

Massachusetts Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Notes
Wednesday, November 29, 2023, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), Springfield

Welcome & Introductions: Pete Sutton, ex-officio, called the meeting to order, called roll and referenced the recently held [World Day of Remembrance](#), which acknowledged victims of road traffic crashes and their families.

Overview on MassDOT's regional safety and multimodal improvement projects in Districts 1 and 2

Thomas Ruta, District Assistant Projects Engineer and Dawn Nims, District Bicycle/Pedestrian/ADA Coordinator provided a presentation (attached) highlighting several multimodal improvement projects within District 2 - an area primarily centered around the Connecticut River Valley in western MA.

Questions and comments included:

- It should be noted that all of these projects are not just some amenities being added piecemeal, but are getting the full, comprehensive Complete Streets treatment they deserve. Many of these projects involve major roadway reconstruction
- There is also another project being planned on West St near the new Birnie Av underpass that will include a new shared use path under the I-291 interchange – adding for safer crossings
- What is the grade of the Birnie Av underpass?
 - Less than 5%, very minimal. The final design also emphasized drainage and clear sight lines from one end of the tunnel to the other for maximum safety
 - MassDOT has an additional project in planning at the Gerena School that will address its underpass flooding issues while making repairs to Birnie Av
- Are any of these projects receiving Safe Streets for All (SS4A) or Reconnecting Communities federal funding?
 - No, these projects were funded prior to both those programs being launched. However, Springfield did receive SS4A funding in 2023 for several intersection safety improvements
- How did you manage permitting to construct an underpass beneath active railroad?
 - Permitting was handled in-house as the railroad is owned by MassDOT

Chris Sorensen, District Bicycle/Pedestrian/ADA Coordinator provided a presentation (attached) highlighting several multimodal improvement projects within District 1 - an area primarily centered around Berkshire County in western MA.

Questions and comments included:

- Are there any plans to upgrade multimodal accommodations around the train station in Pittsfield?
 - Yes, there are already bike lanes on North St, which the City installed; and they're eager to add more infrastructure for better connections with the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail

Findings and discussion on PVPC study on shared -use-path mid-block crossings Jeff McCollough, PVPC's Principal Transportation Planner, provided findings (attached) based on recent fieldwork conducted around behavioral patterns of both motorists and pedestrians/cyclists, including:

- In the 938 occurrences observed, there were two near collisions between vehicles and bicyclists. These near collisions occurred when the signal was not activated
- There were no near collisions between vehicles and non-bikes during the 48 hours of observation when the signal was used as designed
- The crossing would benefit from additional lighting during hours of darkness
- This is a new installation and people are still acclimating to the operation of the signal and additional study would be beneficial
- Motorists and non-motorists would benefit from better education

Questions and comments included:

- There is a rectangular rapid flashing beacon equipped with a motion sensor (to automatically detect approaching pedestrians and cyclists) located a block from the Damon Rd study area. Can pedestrian hybrid beacons (such as the one studied) be equipped with the same motion sensors?
 - Yes. MassDOT will explore this option further at this location – comparison of the two treatments could also potentially be a follow-up measure to study
- There is often the issue of a cyclists or pedestrian pressing the request signal waiting for the safe crossing, with some motorists stopping prematurely upon seeing a vulnerable user, while other motorists pay no attention. This causes further confusion and anxiety for all users

- Is there currently any language contained within the RMV driver's manual that references these two different treatments?
 - MassDOT will check upon the latest revision to be released in 2024
- It'd also be interesting to see if there is existing research conducted yet on pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHB) vs. standard red-yellow-green traffic signalization – e.g. what is the most appropriate treatment?
 - Agreed. Particularly as it relates to pedestrian hybrid beacons, we need to further study whether they are functioning as intended
- In the advocacy world we call the push a button activation “beg buttons” to give a sense of the sentiments about current hierarchy and roadway culture
 - As someone who tries to follow the rules, the wait can be frustrating - in the way that many signals seem to be timed for maximum motorist throughput compared to pedestrians and cyclists, at least in my experience
- WalkMassachusetts has experienced a similar situation on the Cochituate Rail Trail in Framingham with regards to how motorists react to pedestrian hybrid beacons: many wait for one user to cross then proceed even though they're still technically supposed to be stopped until the flashing light activates (signalizing ok to proceed). There may be additional users walking or cycling in the opposite direction who are relying on motorists to wait until the crossing phase is completed
- Option for pedestrian hybrid beacons to be equipped with a green light to signify the “all clear”?
 - No
- MassDOT's Highway Safety section produced a [video](#) explaining how to use a pedestrian hybrid beacon and educating motorists on its safety function
- What is a typical wait time once the request button is pressed?
 - It is usually very timely, within a few seconds - the only exception being when it has just been engaged a few seconds prior
- On-location signage would also go a long way for all users
 - Most PHBs have signage in place for motorists (as part of the elevated signal fixture) and for users (as part of the request button)
- We should also aspire to creative spaces that are functioning for everybody - having that space to be able to understand the data from a community perspective. To have those conversations about: Why pedestrians are not pushing the button? Why motorists are frustrated? Is it because of construction? What are the motivations that are happening around that versus taking data and making our assumptions as to why people are behaving in certain ways in places?
- To be able to really understand what the best pathway forward is in terms of compliance. Is it because it is incredibly difficult for someone who's biking? Maybe they have mobility and problems to get off their bike, to be able to push the button and to get back onto the bike. There are a lot of things that I think that (based on our own lived experience) we sometimes don't even think about
- It would be of great interest to find out why certain users DON'T press the activation button...so much planning goes into these safety features. Why do some choose not to use them?
 - It is always a challenge attempting to predict or attempt to engineer human nature
- State law mandates cyclists dismount and walk their bikes across streets though it is rarely (if ever) enforced...that may be one of the leading factors in non-compliance
- For motorists, it often takes time to get used to stopping at these new PHB. At the Bourne Rotary, it has taken motorists a couple of months to get used to their being in place. There was a 10-15 second window between the time the button was pushed and pedestrians were safe to cross. During that lag time, motorists would get impatient having to wait. This resulted in some pedestrians not wanting to push the button and instead just crossing when the roadway was clear
 - It often takes time to change culture, particularly when it comes to sharing the road

Updates on Valley Bike Share Gary Roux, PVPC's Principal Planner Traffic Manager provided an update (attached) on the current status of Valley Bike share. As of 2023, the vendor – Bewegen - engaged to run ValleyBike has declared bankruptcy resulting in no current service. Stakeholders are currently estimating annual costs to maintain and operate the system for each member community. Some recent developments include:

- A recent Request For Information issued by the City of Northampton resulted in six responses
- The ValleyBike communities are now developing a Request for Proposals
- The stations remain in place while the bikes remain locked up in storage awaiting new ownership

Some questions and comments included:

- The Holyoke bike/ped committee is leading a charge partnering with Walk/Bike Springfield and other organizations in an advocacy effort - engaging with state legislators for assistance

- MassBike staff relayed prior experience working with Omaha, Nebraska's bikeshare: it does need public investment and can't run on its own. Revenue streams such as the one-day passes and annual memberships don't cover the full operating costs
- With regards to Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ funding, is there concern about the service being down? Some stipulations require a commitment of ten years
 - The original CMAQ funding agreement was only for three years, which we covered
- Are you looking for a vendor that's going to give you a whole new system? Will the vendors, tech staff and operators all be the same company?
 - To be determined by the request for proposals reviewed by the City of Northampton
- At least one other former Bewegen customer - Park City, Utah - has decided to just operate the system themselves with municipal employees. Is that idea under any consideration for Valley Bike?
 - We understand Park City has some municipal staff overseeing the program but have hired an outside company to handle technical support
- In the past, the City of Westfield had reservations with granting power and authority to the lead community to buy, sell and enter into agreements with Bewegen. This inter-municipality agreement is something that would need to be re-examined as the new vendor comes on board

MassTrails Priority Trails Network map Pete Sutton provided an overview on the recently released MassTrails Team Priority Trails Network [statewide vision map](#). Focusing on the Pioneer Valley itself, Pete listed existing infrastructure as well as notable gaps, such as access between Springfield and neighboring communities of Agawam and Chicopee. There is also a gap north of downtown Westfield that is the subject of an ongoing feasibility study

- WalkBike Springfield has advocated for interim on-road improvements to better connect Chicopee (along Route 116) and Agawam (along West Columbus Av)
- On behalf of Mayor McCabe, Westfield is fully supportive of MassDOT in realizing the final connection between Southwick and Southampton

Other Announcements

Pete gave a recap of MassDOT's new 4 Feet To Pass signage that has been rolled out statewide as part of the Commonwealth's Vulnerable User's Law. Based on the success of the awareness campaign and the number of participating municipalities, the free signage will most likely be extended into 2024

- Next MAPBPAB meeting: Wednesday, January 24, 1-3 pm (virtual).
- List of board members in attendance (see below)
- Other attendees:
 - Ben Muller (MassDOT D6)
 - Kirby Lecy (DPH)
 - Jacob Stern (MassDOT OPMI)
 - Tom Ruta (MassDOT D2)
 - Cheryl Ann Senior (MassDOT D5)
 - Alexis Hosea-Abbott (MassBike)
 - Jes Slavin (MassBike)
 - Chris Sorensen (MassDOT D1)
 - Peter Frieri (MassDOT D1)
 - Dawn Nims (MassDOT D2)
 - Nick Russo (BRPC)
 - Pedro Hernandez (MassDOT)
 - Josh Grzegorzewski (FHWA)
 - David Loutzenheiser (MAPC)
 - Mayor Michael McCabe (City of Westfield)
 - Rick Plenge (VHB)
 - Ian Adams (MassDOT)
 - Brian Pigeon (City of Worcester)
 - Christian Milneil (StreetsBlog Mass)
 - Barbara Lachance (MassDOT D5)
 - Carl Hultgren (MassDOT D3)
 - Jon Gray (SRPEDD)
 - Kyle Mowatt (OCPC)

- Laura Hanson (MassDOT D2)
- Casey Cooper (CTPS)
- John York (Bourne)
- Benjamin Breger (MassDOT D2)
- Max Rasbold-Gabbard (DPH)
- Yahaira Graxirena (CMRPC)
- Joshua Barber (FHWA)
- Kyle Casiglio (CTPS)
- Audrey Boraski (FRCOG)
- Nick Kiser (City of Chicopee)
- Patrick Collins (City of Chicopee)
- Sarah Cannamela (MassDOT D2)
- Betsy Johnson (Walk/Bike Springfield)
- Dan Murphy (City of Easthampton)
- Joe Kietner (City of Westfield)
- Aaron Vega (City of Holyoke)
- Rana Al-Jammal (PVPC)

MA BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD

Board Member Sign-In Sheet

November 29, 2023 – Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Springfield

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	
Alexandra Papademoulis DPH	yes	
Charlie Ticotsky MOTT	no	
Andrea Papa EOPSS	no	
Jeff McCollough MARPA	yes	
Jessica Boulanger MARPA	yes	
Jackie Jones MARPA	no	
Jeff Larason – public member	no	
Keith MacDonald – public member (South Coast Bikeway Alliance)	no	
Galen Mook – MassBike	yes	
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)	no	
Brendan Kearney - WalkBoston	yes	
Maureen White - public member	no	
Ed Sinofsky – public member (Cape Cod Cycling Club)	yes	
Karen Foster – public member (All Out Adventures)	yes	
Meg Robertson – public member	yes	
Alice Brown – public member (Boston Harbor Now)	yes	