

Massachusetts Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Notes
Wednesday, July 15, 2020, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Teleconference

*****NOTE***:** This meeting was originally scheduled to take place in Fitchburg. Due to circumstances related to COVID-19, all large out-of-office MassDOT meetings are now being held remotely via the Go-to-Meeting app until further notice.

Welcome & Introductions: Pete Sutton, ex-officio, called the meeting to order and introductions took place over the phone.

Online Poll #1: Welcome & Introductions were followed by a poll sent to attendees to gauge whether attendees are walking and/or biking less, same, or more often. Immediate survey results revealed that 25% of people are biking/walking less often, 18% are biking/walking just as often, and 57% are biking/walking more often (total of 28 votes)

Local/Regional Presentations & Discussion:

City of Fitchburg MassWorks and Complete Streets Grant Projects

Sam Squalia, Fitchburg City Council and MABPAB member, gave a presentation (attached) focused on downtown Fitchburg complete streets initiatives including the current project to convert a pair of one-way streets - Main Street and Boulder Drive - to carry two-way traffic with bike lanes. Discussion centered around the history of these two main arterials in the downtown and the existing problems with configuration, inefficient roadway layout, and the lack of pedestrian and bicycle accommodation and safety. Building on a 2016 MassWorks grant for River Street bike lanes and a 2019 Complete Streets grant for Upper Common, Fitchburg is expanding their bike/ped infrastructure with the six-mile Twin Cities Rail Trail to Leominster (currently under construction). Additional walking and biking projects along Main Street and Boulder Drive are slated for 2021.

Some comments and issues raised included:

- Question about how Fitchburg concluded that the City should implement the Main Street One-Way One-Lane Main with Bike Lane experiment that took place from August 2016 – July 2018 as a permanent solution:
 - The project's pilot status made it finite (that it would end), which ultimately resulted in lack of funding and support from many stakeholders. The new direction Fitchburg has taken is to make the bike lanes permanent, making sure they have enough stakeholder buy-in and funding to make it happen this time around
- Question about whether walkability and accessibility improvements are going to benefit the Fitchburg Council on Aging and if wayfinding will include the senior center
 - Walkability and accessibility for seniors and to the Fitchburg senior center is an important part of the MassWorks and Complete Streets projects since it is located in the heart of downtown and these issues have been a concern
- Question about what data will be collected for the Main Street improvement to show and document its effectiveness and success
 - Now included in the scope-of-work spearheaded by the community development director and design team
- Tom Skwierawski, the Executive Director of Planning and Community Development, is hoping to apply to the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces grant to extend Mill Street across Boulder Street to Fitchburg Riverfront Park and close Commercial Street temporarily

Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Active Transportation Plan

Betsy Goodrich from Merrimack Valley Planning Commission presented on MVPC's 2020 Active Transportation Plan and virtual public outreach through an online [Wikimapping](#) application. This interactive tool was created to gather increased community involvement and has served as the main source of input for the Plan throughout the last few months. A demonstration of the tool was given which showcased the ability to draw routes ridden most frequently, routes cyclists do not feel comfortable using, to highlight barriers to walking and biking, to identify locations for bike racks and related infrastructure, and collect information on how to improve access to transit. The map serves to identify corridors in the region's communities that allow for improvements to everyday biking, walking and recreation to downtowns, priority growth areas, schools, and transit. Feedback or advice on obtaining more information in the current pandemic was encouraged. Comments raised included:

- Learning curve with MVRTA bus system specifically regarding many flag stops along its route system (i.e. very few fixed stops for customers to wait)
- Not all MVRTA buses are equipped with bike racks, presenting an opportunity to upgrade the Lawrence/ Lowell routes that many UMass students and workers use
- Making connections to older adults in the region through the Lawrence Health Taskforce, The Center, UMass Lowell and walk audits
- Comment on implementing a similar on-line mapping project in Springfield and not generating as many responses as anticipated. How long should it stay posted?
- Duration of survey
 - Flexible depending on how many responses they feel would be a fair representation
 - Launched two weeks ago with desire to be kept open for another month
- Suggestions to further expand outreach and response
 - Engaging in online focus groups with stakeholder analysis in places
 - One-on-one phone interviews
 - Utilizing regional transportation management associations
 - Reaching out to the Lowell Association for the Blind
 - Target Strava clubs like the Merrimack Valley Velo and Lowell Bike Coalition
 - Create a deadline and send reminders as countdown to deadline
- Fellow MABPAB member shared that the survey went out to a local cycling listserv that has around 100 riders

Applying MassDOT's Potential for Everyday Bicycling in the Pioneer Valley Region

Jeff McCullough, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), presented on applying MassDOT's Potential for Everyday Bicycling in Pioneer Valley Region transportation improvement program (TIP) projects, Complete Streets prioritization plans, Local/State/Regional Bicycle Plans, and other potential projects of regional significance (attached). PVPC is ranking potential for everyday biking projects on a scale from 1 to 9 where 1 is the highest potential. Strong desire to help balance urban and rural projects and kick start neglected or stalled projects through this analysis. The McKnight Community Trail Project in Springfield dating back to 1991 was one such project mentioned that ranks high on the scale and has failed to move forward, but now is on the TIP.

Some questions and comments raised included:

- Interested in reasons McKnight Trail has not advanced sooner?
 - High staff turnover at local level has led to a lack of continuity for the project
- What is the significance of highlighted roadways on map running East-West through Downtown Springfield area? (represented as dark purple on map)
 - State Street in Springfield is a high crash location, but not a project PVPC expects to see reconstructed due to substantial upgrades recently undertaken by the City. There could be segments reconstructed along a corridor close by that has significant numbers of bike and pedestrian crashes

Overview of MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program

Jackie DeWolfe, Director of Sustainable Mobility at MassDOT, presented on the MassDOT [Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program](#) with a brief summary of the rationale for creating the program – to support public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce for municipalities during the pandemic. Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis and further rounds of award grantees will be shared in the future. The Barr Foundation is also providing free technical assistance through multiple providers to municipalities to carry out these projects. Amber Vaillancourt, Sustainable Mobility Intern at MassDOT, then highlighted various projects (attached) implemented by municipalities throughout the state to reallocate street space (prior to the MassDOT grant). Examples of projects included shared streets, expanded outdoor dining areas, automated pedestrian crosswalk signals, sidewalk extensions, and ADA compliant infrastructure. If you have photos you would like to share with MassDOT, please email them to: amber.vaillancourt@dot.state.ma.us and jacqueline.dewolfe@dot.state.ma.us

Discussion on how to sustain enthusiasm for walking and biking

This was a question raised multiple times in the member survey. Jackie DeWolfe facilitated a discussion on how to sustain enthusiasm for walking and biking in the Commonwealth during this period of historically low

motor vehicle and transit use. Input was sought on the best ways to keep biking and walking at the forefront and helping it become a part of the new normal. Comments and questions raised by the group included:

- How are MassDOT roads being changed?
 - Charles River Dam Rd. reduced from 5 vehicular lanes to 3 vehicular lanes, with 2 dedicated bus/bike lanes
 - MassDOT is encouraging requests from municipalities; municipalities can receive funding through Shared Streets and Spaces program.
- Considerations for older residents needs to be prioritized in shared streets projects so that infrastructure does not exclude them from accessibility
- [Advisory signage currently being deployed by DCR](#) may be useful for municipalities to spread awareness about COVID-19 safety
- Economic recovery (i.e. outdoor dining) should not come before the needs of bikers and walkers
- Need to think regionally in order to create consistent biking corridors for improved movement
- Issue of joggers occupying small sidewalk spaces should give way to the idea of creating dedicated jogging / recreation corridors
- MBTA should lift restrictions on all rush hour bicycle restrictions, especially Blue Line because no other way for people to bike/walk from East Boston to other parts of Boston and beyond, and the Commuter Rail.
- When awarding grants take into consideration concerns w/ outdoor dining spaces impeding walking/biking space
- Additional comments from the chat included:
 - MassBike supports easing bicycle restrictions on the MBTA
 - Rise in biking has primarily been recreational, and as a result better ideas need to be advanced about creating safe routes to parks, rail trails, etc.

UPDATE SINCE MEETING: MBTA Policy Update - Policy was changed to allow bikes on Commuter Rail during rush hour. Website had outdated language saying 'except during rush hour' (now removed). Where there is a bike symbol on the timetable, bikes are allowed. <https://www.mbta.com/bikes>. Members are urged to help spread the word of this change

Online Poll #2: An open response question was sent to attendees: "How do we sustain enthusiasm for walking and bicycling? Provide up to three responses, no more than 25 characters each." See attached word cloud.

Response Summary:

- Several responses about **wayfinding**
- Other themes:
 - supporting bike share
 - improving disability access/ accessibility/ engaging older adults
 - focus on sidewalks/ wider sidewalk zones
 - mapping routes to explore
 - public engagement/ working with groups
 - new car-free spaces
 - permanent parklets
 - connected infrastructure/ regional bike routes
 - MBTA bike access/ bike racks on buses.

Presentation on MABPAB Member Survey Responses

John Alessi, Sustainable Mobility Assistant at MassDOT, reported out on responses from the recent MABPAB member survey. This survey was used to gauge members' interest in the remaining priority topics they previously identified, topics from the state Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans, COVID-19 related questions, initiatives by public and state agency members related to MABPAB topics, topics that members expressed interest in learning more about, and questions related to equity and racism. More detailed responses to these survey responses will be sent out with the meeting notes. If members have not yet filled out the survey, they are encouraged to do so. The results from this survey will be used to inform future MABPAB agendas.

Addressing Equity and Racism in our Work

Jackie DeWolfe highlighted that we received a lot of questions members would like to address related to equity and racial justice. She encouraged the group to share resources. As a start, Jackie provided resources for reflection, to inform future discussions, and inspire future action related to these important topics. If members know of any additional resources that would be relevant to future discussions, they are encouraged to send them to Jackie and Pete and the group..

Additional comments from the chat included:

- [Walking While Black: Pedestrian Enforcement and Racial Profiling](#)
- [How to make Urbanism Anti-Racist Webinar](#)

Other Announcements

- [MassTrails](#) is holding its quarterly stakeholder meeting Thursday, July 16th
 - Updates on trails initiatives taking place throughout the state
 - Presentation on MassDOT's Bicycle Wayfinding Design Guide
 - Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to present on environmental concerns in developing trails
 - MABPAB members invited to attend to learn more and get involved.
- MABPAB meetings are recorded and will be moving forward. Check MABPAB web page under [Meeting Documents](#)
- Next MABPAB meeting on Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Online Poll #3: A final poll question was sent to attendees to engage their overall experience with the meeting: How would you rate the meeting? (On a scale of one star to five stars). Fourteen people responded to the question.

Response Summary:

- 7% of people rated it 3 stars
- 36% of people rated it 4 stars
- 57% of people rated it 5 stars
- Average score: 4.5 stars

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 2020 (Teleconference)

- List of board members in attendance (see below)
- Other attendees:
 - Will Glebus (MassDOT D1)
 - Jacqueline Goddard (MassDOT)
 - Madison McGlinchey (MassDOT)
 - Cassandra Gascon (MassDOT)
 - Jackie Jones (SRPEDD)
 - Josh Grzegorzewski (FHWA)
 - Barbara LaChance (MassDOT D5)
 - Tim Paris (MassDOT D4)
 - Rob May (City of Brockton)
 - Beth Giannini (FRCOG)
 - David Loutzenheiser (MAPC)
 - Casey Claude (CTPS)
 - Lev Malakhoff (CCC)
 - Josh Chase (CMRPC)
 - Christian MilNeil (Streetsblog Mass)
 - Cheryl-Ann Senior (MassDOT D5)

**Board Member Sign-In Sheet
July 15, 2020 – Teleconference**

Member Name	Attended	Notes
Tom DiPaolo MassDOT-Highway	yes	
Andy Smith MassDOT-MBTA	no	
Pete Sutton MassDOT-Planning	yes	
Kurt Gaertner EOEEA	yes	
Dan Driscoll DCR	no	
Jackie DeWolfe MassDOT	yes	
Ben Wood DPH	no	
Phyllis Cahaly MOTT	no	
Jeff Larason EOPSS	no	
Jeff McCollough MARPA	yes	
Betsy Goodrich MARPA	yes	
Paul Chenard MARPA	yes	
Bryce Hoffman – public member (Lowell Bike Coalition)	yes	
Angela Rodriguez – public member (Transportation for Massachusetts)	yes	
Keith MacDonald – public member (South Coast Bikeway Alliance)	yes	
Galen Mook – MassBike	yes	
Amanda Chilson – public member (Northern Berkshire Community Coalition)	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	yes	
Sam Squalia – public member (Fitchburg City Council)	yes	
Stacey Beuttell - WalkBoston	yes	
Maureen White - public member	yes	
Meg Robertson – public member (Commission for the Blind)	yes	
Alice Brown – public member (Boston Harbor Now)	yes	