

Meeting Minutes

Special Joint Commission Meeting—Presentation of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan

Date: Tuesday, December 3, 2015

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: City Council Chambers, City of Urbana, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL

Members Present:

Plan Commission

Barry Ackerson
Maria Byndom
Tyler Fitch
Lew Hopkins
Christopher Stohr
David Trail
Daniel Turner

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson
Karie Brown-Tess
Elsie Hedgspeth
Cynthia Hoyle
Audrey Ishii
Susan Jones
Craig Shonkwiler

Sustainability Advisory Commission

Marya Ryan
Bart Bartels
Morgan Johnston
Andrew Stumpf
Stephen Wald

Traffic Commission

Craig Shonkwiler
Bob Fitzgerald (Pat Connolly)

Staff Present: Elizabeth Tyler, William Gray, Kevin Garcia, Christopher Marx

Others Present: Gabe Lewis, Rita Black, Charlie Smyth, Leo Covis, Carolyn Casaday Trimble, and Jeff Yockey

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Tyler Fitch called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Roll call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

3. PRESENTATION

a) Urbana Bicycle Master Plan Draft

Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer, discussed the process for updating the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. He said the process began when the City contracted with the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission in July 2013 for \$38,000 to develop the updated plan. During the course of 2013, the Urbana Bicycle Steering Committee met numerous times to discuss the plan. The Steering Committee consisted of representatives from City staff, the Urbana Park District, the Urbana School District #116, University of Illinois, the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District, Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, and Champaign County Bicycle Club. In February 2014, the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission held public meetings throughout Urbana to receive input from all members of the community. He mentioned that meetings were held at the Urbana

Civic Center, King Elementary School, Early Childhood Center and at Leal Elementary School, which was conducted in Spanish. In April 2014, a meeting was held at the Urbana Middle School to discuss the findings and recommendations resulting from the discussions held in February. Attendees at those meetings voted on preferred locations for bicycle infrastructure. A draft plan was presented to City staff for review in April 2015. Comments were incorporated into a document that was presented to the Bicycle Steering Committee. The plan is now being presented to the commissions that are connected to the aspects of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. He stressed that this joint meeting was an informational meeting. Soon a draft would be submitted to the commissions with a comment period. Then approval would be sought from each of the individual commissions represented: Sustainability Advisory Commission, Traffic Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission and then the Urbana Plan Commission. After those commissions have reviewed and approved the plan, it would go to the Urbana Committee of the Whole and the City Council for approval.

Gabe Lewis, Transportation Planner at the Champaign County Regional Plan Commission, discussed the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. He discussed the structure of the twelve chapters within the plan development and process. Chapter 1 discussed the definitions and concepts contained in the plan. He added that consideration was given to the 5 E's (Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation and Engineering) as part of the development of the plan. He mentioned that complete streets and road diets were already being implemented as part of the current plan. He defined the area of the study and stated that the updated plan included a review of local policies and existing facilities. In discussing the plan, Mr. Lewis said that Chapters 1 through 10 dealt with inputs while Chapters 11 and 12 dealt with outcomes.

Chapter 2 focused on the historical growth of the bicycle infrastructure from pre-2007 to the current time period. He stated that most of the early bicycle facilities were located off the street. He said that within the last few years, bicycle infrastructure within Urbana had increased by 79%.

Chapter 3 was a literature review of peer and model cities—many of which had obtained gold or platinum levels of bicycle friendly community status. There is information about their programs, revenue sources and the involvement of bicycle/pedestrian coordinators in those communities.

Chapter 4 discussed the different types of bicyclists and facility guidelines. He added that facilities were evaluated based upon the four requirements that people needed to encourage the use of bicycle facilities (safety, convenience, access, and social acceptability). He briefly discussed the four classifications of bicyclists as defined by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). He stated that the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan was geared toward the group of cyclists defined as “interested, but concerned,” which made up about 60% of the bicycle community. He added that the interested, but concerned bicyclists usually preferred facilities that were separate from motorists. As part of developing the update to the plan, staff looked at bicycle level of service (BLOS), trying to focus on roadways that had a grade of “C” or lower.

Chapter 5 contained a discussion about user preferences and bicycle facilities. He said that wayfinding signage showing time and distance to destinations within the community were recommended for both on-and off-street facilities. He said that CCRPC was working with the Urbana Park District at the time to create off-street trails and connectivity between its parks. Some new features being considered were bike activated stop lights, bike parking and two-stage turn queue boxes.

Chapter 6 included a review of existing condition inventory. Mr. Lewis said that CCRPC worked on the Bicycle Friendly Community application for the City of Urbana in the summer of 2014. As part of the application process, bicycle counts were conducted. The counts showed a high concentration of bicycle travel around the University of Illinois campus. In addition to the review of bicycle traffic, crash data was reviewed. It was found that between 2009 and 2013, there was one fatality in Urbana, 84 crashes, and 79 injuries.

In Chapter 7 there was a discussion of how public input was sought as was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Chapter 8 contained a discussion of the opportunities and constraints within the study area. Interstate 74, railroads, major arterials all presented challenges and constraints when developing a bicycle network.

Chapter 9 discussed the goals and objectives of the plan using the SMART model (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) to determine the progress of the plan. Themes discussed as part of the plan were 1) multimodal connectivity, 2) safety, 3) convenience, 4) education, 5) funding and implementation and 6) equity.

The discussion of Chapter 10 included the focus on bicycle level of service (BLOS). Mr. Lewis stated that the BLOS was a perceived comfort level indicated by a grade. The grade was based upon criteria, which included the presence of certain elements on the roadway. Consideration was given to the width of the roadway, the striping, and the amount of on-street parking among other factors. Maps were included in this chapter to show improvement (perceived comfort) on streets from 2007 to 2015 where bike lanes had been installed.

Chapter 11 included recommendations for the updates. One recommendation focused on the Urbana Green Loop which would connect the parks in Urbana. The plan looked at drainage grates and encouraged the use of transverse grates and grates flush with the pavement to provide safer and smoother travel for bicyclists. Recommendations were developed by corridors and concepts. Included were Bike and Trails Wayfinding Signage, Urbana Green Loop, MCore project, Safe Routes to School, Rail Corridors and Bikeway Access for Low Income Areas and Areas of Employment. Some areas mentioned for consideration of bicycle facilities were around Interstate 74, future developments, arterial roads, stream corridors, loop between parks and fitness trails at Crystal Lake Park and Weaver Park. Mr. Lewis mentioned that there may be some plans recommended that would require changes to the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Chapter 12 focused on the implementation of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. The plan looked at future recommendations, if funding was possible; maintenance of existing facilities, which had already been or is being done; implementation matrices; funding sources; and a full-time (regional) bicycle/pedestrian coordinator.

Barry Ackerman, Urbana Plan Commission, asked if the MCore (Multimodal Corridor Enhancement Project) was part of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the MCore project was well underway. He mentioned that the letting for Green Street between Wright Street and Busey Avenue (Project 1) was scheduled for June 2016 and that Green Street between Busey Avenue and Race Street (Project 5) was scheduled for 2018. He stated that staff would be requesting the removal

of on-street parking on Green Street between Busey Avenue and Race Street before City Council sometime this winter.

Brandon Bowersox-Johnson, Urbana Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Commission Chair, said that there had been some conflict in the past when removing on-street parking from streets where bicycle facilities were installed. He asked if there were any concerns about locations recommended for installing bicycle facilities. He also asked if there were streets that would require the removal of on-street parking as part of the updated plan.

Gabe Lewis stated that there were not as many areas where on-street parking would need to be removed as were recommended in the previous plan. He said that Green Street between Busey Avenue and Race Street was the only major street where the removal of on-street parking was scheduled.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the removal of on-street parking for the installation of bicycle facilities has been a challenge. He mentioned that in the past residents indicated that they were unaware of the recommendations. Mr. Shonkwiler had planned to announce the proposed areas for on-street parking removal through press releases and notification of those impacted by the removal of parking.

Cynthia Hoyle, Urbana Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, mentioned that City staff had been proactive in discussing the removal of on-street parking with those along the Green Street corridor.

David Trail, Urbana Plan Commission, stated that there had been mention of several national programs. He asked why the plan did not include examples from international programs.

Gabe Lewis mentioned that staff kept track of international trends in case those practices were approved and could be incorporated into City plans. He said that they have looked at open streets and no car Sundays as possible features.

Rita Black, Champaign County Regional Plan Commission Planning and Community Development Director, said that there were standards and guidelines that communities had to follow to receive grants.

Mr. Trail urged the City of Urbana to be innovative and to refuse federal funding if the Federal Highway Administration would not allow the City to implement the plans the City wanted.

Gabe Lewis did not believe that the City would want to turn down funding. He added that the City of Urbana had increased its bicycle infrastructure by 73% with the help of funding.

David Trail suggested that the City discourage auto ownership and implement plans to reduce the number of vehicles in the City.

Cynthia Hoyle felt that the plan needed to be more aggressive to achieve the goal of Platinum Level of the Bicycle Friendly Community within a certain time frame. She said that she had made some suggestions as part of the Urbana Bicycle Steering Committee meeting and wanted to know the status of her suggestions. In particular, she had recommended that the City look at a pilot program similar to Boulder, Colorado. She had asked for a living lab where ideas could be implemented on a trial basis to test their viability in the community. She also requested that the City look at incentives to encourage

the development of bicycle parking close to new and existing businesses. Ms. Hoyle recommended the implementation of a bike share program and the addition of bike corrals in the community. She would like to see the development of an app that would allow easier reporting for bike crashes. She said that there was not good information available since not all crashes were reported to the Police Department.

Gabe Lewis mentioned that staff was currently working on an app that would indicate the location of bicycle parking within the downtown Urbana area. He said that they were also working on an app that would help with the development of a bike sharing program. Presently, Mr. Lewis said that CCRPC was working with University of Illinois students to determine what routes were being used around campus and to study crashes. He saw the goal of Platinum Level as a reasonable goal for the next update of the Urbana Bicycle Plan—perhaps in 2030.

Craig Shonkwiler said that Urbana was a progressive community and he thought that a pilot program, similar to Boulder's, could be included as a suggested program for consideration in the updated plan.

Cynthia Hoyle asked that the plan include language indicating that the City would explore the development of a pilot program similar to the Boulder program.

Chris Stohr, Urbana Plan Commission, praised the effort put into the updated plan. He expressed concern about the loss of green space with the addition of bike paths using impervious surfaces.

Gabe Lewis mentioned that the Urbana Park District was planning to convert part of an existing path (Southridge Park) into a nature path.

Mr. Stohr was concerned about new paths and would like to minimize the amount of impervious trails.

Cynthia Hoyle mentioned that there should be more emphasis placed on the enforcement of drivers who are not yielding to bicyclists and who are harassing bicyclists. She said that the diversion plan for bicyclists seemed to be successful and she thought it would work for motorists. She acknowledged that the program would involve funding issues, but she said that roadway fatalities were not the result of cyclists, but the result of motorists. She wanted to see more year-round programs that would encourage bicycling at all times of the year. She stated that the hiring of a coordinator could make that possible.

Charlie Smyth, Urbana City Council, entreated assistance from the commissioners to continue to strive for Platinum Level for the Bicycle Friendly Community designation. He mentioned that other cities had been aggressively working for Diamond Status. He added that the plan needed a vision and challenge by setting real goals to increase bicycling and bicycle infrastructure. Mr. Smyth said that the plan needed to include the Vision Zero goal approved by City Council. He encouraged the commissioners to take as much time as possible to provide input because the plan needed to be right. He asked them to think about the long-term goals and to help create a vision to obtain Platinum status and beyond. He thanked all of the commissioners and staff for their work in formulating the plan.

Carolyn Casady Trimble mentioned that she would like to see plans to encourage safe bicycle routes between downtown Urbana and downtown Champaign. She asked that the use of permeable concrete for bicycle facilities be considered.

Leo Covis asked if there was more information about bicycle crashes and what could be done to prevent future conflicts.

Gabe Lewis said that there had been only one fatality in recent history. He recounted that the accident had occurred at the corner of Green Street and Gregory Street and the bicyclist died in the accident. He added that there was information included in the plan about the demographics of those involved in bicycle crashes. He said that more males were involved in accidents and that those within the 20-24 years of age group were involved in most of the crashes. He indicated that accident information from the Police Department's accident reports was reviewed to determine the causes of conflicts.

8. ADJOURNMENT

With no other business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary