

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ISSUES TASK FORCE

RECORD OF MEETING

DATE, TIME: April 2, 1997; 5:30-7:20 PM

PRESENT: Emily Goodman (NYBC), Don Odell (Albany County Economic Development, Conservation and Planning), Don Robertson (NYSDOT – Region 1), Paul Russell (Town of Colonie Conservation Advisory Council), Ivan Vamos (NYBC), Kristina Younger and Steve Allocco (CDTC)

ISSUE: Task Force reactions to evaluation methodology and fact sheets on bike/ped TIP candidates

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The group seemed generally comfortable with the approach taken to and results of the technical evaluations. (This is to some extent an inference from (1)the *lack* of much discussion or questioning of the A/B/C ratings and (2)the greater emphasis in discussions on the importance of the *narrative* information presented in the fact sheets. Also, it is noteworthy that projects they spoke highly of tended to be highly rated in the evaluations.) The primary concern raised in the discussions was that the Planning Committee needs to understand the full spectrum of benefits which investments in bicycle and pedestrian projects can yield; three examples cited were potential accident avoidance (the group suggested that if not in a quantitative way, this potential could be expressed in a “low/medium/high” form), helping a community comply with ADA requirements and encouraging tourism/economic development.

Specifics on some individual projects or types of projects were also discussed; the “Action Items” section indicates how they will be reflected in the fact sheets.

ACTION ITEMS

1. **Individual fact sheet entries will be changed to reflect potential safety benefits**, with “low/medium/high” determination based on the nature of the project, its location, any known accident histories, and adjacent motor vehicle traffic volumes. These indications will be shown in the upper right-hand box of each sheet along with the "potential market" and "potential cost-effectiveness" indications, although the entries for “benefit/cost ratio” and “total benefits” will remain “NC” (Not Calculated).
2. Per the group’s recommendation, and provided there is nothing unique to a project or location that dictates otherwise, **the fact sheet entries for “Facilitates Bicycling?” on sidewalk projects will be changed from “No” to “Secondary benefit to younger cyclists,”** to reflect the fact that children under 10 may legally cycle on sidewalks.
3. Also per group discussions, **the title and description of the setaside program for bicycle spot improvements will be changed to (1)include pedestrian treatments and (2)clarify what sorts of improvements might take place under the program** (“pothole repair” in particular seemed to be misleading with regard to the magnitudes or scopes of possible actions; higher emphasis will be given to pavement markings and high-visibility crosswalks).
4. **The words “not likely” will be removed from the “Facilitates Transit Use?” entry on the Route 9 Sidewalks fact sheet.**
5. **Potential to help communities achieve ADA compliance will be indicated for pedestrian projects, as appropriate.**

PROPOSED INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS FROM THE TASK FORCE TO ACCOMPANY FACT SHEETS (envisioned as handout to Committee or as "read into the record" remarks before deliberations begin)

Notes from the bicycle and pedestrian issues task force

Both in its work during the New Visions effort and in its review of the fact sheets for “Enhancement”-type TIP proposals, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues Task Force frequently noted the potential for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations to yield benefits in areas not ordinarily associated with transportation projects. To provide some examples for Planning

Committee members to bear in mind during their reviews of enhancement-type proposals, the Task Force requested at its April 2, 1997 meeting that the following notes accompany the fact sheets.

1. To make bicycle and pedestrian travel true partners in our transportation system, these modes need to be *safe*. As there is a greater likelihood of serious or fatal injury resulting from car/bike or car/ped accidents, we need to bear in mind the importance of actions which increase the physical separation of cyclists or pedestrians from cars, particularly in heavily-traveled areas. As an added safety benefit, many bicycle/pedestrian projects would by virtue of their designs help communities comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
2. Accommodating recreational cycling and hiking (via trail development or trail maintenance) pays off in encouraging people to visit the area (and spend money). For example, a recent survey of Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail users found that 77 percent of weekday users traveled five miles or less to get to the Trail, but only 55 percent of Saturday users came from five miles or less. While most users were still from within the four counties of the Capital District, it can be argued that trails may thus also have the potential to “keep local residents local” for recreation (that is, residents might use the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail on weekends instead of traveling to Lake George, Vermont or other “day trip” locations with cycling/hiking paths). Also, there is much evidence in the literature on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation indicating that bikeable and walkable communities are more tourist-friendly.
3. On a related note, there is a real *timeliness* to investing in bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, as it could compound the benefits of the various Canalway initiatives underway (e.g., charter boat service starts on the Mohawk this summer, the HUD waterfront revitalization program).
4. The Task Force sees many of the Enhancement proposals as critical to helping the Capital District “catch up” after years of not working toward a true, regional bicycle and pedestrian transportation system. CDTC’s philosophy should be that *all* projects should be multimodal; without operating under such a philosophy, we are likely to always be in that “catch up” mode, for bike/ped system development would remain slow, piecemeal and highly localized. The Task Force looks forward to seeing the degree to which sponsors of road and bridge projects show commitments to the incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian features.