

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, November 3, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

Members Present: Connor Ryan, Colleen Downie, Michael Williamson, Josh Gillis, John Wathne, Alex Maranto, Jayne O'Leary, Matt Caruso

Members Absent: Eric Papetti (Chair), Kylie Sullivan, Michael Jaros

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

John Wathne presides in the Chair's absence and called the meeting to order. Devine describes the remote meeting format and procedure for providing public comment.

Public Comment

Wathne opens the meeting to public comment.

A resident at 252 Lafayette Street introduces himself and says he intends to listen to the meeting.

Staff Update

Devine provides the following updates:

- The Housing Roadmap Public Forum is scheduled for November 30.
- The local review status of the following development projects that include a potential multiuse path component: Courthouse and Crescent Lot project at Federal, Washington, and Bridge Streets; North Shore Redevelopment Coalition's redevelopment at the corner of Derby and Lafayette Streets; Salem Oil & Grease Redevelopment at Goodhue St., Grove St., and Harmony Grove Rd.
- Staff have been corresponding with the developer of the City's MBTA crescent lot regarding incorporation of a bike share station. In addition, the City received grant funding to study potential multiuse path route in this area to connect to North Salem and Leslie's Retreat Park.
- Temporary asphalt ramps have been added to the north and south sides of Palmer Cove park so that the new internal paths at the park can be accessed without hopping a curb or riding over grass. More formal connections will be stalled in the next phase of work.

- The Salem Tree Commission is advocating for installation of trees between the first phase of the Mayor Salvo Path and the train tracks. The MBTA may restrict planning near the tracks. Caruso motions, O’Leary seconds, and all vote to support the installation of trees along the path.
- Members had asked Devine to discuss small projects to prioritize as funding becomes available. Members will submit suggestions and to workshop at the next meeting.
- The City will be seeking to coordinate a joint meeting of the Bike Committee and Traffic and Parking Commission in December or January to present the refined plans for North Street improvements.
- There will be a neighborhood meeting with City staff to discuss concepts for bike, pedestrians, and vehicle safety improvements at the intersection of Fort. Ave., Columbus Ave., and Winter Island Road. Connor Ryan will try to attend.

BlueBikes Bikeshare Program Data and Promotion

Document reviewed: Salem BlueBikes Data Through October 31, 2021.

Devine provides ridership data for period between the mid-July launch and the end of October and an overview of promotional activities. BlueBikes did a “Boo! Bikes” promotion where they encouraged selfies with bikes and costumes and awarded free rides and promoted visiting spooky locations in Salem and the Boston area throughout October. To recognize Monday, October 10 as World Mental Health Day, Blue Cross sponsored free rides, and did the same on election day, yesterday, for their Bike to Vote promotion. And a Blue Cross representative tabled at the season’s final farmers market in October. Salem State University continues to provide free ride codes to their students.

Devine says BlueBikes is a year round program, but not every station stays online. Salem will decommission the Ferry and Salem Willows stations for the winter and bring them back in the spring. BlueBikes staff provided guidance on placement of the 8th station that the city owns but has not deployed. To meet the downtown ridership demand, the eighth station will be located at the median on Hawthorne Boulevard by the Hawthorne Hotel. Only a 9-dock station can fit in that location, while the City’s contract is for an 11-dock station. So the 2 extra docks will be added to Salem’s busiest station, expanding the Washington/Federal St./MBTA station to 13 docks. The refined North Street plans will show a BlueBikes station at Liberty Hill Ave., but it can’t be added until the project’s paint and flex posts are added in the coming months. In conjunction, the City will add a station at the MBTA crescent lot, since coming from North Salem there is no great bike connection up to Washington Street until the lot is redeveloped. The City is also working with Salem State to explore opportunities for the University to invest further in the program.

Williamson says he expects ridership to increase when the Canal Street path opens and suggests the City should consider expanding some of the existing stations. Ryan suggests BlueBikes could take steps to help visitors with navigation.

The resident at 254 Lafayette Street remarks that he has seen that some of the Bluebikes kiosks showing bike routes and bike share stations.

Community Survey for Bicycle Friendly City Application

Devine submitted Salem's application to the League of American Bicyclists Bike Friendly Cities program in September. The Bike League does a community survey to get feedback from the public on perceptions, infrastructure, education, and other programming, to support their evaluation. Devine used the survey as an opportunity to promote BlueBikes, and raffled 4 Bluebikes annual memberships to survey respondents. This resulted in over 500 survey responses.

Online Mapping of Bike Paths

Devine states that Williamson had been looking into this. Devine finds that all of the City's multiuse paths are shown on Google Maps and they are incorporated into directions when you choose a walking or biking route.

Communication Regarding Benefits of Bike Infrastructure

Devine says Caruso had suggested this as a discussion topic. Caruso states that there has been a lot of skepticism on social media about bike infrastructure and missteps on Fort Ave. contributed to that. On the other hand, many projects are done well. He wonders if the Committee can have a facebook page.

Devine says that he sees the Bike Committee members as bike ambassadors who can be a positive and civil voice in these discussions. Members can be helpful that way in online discussions. He notes that the Traffic & Parking Department has a Twitter account, but everything they post is carefully thought out. The purpose is to put out accurate information and frames discussion to increase understanding. Wathne asks if members can discuss offline managing a facebook page, and Devine states that a quorum of members can't have a discussion outside a meeting. Downie suggests members snap photos of bike friendly infrastructure for the City to share on its social media channels. Gillis believes that much of the negativity is drivers frustrated about having to slow down.

Solicitation of Committee's Input on Marblehead Bike Path for Marblehead's Open Space & Recreation Plan

Devine states that volunteers updating Marblehead's plan seek input on the path connection in the area at the Lead Mills, around the Salem-Marblehead line on Lafayette Street. They seek responses to four specific questions and some members have responded already by email. The group discusses as follows:

Is the path connection area at Lead Mills good, adequate, or inadequate for your expectations of bike path use?

- Bollards impede movement for bike trailers and several kinds of bikes.
- Path gets muddy seasonally when ice and snow melt.
- Rocks work their way to surface with the frost.
- Grading between bridges and path surface should be improved.
- Access from path to crosswalk is awkward.

What sort of path traffic do you envision?

- No comments.

How do you see path traffic varying through the year?

- Limited in winter. One member snowshoes on it.
- Path use likely to increase soon when Phase 2 of Salem's Canal Street path opens and may increase more if a South Salem train station is built along path.

Could the connecting area be improved? If so, how?

- More signage warning cars about bike traffic.

Discussion and Vote for Chair

Williamson motions and O'Leary seconds to elect Wathne Chair and all vote in favor.

O'Leary motions and Wathne seconds to elect Williamson Vice Chair and all vote in favor.

Meeting Minutes: 5/5/2021, 6/2/2021, and 7/7/2021

Caruso motions and Williamson seconds to approve the minutes and all vote in favor.

Adjourn

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

Approved by the Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee on March 2, 2022