

Meeting Minutes: Bicycling Discussion between WABA and DPW&T
Tuesday, May 24, 2011, 4pm

For DPW&T: Haitham A. Hijazi, Director; Victor Weissberg, Special Assistant to the Director; Dawit Abraham, Associate Director

For WABA: Shane Farthing, Executive Director; Jim Titus, Director & County Resident-Advocate

1. Bike Lanes.

- a. The door zone issue. We discussed this only in terms of Oxon Hill Road. Haitham asked Jim his opinion about a plan for an 8' parking lane with a 5' bike lane. Jim said that it depends on where the car's tire is. To be outside the door zone, the bike's tire must be at least 5' to the left of the cars (e.g. SUV door swings 3.5' and cyclists tire is 1.25' to the left of handlebar on a typical hybrid or mountain bike). Haitham said 6' *might* be possible on Oxon Hill Road; Jim said that it is very difficult to find the space to keep the bike lane entirely out of the door zone, but there are several known ways for striping the boundary of the door zone, and doing so largely mitigates the hazard: Novice cyclists will realize not to ride in the door zone and drivers will better understand where to expect the cyclist.
- b. Roundabouts where there are bike lanes. Haitham showed plans for the Oxon Hill Road Bike Lane, pointing out how the bike lane leads to a sidewalk that goes $\frac{1}{4}$ around the circle and uses a crosswalk to cross the intersecting street at a right angle, which leads to another sidewalk around the circle, etc. WABA agrees that these sidewalks can be useful for slow cyclists; but WABA thinks that cyclists traveling at 10-20 mph are generally safer if they merge into the traffic (DPW&T does not feel the term "safer" is appropriate, and prefers that cyclists use the sidewalk.). Jim said: "Please do not post signs directing the bike route onto the sidewalk at roundabouts the way they did by Wegman's." Haitham said: "The developer did that, I am happy to save the money with fewer signs."
- c. Haitham expressed enthusiasm for new streets to have bike lanes and noted that they have been included in several major large recent CIP projects (Cherry Hill Road, Amendale Road and are in plans for Oxon Hill Road). Everyone agreed that DPW&T will encourage cycling community comments for CIP projects related to and relevant to bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Plan for doing so includes:
 - i. Provide WABA and BTAG with the annual list of planned street construction of the CIP capital projects and green street initiatives.
 - ii. Quarterly meetings on street upgrades at DPW&T's Largo Office with WABA, MNCPPC, other BTAG members.
 - iii. DPW&T will get Jim plans for the Oxon Hill Rd project.
 - iv. The DPW&T Website contains status on CIP projects and can be visited by the public.

Low-cost retrofit options and low-cost projects to improve cooperation between bikes and and motor vehicles on roads that do not have bike lanes

- a. Options discussed

- i. DPW&T expressed a preference for signs over pavement markings because signs are less expensive, require less maintenance, and have longer expected lifetime. Therefore, sharrows are unlikely unless cycling community can find the necessary funds. DPW&T might be willing to cost-share if matching funds through M-NCPPC were available.
- ii. DPW&T is willing to post “[Bicycles] may use full right lane” signs on roads that have at least two lanes in each direction, a right lane that is too narrow for side-by-side sharing, and neither a bikable sidewalk or sidepath. DPW&T is not willing to post R4-11 signs on roads with one lane in a given direction.
- iii. On one-lane roads, DPW&T is willing to post a “[Bicycle-Symbol] Share the Road” sign: DPW&T is willing to post “Share the Road” signs on narrower roads as long as there is a continuous clear sight line and there is an adequate shoulder. WABA sees a need for signage, but is concerned about ambiguity of Share-the-Road signs because their meaning is not well understood by the public.
- iv. DPW&T is willing to post for exclusive marked bike lanes “Begin Right Turn Lane Yield to Bike” signs when a right turn lane overlays a well-used bikeway.
- v. DPW&T is building sidewalks in lieu of on-road bike accommodations in some cases.
 - 1. WABA and DPW&T agree that sidewalks are not useful for cyclists in areas with driveways or frequent cross streets, but that they may be better than riding in a narrow lane with no shoulder going up a hill if there are few driveways and cross streets.
 - 2. For other roads, WABA agrees that sidewalks can be useful for some cyclists, but that they are less useful for experienced cyclists and should be studied carefully to ensure that additional hazards are not created. Jim said that riding against the flow of traffic on a sidewalk is especially dangerous if there are sidewalks or cross streets.
 - 3. We also discussed the legality of riding on sidewalks. Haitham said that until he saw Jim’s email last summer, DPW&T had assumed that riding on sidewalks is legal. Jim explained the Maryland and County statutes, which basically allow the county executive to designate specific bikeways—but no one has a list of which sidewalks have such a designation. Haitham said that the Department can look into getting the necessary directives, which is Division 12. Sec. 26-150. Designation of sidewalks and trails, which allows for “The County Executive to have the authority to establish sidewalks...” making it clear that bicycle use on sidewalks are permissible, as the Department feels that sidewalks are safer than riding in traffic when there are no bicycle facilities.
- vi. DPW&T is willing to stripe shoulders for the use of cyclists and pedestrians where an existing shoulder is unneeded for parking. Willing to make low-cost intersection accommodations (e.g. modify triangular islands that guide right-turn lanes), as funding permits.

b. Way Forward—Pilot Effort

- i. WABA and/or BTAG will provide a draft list of priority roads and some test areas.
 1. BTAG has been working on a list of roads with the following criteria: County roads with a major transportation benefit (either significant cycling today or a missing link); geographically diverse within Developed and Developing Tiers.
 2. BTAG has also been working to identify 5-6 geographical areas to focus on for additional improvements, which they will send as well. DPW&T Encourages BTAG/WABA to take a comprehensive county-wide approach as has been the case historically.
 3. We will send a draft and make revisions to create a list that makes sense to all.
 4. Then we will have discussions on what can be done to improve cycling conditions on those roads.

3. General Areas of Agreement between WABA and DPW&T

- a. Cycling is a viable means of transportation
- b. New projects that widen roads will include some form of bike infrastructure as ROW and funding permits.
- c. It is to be expected that DPW&T and WABA disagree on some matters, such as whether cyclists should ride in the center of narrow roads or not ride on such roads at all. Having identified particular disagreements, we agreed that it would not be productive to debate or discuss those matters every time we meet. It is useful, however, to clearly enunciate those differences so that we can put them aside and move forward on those matters where we have agreement. As we work together, we may find other issues where cyclists and DPW&T staff do not agree. The purpose of airing our differences is so that we can understand them, not to carry on a continuing debate.

4. Areas for Further Discussion

- a. Are cyclists presumed to be part of the mix of road users to which DPW&T has a responsibility on all county roads? (The expressways where bikes are prohibited are all state and federal highways.)
 1. WABA says yes. Cyclists are riding on all roads; the MVA has long warned drivers to expect cyclists on all types of roads. If signs and shared lane markings can make some of those roads safer, then DPW&T should do so as funding and right of way permits
 2. DPW&T says yes. As DPW&T has responsibility for County roadways, it reminds WABA that cyclists as with all road users, vehicles, pedestrians, or any other road users shall operate in accordance with the laws and the conditions of the road. This also calls upon the user to exercise basic common sense, and personal responsibility for themselves, their loved ones and others using the roadway or whom they may come in contact or may interface with that individual.
- b. The position of DPW&T is: If a road is straight and visibility is good, then riding a bike on the road is acceptable. DPW&T would, if there is a shoulder, be willing to consider "Bicycles Share the Road" signs to warn drivers that bikes may be on the road. That means that a bike may either be on the side of the road or using full lane. DPW&T would still not want a "Bicycles Use Full Lane Sign" because that might lead some cyclists to use the full lane who would otherwise not do so, which must be weighed against the more explicit message to drivers. (But note that DPW&T is willing to post those signs along some of the roads with 2 lanes in each direction.)
- c. There was discussion over issues regarding road conditions, safety for all road users, liability and signage:
 - i. DPW&T believes that signs and pavement markings increase its liability because doing so would imply endorsement of riding those roads. Today, cyclists ride those roads at their own risk. The County has never stated that all of its roads are part of the cycling transportation network. Installing signs and pavement markings would in effect endorse biking on those roads, making the county liable.
 - ii. WABA believes that if DPW&T thinks that certain roads are unsafe for cycling, then DPW&T should develop an inventory of the roads where cycling is unsafe and either issue warnings or take remedial action. The failure to issue warnings or make remedial repairs pose the greater liability. DPW&T feels that all road users need to utilize personal responsibility and judgment when driving a vehicle, riding a bicycle or when engaging in pedestrian movements. DPW&T cares about public safety and is concerned when members of the community take safety lightly or knowingly commits acts of high-risk behavior as a mechanism to achieve a public action.