

Burlington Walk Bike Council (BWBC)

November 6th, 2024 Meeting Notes

The monthly meeting took place 5:30- 7:00 pm via Zoom and at the DPW Office (In some back room).

In-Person Attendees: Phillip Peterson (DPW), Erik Brotz*, Jason Stuffe*, Jonathan Weber (Local Motion)*, Bob Leidy, Gabe Nelson, Tenzin Chopel, Mark Stater, Alia Liebowitz

Online Attendees: Gordon Dragoon*, Serrill Flash, Ushi Larsen

* BWBC Coordinating Committee members

1. Announcements & Updates

Question on what the walk/bike council does

- Erik: We are an advisory group that works with DPW (Department of Public Works)
 - We provide feedback on walk/bike inputs to the city
- Phillip: Long-term DPW has discussed giving some decision-making power to the BWBC, this could involve vetting certain aspects of projects

There have been some 20 mph speed limits signs going up in the downtown, which Jason was happy to see. But he says some have questioned why this was a priority without enforcement.

Phillip: Infrastructure can help passively enforce these limitations, as of right now we are reliant on policing for areas that are still built for 25 mph or above. There is a grant to give overtime pay to a police officer working extra hours to do parking enforcement. Having a 20 MPH speed limit justifies designing to 20 and can help with getting grant money.

Phillip said if not already present the 20 is plenty webpage could be updated to also explain how the designation helps grant money. Jason checked and did not see reference to anything about grant money.

<https://burlingtonvt.gov/892/20-is-Plenty>

Bob wondered if cameras could be used for enforcement. Phillip says it's potentially viable.

Bob Leidy brought up the idea of partnering/meeting with neighboring Walk/Bike groups in Colchester, Winooski and South Burlington.

2. Interstate 89 Bike/Pedestrian Bridge Connections

Target date for construction of bridge is 2026

Phillip - not currently a project for planning connections to the bridge. It is unclear where the connections will be. It seems like the bridge will end in the Staples parking lot but where a path will go from there is unclear.

Discussion on how to connect to South Burlington Rec path. Not under our control but in discussions with SBVT it should be confirmed what the connection points into Burlington will be. SBTV rec path into UVM would be good. There is already an RRFB across Spear Street. Also should be a more direct connection to UVM/Hospital.

The hope is to get a work plan with CCRPC on this project. Want to try this with "scenario-based planning". They've discussed how this will scale with increasing housing stock.

Phillip took a note to follow up with South Burlington.

3. Battery Street Short-Term Plan

For the long term plan, the "preferred alternative" selected by the advisory committee is two-way bike lanes on the west side of the road aka option 2.

The final infrastructure will be prohibitively expensive in the present, so they are investigating interim solutions. This will enable them to do analysis on the queues and use. The current take is that paint and bollards will not be sufficient for the dedicated bike lanes, so probably something more substantial like jersey barriers.

Effectively the proposal is to reduce the amount of lanes from 4 to one lane in each direction to be used for through traffic and a dedicated lane in the center for turning when it is necessary.

DPW is focused on how to implement it at this point, not scoping studies and such. *I.E.* We are approaching the engineering phase of the project. Julia Ursaki (DPW) is talented at signaling.

There was a clarifying question on if this needs to go to the voters, the answer is no. Another clarifying question, how long do we think this will take to complete the full construction. The guess is around 7 years until the full construction is complete, but it could be faster and slower depending on political will and funding. Also hopefully the interim plan can be implemented faster than that to get something functional.

Question around how to help accelerate this project. It's just a matter of emailing city councilors and making sure your voice is heard during a public forum at city council or committee meetings.

Question on how long it'll take the short-term plan to be put into effect, especially if it just involves throwing some cones down. The answer is that even if the work is straightforward there still needs to be thoughtful analysis on where it is put down and what mechanism can be put into place to make it safer.

Question on how it connects to the railyard enterprise project. "It's in a liminal phase right now". It seems as if the railroad is very much against the bike facilities on the west side, so those facilities will need to swap sides to connect with the Battery St bike lanes. The project team is trying to determine whether the project will go forward at all, depending on the rail company's cooperation.

Discussion around how to connect to the waterfront between College and North Street. The bank is very steep. A slide would be fun. A funicular or ski lift was also suggested. A connection across from Cherry would be close to hotels but has a steep slope. Bank once connected down to the waterfront. Existing "goat" paths from large sidewalk near Main Street Landing down a stone road to parking lot near FOAM. Question of who owns the land - public vs private and how that area could be made an accessible connector. Julia from DPW is working on how to connect pedestrians to the waterfront.

4. Local Motion Legislative Priorities 2025

See attached slides

Collaboration with the Transportation for Vermonters Coalition (T4VT)

Vermont is updating the Vermont State Standards (including how big road/bike lane/sidewalk should be based on uses and more) last one 1997, new standards expected ~2026

2024 progress:

Fixed the state "pedestrian" definition. Manual wheelchair users were not included in the previous definition.

Removed the sidewalk **use** requirement so pedestrians can walk in road even when a sidewalk is present.

Made 4 feet of clearance necessary for passing a bike

2025 priorities

- Transit funding is the primary effort that Local Motion will support this year; one idea is that an extra \$10 on registration fees would fill the gap.
- Make the Idaho Stop legal - allowing cyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs. Research suggests no impact on safety; most cyclists do this already.
- Make it legal for cyclists to cross by using leading pedestrian interval even when light is red. This is already legal in Burlington
- Funding for e-bike incentives. Old program was giving \$400-800 to lower-income Vermonters, but the program only has \$70K and it ran out. There is a sentiment in VTrans that e-bikes don't reduce emissions
 - **Note that Burlington Electric also has a \$300 rebate for e-bikes for all income levels**

- Boost Bike & Pedestrian Grant Program Funding. Funding ~\$7M in projects annually, but the demand is much higher. Proposing ~\$12M
- Sustainable Transportation Plan. Vermont/VTrans does not currently have a target for reducing VMT (vehicle miles traveled)
 - A good question on this, are any states doing well on this? Colorado
- Dedicated Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Funding

Phillip stated that “Motorist Must Give X(4) Ft Clearance” signs will go up but with limited use in areas where they would be most effective. Try not to “oversign”. Bob Leidy noted excessive signs at the Shelburne Street roundabout.

Asked about trying for “Red as Stop” rules for bicyclists, Jonathan said may also try for that but they don’t consider it as high priority as “stop as yield”

Comment: Stop signs on the greenway are bad. Cars stop anyway.

- Phillip: Current issue is sightlines

Comment: Self-driving cars have an infrared mechanism that keeps an eye on pedestrians. This could be something that is more common on cars.

Question: Does updating the Vermont State Standards involve any adjustment to the fire code requirement for road size? The answer is it is a separate initiative.

Phillip mentioned Miovision on new signals on Champlain Parkway that detect pedestrians and people biking. Data could be pulled for “usage” statistics but unsure of process at this point.