

## Meeting Minutes

### Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

**Members Present:** John Wathne (Chair), Michael Williamson, John Wathne, Josh Gillis, Jayne O'Leary, Connor Ryan, Matt Caruso, Eric Papetti

**Members Absent:** Kylie Sullivan, Alex Maranto, Colleen Downie, Michael Jaros

**Also Present:** Tom Devine, Senior Planner

#### Call Meeting to Order

Papetti called the meeting to order. Devine describes the remote meeting format and procedure for providing public comment.

#### Public Comment

Papetti opens the meeting to public comment and there are none.

#### Staff Update

Devine provides the following updates:

- Development projects of interest
  - The North Shore Community Development Coalition's project at Derby and Lafayette Streets is on the December 16 Planning Board agenda, but engineering and utility investigations are likely to continue into the new year. The NSCDC withdrew its initial proposal and is on the December 8 Salem Redevelopment agenda with a new filing for the project.
  - The Courthouses and Crescent Lot Redevelopment at Washington, Bridge, and Federal Streets had its schematic design approved by the SRA and Design Review Board and will proceed to the Planning Board in the spring.
- The North Street project design has been refined for implementation in the spring and summer. The City proposes a joint meeting with the group and the Traffic and Parking Commission if the Committee is amenable. The designer would present the plans for feedback from both boards and the public. Timing is dependent on National Grid's gas main project within the roadway. The City is looking at piloting the improvements at Liberty Hill Ave. and North Street where there was a recent series of accidents. The City has also been awarded a grant to explore bike and pedestrian connectivity from North Street to the train station

and Leslie's Retreat Park. The City is seeking to have Tetra Tech launch this at the joint meeting.

- The Mayor has submitted a letter to include the new segments of the Salvo/Canal Street Path and the Bridge Street Path as part of the East Coast Greenway. So there will be ECG markers added and it will be included in their online and printed maps.

## **BlueBikes Bikeshare Program Data & Promotion**

*Document reviewed: Salem Bluebikes Data Through 11/29/2021*

Devine presents the November data. Papetti asks for Devine to track trips per day per bike to compare apples to apples across communities. Papetti states that he is reaching out to local elected officials to encourage them to be members, ride the bikes, and promote the program. He encourages the Committee members to sign up.

Devine states that only 7 of the 8 stations the City owns have been deployed. The 8<sup>th</sup> station will be deployed this winter at the concrete pad at the median at Hawthorne Boulevard and Essex Street. That location can only fit a 9-dock station, leaving 2 docks that City will add to the MBTA/Washington and Bridge Streets station to increase total docks there to 13, increasing capacity at the city's busiest station. We also plan to expand into North Salem with a new station in the expanded curb at Liberty Hill Ave., and to support this, a new station at the lower level Crescent Lot at the train station. Devine is preparing a Community Connections grant application to add stations to the Salem State North Campus, Blubber Hollow, and Dalton Parkway (by Jackson and Essex Streets). Devine notes that Bluebikes generally recommends making the system denser, but the City also wants to expand the reach of it.

Devine suggests that the Committee issue a support letter to support the City's grant application.

Papetti motions, Ryan seconds, and all vote in favor to support the application and to authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support on behalf of the Committee.

## **Prioritization of Small Projects**

*Document reviewed: Prioritization of Small Projects Spreadsheet, undated.*

Devine shared a spreadsheet he began to populate listing projects for the Committee to consider prioritizing. Williamson suggests adding connection between Canal Street path and the Saltonstall School and Palmer Cove Park. Ryan suggests more bike route signage. Wathne suggests members look at PDF of the Bike Master Plan to annotate it with their priorities for the next meeting.

## **Review of Fort Avenue/Columbus Avenue Intersection Re-Design Project**

Documents reviewed: *Fort Avenue at Winter Island Road Intersection Improvements, Salem, Massachusetts; Concept Plan – Alternatives 1, 2, and 3; September 2021, McMahan Associates.*

Devine shares the concept plans on screen. Ryan attended a recent neighborhood meeting and provides an overview. Neighbors were supportive of narrowing the roadway for additional bike and pedestrian space. The participants spoke in opposition to the existing zebra armadillo separators and expressed preference for completely separated paths. The neighborhood complained that the armadillos look bad and are unsafe because they do not provide real separation. They supported all of the other elements of proposed improvements. Papetti states that this project has received more public discussion than any other transportation project and he advocates for making sure that while the neighborhood's views be heard, that safety of the general public need to be a driving factor.

Devine states that the City has no plans at this time to remove the armadillos, but does have the long term goal to convert this into a fully separated path. Members state that it is encouraging that the neighborhood is supportive of this goal. The City applied for MassTrails grant funding to begin to separate the portion along Derby Street, between Webb St. and Memorial Drive, but the grant was not awarded. Wathne wonders if the Bike Committee should go on record supporting and advocating this long term goal, acknowledging the neighborhood's wishes on this. Ryan will share this with the Ward Councilor.

Devine presents the three concepts for the intersection, noting that option 3 was developed in response comments on concepts 1 and 2. Wathne remarks that none of the concepts include a connection toward Winter Island. Other members agree that the lack of connection to Winter Island is a shortcoming. Ryan mentions that the neighborhood notes that there is a family memorial within the triangular greenspace to protect. The group discusses how to avoid this.

Papetti states that the intersection's current configuration is not functioning and needs to be fixed before spring. Caruso remarks that a path located to avoid street crossings means a rider who wants to get to those streets needs to cross Fort Ave.. The group suggests using concept 3, but adding a spur to Winter Island Road. Ryan says that the neighborhood liked concept 3 with its two raised crosswalks to slow car speeds. Wathne wonders why not move one of the crosswalks to between Winter Island Road and the Cat Cove entrance. Papetti notes that the Cat Cove driveway gets very low volume. O'Leary adds that Salem State is ending its use of Cat Cove. Wathne states that snow trucks dump snow in the city's lot. Caruso asks why not make Winter Island Road one way into Winter Island and Columbus Square one way out. Ryan remarks that the truck apron in concept 3 allows large trailers in and out of Winter Island Road.

### **Review of Bridge Street Concepts (Washington Street to Ayube Bypass)**

Documents referenced:

- *Middle Bridge Street Bike Path Link, Schemes A-F, 11/21/2021.*
- *Riley Plaza and Washington Street Concept Plan, Toole Design, 12/4/2019.*

Wathne presents the concepts he developed to connect the end of the Bridge Street/Ayube Bypass Path to the Commuter Rail Station and the Washington & Bridge Streets intersection. He believes that this segment of Bridge Street could be reduced from 5 to 4 vehicular lanes, which is what is shown in the Toole concept. Concepts show a variety of options, from a two-way separated path, to directional paths, to routes through side streets.

Devine will coordinate a time for Wathne to present these concepts to the City's transportation staff.

### **2022 Meeting Schedule**

Devine shared a draft meeting schedule and no members object to the dates.

### **Discussion and Vote Regarding Hybrid Meetings**

Devine reports that the state legislature essentially extended the Governor's order to allow remote meetings until April 2022. The City is giving boards and commission the option to meet fully remote or have a hybrid format. Caruso asks if the city has the equipment to capture the people in the room. Devine says some of the public meeting rooms are now "Zoom rooms" with equipment to accomplish this. There are challenges with this, such as making sure that in-person and remote participants are treated equally. Devine also notes that there are only a limited number of Zoom rooms, so if many boards which to conduct meetings in a hybrid format, the city will have to prioritize which get to use the Zoom rooms.

Williamson says the only advantage he sees would be to be able to review paper plans in person. Papetti says he would be curious to try a hybrid meeting since it could someday be valuable when one or more members are away. He suggests trying it. Caruso agrees. Devine expresses reservations about being the committee that tries this first. Wathne notes that COVID cases are rising, so the group should continue remote for the time being and revisit the matter later.

Williamson motions and Ryan motions to table the matter until March and all vote in favor.

O'Leary suggests moving the meetings to 6pm to avoid later endings. Caruso says 6pm would be harder for him coming home from Boston, but he will go with the majority. Wathne and Williams say they could do 6pm. Ryan says 6pm would be hard for him. Wathne doesn't want to continue to struggle to achieve quorum. The Committee makes no changes to the meeting time.

### **Adjourn**

Caruso motions and Williamson seconds to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. and all vote in favor.

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Approved by the Bicycling Advisory Committee on 4/6/2022.