Town Police Department to review emergency access locations.

Criteria Development – Review criteria descriptions

Henry outlined his view of the larger picture for the Committee. He referenced how the Town uses the Comprehensive Plan as a tool to outline the direction and future of the community. Intrinsic to the Comprehensive Plan would be a Pedestrian/Bicycle Program. All the parts of the Program (Education, Engineering and Enforcement) would work together in a comprehensive way. Within this context the Complete Streets Resolution is a link to start this broader program.

John suggested we invite a Town police officer to one of our meetings to cover aspects of the enforcement part of the program.

Steve reemphasized that signage is a critical component to bicycle education. Especially after the Rail Trail comes to fruition.

Criteria Comments

The Committee noted that after drafting the evaluation criteria, a Pairwise application or any other weighting scale exercise should be carefully considered. The Committee suggested a list of evaluation criteria could be the end result, without a weighting scale or rating scale. The current criteria list would be applied to the construction of new facilities. It would not be used for evaluating the need for the maintenance of existing facilities.

The Committee reviewed the safety, potential users, and destination criteria descriptions.

Safety

The Committee had the following comments on the safety criteria description:

- Suggested we may not need actual traffic volume or speed data. Road functionality (arterial, collector, local) will typically dictate volume and speed experienced along the roadway.
- Scott outlined four conditions that contribute to the number and severity of bicycle and pedestrian accidents. They include:
 - Volume (related to exposure)
 - Speed (related to severity)
 - Geometry
 - Intersections (50% of all accidents occur at intersections)- For example, the number of intersections and complexity of intersections. For example, crossing the Delmar Bypass increases exposure to an accident called multiple threat, where one car stops on a multilane highway to allow a pedestrian to cross and another car that does not see the pedestrian passes the vehicle and hits the pedestrian. This crossing location is considered a complex intersection.

- Space- Defined as total pavement width (including travel lane and shoulder, sidewalk. Erik noted that a typical Town road section is two 12 foot lanes. Scott noted that the FHWA provides guidance thresholds for determining appropriate bicycle facilities based on roadway functionality, speed and volume (AADT thresholds at 2,000 AADT and 10,000 AADT).
- The Committee suggested that volume, speed and geometry assist in evaluating the safety measures of a roadway. It was suggested that a rating scale of high, medium, low could be applied to these measures.
- Erik suggested that sight distance could be associated with roadway geometry.
- Review the environmental context surrounding the project. For example, the presence of multiple commercial driveways influence safety.
- The Committee questioned whether we need a different evaluation process for bicycle and pedestrian projects. For example, the Elm Avenue corridor contains a sidewalk but does not have a bicycle facility. If an Elsmere Avenue bicycle facility project was proposed, would it rank low, since the corridor already provides a pedestrian facility? Members suggested that it may not rank low, because if the project is only bicycle improvements then that would be reflected in the total cost (which would be lower than if pedestrian facilities were proposed). It was felt that a separate process for evaluating bicycle and pedestrian facilities acts against the Complete Streets Resolution.
- Henry suggested listing out the measures and listing the sources of data. In his experience, measures are listed without the ability to easily gather the data, and the measures are not applied.

Potential Users

The Committee had the following comments on the potential users description:

- It was suggested that the description should include two separate measures: population density and potential users. For example, a proposed project that does not have many residences may not rank high based on population density. However, the project may complete a linkage between destinations, which would affect a large number of potential users.
- Consider continuity as a criteria. For example, if a project connects to an existing facility (filling a gap). Destinations may not be located within ½ mile of the project area but the project is an important piece of a larger connection. For example, the current Feura Bush Road and Elsmere Avenue sidewalk projects independently are almost meaningless projects since no destinations are along them. However, together they provide a connection between the Glenmont and Delmar hamlets providing a synergy for a greater connection.
- Look at barriers (Normanskill, Thruway, Delmar Bypass) in regards to walking and biking. The Town road network directs traffic (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists) to certain streets (collectors, arterials) in order to cross barriers, so all traffic is diverted to one area, which has the tendency to increase the potential users along that roadway. For example, traffic is directed towards Elsmere Ave, Murray Ave, Elm Ave as locations to cross the Delmar Bypass (barrier).
- The ½ mile measure for density is standard for pedestrian users. However, this distance is not standard for bicyclists since they typically travel a greater distance to their destination. Scott stated that the typical distance for potential bicycle users is 5 miles. It was noted that the ½ mile radius placed around the Committee's destinations exercise resulted in development of the corridors. It was suggested that instead of calculating density, perhaps we institutionalize the corridors map to

say that if a project is located within a corridor then it's identified as a high potential use. Or perhaps the corridor map is treated as the first screening criteria: "Is the proposed project located within a corridor on the Corridor Map? Yes/No."

- It was expressed that some corridors were not listed because they didn't have destinations or density surrounding them (for example, Elm Ave, South Albany Road). The Committee recalled that perhaps they did not account for bicycle travel (recreational, commuter, or destination) when identifying corridors on the map. The Committee suggested revisiting the map to account for bicycle travel. The corridors map has the potential to become the priority network map.
- Members expressed concern that the map may become stale or static. It was suggested that as the Town further develops the Committee may need to revise the map.
- It was suggested that as the Committee revisits the map, two priority networks may develop, a bicycle network and a pedestrian network. Although, the bicycle and pedestrian network may overlap.

Destinations

The Committee had the following comments on the destinations description:

- It was suggested that if a proposed project is providing access to several destinations, then users of the facility would also be reflected. For example, schools and parks would reflect students and recreational users.
- There was discussion regarding recognizing the Rail Trail as a separate criteria altogether. The Rail trail has the potential to generate/attract 250 to 300 users per hour on the weekends. There was concern that we're placing a value on the Rail Trail greater than other destinations such as schools, commercial areas, etc. The Rail Trail is unique since it is simultaneously a corridor and a destination. The Committee determined that it should be added into the listing of destinations.
- Bicyclists should be added to the description.
- Linkage should be added as a destination.

Next Steps

The Town will revise the criteria descriptions based on the comments and discussion provided at the meeting. In lieu of a December meeting, the Town will post the updated criteria to the Committee's message board. Committee members were encouraged to actively participate on the message board.