

Massachusetts Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Notes
Wednesday, March 16, 2016, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Central MA Regional Planning Commission 2nd Floor Conference Room
Union Station, 2 Washington Square, Worcester

Welcome & Introductions: Pete Sutton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

Members present: Tom DiPaolo, Dan Driscoll, Richard Fries, Steve Heinrichs, Wendy Landman, Jeff McCollough, John McQueen, Joe Repole, Pete Sutton, Jim Tozza, Ben Wood **Members absent:** Rosalie Anders, Glen Berkowitz, Philip Groth, Scott Hamwey, Kurt Gaertner, Janie Katz-Christy, Steve Miller, Steve Woelfel **Guests present:** Sarah Bradbury (MassDOT District 3), Dan Daniska (CMRPC), Trish Domigan (VHB), Jacqueline Ewuoso (City of Worcester, Division of Public Health), Dawn Geoffrey (Town of Grafton), Rick Handfield (MassDOT District 3), Laura Hanson (MassDOT District 2), John Michalak (Nitsch Engineering) Karin Valentine Goins (WalkBike Worcester) David Watson (WatsonActive) **Guests participating by telephone:** John Allen (Waltham Bicycle Committee), Mike Burns (Nantucket Planning), Cameron Bain, Tim Kochan (MassDOT District 5), Kate Maszta (MassDOT District 1), Rob Miceli, Fred Moseley (Stantec), Bill Schwartz (TCI)

Approval of 1/20/16 Minutes: Pete Sutton moved to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Joe Repole, approved unanimously. After introductions, Pete explained the MABPAB schedule of conducting half of the six annual meetings in different locations around the state in order to highlight regional bike/ped initiatives. Today's desired outcomes were to gain greater familiarity with MassDOT bicycling & walking initiatives in Central MA; to be updated on Worcester Advocacy Efforts and to be updated on DCR's Blackstone River Bikeway.

Current Bicycling & Walking Projects in Central MA: Rick Handfield and Sarah Bradbury gave a detailed presentation highlighting three of MassDOT's current bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects. (see attached) The Assabet River Rail Trail is a rail-to-trail conversion, a 3.4 mile segment through Maynard and Acton and is scheduled to take two years to construct. The complexities of the project were explained, most notable over a dozen grade crossings along some very busy roadways such as Route 62. The path will not cross Route 27, however. Crosswalk treatments were also detailed on a case by case basis, all of them ADA-compliant with no bollards being used. In addition to the trail, amenities such as parking lots, new sidewalks, bridge replacement and a boardwalk over wetlands will be included. Once completed, a gap will remain in Stow between the existing trail and the newly constructed portion due to property issues that are still being negotiated. It was suggested that wayfinding signage be put in place at both trailheads directing cyclists to the safest on-road routing between the two completed segments.

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is noteworthy in the fact that it crosses two MassDOT districts (3 and 4), and is also an extension of the existing segment between Lowell and Westford (completed in 2009). The Twin Cities Rail Trail will link two dense urban areas - downtown Fitchburg and Leominster while providing direct links to both city's transit facilities. There is also an opportunity to upgrade the ramp system on Route 2 at the Route 12 interchange pending the possible replacement of the existing rail bridge. Where right-of-way allows, the paths will also have soft shoulders for runners. Once constructed, trail maintenance would revert to the local municipalities. Construction timelines may also vary based upon several factors, such as drainage and terrain issues encountered.

MA Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan updates: Pete Sutton provided an update that the draft Plan Scope of Work for the statewide Bicycle Transportation Plan has been approved by FHWA and is scheduled to be put out to bid as an RFR on CommBUYS the week ending March 25. Work has begun by Toole Design Group on the statewide Pedestrian Transportation Plan, with information being compiled for the existing conditions as part of Task 1. As is the case with both plans, MABPAB board members are expected to be involved directly with the studies acting in the capacity as official steering committees. Materials will be available for review in advance of upcoming meetings.

Overview of Worcester Advocacy Efforts: Karen Valentine Goins presented on behalf of WalkBike Worcester and the city's Safe Routes to School program. (see attached) As SRTS has been adopted and the city remains committed to the program, several challenges remain, including substandard drop off/pick up areas; lack of a parent-teacher organization to coordinate with; minimal training for crossing guards, informal bus service arrangements, issues with survey-taking and overall challenges with school administrators regarding outreach efforts such as Walk to School Day. CMRPC was praised for their partnership, particularly their assistance in creating and supplying routing maps for each neighborhood.

It is hoped that future SRTS activities such as the successful Walking School Bus program can be adopted once a stable base of volunteers can be established. Complete Streets initiatives were also highlighted in the presentation, including the creation of the city's own Community Health Improvement Program (CHIP). MassDOT will also be partnering with WalkBike Worcester on upcoming meetings regarding Complete Streets improvements to Main Street.

Pete Sutton gave an update on Complete Streets funding, noting that funds plan to be allocated for each year in the upcoming 2017-2021 Capital Investment Plan, which is currently being finalized. Other major expenditures in the CIP includes funding to retrofit thousands of curb ramps along MassDOT's 1200 linear miles of sidewalks for ADA compliance, as well funding for high priority projects identified in both Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plans.

Update on DCR's Blackstone River Bikeway: **Dan Driscoll** gave a comprehensive overview on DCR's ongoing Blackstone River Greenway project, highlighting its evolving design and best management practices. Over the course of the project's twenty year history, segments in Worcester, Millbury (4 miles) and a new segment through Uxbridge and Millville (4.2 miles) have been completed, complementing an existing segment in Rhode Island, that when fully built out will be a 50+ mile off-road shared use path system between Providence and Worcester. Permitting over wetlands as well as other environmentally sensitive areas along the river have held up the project and in some cases put entire segments on hold indefinitely, pending further re-evaluation. The latest phase was constructed along the existing Southern New England Trunk Line Trail (SNETT) and includes seven reconstructed bridges and one tunnel. Additional challenges for future trail segments include land acquisition, negotiating with the Providence & Worcester Railroad for possible rail-with-trail use, easements from private property owners, encroachment from abutters (all documented and sent to DCR's legal affairs), as well as licensing from private property owners in lieu of easements. (see attached)

Other Business, Public Comments & Questions:

- Richard Fries gave an update on the League of American Bicyclist's annual National Bike Summit held earlier in the month in Washington, DC. Of particular note were details of the recently passed five-year transportation bill known as the FAST Act. Under this new bill, additional funding is now being made available for all National Highway System roads and towards Complete Streets.
- Pete Sutton concluded the meeting with an announcement that BayState Bike Week will be taking place this year from May 14-22. Cyclists are encouraged to plan their own events throughout the state during that week and to upload any events open to the public at the official web site:
<http://baystatebikeweek.org/>

Next Meeting: The next Board meeting is scheduled to be held in the MassDOT Planning Conference Room (enter through Room 4150), at the State Transportation Building (STB), 10 Park Plaza, Boston, on Wednesday, May 25, 1 – 3 PM.

Adjournment: Pete Sutton adjourned the meeting at 3:00 PM.