

Massachusetts Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Notes
Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), Lowell

Welcome & Introductions: Pete Sutton, ex-officio, called the meeting to order, called roll and recognized MABPAB's first remote meeting of this year taking place at NMCOG in Lowell.

MassDOT Request for Information and Ideas – Roadway Safety

Kris Carter, MassDOT's Chief Innovation Officer presented on a request for information (RFI) regarding roadway safety initiatives in 2024. Specifically, MassDOT would like to address through public outreach:

- Tools that can help minimize crashes related to unsafe driving behaviors
- Both hi-tech and low-fidelity tools to improve safety
- Understand How successful tools are being deployed around the world
- Experimental concepts needing additional validation from field testing
- Provide an opportunity for experts that don't always get invited to government issued RFx to share their expertise (residents, advocacy orgs, academics, etc.)

Questions and comments included:

- Is climate change being taken into consideration for this RFI?
 - Not in this specific call, though it is being addressed in several other current safety initiatives MassDOT is working on. Indirectly, multimodal shifts toward walking and cycling addresses this topic, as does the potential shift to electric vehicle fleets
 - Another example came up early on in a telematics platform, doing asset management. It's actually some real environmental savings: looking at the smoothness and friction of a roadway - some good research on that. There's an opportunity to say: how do we measure a thing for safety, but it also provides this other benefit? Determining what type of material: when we put it down, and then it actually generates less emissions. So those environmental benefits are there, but they take a couple steps to get to
- Is MassDOT aware of the technology cyclists are using called the [Garmin Varia](#) radar? It is used to alert cyclists of motor vehicles that are coming up behind – it is literally a lifesaver, and I feel naked if I'm on the road without it. Not only does it alert me, but it allows me to interact with the drivers by letting them know they've been seen by flashing and pulsing the rear red bike light. When the car passes, I give them a little wave, and then instead of a cycle-car confrontation, it's a cycle-car relationship, If you will
 - Love that phrase. This is something that could be especially beneficial for future bikeshare deployment

NMCOG overview on current bike/ped initiatives and Greater Lowell Vision Zero

Jessica Boulanger, NMCOG's Transportation Mobility Specialist, provided an overview (attached) on the regional planning agency's latest focus areas for input:

- Greater Lowell Vision Zero – Regional Safety Action Plan
 - A Regional Safety Action Plan
 - Regional High Injury Network
 - Regional High-Risk Network (predictive analysis)
 - Region-Specific Equity Indicators
- Transportation Improvement Projects
 - Rourke Bridge – Lowell, MA
 - Yankee Doodle Bike Path – Billerica, MA
 - Resurfacing and related work - Route 110 Lowell, Dracut, and Methuen

Questions and comments included:

- MassDOT's bridge designs have evolved over the years: the separated bike lanes proposed on the Rourke Bridge would have greatly benefitted the Route 9 Burns Bridge between Worcester and Shrewsbury when it was reconstructed in 2015. Are there any options of retrofitting these treatments?
 - A valid point: MassDOT's Complete Streets designs continue to advance where even projects constructed as little as five years ago are now in need of some retrofits. The Burns Bridge would be challenging, but not impossible.

- The Rourke Bridge design shows sidewalks on both sides, which meets MassDOT's engineering directives. However, there are other bridges currently in design that have only a shared use path on one side and is considered sufficient. How can we get this standard more uniformly applied?
 - It's tricky to apply treatments uniformly, especially in Massachusetts where there is a great range of contexts for each region. There is a process we go through. MassDOT starts with the goal of combination on both sides for all users. But for whatever reasons we justify why that can't or shouldn't be done as part of a particular project
 - The Route 110 project is a good example: overall design for multimodal accommodation is good, but it's not 100% ideal, because cyclists are limited to only one side of the facility. We would love to have the shared use facilities on both sides, but there are cost increases that go along with this. There's often environmental and property impacts. I can't speak to every single situation because every project has its own unique set of challenges
- It seems like a sidewalk and a bike path would be relatively inexpensive compared to something capable of carrying trucks on the main roadway. Do you have any kind of a rule of thumb or percentage, such as if it's 10% extra to put a sidewalk on the side of a bridge or anything like that?
 - Oftentimes, it's not so much cost so much as existing conditions: Most of these major reconstruction projects are in areas where there are properties, intersecting streets. They're not always the same, that's for sure. We try to not make cost the driving, determining factor. Sometimes it can be relevant
 - If the cost is just so excessive that it can double the amount of a project, somebody may decide that this really shouldn't be part of this project. The project is to rehabilitate the bridge and adding all these other costs maybe don't fit with this budget. With the Rourke Bridge, we have a little more flexibility. It's a full reconstruction and we have a blank slate to work with. So that helps
 - if we include those elements in the original project scope, it's a lot more palatable. As the project advances, and in a later stage a new sidewalk needs to be added, you start doing the math and that's another 8 million dollars! We may not have that in the region's budget, but we still have to program the project. So then you have to find money someplace else
- Maintenance of these new facilities is integral to project implementation, whether its cleaning broken glass, sweeping or fixing potholes
 - Maintenance has always been a challenge for MassDOT or for any municipality that accepts a new facility, keeping it in good condition. Off-road paths are especially challenging to maintain (equipment, staffing), especially in winter
- Regarding the Rourke Bridge, is there a plan for winter maintenance? Is there any description of how clearing the roadway and sidewalks would be accomplished?
 - MassDOT would be responsible for maintenance through the District 4 office, which I'm sure is very aware of the project, and is probably already planning for winter maintenance. Potentially, there could even be an agreement with the local community to do the maintenance. I'm not sure that if Lowell typically clear sidewalks in the area, would they also clear this path?

City of Lowell overview on RAISE grant and traffic gardens Elizabeth Oltman, Transportation Engineer for the City of Lowell provided an overview (attached) on the slate of bridge repair projects soon to be undertaken. The \$21.4M grant reward was a result of applying for a 2023 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant – spun out from USDOT's 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. MassDOT is going to be the direct recipient of that money, (with the City becoming the subrecipient) going through the MassDOT design process

Jessica Wilson, Design Planner for the City of Lowell then gave an overview (attached) on progress being made regarding the adaptive reuse of existing public spaces (such as school playgrounds or parking lots) into traffic gardens. The concept is essentially a miniature network of streets and scaled down signs that are used to teach young bicyclists the safe rules of the road without having to compete with traffic on an actual roadway. Traffic gardens can be all shapes and sizes and can be constructed from basic materials, such as tape and artificial turf on the ground. The idea is to quickly construct anything from a very temporary pop-up one day installation to a permanent traffic playground fixture. Lowell uses traffic gardens and traffic playgrounds interchangeably. We've started moving towards calling them traffic playgrounds because it just resonates a little bit more with people understanding what we're actually talking about. It is a very new concept

Questions and comments included:

- Is there any data available yet regarding the usage of traffic gardens?
 - Not in the United States, as it is a relatively new concept. However, I've been speaking with our Safe Routes to School partners at MassDOT, and I understand there's some interest in potentially creating grant opportunities specifically for additional traffic gardens/playgrounds in the future. So we're really excited to initiate this as a pilot project and kind of test it out
 - MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program is a partnership through our consultants at AECOM. Traffic gardens were originally supposed to be one of the main implementation initiatives in the statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan updates and 2019. Then Covid happened in 2020, and all the schools closed as everybody went to remote learning. So we're just starting to resume those talks
 - There are other locations of successful traffic garden programs such as Newport, RI and Alexandria, VA worth looking into. Northampton, MA and Burlington, VT have noteworthy bike/ped safety programs as well
- Do you see this becoming a regular program where families go there with their kids and the kids just ride around, or where schools sign up for a block of time?
 - Definitely. As this is a pilot project, we're experimenting a bit here - seeing what works best. The community wants to put it to use and we're happy to help make that happen. We do plan to have a maintenance plan and envision it being an outdoor classroom type space for bicycles. We've talked with the Bike Connector - the nonprofit in downtown Lowell. They conduct bike rodeos where they give away a lot of bikes to young kids, and we'd love to collaborate with them to do an event like that as part of this project
 - I remember when I was a little kid, and my dad bringing me to learn how to ride my bike at our local high school, and it had ramps and other tactile things that were great for learning. It's creating that type of safe off-road environment
- Near the Burlington Mall, they have a similar set-up and wonder how much use it gets
- I have family who lives in Germany. At about age 10, they all go through a training program through school that is very much knits together the experience of cycling: kids practicing with the infrastructure because it's much more uniform. A suggestion regarding Safe Routes to School is: how to put those pieces together and make what is there as a playground more like what actual streets are like?
- America is a work in progress as far as integrating biking into transportation. I hope that there is a conscious effort to integrate what's really out there, and what the kids are essentially playing with and learning with
- This is a great learning tool for pedestrians as well, especially teaching for individuals with visual impairment. I'd like to see some more tactile information put in where there are detectable warnings at the crosswalks, and more definition where the sidewalks are, where they're all flush
- I know it's focused on bikes, but focus should also be on the pedestrian experience - understanding signage location and how people should be crossing. For the younger kids, teach the difference between the yield to stop signals. I would also look at making the space a little more defined tactually to locate the sidewalks and the crosswalks
 - That's really helpful, thank you. Part of the maintenance plan includes updating it every few years. We also thought about potentially keeping it flexible enough that we could try out different configurations in this space. Maybe having one layout for the first couple of years, because then there's a way that we can reconfigure 2-4 years down the road and do a new a new layout, so that it's kind of keeping up with changing needs or just keeping it fresh and presenting different opportunities for learning
 - Lowell anticipates completing design and community engagement this year and building this in 2025

MassDOT's Project Initiation Process Lorenzo Varone - Program Manager - Trails & Accessibility Improvements, MassDOT Office of the Chief Engineer gave a step-by-step presentation (attached) on initiating projects through MassDOT's Project Intake Tool (MaPIT) including:

- What is Needed to get Started in MaPIT?
- Initiating a Project in MaPIT
- What Happens After Project is Submitted?
- What does it mean to have a PRC approved project

Envisioned Regional Projects Discussion Andrew Jennings (Billerica) and Doug Chandler (Chelmsford), - both representatives for the Middlesex Canal Association - provided a presentation (attached) of potential trail connections between the existing Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Middlesex Canal tow path, and Concord River Greenway as well as the future Yankee Doodle Bike Path. Pete wrapped up by stating that a follow-up meeting with all parties, including MassDOT District 4 is a logical next step in project development

Other Announcements

Bill Kuttner (Middlesex Canal Association) announced the annual Middlesex Canal bike ride taking place April 6 between Boston and Lowell

Ruairi OMahoney (Umass Lowell) invited all attendees on a post-meeting walk in the general area to see progress being made on the Pawtucket Greenway

Next MAPBPAB meeting: Wednesday, May 29, 1-3 pm (virtual).

- List of board members in attendance (see below)
- Other attendees:
 - Tim Paris (MassDOT D4)
 - Betsy Johnson (WalkBike Springfield)
 - Francisco Lovera (MassDOT)
 - Tom Ruta (MassDOT D2)
 - Cheryl Ann Senior (MassDOT D5)
 - Alexis Hosea-Abbott (MassBike)
 - Beth Giannini (FRCOG)
 - Colleen Medeiros (CCC)
 - Joyia Smikle (CCC)
 - Laura Hanson (MassDOT D2)
 - Pedro Hernandez (MassDOT)
 - Ian Adams (MassDOT)
 - Josh Grzegorzewski (FHWA)
 - Jane Hanser (Newton)
 - Roger Woodbury (Beverly)
 - Jess Slavin (MassBike)
 - Barbara Lachance (MassDOT D5)
 - Tony Collins (MVRPC)
 - Jon Gray (SRPEDD)
 - Christian Milneil (StreetsBlog Mass)
 - Kris Carter (MassDOT)
 - Casey Cooper (CTPS)
 - John York (Bourne)
 - Chris Sorensen (MassDOT D1)
 - Max Rasbold-Gabbard (DPH)
 - Yahaira Graxirena (CMRPC)
 - Joshua Barber (FHWA)
 - Josh Grzegorzewski (FHWA)
 - Nick Russo (BRPC)
 - Terry Cowman (TLC)
 - Katherine Malgieri (Town of Billerica)
 - Bill Kuttner (Middlesex Canal Association)
 - Marlies Henderson (Billerica)
 - Allison Burson (ECGA)
 - Emily Paskewicz (ECGA)
 - Alan Heredia (City OF Lowell)
 - Austen T. Davis (NMCOG)
 - Jesse Strod (City of Lowell)

- Craig Thomas (UMass Lowell)
- Ruairi OMahoney (Umass Lowell)
- Jeremiah Breen (Friends of Regional Trails and Towpaths)

MA BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD

Board Member Sign-In Sheet March 20, 2024 – NMCOG, Lowell

Member Name	Attended	Notes
Tom DiPaolo MassDOT-Highway	yes	
Peter Robie MBTA	yes	
Pete Sutton MassDOT-Planning	yes	
Kurt Gaertner EOEEA	no	
Gerald Autler DCR	no	
Jaclyn Youngblood MassDOT	yes	
Kirby Lecy DPH	yes	
Charlie Ticotsky MOTT	yes	
Andrea Papa EOPSS	no	
Jeff McCollough MARPA	yes	
Jessica Boulanger MARPA	yes	
Jackie Jones MARPA	yes	
Jeff Larason – public member	no	
Keith MacDonald – public member (South Coast Bikeway Alliance)	no	
Galen Mook – MassBike	no	
Karin Goins – public member (Walk/Bike Worcester)	yes	
Seun Oluwole – public member	no	
James Fuccione - public member (Mass. Healthy Aging Collaborative)	yes	
Cheryl Casper – public member	no	
Sam Squalia – public member (Fitchburg City Council)	yes	
Brendan Kearney - WalkBoston	no	
Maureen White - public member	no	
Ed Sinofsky – public member (Cape Cod Cycling Club)	yes	
Karen Foster – public member (All Out Adventures)	no	

Meg Robertson – public member	yes	
Alice Brown – public member (Boston Harbor Now)	no	

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