

Burlington Walk Bike Council (BWBC)

February 7th, 2023 Meeting Notes

The monthly meeting took place 5:30- 7:00 pm via Zoom and at the DPW Office.

In-Person Attendees: Erik Brotz, Jak Tiano, Gordon Dragoon, Bob Leidy, Julia Ursaki (DPW)

Online Attendees: Cole Dube, Serril Flash, David Cawley, Jonathon Weber (Local Motion), Jason Stuffie, Scott Luria

1. Introductions, Announcements, Updates and Public Comments

Started with introductions from everyone.

- Said our thanks for Faith, she was on the coordinating committee for 4 years.
- Bob let us know that the Main Street project has broken ground.
- Gordon gave thanks to Burlington/Winooski in general for their active transit advocacy.
- David asked about how they are determining certain aspects of the bridge will cost too much ahead of time. Bids haven't gone in yet and folks are already nervous
 - Erik reported that during a meeting with the project team earlier in the week, the Winooski representative was indicating that this project is already a stretch for them financially and that they are not supportive of making it even more expensive. But it's also true that they don't know what the cost will actually be.
 - Jason reported that during that meeting he asked for and was promised an estimate of the incremental cost of adding width to the bridge. Agrees that we should not skimp on walk-bike because of first cost for a 100 year bridge.
- Serrill wants to see a roundabout on the Burlington side, thinks that if there is a house in the way perhaps they should be bought out
 - Jason: a roundabout was investigated in earlier stages and it was decided at the time that it wasn't viable. The planners believe that traffic volumes require a 2-lane roundabout. Agrees a 1-lane roundabout would be good
 - We went back to the 2-lane bridge 1 lane roundabout conversation
 - Bob thinks the models on "capacity" are poorly defined as the Shelburne Rd. roundabout near his home is considered "at capacity" but does not feel close to capacity at all
 - Erik clarified that the focus for this meeting is on the bridge and that if desired we could have a separate later conversation about the intersection . Planning for the bridge is on a faster timeline than the intersection.
- Jonathon: Effectively we have established that all the decision-makers on the project agree that the bridge needs to be 4 lanes. It is effectively a decision made at this point and planners are working around that decision. The project team would only reconsider that at the direction of the City Councils.
- Question: why isn't the bridge being built to "Great Streets" standards?

- Julia: those standards currently only pertain to Burlington's downtown. It could be expanded in the future, but that's a *maybe* as the existing funding is because of the TIF districts. Other streets do not have the same level of design standards, but we do use Complete Streets standards.

2. Winooski Bridge Replacement Design Project Comments

- Erik provided an overview of the current draft design:
 - 4 motorized traffic lanes at 11' wide each, plus 2' buffers at each side for a total curb to curb distance of 48
 - Vertical barriers between motorized lanes and 12' shared use paths on each side for walking and biking.
- Erik reported that members of the coordinating committee met with the project team on Monday to present some suggested changes and get feedback. Jak has drafted a memo to the planners saying that the current paths are inadequate for walking/biking. We want bikers to be able to maintain existing speed and walkers to not have to worry about being clipped by bikes. The currently proposed 12' is far from optimal.
 - Erik thinks the existing proposal is still an improvement over what we currently have, but wants to make it better
 - Members of the project team have expressed concern about reducing the width of the motorized section because of snow removal and also having enough room to maintain 2 lanes of traffic during future repaving.
- Discussed some suggested alternatives to the existing draft design
- 1st proposal - Reduce the size of the roads to 10.5' each, with 2' buffers for 46' total. On west side, 6' sidewalk and 10' 2-way bike path connecting to Riverside path; on east side, 5' sidewalk and 5' 1-way bike lane going north.
 - This option was not considered feasible with a curved bridge alignment because 11' is considered the minimum for a curved road
 - Bike lane on the east side would only be separated with paint. The project team indicated that a recessed 5' lane was too narrow for sidewalk plows.
 - Jonathon met with members of the Winooski Alliance for Active Transportation and they didn't love the idea
- 2nd proposal - As above, but the east side is a 10' shared use path instead of a 1-way bike lane going north
 - Again probably only feasible with a straight bridge alignment
- General comments
 - David says that 10.5' might be a non-starter
 - Erik: the project team was not totally opposed to 10.5' lanes with a straight alignment so it's still worth proposing
 - David asked about the bike path that might go underneath the road for bikes (he was speaking to a path on the Burlington side)
 - Erik: an underpass on the Burlington side may be possible with a curved alignment of the bridge but not with a straight alignment. The team has apparently not explored it much yet.

- Jason thinks that snow clearing should still be viable if DPW would invest in the machinery.
- What if there is no path on the east side? Several people expressed concern with this idea.
- Can we heat the bridge?
 - Answer is probably no; expensive and lots of energy use
- Jak mentioned that he thinks that walk/bike usage on the east side will be lower but not sure whether that's true or by how much
- Bob passed on that some older advocates would prefer having a dedicated walking path and that currently biking on the bridge is impossible
- David thinks that options are improved with the under-bridge on the Burlington side. As a biker he'd be willing to take that compromise
- Jason suggests that we ask them to design a bridge that is easily reconfigurable, as we are currently arguing over inches and feet. Used the example of the moving of the Jersey barriers on some states' highways. Maybe flexibility should be key
- Jonathon spoke to the underpasses. They have the potential to be helpful, but he sees an issue with just having the sidewalk on the east side. Folks will probably not like the idea of going around and will almost certainly bike on the east side. The project team mentioned that the underpass might just connect with the parking lot, making it less likely to be used. The underpass on the Winooski side also involves a long detour.
- Conversation on how to slow bikers down coming down Colchester Avenue.
 - Speed bumps are probably out because they aren't ADA compliant
- Erik brought us back, do we think that 10' is enough for a mixed-use path
 - Jonathon does think that 10' is a bit tight, but that walkers/bikers are decent at negotiating things
 - Folks are frustrated, no good solutions seem apparent
- With some discussion, agreed to several recommendations to include in a letter to the project team
- Final decisions
 - Present our ideal plan
 - 2 lanes motorized traffic
 - Single lane roundabout at CoBaRi intersection on Burlington side
 - 6' sidewalk and 10' 2-way bike lane on each side
 - If 4-lane configuration is kept, then propose adjusting the motorized width and total width as needed to still have 6' sidewalk and 10' 2-way bike lane on each side
 - If the 4-lane configuration is kept AND the total bridge width cannot be increased then
 - If the bridge is straight
 - Follow proposal #2 above, with 10.5' motorized lanes, 16' separated walk and bike on west side, and 10' shared use path on the east side

- On the west side, differentiate bike and walk portions with different grades, or removable bollards, or at least different surface treatments
- If total space for walking and biking is limited to the current 24' then keep the proposed 12' shared use paths on each side.
- If the bridge is curved
 - If there is an easily accessible underpass on each side then propose 16' separated walk and bike on west side, and 8' sidewalk on the east side
 - This is **only** if the underpass on the Burlington side is guaranteed and if the access to both underpasses is directly from the path on each side and does not require a significant detour
 - If there is not an easily accessible underpass and if total space for walking and biking is limited to the current 24' then keep the proposed 12' shared use paths on each side.
- Those present agreed that the BWBC coordinating committee can finalize the proposal and letter for submission to the project team