

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling & Shared Path Advisory Committee

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 | 6:30 p.m.

City Hall Annex 1st Floor Meeting Room & Via Remote Participation

Members Present: John Wathne (Chair), Cat Seiferth, Annie Wolf, Charlie Heaps, Colleen Downie, Connor Ryan

Members Absent: Walter Morrell, Josh Nagle, Matt Caruso, Alex Maranto

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Wathne calls the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Wathne opens public comment and there are none.

Bikeshare Accessibility

Devine continues to follow up after a resident expressed displeasure at a previous meeting about the bike share program's level of accessibility for people with disabilities. He has been in touch with the City's ADA Coordinator and Parks & Recreation Director. He has also been in touch also with a member of a neighboring community with knowledge of adaptive bikes. Devine adds that the Bluebikes municipalities are developing a Request for Information (RFI) to bike share operators to gather information leading up to a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new operator contract in 2026. Devine has participated in the working group that developed the RFI and confirms that one of the questions being asked is about ways to provide access for people with disabilities.

Wathne asks if this approach will be regional. Devine confirms that there will be a single procurement for all the participating municipalities while each community has its own agreement with Bluebikes that plugs into the umbrella contract. Heaps asks if we know yet if we are legally required to provide access to people with disabilities. Devine does not have a definite answer. His sense is that other communities in the Bluebikes program do not see themselves as having an ADA compliance issue. The stations in the system are sited in a way to maintain adequate space so that no one of any ability is blocked on a sidewalk. But the communities have not expressed the view that they have an obligation to provide adaptive bikes. At the same time, the Salem community and its municipal government wants to accommodate people with disabilities in the program.

Bike Parking Ordinance

Document reviewed:

Documents reviewed: City of Salem Bicycle Parking Guidelines, approved 12/18/2018.

Wolf leads the discussion and review of the first two sections. She states the goal is to determine whether the guidelines are adequate with tweaks or if an ordinance is needed.

The group reads the *Introduction* section and Heaps edits and annotates the it.

- Replace North Shore Medical Center with Salem Hospital
- Make first paragraph more holistic than just first and last mile destinations; include homes, major destinations, schools, museums, parks, recreation facilities
- More focus away from tourists
- Replace encourage with incentivize
- Add: Create a walkable, bikeable, accessible, low carbon city
- Suggest subsidizing public e-bike charging stations
- Describe bike parking as necessity, not amenity

The group reviews *Which projects should include bicycle parking?*

- It should apply to every applicable project.

The group will review the next section at the next meeting.

Bike Parking at Stores

Documents reviewed: Bike Parking for Store Customers and Employees, draft letter from Bicycling & Shared Path Advisory Committee, 11/14/2023.

Devine shares the draft letter incorporating the group's earlier comments. The group makes a series of minor edits. The group asks Devine finalize it, have the Chair sign, and mail it.

Bluebikes Bikeshare Program Data, Promotion, and Funding

Documents reviewed: Salem Bluebikes Data through 11/30/2023

Devine presents data from November. Ridership dropped substantially after the October peak. The Community Life Center station's ridership remains low, supporting the case for relocating it to a more visible spot.

Wolf intends to contact people in Beverly regarding the potential for their community to join the Bluebikes system.

Staff Update

Devine proposes that the Committee continue meeting on the first Wednesday of each month in 2024, with the exception of October, when he proposes meeting the second Wednesday to avoid Rosh Hashanah. The group concurs.

Commission Vacancy

Alex Maranto has resigned from the Committee and Devine is grateful for her service. So the Committee now has two vacancies. Downie asks if there is an age minimum to serve, since it could be a good opportunity for a younger person. Devine will confirm. Seiferth will consult with some youths in her bike network.

Meeting Minutes

Wolf motions and Downie seconds to approve the 9/6/2023 minutes and all vote in favor.

Discussion of Bicycling Outreach, Education, and Events

Downie reports that she joined the SWAG (Safe Walking Advocacy Group) email list and was interested to see if there is an opportunity to collaborate with them. She wonders if one of them might want to join a bike committee meeting. Seiferth praises the group leader. Downie notes that there had been earlier interest in growing the Bike Committee to include people who are interested in biking but do not currently bike because they are not comfortable with the current infrastructure.

Bluebikes Funding Information

Documents reviewed: Bluebikes funding (spreadsheet), undated

Devine reviews the capital and operations costs for the Bluebikes system and the sources of funding. It is challenging to maintain funding for operations and the City is submitting a grant application to the MassDOT Shared Streets & Spaces program, which for the first time is allowing bikeshare operations as an eligible grant expense. Heaps asks and Devine confirms that if needed, stations can be shut down to save on operation costs.

Wolf asks where the revenue goes. Devine says it goes to the operator along with Blue Cross sponsorship funds. The core communities' operations are fully funded through rider and sponsorship revenue. Outer communities except for Salem pay \$55 per dock per month, while Salem, being non-contiguous with the member municipalities, pays \$75. In addition to the regional bikeshare agreement expiring in 2026, Salem has its own individual agreement with the operator that expires in 2024. Salem will revisit this operations fee when renewing this agreement. Devine states that there is will among the core communities for the next master contract to be more favorable to outlying communities, including Salem. Heaps is interested to know how much money the operator makes from the program. He suggests negotiating with the operator to be more

transparent with this information. Wathne would be interested in seeing predicted metrics for e-bikes.

Heaps asks if there are many options for different operators for the renewed master contract. Devine says staff from Bluebikes communities have a sense that Lyft might be the only company equipped to continue operating the system.

Adjourn

Heaps motions, Downie seconds, and all vote in favor to adjourn at 7:57 pm.

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