

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Monday, July 17, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Joseph O'Neil, Michael Williamson, Raymond Swartz, Eric Papetti, Richard Frank

Members Absent: Dan Shuman (Chair), Kylie Sullivan, Michael Jaros

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner; Jayne O'Leary, newly appointed member (Council confirmation pending)

Michael Williamson, presiding as Acting Chair, opens the meeting.

Salem Bike Share Expansion and Utilization

Devine states that there have been 898 rides to date. Blue Cross Blue Shield will sponsor ribbon cutting for the new station at Salem Willows this coming Thursday. The Mayor will be present and Blue Cross will provide healthy snacks to build on their theme of healthy living. Devine continues to promote the bike share at the farmers market.

The Committee discusses the operation of the bike share, expressing concern about the condition of the bikes at the Congress Street station. Devine says that Salem Cycle was under contract to maintain the bikes, but Zagster and Dan Shuman ended that relationship and a new independent contractor is now maintaining and balancing the bikes. The City expects Zagster to keep bikes maintained.

The Committee discusses the ridership trends. Devine reports that there was a recent surge, but it seemed to have been a peak that has passed. He still thinks there may be 1,000 rides by the end of the month. The City will be continuing to watch how utilization is impacted by the start of the fall, beginning of the Salem State University semester, and the October Halloween activity.

A member asks what the plan is for Zagster's marketing. Devine says he expects Salem State to conduct mass outreach to their students and to lead a promotional event once the semester starts. The bike share is advertised in the Haunted Happenings guide. The Committee suggests making sure that there is material about the bike share available to the people staffing the October info booth. The Committee also suggests working with the ferry operator to promote the system.

Bridge Street MassWorks Project

Devine announces September 7 as a tentative date for a public meeting for the project, probably at the Moose Hall. This presentation will include revisions that resulted from the review by this committee and the Traffic & Parking Commission. Devine does not know that there will be another chance for the Committee to review this, so this may be their last chance to review and comment on the design.

The Committee expresses hope that the presentation will be led by someone who is skilled at public engagement. Devine states that he agrees that it would be beneficial to the presentation to be conducted that way, but he thinks it is likely that an engineer will lead the presentation.

Papetti motions to request that Devine request that the project team utilize a public engagement specialist at the upcoming presentation. Michael Williamson seconds and all vote in favor.

Papetti notes that he had suggested that the Bike Master Plan consultant could review the MassWorks project.

Essex Street from Washington to North Street

Devine reports that he and Kylie Sullivan participated in the first stakeholders group meeting for the project's design. He says he was impressed with how much the consultant may be able to fit into what feels like a narrow street. A number of options were presented, including angled parking, which nobody liked and retaining parking on both sides with a new striped bike lane. Devine himself asked the consultant to consider a design that retains parking on both sides, adds bike sharrows to the vehicle lane, and stripes a contraflow bike lane. He thinks this would vastly improve bike circulation if bikes and legally and safely ride both ways down this street. Also under consideration is a modest widening of the sidewalks, installation of crosswalk bump-outs, and very selectively removing a small number of parking spaces to add especially wide sidewalks in places where the pedestrian realm might be expanded. Devine plans to continue to be involved with the design and to report back to the Committee as it progresses.

Power Plant Pathways

Williamson states that there is a major opportunity for a path connection through the reconfigured site. Devine says the design of the paths through the planned berm were reviewed and approved by the Conservation Commission and Planning Board. He says that he views these as walking paths that may be traversable by bike, but probably won't be a natural means for bikes to get from one place to another. However, there has been no determination about what kind of pathways will be developed through the vast vacant land being made available as a result of the power plant redevelopment. A framework for the reuse of these vacant areas will come out of the upcoming harbor plan update. The plan will likely look exclusively at this part of the waterfront, since the last plan update assumed that the coal power plant would continue to utilize the entire site. Footprint Power is conducting their own internal planning to determine what kind of tenants they may be able to attract to the site. Devine expects there to be coordination between Footprint's planning and the harbor plan update process.

Devine adds that the Derby 2020 Vision and Bike Master Plan update will need to look at how public paths on the site will be integrated with the surrounding neighborhood. Devine believes this will cover Bridge Street to the Peabody line.

Boston Street Redesign

Devine reports that there will be a design process to get this project to a 25% design in order to get it on the state TIP. VHB has completed some surveying and will begin design this fall. It is expected that the Committee will be given an opportunity to review it.

Papetti states that he thinks the Committee needs to be part of the early discussions about a project's scope and budget, rather than later in the design. Richard Frank remarks that this is one of the complaints the previous committee had. Devine states that he recognizes that the City is transitioning to such a way of doing things, but that this is as slow and challenging as any human being changing their habits. Evidence of very real progress on this account includes having a strong complete streets advocate in the position of Director of Traffic & Parking, the creation of a new Traffic & Parking Commission, and having dedicated staff for this Committee.

Miscellaneous Updates

Devine announces that, beginning in September, the traffic lights and 10 key downtown intersections will be upgraded to smart signals that not only adjust in real time to traffic conditions, but also communicate with each other.

Papetti expresses concern about the delay in the state's contract to stripe bike lanes from the train station, down Washington Street, through Derby Street, and up Norman Street back up to Bridge Street. This was originally scheduled to take place this fall, but is now expected to be delayed until next year. Papetti suggests that a call from the mayors whose communities are to get bike lanes through this state contract should consider calling the state to see if it can be put back on schedule. Devine commits to consulting with Matt Smith about that.

The Committee discusses the schedule for completing Phase I of the Canal Street bike path. Devine says he thought it was expected to be completed this fall, but can check on this.

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Frank motions to approve the minutes, Papetti seconds, and all vote in favor.

Bicycle Master Plan: Update and selection representatives to serve on Steering Committee

Devine reports that the Mayor accepted the selection committee's recommendation to hire Toole to complete the plan. After some negotiation to get the fee proposal within budget, the contract is now being processed. Devine expects the process to begin mid-September.

The Committee expresses interest in dedicating one of its meetings to having a charrette-style discussion as part of the planning processes. Devine suggests that the right time for such a meeting is probably after the consultant collects data on existing conditions but before they make their recommendations.

Papetti, Williamson, and O'Neil volunteer to serve on the steering committee.

Adjournment

Williamson motions to adjourn at 8:10 pm, Swartz seconds, and all vote in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Approved by the Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee on September 18, 2017