

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, June 3, 2020 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

Members Present: Eric Papetti (Chair), Jayne O'Leary, Alexandra Maranto, Matt Caruso, John Wathne, Colleen Downie, Michael Jaros, Michael Williamson

Members Absent: Kylie Sullivan, Josh Gillis, Joe O'Neil

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

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

Public Comment

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

Staff Update

Devine states that he and the chair are consolidating routine project updates that don't require any substantial feedback or recommendation from the Committee under this new Staff Update heading.

- City staff, the Ward 1 Councilor, and the designer met at the Fort Ave. bike lanes to look at potential tweaks to address neighborhood concerns.
- Derby Street has gone out to bid with its reduced scope for Hardy to Blaney Street sidewalks. Repaving would happen at some point in the future along with any new striping. A pre-construction meeting is expected this week.
- The City is working with Stantec to update the bid documents to reflect the revised scope to bring the project within its budget. The project may go back out to bid in June or July with an 18-month construction period.
- Keolis has removed a rail spur and relocated a cable that is allowing the northern portion of the Phase II Canal Street path where it is adjacent to the rail line to proceed. Drainage work is starting within the next couple weeks.

- The Salem Harbor Connector Path's construction continues to progress. The MassTrails grant program is advancing the City its fiscal year 2021 funding so the project can maintain its momentum.

Discussion of Bicycling and COVID-19 Response

Papetti says there have been small sidewalk expansions and he is waiting to see what comes next. Devine says he expects there will soon be an expansion of areas where outdoor dining is allowed if that is permitted before indoor dining. Downie says she has walked the extended sidewalks and likes them. Williamson states that he supports allowing as much outdoor dining as possible right away while it is needed.

Bike and Scooter Share

Devine reports that Zagster has ceased operations with a portion of the company being bought by another company. It looks like this other company may only operate scooters and not bikes. Zagster's bike and scooter contract ended in May. Without the pandemic, the City would have executed an interim contract, but all has been put on pause. The Committee is concerned that Zagster's bikes will be scrapped and hopes that they can be put to use in some way.

Collective Procurement for North Shore Micromobility Program

Papetti states that he is concerned that the two responses to MAPC's RFP were weak. Since the responses came in before the pandemic, if the City were to proceed, he would want to confirm that either company is even still in businesses. He thinks it may be better to put a new RFP out. Williamson is skeptical about whether a bike share would be used and thinks it may be best to put off to next year. Caruso says on the surface the two proposals seem ok. Papetti says he thinks the companies are very small and didn't provide strong back up documentation for their financials and how they could pull it off.

Devine says the City is leaning toward asking the MAPC to put the procurement process on pause.

North Street

Devine reports that Dave Kucharsky spoke with the Ward 6 Councilor today regarding the plan to kickoff outreach for North Street improvements. There will probably be a remote public meeting where staff presents all relevant information and take in comments. We would probably promote a survey and online mapping tool at the same time we promote the meeting. There would then be another meeting to present plans that incorporate the feedback. Devine hopes that there will be robust input with many voices. This would be an opportunity for the Bike Committee to advocate for bike facilities and encourage others in their network to do the same. No dates are set, but it is looking like June or early July for the first remote event.

Downie says she will contact the Ward Councilor to advocate for the bike lanes and see how else she can help. Papetti says he will do the same and encourages others to do the same.

Harmony Grove Road Feasibility Study

Document referenced: Weston & Sampson untitled and undated presentation with Surrounding Conditions, Existing Images, Property Ownership, Existing Site Conditions, plans for adjacent development, Preliminary Pathway Options plan, sections, and precedent images.

Devine states that Downie is the Bike Committee's representative on the project's working group is has offered to provide an update to the Committee.

Downie provides an overview of the presentation and discussion from the working group meeting. She states that different path alignments would interact differently with existing bike lanes on Harmony Grove Road. Members of the working group advocated for a path wider than the 10' considered so far. One of the options is a cantilevered boardwalk and Colleen wonders how good that is for biking compared to a path on land.

Caruso wonders how durable a cantilevered board walk would be and if it would need to be periodically rebuilt. He wonders how snow removal would work. Wathne thinks options A and B are difficult because of the way they cross the river. He likes C with its own dedicated trail that links up nicely on both ends. Jaros likes option C the best too, but is concerned about the cost of building with the terrain. He wonders if there is a long-term plan to convert the rail line to a trail, which would make these options redundant.

Downie says her understanding is that the rail line is still in use. Wathne says as long as Rousselot is in business, they will need the rail line. Devine says the freight activity has increased since Rousselot came in.

Papetti says he agrees that the direct route is appealing for a lot of reasons. But he recognizes that there are right-of-way issues with Stop & Shop and the private homes. He thinks this could be a challenge and add time to the project. Caruso asks if property lines cross the river. Devine displays the slide showing the property lines. Wathne says he wouldn't expect a fight from the homeowners over the land since it is separated by a steep slope and attracts dumping.

Papetti asks if there is an option that would connect to the path by Goodhue Street without passing through the Salem Oil & Grease development. Wathne says option B has two at-grade rail crossing and that could be tricky to negotiate. Devine says one of the crossings is permitted already by the MBTA—the one that is within the Salem Oil & Grease development. Williamson says option C is the best. Papetti says another advantage to option C is that it doesn't require rebuilding Harmony Grove Road.

Papetti asks what the project timeline is. Devine says the initial schedule in the contract required completion this calendar year. Weston & Sampson's own scope has them wrapping the project up in September or October. So there may be some wiggle room if needed. Beyond this, the timing could be driven by any grant opportunity that fits and would help advance the project.

Williamson asks if anyone has talked with the cemetery about taking land from them for a trail on their side.

Miscellaneous

O'Leary met with Michael Salerno and explored trails in the southwestern area of Salem. There are opportunities to make connections in the area of Spring Bond and McGrath park. There is something called the Heritage Trail that has unique granite formations with flat faces that are very rideable. However, it is overgrown after having been managed better in the past. Some work had been done about ten years ago with a little grant and city assistance in Salem Woods. She says there is a perfect place for a pump track in that area too. Caruso suggests finding any mapping that has been done for the area.

Williamson asks what the status of the trails is at the Osborne Hills/Strongwater Crossing subdivision. Devine says he will provide an update to the Committee.

Caruso motions to adjourn, Williamson seconds, and all vote in favor to adjourn at 7:48 pm.

Approved by the Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee on August 5, 2020.