



WORTHINGTON BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the Monday, March 27, 2023, Meeting

Members Present: The members present were Mike Bates, Danielle DavisRoe, Rebecca Green, Ann Horton, Brian Iarocci, Brian Meilton and Kelly Whalen.

City staff members John Moorehead (Service & Engineering Director) and Celia Thornton (Parks & Recreation Project Supervisor) were present. Also present were residents Rob Wendling, Sherman Moyer and Rachael Dorothy from Colonial Hills.

Minutes from the February 27, 2023, meeting were approved by all present.

Visitor Comments: Mr. Wendling came to inquire about Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and is concerned about the lack of sidewalks, or sidewalk gaps, along routes students in Colonial Hills have to walk to school. Mr. Moyer pointed out that neighbors also walk a lot, particularly since COVID, and that Foster Road is more heavily walked since the study was completed. Mr. Wendling asked what the results of the study were and Mr. Moorehead shared the results of the study.

Norfolk Southern Railroad Crossing Letter: Mr. Moorehead overviewed the situation regarding the Northeast Gateway railroad crossing gate (heading east) and brought them up on the TV screen so the board could view exactly what he was referencing. The gates are intended to deter pedestrians and bikers from crossing the tracks without slowing down and checking for safety. Both CSX and Norfolk Southern required the gate. Norfolk Southern now wants modifications to the gates because they don't overlap (making a true Z shape), which theoretically could allow a biker to go straight through without slowing down enough to check for oncoming trains before crossing. The City is attempting to convince Norfolk Southern that this configuration is ok and that if we tighten it further riders with trailers won't be able to get through. The City has also received complaints from users from the opposite viewpoint, that the gates are difficult to navigate. Mr. Moorehead's concern is that if we tighten the gate configuration further will actually make the crossing less safe, by forcing bikers off the trail and into the roadway. The City is in discussion with the railroad company and a letter of support from the board might help. Mr. Whalen asked how it was constructed if Norfolk Southern didn't approve of the design. Mr. Moorehead responded that it was approved in the field by both railroads and that CSX is still ok with the

design, but that Norfolk Southern has changed their mind. Mr. Whalen asked if it was possible to widen the area or move the gates back. Mr. Moorehead brought up Google maps on the screen to show how tight the area was and why that wasn't an option. Mr. Bates asked if there was a best standard. Mr. Moorehead said this was an industry design, but that there aren't necessarily standards. If we do have to change it on the Norfolk Southern side, he'd want to change the gates on both sides for consistencies sake. Ms. Horton asked who was liable in the case of an accident. Mr. Moorehead said the liability was on the railroad. The guest, Mr. Wendling, asked about a swinging gate. Mr. Moorehead said those are problematic from an ADA standpoint. There was some discussion among the board, particularly about how users would react to tightened gates and the likelihood that this would push bikers into the roadway. Mr. Moorehead said it was not necessary for the board to engage, though he thought it was good for them to understand the issue. If the board was willing, he thought a letter of support might be helpful. Mr. Bates asked about the cost of the redesign. Mr. Moorehead didn't know the cost, but said it would be an 18 month process. Mr. Whalen asked if wheelchairs would be able to negotiate the gates if the design was tightened. Mr. Moorehead said they would because they're smaller and more maneuverable. Mr. Moorehead said he was hearing that the board was generally opposed to tightening the design and were in favor of writing a letter to Norfolk Southern in defense of keeping the gates as they are. All board members present agreed.

Trail Condition Assessment: Mr. Moorehead said that the City had engaged a company to help assess all pavement conditions throughout the City, and that this included both roadways and trails. The company uses an AI based system that maps cracks (size, width, etc.) on the pavement and auto logs them and assigns a condition level. The City will use this going forward to help us track issues, see how conditions deteriorate and prioritize work. This system links to high definition video, allowing Service to more easily put eyes on road/trail conditions. This isn't a public facing system but is a very useful tool for staff and saves a lot of man hours. He showed the board video of the trail assessment.

Olentangy Trail Etiquette Project: Ms. Green suggested the easiest way to start planning this project might be to split it into three buckets: infrastructure implementation, education and communication. There was board discussion around the type and number/placement of signs, sign alternatives, and trail ambassadors. The guest, Mr. Moyer, said that from his perspective the first problem is that not everyone is operating from the same understandings about what good trail etiquette is. He suggested the board look at some of the work Rails To Trails has done. They have five second educational videos which are excellent. QR codes could be used to link to the videos. The board could speak with other bike groups and partners and could work on campaigns together and do public service announcements. Ms. Horton suggested engaging with Metro Parks rangers and the police. Ms. Thornton suggested engaging with Central Ohio Greenways (COG). Mr. Bates asked a question about how Columbus manages the Alum Creek Trail. Mr. Moyer said that there isn't the same heavy use on that trail and that it doesn't run through as densely populated areas, so it isn't a good comparison. Mr. Iarocci recommended hyper-focusing on etiquette near trail entrances, like at the pickleball courts. Ms. Green suggested putting more information online. Ms. Thornton said she'd get the marketing team engaged in helping us come up with a communication plan. Ms. Green reviewed that moving forward the board would work on sign design and placement, trail tattoos, and an online and social media campaign. In addition they would explore engaging the police, metro parks, and trail ambassadors and focus on raising awareness of the issue at their events. Mr. Moorehead reminded the board that in 2025 the City will be doing a study on the Olentangy Trail which will include looking at bridges, trail surface and explore widening the trail. That is when he would prefer to see new tattoos added because the tattoos adhere better to new pavement and last longer. Mr. Whalen wants tattoos added this year and doesn't want to wait until 2026. If necessary he thinks Service can put down fresh tar on top

of the trail and then add the tattoos. Ms. Green pointed out that we could add tattoos on the new section of trail being laid this summer from S.R. 161 to Antrim. She also thought we should form a sub-committee to work with staff to bring this topic back in a more organized format to a future meeting. Mr. Wendling asked about the possibility of the City obtaining the old Delaware Bridge and if it could be used on our trail. Mr. Moorehead said he'd look into it and see if the bridge was even still available. Mr. Moyer wondered if the new trail design could help keep water off the trail during flooding. This was briefly discussed.

Updates:

Burton Planning Services Contract – Mr. Moorehead went to City Council the previous Monday and got approval to sign a contract with BPS. The goal is for them to better integrate upcoming Capital Improvement Projects and the Street Improvement Program with the Bike & Pedestrian Master Plan. They are currently reviewing the Master Plans bike boulevards for the Worthington Estates area. Mr. Moorehead hopes to have them attend a May or June meeting to discuss their ideas and get board approval, then move the bike boulevard process through City Council. The City just received Toole Designs final draft recommendations and cost estimates and will review them with the board at a future meeting.

Northeast Gateway Trees – A generous donation of \$1,000 was made to plant trees in the Northeast Gateway area. Mr. Moorehead said that we have to wait to plant trees until the project is completely finished and approved by ODOT, at which time it will be turned back over to the City. This is tentatively targeted to happen in June, which means tree planting can probably happen in fall. There are a couple of areas that come to mind for trees. The first is a small retention pond with trail around it. The second is at the cul-de-sac. Currently drivers are driving over the curb and then driving on the trail to get back to the road. A fence was built to prevent this and drivers are going around it. This would be an excellent area to put in trees to act as a natural fence to prevent cars from using the trail. This area also doesn't have any buried cables or underground lines, which most of the rest of the area does. Mr. Moorehead plans on engaging the Arbor Advisory Committee and coming up with a tree plan for the area that the board can react to later in summer.

Quarterly Training – Ms. Thornton reviewed a list of training ideas from a previous meeting to verify that these were still at the top of the list and see if there were other suggestions. The board approved the list without further items. The first training will likely engage Planning & Building and the board discussed using BPS to do an Alternative Transportation training to which City Council members, City administrators, etc., could be invited. Mr. Moorehead indicated that Alternative Transportation was a specialty of BPS.

Other – Mr. Moorehead had an ODOT meeting the previous Thursday on the West Wilson Bridge Road bridge project. It looks as if the bridge could be closed as early as April 10. They have already cleared some trees. The mountain bike area will be a construction zone, or adjacent to the construction zone. Work on the bridge will close the Olentangy Trail at various times during the summer. A bridge on the Alum Creek Trail will also be closed for a portion of time this spring/summer and so the Ohio To Erie Trail will be temporarily re-routed to the Olentangy Trail.

Mr. Bates said that he attended the last ARB/MPC meeting to see the latest updates to the Thomas Worthington High School renovation plan. The current plan seems to show an 8-foot sidewalk in front of the high school. It's not a final plan, but he was optimistic that a connection of some sort was included.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.