

Notes

Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee

May 21, 2020

313 Luck Ave SW, Roanoke VA

Present

Cecile Newcomb, Roanoke County
Andrea Garland, City of Roanoke
Jim Lee, community volunteer
Garrett Brumfield, Overcome Yours
Lisa Cooper, Franklin County
Jeremy Holmes, RIDE Solutions
Kathleen Herndon, SPCA
Anita McMillan, Vinton
Tim Pohlada-Thomas, RVARC
Wayne Wilcox
Greg Walter, Greenway Commission
Nathan McClung, Vinton
Carol Moneymaker, VDOT
Ken McLeod, League of American
Bicyclists

Erik Olsen, Montgomery County
Wayne Leftwich, City of Roanoke
Matt McKimmy, Ride Amigos
David Radcliff, New Community Project
Will Crawford, Roanoke County
Isaac Henry, Roanoke County
Laura Hartman, Roanoke College
Wayne Leftwich, City of Roanoke
Robert Robillard, North Cross High
School
Kevin Jones, Federal Highway
Administration
Peter Volosin, Botetourt County
Liz Belcher, Greenway Commission
Barbara Duerk, Connect NOW
Rachel Ruhlen, RVARC

Cecile Newcomb called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.

1. Procedures and membership

Cecile Newcomb presented the draft procedures to be approved and to approve the membership as it was in January 2020 (with the exception of Lisa Wever who has moved to another state). Rachel Ruhlen commented that the RVARC executive director Wayne Strickland had asked to make sure everyone understood Article VI which states that the committee shall not state a position on an issue or claim to represent RVARC. Otherwise the procedures were drafted to incorporate input from the discussion in April when the consensus was "Option 2" (not an advisory committee to RVARC) but with several requests for rules so the committee could govern itself. Wayne Wilcox asked about membership. Rachel replied that membership was necessary to know who can vote but otherwise everyone is welcome in all committee meetings and activities. Carol Moneymaker asked how item number 3 on the agenda (How to be an advocate) fit with the limitation of Article VI that the bike/ped committee cannot state a position. Rachel Ruhlen replied that the intention is educational and Jeremy Holmes added that there is a distinction between personally advocating vs. advocating as a group that represents RVARC (which is not allowed).

Jeremy Holmes moved to approve the procedure and membership. Ken McLeod seconded. The motion passed.

2. Announcements

- a) Rachel Ruhlen thanked Angela Yarbrough and Wayne Wilcox for responding to her request for volunteers to help download/upload data from pedestrian counters that don't transmit to the cloud. Having more frequent data updates will be helpful in

monitoring counters and analyzing activity in response to events or incidents (such as a pandemic).

- b) Tim Pohlad-Thomas announced May is Still Bike Month. With many folks working from home or otherwise disconnected from their neighbors and friends at this time, getting outside to enjoy the region's natural beauty is more important than ever. To that end, RIDE Solutions has created a series of [Socially Distant Bicycle Tours](#) providing opportunities to explore your neighborhood and broader community with solo or small family rides. Angela Yarbrough commented that she had been enjoying exploring these routes. RIDE Solutions appreciates feedback on the routes and suggestions for additional routes.

3. Get to Know Our Members

- a) Robert Robillard

Robert bikes to work, bikes with his wife & kids, and bikes in different countries. Japan in particular has an extensive and beautiful network of bike lanes and parks. He commutes by bicycle daily to North Cross High School where he teaches, but not a single student bikes to school because there isn't a safe route. He has a bicycling blog:

<https://midlifecyclist.weebly.com/>.

- b) Ken McLeod

Ken has lived in Seattle, southern California, and Washington DC area before moving to Roanoke in 2018. He primarily commuted by bicycle but telecommutes now and has joined the Downshift Men's Team and bought a mountain bike. Through his job as Policy Director for the League of American Bicyclists he learns what other communities are doing and provided some valuable insight on Roanoke.

A silver level Bicycle Friendly Community of Roanoke's size would typically have one full-time employee dedicated to bicycling, 2.5% bike to work, and a bike/ped advisory committee that meets monthly. Roanoke is currently bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community and has 0.1FTE bicycle employee, 0.05% bike to work, and the bike/ped committee meets 5 times/year. Roanoke has made progress on the recommendations from its 2016 report card in wayfinding, signature event, and the bicycle count program.

Roanoke's ambitious bike plan lacks specific details. The bike/ped committee can work through design changes and provide local knowledge and experience to make priority corridors work. For example, Campbell/Wise Ave is a priority corridor on the bike plan but was recently repaved with no bicycle improvements. The committee should get itself involved early in discussions about repaving and improvements. The committee can help hold the City accountable to its own goal of 3 miles of on-street bike routes annually.

Ken has spoken to City Council three times, twice about the Greenway reopening and once about Brandon Ave repaving. He also has a blog at bikingwithken.com.

4. Andrea Garland introduced the activities that the Bike/Ped Committee will focus on in 2020.

- a) Give input to localities on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Andrea Garland stated that repaving schedules are a good opportunity to consider pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

The City posts its repaving schedule online: <https://www.roanokeva.gov/530/Transportation>
The City has a performance measure target of 3 miles of new bike lanes each year. That has been easy to meet until now. There aren't many streets left that bike lanes can be added by narrowing existing lanes without not removing parking or travel lanes. To remove a lane on Brandon Ave will require a traffic study. City staff are willing to do that but there's a challenge because traffic is not normal right now.

When striping bike lanes doesn't require taking away parking or a travel lane, no public input is sought. Because most bike lane striping will require taking something away, the committee can help with public input.

Ken McLeod commented that the repaving schedule is shared in the form of a map but asked how the striping plans are shared. Andrea replied that that information isn't shared publicly.

Rachel Ruhlen added that VDOT shared the repaving schedule for Roanoke and Botetourt Counties and that she compared those to the RVTPO and rural bikeway plans and let them know which roads are on one of those plans (almost all of them).

Andrea added that in addition to repaving projects, locality staff can consult the committee for input on other projects. Plantation is being repaved but is not on the posted repaving schedule (because it is through another funding source), and it is wide enough for buffered bike lanes.

b) City of Roanoke pedestrian safety campaign

The City of Roanoke has a grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for a Pedestrian Safety Campaign. The campaign is Every Corner is a Crosswalk, which is timely because Virginia law just changed from YIELD to STOP for pedestrians in the crosswalk (easier to understand and enforce). Committee member Garrett Brumfield will be an actor in one of the video ads. The kick-off event will be virtual and occur on July 17. The campaign will run from July 13 – Sept 4. This committee can help promote the campaign, participate in the kick-off, and distribute yard signs and materials.

Erik Olsen commented that Blacksburg had created a video for pedestrian safety in 2009: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=wV4oi8SxZV4>

c) RVTPO Bikeway Plan Update

Rachel Ruhlen announced that the RVTPO Bikeway Plan update will begin this year and the committee will have opportunities to be involved in that.

d) Bicycle Friendly Community application

Rachel Ruhlen announced that the City's Bicycle Friendly Community Bronze Level designation will expire this year and that the application is in process. The committee will have opportunity to be involved in the application process and after the application is surveyed, the League of American Bicyclists will seek further input.

5. How to be an advocate

Ken McLeod described his experience speaking to Roanoke City Council. Locality staff present supplied additional information about their localities.

Because meetings are all online right now, ordinary procedures to sign up to speak at a City Council meeting are different. The City of Roanoke has an online form to sign up. Other localities ask citizens to email or call. Franklin County doesn't require signing up. All meetings are public and anyone can speak whether or not they are a resident, but most require speakers to state their name and address. There is always a time limit, typically 3 minutes.

Ken recommends having written remarks and practicing with a timer. He provided [an example](#). He has attempted to have slides but they didn't work smoothly in the online forum. An advantage of written remarks is that he could share them on social media and multiple council members contacted him after he shared his remarks on Facebook.

Another strategy Ken described was Power Mapping. In this activity, advocates identify the decision maker. They learn who that person listens to and who each of those people listens to. In this way they can focus their efforts on people who can influence the decision maker.

Ken and locality staff agreed that very few people speak at council or board meetings or in public hearings and this is an excellent opportunity for advocates to speak directly to decision makers. Cecile Newcomb commented that while the County received a lot of public input on its area plans, no one showed up to the public hearings. MPO staff Erik Olsen and Rachel Ruhlen agreed that it is extremely rare to have public comments during MPO Board and Committee meetings and hearings as well.

Andrea Garland commented that locality staff don't directly seek public input on most decisions, but that is something that might change if people seem to be interested in getting involved.

6. Wrap up

Andrea Garland announced that e-scooters are back and recommended that you use hand sanitizer if you use them.

Jeremy Holmes announced that RIDE Solutions is developing its 5-year Commuter Assistance Strategic Plan. RIDE Solutions uses encouragement to reduce drive-alone trips through incentives and behavior change programming. RIDE Solutions is launching a new version of the carpool-match app which will include event carpool matching (such as Floyd Fest) in addition to work trips, and Bike Buddy matching. He invites committee members to sign up to be Bike Buddies. The app will have active transit integration, which is important to this community as walking and biking are critical to the "last mile" of transit trips in this area.

Anita McMillan commented that the Walnut Ave corridor has partial bike lanes but they have applied for funding repeatedly to complete the corridor and not been successful. The Town Council understands the need but it competes for other needs for funding.

Wayne Leftwich reminded members that [an opportunity for public input](#) is available right now on the City of Roanoke's Comprehensive Plan, which has already received extensive public input throughout its development.