

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, April 1, 2020 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

Members Present: Eric Papetti (Chair), Michael Williamson, Jayne O'Leary, Josh Gillis, Alexandra Maranto, Michael Jaros, Matt Caruso, Joe O'Neil, John Wathne, Colleen Downie

Members Absent: Kylie Sullivan

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Papetti calls the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Devine provides an overview of protocol for the remote meeting format and guidelines for public comment.

Joe Conley says he is interested in the Fort Ave. bike path and the potential rumble strip to be installed. The item is not on the agenda, but Devine advises Conley to contact him directly.

Ward Six Councilor Meg Riccardi says she may have comments on bike share and Harmony Grove Road and North Street projects.

COVID-19 Update

Devine reports that City buildings are closed to the public, but Devine and many other staff remain accessible as they work remotely. Capital construction projects are moving forward provided that workers can take appropriate precautions. No City or state directives are halting this work so far.

Devine says that there have been incidents of reckless driving with people taking advantage of the unusually open roads. He says Lt. Tucker of the Salem Police says this hasn't been flagged as a widespread problem and is so far being dealt with case by case.

Devine notes that Papetti expressed interest in how biking may be taking on a different role during the pandemic. Papetti asks how Committee members have been using bikes and whether there are any issues with social distancing with it. He reports that he had to get off a bike path because there were too many people present.

Jaros said he was biking to work before the University shut down and he hasn't been biking since then. Williamson said the Fort Ave. bike lanes are helping to give people the space to keep away from each other. Wathne remarks that he hasn't been biking because he is concerned about safety. His concern is that there is limited hospital capacity for anyone injured while biking. O'Leary has been only biking on the trails. Her neighbor was hit by a reckless driver, with no injuries. She says she normally isn't a road bicyclist, but she is even more apprehensive now.

Wathne says he found himself riding fast when the roads were first clear. His instinct as an urban cyclist is to accelerate whenever there is a clear road, so he has had to adapt to these clearer roads and ride at a more reasonable pace. Caruso says he bikes to a nearby pharmacy to pick up medication for a family member, but he hasn't biked much beyond that.

Papetti suggests collecting speed data on some of the entrance corridors. Devine says that such data collection would not be useful for applying to normal circumstances. Papetti suggests it would still be helpful to get the data on what is really going on traffic wise. He is concerned in light of the recent crash involving a family that was riding in Ipswich. Devine will consult with the Traffic & Parking staff on this matter. Papetti says the Traffic & Parking Commission will discuss potential traffic restrictions to provide more pedestrian space at its upcoming meeting.

Bike and Scooter Share

Devine reports that Zagster has taken the bikes and scooters offline. The scooters are off the streets and the bikes are locked at the docks and cannot be accessed through the app. Devine displays the bike share data dashboard and provides an overview of recent ridership compared to the previous year.

Jaros asks why the bikes are kept at the docks. Devine replies that riders received a message from Zagster announcing the shutdown and the app will say the same and prevent the start of a ride. It appears that much of the Zagster staff has been furloughed, so there is likely simply not the staff available to take the bikes in.

Riccardi asks what date the Bike Share was suspended. Devine states that this occurred Thursday evening. The scooters came offline a few days before that. Papetti notes that he received the email announcement from Zagster on March 26. Downie says she tried to take out a bike on March 21, and it wouldn't work.

Bicycle Benefits Rollout

Devine says that this is not a priority for local businesses during the pandemic, so there is no progress to report at this time.

Collective Procurement for North Shore Micromobility Program

Devine states that the RFP was issued and the submittal deadline was extended two weeks to April 21 in response to requests from Bike Share companies.

North Street

Devine reports that the planned robust public process for this project cannot happen the way the City would like at this time. Staff are looking at online alternatives for outreach and will give that some additional thought over the next couple weeks. In the meantime, the City has collected additional parking utilization data and is looking at potential locations for adding crosswalks. In addition, the City is corresponding with the MBTA about options to consolidate bus stops.

Caruso asks about the parking data. Devine says they collected limited data during the summer pop-up bike lanes. Since then, Toole Design Group and City staff collected additional data along the whole corridor, block by block, to inventory total spaces (legal and illegal) and actual number of parked cars at several times during a typical week. This was done before the traffic slowdown resulting from the pandemic. The data gives us a clear idea of where there parking demand is and highlights where we need to consider the parking the most in designing the project.

Caruso wonders if seasonal parking demand is only downtown. Devine says staff heard anecdotally from residents that tourists park on North Street on the end near downtown to avoid paying for parking. The data include plate numbers to track these patterns. Papetti suggests utilization data collected now, when everyone, in theory, is home, would be informative. Riccardi says she recognizes the challenging timing and agrees that public input is critical. She hopes that we can begin to collect some feedback with our new remote tools. She also agrees that it would be informative to collect current parking utilization data.

Bridge Street MassWorks Project

Devine states that the construction bids came in over budget. Wathne asks how the bids compare to the budget. Devine will find the information and share with the group by email. Devine will also share any forthcoming proposal for changing the scope or allocation additional funding.

Canal Street Path, Phase II

Devine has no update. Papetti notes that any MBTA capital work needed to facilitate this work may be suspended as a result of the pandemic.

Harmony Grove Road Feasibility Study: Representative Needed for Working Group

Devine states that Weston & Sampson has begun collecting existing conditions data and the City is putting a working group together. Colleen Downie volunteers to represent the Bicycling Advisory Committee on the Working Group.

Harbor Connector (Szetela Lane) Path

Devine reports that work on the path continues. The City continues to look at additional improvements beyond the current project plants. This may include additional bumpouts at the crossings and lighting.

Boston Street Reconstruction

Devine states that the project is being evaluated through the TIP process. How it looks this year is uncertain, but priorities and competition change year to year. Either way, construction would be years away. Papetti suggests that Devine have more specific details about where the project is in the process so that the Committee members know how best to advocate for the project.

Derby Street Improvements

Devine says that another public meeting of some type had been planned, but it can't be in person now. There are also constraints on the budget and Devine will report back to the group about what this means for the scope or schedule.

Miscellaneous

Devine remarks that Michael Williamson met with Seth Lattrell, the City's Harbor Planner, to discuss the upcoming Harbor Planning Process for the vacant land at the Power Plant site and how to advocate for multimodal connectivity. The process has been initiated and may take 18 months. As it ramps up, there will be monthly public Harbor Planning Committee meetings and three or so additional public events. The process sets parameters for the public accommodations that would be required to be part of any development at the site.

Papetti requests the revised Ferris Junkyard redevelopment be on the next meeting agenda. He would also like to see the comments that the Committee made on the last iteration. Williamson asks what is changing. Devine says the project has been changed to remove a piece of land whose ownership was in dispute.

Meeting Minutes

Wathe motions to approve the March 4, 2020 minutes, Jaros seconds, and all vote in favor.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourns at 7:30 p.m.

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