



MINUTES

Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

January 16, 2020

313 Luck Ave SW, Roanoke VA

Members present

Andrea Garland, City of Roanoke
Jim Lee, community volunteer
Garrett Brumfield, Overcome Yours
Lisa Cooper, Franklin County
Angela Yarbrough, community volunteer
Jeremy Holmes, RIDE Solutions
Kathleen Herndon, SPCA
Anita McMillan, Vinton

Others present

Wayne Wilcox

Staff present

Rachel Ruhlen, RVARC

Members absent

Cecile Newcomb, Roanoke County
Lisa Wever, Fallon Park Elementary
Greg Walter, Greenway Commission
Erik Olsen, Montgomery County
David Radcliff, Botetourt
Ken Mcleod, League of American
Bicyclists
Matt McKimmy, Ride Amigos
Jessica Preston, Salem
Robert Robillard, North Cross High
School
Carol Linkenhoker, Virginia Dept. of
Transportation

Andrea Garland called the meeting to order at 3:06 pm.

1. Approval of October 17, 2019 minutes and minutes of the Procedures Subcommittee meeting on October 17, 2019.
Motion by Lisa Cooper that both sets of minutes be approved, seconded by Jim Lee. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Announcements
Andrea Garland reported that the National Transportation Safety Board presented a report at the Annual Transportation Research Board recommending a national mandatory helmet law. Mandatory helmet laws have been shown to discourage bicycling and there is no evidence that they improve bicyclist safety. The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals wrote a letter to the National Transportation Safety Board opposing this recommendation (see attached letter).

Andrea also reported that Lime and Bolt have both removed all e-scooters from Roanoke City because of the weather. Andrea did not receive any complaints about the e-scooters, although many complaints were made on social media.

Rachel Ruhlen reminded the committee of two opportunities for public input: the I-81 survey (closed 1/16/2020) and the [Traffic Congestion survey](#). Input from highly informed citizens such as the bike/ped committee members is particularly valuable for the RVTO.

3. Update from RVTPO Technical Committee

Andrea Garland reported that the Bike/Ped Committee was on the Technical Committee's January 10 agenda, but the Technical Committee ran out of time and was not able to discuss it. In October, the Bike/Ped Committee had made a recommendation to the Technical Committee. As the conversation has developed, including a meeting between the chairs of the Technical Committee and the Bike/Ped Committee, the consensus is that the activities that the Bike/Ped Committee could engage in which would most benefit walking and bicycling in the region are not advisory to the Technical Committee. Therefore, the recommendation the Bike/Ped Committee had made in October was not brought to the Technical Committee.

4. Actions from the Pedestrian Vision Plan

Rachel Ruhlen presented a list of actions derived from the [Pedestrian Vision Plan](#) (2015) that the Bike/Ped Committee could engage in.

Anita McMillan commented on the need for education of key staff, elected officials, and citizens whose support is critical, even for low-cost solutions like signs or restriping when repaving. Committee members brainstormed opportunities to deliver messages about the benefits of bicycling and walking infrastructure:

- City staff present to staff in other localities their experiences making small changes through routine repaving
- Look for opportunities, such as the CEOs meeting, to present the economic development benefits of bicycling and walking.
- Hold a Summit and invite locality CEOs, elected officials, and key stakeholders.

Jeremy Holmes commented that the Bike/Ped Committee could help RIDE Solutions' efforts:

- Assist with RIDE Solutions' business outreach by connecting them with HR managers.
- Most of RIDE Solutions' conversations with businesses have focused on rural transportation, and the Bike/Ped Committee could do a site visit to address the "last mile" of a trip from the closest transit stop to a business.
- RIDE Solutions promotes smaller rides and themed rides to encourage people who aren't athletic to bicycle. Having ambassadors to assist in leading rides would allow more rides. Jim Lee suggested asking Renee Powers to recruit Greenway Ambassadors to serve in this role.

Anita McMillan expressed interest in Safe Routes to School plans. The Bike/Ped Committee could do a walk site visit at a school and meet with the Neighborhood Association of the school's neighborhood. These activities would be most successful at a school whose administration sees Safe Routes to School as valuable and at a school that has a leader for the effort.

Jeremy Holmes mentioned that RIDE Solutions is writing its annual grant and requesting additional funds for bike/ped safety outreach. The details haven't been determined yet, and if the grant is successful, the Bike/Ped Committee could help develop this effort, run bike rodeos, and provide volunteer support for the effort.

Jim Lee commented that 10th Street, which has recently re-opened to traffic, needs more destinations. The park on 10th Street is on the Parks Plan.

5. Get to Know Our members

Angela Yarbrough has done extensive bicycle touring for decades, on a tandem as a newlywed, with toddlers, with older kids, and beyond. They toured in Europe, Canada, and the United States. She showed photos of bicycle amenities such as “Wrong Way Except Bicycles” (in several languages) and bicycle stop lights.

Garrett Brumfeld has limited mobility due to cerebral palsy. He founded Overcome Yours, empowerment speaking, in 2014, which led to his involvement in disability advocacy. He serves on several councils and boards. Jonathan Stalls from Walk2Connect spoke at CityWorks Expo in 2016 and inspired Garrett to get involved in mobility advocacy. Garrett graduated from the America Walks Walking College in 2017. He has done disability and walk audits in several cities (including with the Bike/Ped Committee in Roanoke). He is pursuing ADA certification and plans to launch an empowerment podcast.

6. Updates

There were no further updates.

The meeting adjourned at 4:54 pm.

January 13, 2020

The Honorable Robert L. Sumwalt, Chairman
The Honorable Bruce Landsberg, Vice Chairman
The Honorable Jennifer Homendy, Member
The Honorable Michael Graham, Member
The Honorable Thomas Chapman, Member
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

The Honorable Robert L. Sumwalt, The Honorable Bruce Landsberg, The Honorable Jennifer Homendy, the Honorable Michael Graham, and the Honorable Thomas Chapman,

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP), our members and organizational partners are writing to respond to your recent bicycle safety report. We thank NTSB for taking on bicycling safety at a time when fatalities are on the rise and support your recommendations on building better infrastructure and improving vehicle design to enhance conspicuity.

However, we are writing today to express our grave concern with your recommendation on mandatory helmet laws and would like to request the opportunity to discuss the issue in person.

APBP is a community of practitioners working to create more walkable, bikeable places. We foster peer knowledge sharing, advance technical expertise, and support the professional development of our members. As professionals in the field, we agree that improving the safety of people walking and biking is paramount. However, we believe mandatory helmet laws have the potential to not only reduce the number of people biking, but to actually make bicycling less safe rather than more safe.

In the hearing on November 5, NTSB staff stated that advocates didn't agree with helmet laws because they could decrease the number of people bicycling. That is only half the story. Multiple studies across North America, Europe and Australia have shown that bicycling safety differs from other modes in one specific way. There is a **safety in numbers** effect to bicycling that not only reduces the rate of crashes and fatalities for people biking, but actually reduces the number of crashes, even as the number of bicycling trips increase.

More people bicycling reduces the rate of bicycling fatalities

Conventional wisdom tells us that traffic fatalities increase with the number of miles traveled. While that proves to be true for motor vehicles, that is not true for bicycling and walking. A 2003 report, studying five different data sets across European countries and American cities found that:

“The likelihood that a given person walking or bicycling will be struck by a motorist varies inversely with the amount of walking or bicycling. This pattern is consistent across communities of varying size, from specific intersections to cities and countries, and across time periods.”¹



Countries with high cycling rates also have low rates of fatalities per distance biked. Graph: International Transport Forum [PDF] via Amsterdazize

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Reduction of crashes and fatalities as bicycling increases

In U.S. cities, the increase in bicycling trips has not only led to a reduction in crash and fatality rates, but even as the number of miles bicycled increased, actual numbers of crashes and fatalities have decreased. A 2008 study in New York City found that in 1998, the city had an average daily ridership of 80,000 people and over 9,000 bicycle crashes and fatalities combined. In 2008, the city had an average daily ridership of 180,000 bicyclists but had less than 3,000 bicycle crashes and fatalities.

The same trend has been found in Minneapolis, Boulder, California cities, and in cities that have introduced bikeshare.

Bikeshare, increased bicycling and the effect on head injuries

¹ Peter Lyndon Jacobsen, “Safety in numbers: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling,” *Injury Prevention* 2003;9 (September 9, 2003): 205-09. <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/9/3/205>. Accessed January 10, 2020. Published correction appears in *Injury Prevention* 2004;10 (April 1, 2004):127. <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/10/2/127.2>. Accessed January 10, 2020.

Peter Lyndon Jacobsen, David R. Ragland, and Charles Komanoff, “Safety in Numbers for walkers and bicyclists: exploring the mechanisms,” *Injury Prevention* 2015;21 (July 8, 2015): 217-20. <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/21/4/217.info>. Accessed January 10, 2020.

² Graph taken from Angie Schmitt, “Safety in Numbers: Biking Is Safest in Nations With the Most People on Bikes,” *Streetsblog*, (February 17, 2015). <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2015/02/27/safety-in-numbers-biking-is-safest-in-nations-with-the-most-people-on-bikes/>. Accessed January 10, 2020.

In [this study of bicycle injuries and head injuries](#)³, the authors went into the study with the assumption that bikeshare would reduce helmet use, and therefore increase head injuries.

The actual results compared bicycle crash injuries and head injuries in bike share cities versus control cities and found that in cities that adopted bikeshare systems:

- Bicycle trips increased at a faster rate
- Crashes decreased at a faster rate
- Crashes with head injuries decreased at a faster rate
- Crashes with severe head injuries decreased at a faster rate

There were no fatalities in the bikeshare cities during these three years. In fact, there were no bikeshare fatalities in the U.S. for the first seven years of it being introduced in the country.

The effect of mandatory helmet laws on head injury rates among bicyclists, and on bicycling rates

While an individual choosing to wear a bicycle helmet can increase safety for that individual, the societal effect of mandatory helmet laws can be expected to reduce safety overall. A 2006 study of head injuries of bicyclists in jurisdictions after enforcement of helmet laws showed no noticeable drop in head injuries, but did show drops in bicycling of between 20 and 44 percent. The study, published in the British Medical Journal studied cities in Australia, Canada and New Zealand.⁴

The effect of bicycle helmet laws reducing bicycling rates not only makes bicycling less safe; it has long-term impact on the health of those communities. Bikeshare has been a boon to bicycling in cities across this country and the world. However, in cities with mandatory bicycle helmet laws such as Brisbane and Melbourne, Australia and Seattle, Washington, bikeshare systems struggle to gain traction. A 2012 paper in the journal *Risk Analysis* weighed the reduction of head injuries due to mandatory helmet laws against the increased morbidity due to foregone exercise from reduced cycling. The study concluded that mandatory helmet laws “have a net negative health impact.”⁵

Discriminatory enforcement of mandatory bike helmet laws

Mandatory helmet laws for minors are relatively common across the U.S., which demonstrates a serious concern for inequitable enforcement. While not intentional, the consequences of mandatory bike helmet laws are likely to cause serious concern for minority and low income populations. Here are just a few examples: After bike helmets were made mandatory in Austin, Texas, 92 percent of tickets were issued to African-American and Latino children. Tampa, Florida was in the news where police were potentially violating civil rights laws while enforcing

³ Janessa M. Graves, Barry Pless, Lynne Moore, Avery B. Nathens, Garth Hunte, and Frederick P. Rivara, “[Public Bicycle Share Programs and Head Injuries](#),” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 104, no. 8 (August 2014): e106-e111. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302012>.

⁴ D.L. Robinson, “Do enforced bicycle helmet laws improve public health?” *BMJ*, 2006;332:722 (April 6, 2006): 722-25. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.332.7543.722>. Published correction appears in *BMJ*, 2006;332:837 (April 8, 2006): 837. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.332.7543.722-a>.

⁵ Piet De Jong, “The health impact of mandatory bicycle helmet laws,” *Risk Analysis*, 32(5) (May 2012):782-90. doi: 10.1111/j.1539-6924.2011.01785.x. Epub (March 2, 2012): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22462680>.

bicycling laws, including helmet laws.⁶ Discriminatory practices that target low income and people of color communities further discourage bicycling, including in low income communities where bicycling can often be a low-cost transportation option in areas where transit isn't readily available or easily accessible.

Conclusion

As an association of practitioners in a field that promotes and encourages safe bicycling, APBP wants to stress the importance of increasing the number of people of bicycling to ensuring bicycling is safe. Bike helmet laws are not the same as mandatory seat belt or motorcycle helmet laws. In contrast to these laws, there is clear evidence that the more people bicycling in a community, the safer bicycling becomes for everyone, and there is evidence that mandatory helmet laws can reduce bicycling rates, effecting the "safety in numbers" argument. Mandatory helmet laws also make it harder for bikeshare, a service that increases bicycling rates and thus bicycling safety, to be successful.

We look forward to discussing these concerns in person and hope that we can find a time to meet in Washington, D.C.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Roberts, APBP President
Caron Whitaker, APBP Policy Specialist

Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
Adventure Cycling Association
Better Bike Share Partnership
California Bicycle Coalition
League of American Bicyclists

North American Bikeshare Association
National Association of City Transportation Officials
PeopleForBikes
Safe Routes Partnership
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Active Towns
Alta Planning + Design
BlinkTag Inc
Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, Inc.
Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

Luum
Nelson Nygaard
Street Plans
Toole Design Group
Two Wheel Valet LLC
UrbanTrans

Active San Gabriel Valley
Active Transportation Alliance
Aggie Blue Bikes/Utah State University
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
Bicycle Colorado
Bike East Bay
Bike Easy
Bike San Diego

Bike Walk Savannah
Bike Walk Tompkins
BikeAthens
BikeDFW
BikeWalkKC
Center for Community Transportation
Community Cycling Center
East Arlington (MA) Livable Streets Coalition
Georgia Bikes

⁶ Caitlin Giddings, "Do Helmet Laws Unfairly Target Minorities?" *Bicycling Magazine* (April 21, 2015). <https://www.bicycling.com/news/a20015616/bike-laws/>. Accessed January 10, 2020.

I Bike Rockford
Investing in Place
League of Michigan Bicyclists
LivableStreets Alliance
Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
Los Angeles Walks
Madison Bikes

New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition
Our Streets Minneapolis
Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition
The Bike-sharing World Map
The Center for Cycling Education
The Street Trust
Tulsa Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

cc: Ivan Cheung, PhD and Erik Strickland