

Regional Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee October 31, 2017

Present: David Holladay, Kelly Fomenko, Lindsay Webb, Ben Bristoll, Andrea Garland, Liz Belcher, Michael Gray, Garrett Brumfield

Staff: Rachel Ruhlen, Cristina Finch

Discussion of draft procedures

Background: It all began with an innocent question about the name of the “Bicycle Advisory Committee”. The discovery that the committee’s formal name is the “Regional Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee” launched an existential crisis. What is the committee’s purpose? Why does it exist? Who is it? After several months of discussion, staff drafted formal procedures based on input from the committee and from the Transportation Technical Committee.

The committee discussed the draft. Several committee members who were unable to attend submitted comments by email; these are included where relevant. The effect on the draft procedures of the committee’s discussion is noted in italics.

Off-road recreational biking & walking

David Holladay asked for clarification on the guidance received from VDOT that the purview of the RVTPO does not include recreational off-road biking & hiking. Recreational on-road, and both on- and off-road transportation, is considered within the RVTPO purview. The committee consensus was that it is not necessarily excluded from the committee’s business because there is overlap. For example, it would not be appropriate for the committee to undertake a study of the Carvin’s Cove trail system, but it might be appropriate to study an off-road transportation connection to that recreational destination. *Request for clarification referred to 9/5/2017 committee meeting notes; no effect on draft procedures*

Should this be a committee of the RVTPO or of the Regional Commission?

The question of recreational off-road led to a discussion of the role of this committee within the Regional Commission vs. the RVTPO. Staff commented that the committee has been an RVTPO committee because it appears in the RVTPO Work Program, and not in the Regional Commission work program. Liz Belcher disagreed with that assessment and pointed out that the committee in the past has been involved in efforts that extend beyond the urbanized area, such as Bike Route 76. However, efforts that extended beyond the urbanized area also included the urbanized area—to the committee’s knowledge, there had been no work done in exclusively rural areas¹. Michael Gray mentioned an old railroad bed considered for a rail-trail conversion in Craig and Botetourt Counties that was outside of the urbanized area, which the Regional Commission (but not the Bicycle Advisory Committee) had been involved in. The committee expressed a desire to not exclude outer-lying areas. They were comfortable considering rural issues on an individual basis as they come up, inviting interested stakeholders to participate at that time.

No change to draft procedures

Who develops the Action Plan?

Michael Gray suggested the committee’s Action Plan be developed by the TTC which takes the lead on the RVTPO Work Program. The committee’s Action Plan should be in line with, and support, the RVTPO Work Program. Ben Bristoll commented that a role of the committee is to gather grassroots

¹ Confirmed by Shane Sawyer, personal communication

input and thoughts and send that up to the TTC and Policy Board, so it should be a two-way street. Michael agreed, but emphasized the committee's supportive role to the RVTPO (Figure 1). *Revised procedures so TTC approves committee's Action Plan.*

Committee purpose

David Holladay suggested the committee's purpose is to promote bike/ped *facilities*, rather than bike/ped *travel*. An email from Jerod Myers (not present) expressed a similar idea. Andrea Garland asked about Bike Share being a program, Liz Belcher replied that it is infrastructure. Andrea mentioned that the NHTSA/VDOT Pedestrian Safety program she attended described an action plan which included establishing a pedestrian safety coalition including representatives from the 7 E's (engineering as well as education, enforcement, and others.)

Revised purpose statement to specify infrastructure.

Reserved positions

Rachel Ruhlen stated that a guiding philosophy behind the draft was to allow flexibility without mandates. In that spirit, the draft suggests 15 at-large positions which the TTC and later, the committee, could fill with anyone they choose. At the previous meetings, committee members had expressed a strong desire to see more "users" of facilities in addition to "builders" (i.e., locality staff responsible for building and maintaining infrastructure), a sentiment that was reiterated in several emails from absent members. Reserving positions for "builders" ties up positions and may lock the committee into having perpetually vacant positions. The committee had mixed feelings about this. Andrea Garland suggested that if a locality is interested in being on the committee, it could apply for a position same as everyone else. Michael Gray worried that a locality that failed to apply would generate conflicts which would be bad for the committee and bad for the RVTPO. David Holladay supported having reserved slots for localities plus VDOT, and increasing the number of total slots to account for the localities that will probably never fill their slots: 8 reserved and 10 at-large for a total of 18.

Revised procedures to 18-member committee with 7 locality-appointed members, 1 VDOT-appointed member, and 10 at-large members.

Committee recommendations

Michael Gray felt the committee shouldn't make recommendations to "other entities" but only to the TTC and RVTPO Policy Board. Rachel Ruhlen asked how the committee would respond to localities' requests for input under that restriction, and Liz Belcher replied that input isn't the same as recommendations. Ben Bristoll felt the committee should have some degree of independence and the requirement that everything filter through the parent organization seems constraining, while recognizing the need to be cautious of potentially contentious issues. Michael expressed strong feelings about the inappropriateness of the committee writing any letters of support, for example the recent request from the City for a letter of support for pedestrian signals at an intersection. Liz Belcher thought needs for letters of support or public input on a project could be put out to individual committee members and not represent the committee itself.

Revised procedures to clarify what the committee does and does not have the authority to do.

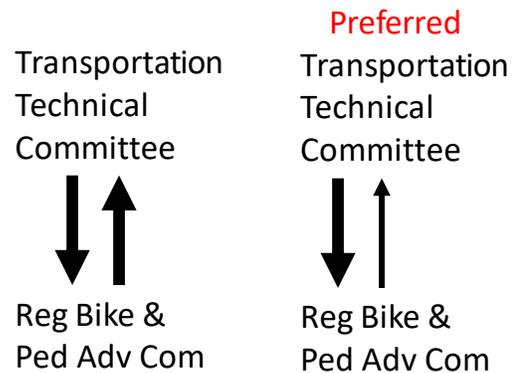


Figure 1. Development of action plan.

Feedback to the committee

Michael Gray said the RVTPO Policy Board and TTC won't provide feedback to the committee. Rachel Ruhlen explained that a major issue with committees in general was feeling that their participation was meaningless, and that one way to ensure feelings of meaningful participation is communication, and that is why feedback is important. However, the committee felt that feedback is an unrealistic expectation.

Removed feedback expectations from the procedures.

Chair

Jerod Myers (not present) had emailed that staff should chair the committee. Several voices instantly arose in unified opposition to this concept. Committee members agreed that the Chair & Vice-Chair should be elected from the committee membership.

No change to draft procedures.

Quorum

Several members felt that a quorum of five members was appropriate.

Changed quorum to five.

Officer term limits

Andrea Garland asked about term limits for Chair and Vice-Chair. David Holladay suggested one-year terms, with maximum of two successive terms.

Incorporated one-year terms with maximum of two successive terms into procedures.

Categories of representation

Andrea Garland suggested adding schools. David Holladay suggested expanding that to education, which could include community colleges and after-school programs, because it is very difficult to get public schools involved in committees.

Added "education" to list of desired interest representations.

Committee member terms

This was not discussed at the meeting. Several individual emails had expressed a preference for two-year committee member terms. Mark Jamison (email) suggested initial terms be for one and two years so there would be staggered terms.

Changed terms to two-year, with initial terms staggered.

Next steps

The committee was not comfortable making a formal recommendation to the TTC. They want to bounce it off the TTC after staff revise the procedures.