

Regional Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Aug 1, 2017

Present: Andrea Garland, Liz Belcher, Jim Lee, Lindsay Webb, Jerod Meyers, Jeff Collignon, Pete Peters, Frank Rogan, Michael Gray, David Holladay, Ben Bristol, Anita McMillan, Mark Jamison, Bryce Johnson

Staff: Rachel Ruhlen, Amanda McGee, Cristina Finch, Dorian Allen, Jeremy Holmes

National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation (NBPD): Amanda McGee

Amanda attended a webinar from the Transportation Research Board, “Challenges in Bike and Ped Traffic Monitoring”, which emphasized knowing the purpose of the data. The purpose for NBPD is to create a national database so that the adjustment coefficients can be more accurate. Only counts matter for that. The local purpose for the counts is performance measures reporting, and demographic data collected during the counts is used for grants.

We’ve participated in the NBPD for five years. The only count location that has been consistent is Memorial Ave Bridge. In previous years the counts have been reported to the committee as raw data, so Amanda showed the committee the counts after adjustments for 2016 counts. After adjustment, the weekend and weekday counts should be similar, and they are not, which suggests the coefficients are not accurate for our region.

To make the NBPD more useful locally, we need to review and prioritize count locations, target planned improvements, and expand the counts beyond Roanoke City. NBPD has designated the week of Sept 11 for counts, which (as with last year) is a conflict with a VDOT conference. The committee discussed moving it to the NBPD May designated week, but thought there would be more conflicts in May. The committee discussed selecting a different week in September, which would mean we would not participate in NBPD (it would be local only). The committee felt it is beneficial to contribute toward the goal of having accurate adjustment coefficients one day.

Anita McMillan asked if recreation or transportation could be distinguished by the counts. The counts are observational only, so trip purpose can’t be determined. Michael Gray pointed out that 2-hr counts is adequate for high-level estimates, but not for project-specific. Some members asked about technology to replace manual counts, such as automatic counters or video cameras. VDOT has provided counters in the past and may be able to provide more, and other means are not feasible. Bryce Johnson suggested counting some old locations (that may not otherwise be strategic locations) to provide overlap so that we can extrapolate trends.

This year’s September counts will proceed as before, consulting with the City to identify this year’s locations. This committee will continue to explore expanding the NBPD from City to region. Members should email amcgee@rvarc.org with count location requests.

Bike Share: Jeremy Holmes

Zagster launched Roanoke Bike Share with 9 stations and 45 bicycles on May 24. In the first two months, compared to two similar anonymous cities and the Zagster average from a 2-month-old bike share, Roanoke is performing at more than twice the number of members and the number of rides. Furthermore, the average Zagster system has 80% hourly / 20% annual memberships, while Roanoke Bike Share has about half hourly and half annual memberships, which shows strong community support. Some memberships are the result of partnerships with residential agencies, so they are free to

the residents, which could mean that there are members who don't use the system. Over three-quarters of members have used bike share at least once.

It is evident our system is successful. RIDE Solutions hopes to double the number of stations in the first year. Station location has been determined by sponsors. Stations should, however, be placed strategically to ensure the greatest ridership. RIDE Solutions would like this committee to provide input into prioritizing new station locations. The territory boundary is the TPO area.

Andrea Garland commented that this is a good task for this committee and is an opportunity for regional cooperation. Ben Bristoll suggested creating a work group to focus on this. Mark Jamison suggested including Valley Metro because bike share could help fill transit gaps or last mile gaps.

Pedestrian Infrastructure Inventory: Dorian Allen

Dorian presented data he has compiled into a pedestrian infrastructure inventory. The sidewalk inventory was completed several years ago and has been updated regularly. Dorian added curb ramps, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals to the inventory. Jeff Collignon requested this inventory be made available.

Clarification of committee purpose: Rachel Ruhlen

Several months ago, staff asked about adding Pedestrian to the Bicycle Advisory Committee. They then discovered that in the RVTPO Unified Planning Work Program, the committee has always been the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee. The committee asked for further clarification from the Transportation Technical Committee. The Technical Committee observed that they need to know the purpose of the committee before determining if it should be just bicycle or both bicycle & pedestrian. Staff created a short survey for the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members to assess how the committee can be useful to them and their agencies and to solicit specific work items. Staff summarized the responses and asked members of the summary captures all the responses.

Liz Belcher commented that the group had in the past been an advocate on behalf of bicyclists to agencies such as the Blue Ridge Parkway and VDOT. An example was ensuring bicycle accommodations on Cotton Hill Rd. Mark Jamison said the City had benefitted from getting feedback through this committee on early bicycle facilities. This committee could continue in that role by identifying where we need more signed bike routes and how we could improve the signs with distance and time. Andrea Garland said the committee has given her ideas legitimacy when she presents them to the city manager's office. Ben Bristoll said he is looking for a forum to give suggestions when he sees where a small modification could make a huge difference for bicyclists and pedestrians. Lindsay Webb suggested this committee could be more involved in updating the Pedestrian Vision Plan and the Sidewalk Inventory.

The committee has been city-centric, and other localities weighed in. Anita McMillan (Vinton) said she is better able to persuade leaders if the City is already doing it. She appreciates being able to learn from the City's experiences. Jerod Meyers (Botetourt) agreed that not having to make the same mistakes is helpful, and cited the May field trip to the Garden City Greenway where he learned new approaches to right-of-way acquisition. Lindsay Webb (Roanoke County) said the committee is increasingly important to their plans, and cited Plantation Rd and 419.

Andrea Garland added that once the committee has established a purpose, it could have an annual work plan. Ben Bristoll commented that pedestrian and bicycle facilities coexist and are not always distinct, and because of that overlap it would be natural for the committee to cover both. Anita McMillan mentioned the idea of a bike route that loops the Valley, similar to what many other cities have.