



## **WORTHINGTON BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD**

### **Minutes of the Monday, May 23, 2016 Meeting**

**Members Present:** The members present were Michael Bates, Lawrence Creed, Matt Erickson, Ann Horton, Emma Lindholm, John Rist, Kelly Whalen and Jeannie Martin (Chair).

City Council Member Ms. Rachael Dorothy was present along with City Support Staff Darren Hurley (Parks and Recreation Director) and Celia Thornton (Project Supervisor). Also present were EMH&T Senior Project Manager Mr. Michael Brehm and Mr. Neil Schwartz. Resident Mr. Paul Dorothy (179 Kenbrook Dr.) also attended the meeting.

The minutes from the April 25 meeting were approved by all present with the exception of Mr. Erickson who abstained.

**Swearing In of New & Reappointed Members:** New member Mr. Matt Erickson and reappointed members Mr. Creed and Mrs. Horton were sworn in as members of the Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Board by Ms. Martin.

**EMH&T Presentation on the Northeast Gateway Project:** Mr. Brehm began by giving a brief history of the project. The City received MORPC Attributable Funding in 2012. In 2014 EMH&T was hired to manage the project. Public Meetings were held in 2015 and a presentation given to City Council in 2016. Right of Way (ROW) acquisition is scheduled to begin in 2017 and construction in 2019. Mr. Brehm then explained the first map and the difficulty of servicing the existing level of vehicular traffic that led to a signalized realigning of roads. After the initial plan submission the City asked EMH&T to go back and also add bike and pedestrian facilities to the plans, which they did (as shown on the map) and are now bringing to the board for feedback. The map shows the addition of a shared use path along the east side of Huntley from Lake View Plaza Blvd. to the CSX RR crossing, along the south side of E. Wilson Bridge Road from Huntley, across the Norfolk Southern RR crossing to the Community Center entrance, and along part of the east side of the newly routed Worthington Galena Road. It also shows continuing the 5 foot sidewalk along the north side of East Wilson Bridge Road across the railroad tracks all the way to Huntley Road. Two new signalized crossings with pedestrian heads and push buttons would also be added to the intersections of East Wilson Bridge and Worthington Galena Road and Huntley and Worthington Galena Road, along with railroad pedestrian crossings at East Wilson Bridge Road across the Norfolk Southern tracks and at Huntley across the CSX tracks.

Mr. Rist asked if a below grade crossing had been considered at the railroad crossings for increased safety. Mr. Brehm replied that because it was below the water table a pump station would be required which made that option cost prohibitive, in addition to the need to close very busy railroad tracks for several months of construction.

Mr. Dorothy asked why no sidewalks were proposed on the east side of Huntley and pointed out that there were no pedestrian crossings between the project area and a half mile north. Mr. Brehm said part of the reason was that the geometry under the bridge (not undermining the bridge abutment) made just adding a multi-use path very difficult and expensive. Ms. Martin asked why it wasn't feasible to take the same approach as Dublin had on Riverside Drive and Emerald Parkway under I-270. Mr. Dorothy then added that people are now traveling on foot under the bridge in very dangerous conditions and since we know that, spending all this money on a new reconstruction and not addressing that problem is a huge issue for the City. He further added that having a level of service B and C for vehicles, but F for pedestrian and bike travel didn't make the City bike and ped friendly. Plus, moving traffic more efficiently means a speed increase, further endangering bike and pedestrian activity.

Ms. Martin then asked why the multi-use trail was not carried throughout the project area (all the way down Worthington Galena and across the Norfolk Southern RR tracks there). Mr. Brehm said that they must address logical termini when using federal funding and to extend the trail south it would need to take it to another trail or project in future plan which doesn't currently exist. EMH&T also preferred to concentrate all of their efforts on the Wilson Bridge Road railroad crossing. Ms. Martin replied that bike and pedestrian travel should be treated at the same level as that for automobiles and that forcing circuitous routes for alternative transportation, but not for vehicles, was not equal.

Mr. Dorothy said that new infrastructure should never be built without sidewalks in the City. If we plan ahead then we can force the railroad to address crossing issues in the future. He also suggested taking out the center left turn lane on Huntley Road and use the additional space for a sidewalk on the east side and a dedicated bike lane on the west. There are too many driveways for a multi-use trail to cross and it makes using the trail a suicide mission. The speed limit should also be dropped to 30 mph. Mr. Brehm said this is exactly why he was presenting to the board and the kind of feedback they were looking for. Mr. Dorothy asked where we were in the process and Mr. Brehm said on the cusp of detailed design and currently looking at utilities. Mr. Dorothy said that was why this was the time to change the plans and take some ROW from the vehicles and use it for bike and ped facilities since the project was biased towards vehicles. Mr. Brehm reminded the group that EMH&T was given a specific goal at the outset to move vehicles through the area. That said, he believes they have enough ROW to do what the group might want, within reason, and that's why he was at the meeting- to develop these ideas. Mr. Dorothy said that his concern is how cost prohibitive it is to make changes after a certain point in the project. Mr. Rist asked how narrow traffic lanes could be made and still get approved by ODOT or the Federal Highway Administration. Mr. Brehm reiterated that he would not worry about a foot here or there and would rather we figure out what the board wants so he can see what he can do to make that happen. EMH&T would also like to make this a successful bike & ped project. Mr. Dorothy summarized his points into three suggestions:

1. There should be sidewalks on both sides of the road throughout the project area.
2. Delete the center lane to gain enough right of way when necessary.
3. A buffered bike lane on the east side of Huntley is safer than a multiuse trail where a sidewalk should be.

Ms. Martin mentioned that Huntley is not as busy as people think. Mr. Brehm said that AM and PM peak volumes were measured and ODOT's traffic modeling group used the counts, in conjunction with MORPC's existing plans, to create the current plan based on a 20 year use. Mr. Rist asked how trucks get to Busch using the existing roads. Ms. Martin then interjected and asked if five lanes for traffic were necessary and proposed that instead there could be two travel lanes and a shared middle turn lane to keep so that it would be affordable to build additional sidewalks and a buffered bike lane. Mr. Dorothy chimed in that a 30 mph speed limit is necessary. He said it wouldn't greatly impact vehicles but allows narrower lanes, calms the area and makes it much safer (and survivable in the case of accidents) for bike and pedestrian travelers. Mr. Brehm's response was that the best way to slow traffic was to enforce speed limits. Ms. Dorothy interjected that this is where an engineering bike ride would be helpful.

Mr. Hurley commented that the board needs to funnel all the discussion into specific suggestions so that Mr. Brehm has a list he can take back to EMH&T. He then asked that everyone have a chance to share so the board could come to a consensus. Ms. Martin asked board members to go around the table and summarize their comments with a focus on actionable items.

Mr. Creed stated that while he theoretically agrees with the philosophy put forth by Mr. Dorothy and Ms. Martin, he has some concerns about certain ideas, such as taking out the left turn lane, because there are good reasons it is there. He also worried about hurting future growth by limiting vehicular traffic. Mr. Creed also thought it might be useful to bring in some other city department directors, such as the law director, to discuss the ability to change speed limits. He thought perhaps the revised code dictates speed limits and if this was the case then there would need to be a process to change it and mentioned that it can be difficult to lower speed limits. Mr. Creed then said he could get traffic forecasts and volumes out to the group but just remembering from last year, after actually looking at the data this plan best addressed the situation and the plan had the capacity needed to resolve existing and future traffic problems.

Mr. Bates said he likes the idea of sidewalks on both sides of the street on Worthington Galena and the idea to extend it down past the railroad crossing.

Mr. Hurley asked Mr. Brehm if this was feasible given funding amounts. Mr. Brehm said no, but maybe other changes, going after more money, or putting the ideas in future plans were possibilities. He also said that the city was already asking MORPC to approve a pretty big increase and that these new suggestions would require more.

Mr. Rist agreed with the addition of sidewalks and protected bikeways to the plan.

Mrs. Horton said that Sancus was her concern. She would like Worthington to set the example. Columbus has done a poor job of incorporating bike and pedestrian facilities in the area and there is nothing anywhere (sidewalks, etc.) going north. Many children north of I-270 have grown up in school with kids in Worthington and they need that connection.

Mr. Erickson was pleased with what was proposed and thinks it is ambitious as planned. Since the plan had already been peer reviewed in a public forum he has no comments or suggestions for change.

Mr. Whalen isn't familiar with the types of users who might use these facilities, as opposed to the recreational bikers he is familiar with on the Olentangy Trail. His main questions were what is the true purpose of adding these facilities? Why are we putting them in and for whom? He also wanted to clarify if we were adding both a dedicated lane and a shared use path on Huntley? Before he can make a recommendation he would need more data and to better understand the situation. Ms. Martin said that some people who work in the area only have alternative transportation as an alternative to get to work. It also encourages a healthy lifestyle, allowing workers to get out and walk on their lunch hours. Mr. Whalen asked how do we know what percentage need or will use alternative transportation? Is it anecdotal? Where is it needed the most if we have to prioritize? Mr. Bates noted that some of the bike and pedestrian traffic is seen, but much is unknown, and we can't know who else would choose to use it if the facilities were built.

Mr. Brehm pointed out that building these connections gives the community a chance at linking the Olentangy Trail and the Alum Creek Trail eventually (out through Westerville) and that a commuter route makes sense. Ms. Martin said she was not a fan of big, formal bike lanes on Schrock, but is a fan of reducing speed. She also noted that we should learn from past examples (other projects in Central Ohio). Ms. Martin also wanted to follow up on Ms. Dorothy's suggestion that we take a bike ride so the group has a better feel for the road and its impact on bikers. She also noted that the other thing we hadn't discussed was whether there are COTA connections. Mr. Brehm believes there are a couple of bus stops impacted. He offered to send these plans to the group and mentioned that they are on the website.

Given the time, Ms. Martin suggested that the board end the NE Gateway project discussion and try to power through the rest of the agenda.

**Citizen Requests Follow Up:** Mr. Hurley indicated he wanted to follow up with some framing of citizen requests which had been brought to the board over the past several months. His hope was to frame options for moving the requests forward.

He began with Cheryl Graffanino's request of a crossing of Linworth Road to connect her neighborhood on the east side of Linworth Road to Linworth Park on the west side. She hoped that development of Linworth Crossing could be leveraged to expediate connections for her neighborhood to the park. She had noted the project was in the priority two level of the original steering committee recommendations but hoped the board would consider moving it up based on the development activity. Mr. Hurley shared that the development has been leveraged for a connecting path from 161 along the west side of Linworth Road to the north park entrance and for the crossing improvements at Linworth/161 to Wendy's, but there does not appear to be further accommodations on tap. He outlined three options for the board moving forward:

1. Put on the agenda for further discussions/information/options.
2. Add to recommendations/clarify existing recommendation to include this as a project and give it appropriate priority.
3. Take no action – does not change existing recommendations.

Mr. Rist said he would like to see the board take some sort of action; or all of the above. The board needs to let citizens know they were heard and what was decided. Mr. Rist said that a recommendation would require money. Mr. Creed said he'd like to hear from city staff, such as the City Engineer for the first option. The consensus of the group was to get a report and put it on a future agenda.

Mr. Hurley then outlined the request made by Mr. Jeff Tewart. He requested consideration of a leash law on the Olentangy Trail. He noted that besides addressing the board, Mr. Tewart also sent a letter to City Council. The same options apply to this request. He said that we could get a recommendation from the Law Director and find out what other trails have in place regarding leash laws. Ms. Martin indicated some research on other trail protocol would be good. Mr. Hurley asked how to prioritize responses? Do we deal with them from oldest to newest? Mr. Rist asked if the city had liability in any of these requests. Mr. Hurley indicated that in the case of the leash law, he did not feel we had added liability due to the concerns brought forward by Mr. Tewart since there were concerns either way in terms of dog on or off leash potentially being involved in accidents.

Finally, Mr. Hurley discussed John Stephan, who attended the February meeting requesting a trail/sidewalk on the west side of Worthington/Galena all the way down to High Street. This project is currently in the steering committee recommendations as E-2. Again, members asked for the discussion to be put on the agenda and for staff to bring further information/research to guide the discussion. The consensus of the board was for most citizen issues that the follow up be a staff report and background at a subsequent meeting for further informed discussion.

**City Street Improvement Program – Tour of City Streets:** Mr. Rist went on the tour of city streets, and Mr. Hurley had sent out a Power Point Presentation put together by the City Engineer, Mr. Dan Whited. Both City Council members who attended (Ms. Michael and Ms. Dorothy) kept pushing on bike and pedestrian accommodations throughout the tour, expressed willingness to assist the board in a Safe Routes to School work plan and with PHB's. Mr. Rist said what it comes down to is money, as the interest is there. Mr. Hurley indicated this was a good step as the city will now plan on a Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board member participating in future tours.

**Education & Encouragement Sub-Committee Survey Discussion:** Ms. Lindholm presented the surveys that the Education & Encouragement sub-committee created and asked for feedback from the board. Mrs. Horton asked if it would be specific enough to be useful and noted that it doesn't align to any particular project. Ms. Martin said they are only supposed to be quick snapshots that can be used at multiple events or for base data gathering. Mr. Hurley asked that everyone give feedback to Ms. Lindholm within a week and we can approve it at the next meeting. Members also discussed some options for distribution.

## Updates:

- **PHB's** – Mr. Hurley shared that the calendar had been submitted and the start date is not until the very end of 2016/early 2017. He also shared that the original budget for the Stafford/High intersection had been \$100,000 to come out of the 2016 Bike and Ped CIP allocation. Since the recommendation was to include the other two crossings with PHB's, the new project estimate is in excess of \$200,000 and funds have not been allocated other than future Bike and Pedestrian CIP allocations. Mr. Hurley indicated this doesn't mean no bike and pedestrian projects can be accomplished and that the board should still provide a listing of priority projects going into this year's budget process. Mr. Rist asked if certain CIP projects don't go, can that money be reassigned to this project, salvaging some of the Bike & Ped allocations. Mr. Hurley indicated that was part of the discussions going on at City Hall now.
- **SRTS** – Mr. Hurley had spoken to Mr. Tim Gehring, Director of Facilities Management for Worthington Schools, and along with Mr. Greeson is coordinating a meeting with Superintendent Trent Bowers sometime this summer to engage the schools in SRTS discussions. Mrs. Horton added that Brookside already has a SRTS travel plan which Ms. Thornton can share with the board. Mr. Hurley indicated staff were planning a summer workshop as a part of one of our agendas.
- **Mobility Study** – Mr. Rist asked whether transit was part of the original study. Mr. Hurley replied that it wasn't. Mr. Rist asked if it could be added. Mr. Hurley affirmed that it could for a cost. Ms. Martin pointed out that the study only applies to historic Worthington. Mrs. Horton said that adding transit as part of the project would still be valid with the major intersection of High Street and S.R. 161. Mr. Hurley indicated that a draft of phases three and four had been submitted to the City Engineer and once reviewed for deliverables it would be brought to Bike and Ped for review.
- **Heischman Park Open House** – Mr. Hurley shared that at a recent public open house regarding improvements to Heischman Park, some residents had indicated a desire to have pedestrian facilities added along Worthington-Galena north of Schrock. There are no sidewalks on the east side of that section and now way for residents to cross the street to the park or to get to the Community Center. Mr. Hurley indicated that Worthington-Galena in general is in the current recommendations and this area would be a part of that.
- **Summer Meeting Dates** – Mr. Hurley made the board aware that due to personal scheduling issues, neither he nor Ms. Thornton would be able to attend the regularly scheduled June meeting. He suggested June 20<sup>th</sup> (the prior Monday) as an alternative but neither Mr. Rist nor Mr. Bates would be able to attend that meeting. Mr. Hurley said that other feasible dates would be offered to the group and we would figure out a new date via email.
- **Green on the Green** – Team Worthington (Pelotonia) managed a bike corral at the event. There is lots of talk about continuing the corral at the Farmer's Market and for other major City events. Mr. Hurley said that the corrals are definitely trending right now and that there had been talk about having them for Concerts on the Green as well.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.