

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling Advisory Committee

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting

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

Members Absent: Kylie Sullivan, Michael Williamson, Michael Jaros, Joe O'Neil

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Papetti calls the meeting to order.

Public Comment

Papetti open the meeting to public comments and there are none.

Bike and Scooter Share

Devine reports that the Bike and Scooter shares remain on pause. The City had planned to execute an interim contract with Zagster for the period from May to September, which would be the gap in service between the expiration of Zagster's current contract and the anticipated time of a new North Shore regional system contract to start. However, with all the uncertainty about whether the system could operate now, the City will not execute the interim contract. To the City's surprise, Zagster did not submit a proposal for the North Shore regional system. Wathne asks if the business model just didn't work. Devine says these small city bike shares were somewhat experimental already with an uncertain future even before the pandemic. No one know if the companies would last or consolidate. The pandemic has been a big stress on the industry. Wathne asks if Zagster is pursuing scooters, and Devine says not at this time.

Devine states that there were only two proposals in response to MAPC's North Shore micormobility RFP. Caruso asks when these proposals came in, and Devine responds that it was April 21. Caruso wonders if this pandemic is making all the operators hesitant. Devine says MAPC gave operators additional time to respond as the pandemic happened. And there were already only a limited number of companies still willing to operate a bike share before the pandemic.

Papetti notes that bigger city bike shares are going full steam ahead. He hopes that we can take another shot at this and make it work. Devine says he is concerned that Salem's unique tourism season that extends into that fall is going to be very limited this year and that is what normally makes Salem attractive for these operators.

Downie asks how far BlueBike goes. Papetti says they recently executed a contract with Everett, and possibly Chelsea too. Downie thinks it is worth looking at what the threshold is for a larger bikeshare to come to a smaller place like Salem. Papetti says BlueBike's operator has a semi-dockless model like ours. Gillis asked who decided to pause the bike share. Devine states that Zagster decide to shut down. But we don't know if the City would have made that decision if Zagster didn't.

Papetti asks what the next steps are. Devine says MAPC is convening a selection committee with representatives from North Shore municipalities. Dave Kucharsky or Nick Downing will represent Salem on the committee. If the proposals meet the minimum requirements stated in the RFP and one of them ranks higher, the committee will consider whether to execute a contract with the operator. But if neither are acceptable or the circumstances don't support a bike share, we may hold off altogether until the right time. Devine will share the two proposals with the Bike Committee and pass on any comments to the selection committee.

Bicycle Benefits Rollout

Devine says there is nothing to report on this item at this time.

North Street

Devine reports that said there had been data collection and conversations with MBTA, and the City is still looking at conducting some kind of online public outreach. That will be an opportunity for the Bike Committee and other advocates to participate.

Papetti suggests demonstration projects as outreach for this and other projects to allow people to see examples of various types of bike infrastructure and provide feedback. Wathne thinks this is a clever idea to basically do mockups. Downie thinks it is a good chance for people to make general observations of how things are used. Wathne wonders if this could be done with temporary paint.

Catherine Seiferth of 18 Buffum Street expresses support for improvements on North Street and would like to help.

Bridge Street MassWorks Project

Devine remarks that there are proposed changes to reduce the scope after bids came in higher than the available budget. This includes shifting the separated path on the Community Life Center side of Bridge Street to just a striped lane. The full, two-way, protected bike lane would remain on the other side. The element that is being removed could remain as an alternative if rebidding happens to lead to lower prices overall. Papetti asks if the project has been rebid yet. Devine says that it isn't back out yet and there is some design work that needs to be done first to modify the construction documents.

Canal Street Path, Phase II

Devine reports that the City and the MBTA/Keolis are coordinating the work to remove a rail spur and relocate utilities to allow construction of the path where it runs adjacent to the rail.

Harmony Grove Road Feasibility Study

Downie had volunteered to represent the Bike Committee on the Working Group. Devine reports that he had to hand over project management duties to Nick Downing, who will be scheduling the first Working Group meeting. It is a months-long project. Weston & Sampson expects to be done in the fall, but it could take up to the whole calendar year. Weston & Sampson has collected existing condition information including ownership, structures, and grading, and is looking at the complicated permitting for work next to a waterway. They also initiated contact with the MBTA for a path next to their rail line. Wathne asks who owns the rail. Devine says the MBTA owns in and PanAm leases and operates it. When the Salem Oil & Grease project obtained a permit to cross the line, the permit was from the MBTA.

Harbor Connector (Szetela Lane) Path

Devine reports that the project is progressing. The \$300,000 grant for the project is split over two fiscal years, which change over July 1, 2020. He is currently in the process of requesting that the second half of the funding be released early, since construction is moving right along.

Boston Street Reconstruction

Devine states that the project has not yet been incorporated into the 2021-2025 state capital plan, but the City is moving ahead with a 25% design to be ready for consideration next year. But best case, the full reconstruction project would be several years out. So Devine suggests that the Committee consider whether they would like to see interim striped bike lanes that could serve us for 4 or 5 years.

Caruso suggests laying down some lines to show what is coming and it could result in getting feedback from the public. Papetti says that when you consider the construction period, it is quite a long time before the project would be done and thinks this warrants doing something in the interim. Gillis says this road is an important connection in a fragmented network. The width of the road provides space for lanes.

Derby Street Improvements

Document reviewed: *Memorandum from David Knowlton, P.E., City Engineer / DPS Director, to Mayor Driscoll RE Phase I Derby Street Corridor Improvements, Response to Design Comments and Plans for Bidding.*

Devine states that he had shared an update from the City Engineer with the group. Like with Bridge Street, the project is limited by the funding available. So the City is reducing the scope to a short length of street that can be done now from Hardy to Blaney Street, removing street furniture and plantings that could be installed in a future phase. The document Devine circulated includes responses to comments from the Bike Committee, Traffic & Parking Commission, and the general public.

Papetti states that he commends the level of detail and transparency the City Engineer and his team has provided. However, he is disappointed in the substance of the comments and the decisions. He would like the team to contact City Engineers in other municipalities that have implemented contraflow lanes and discuss their decision process. The arguments again contraflow in Salem are similar to the arguments he heard ten years ago in Somerville before they came around and implemented them in the City.

Gillis wonders whether Somerville has examples of a contraflow lane with many intersecting side streets like this. Papetti says it depends on details such as speed and volume. These side streets are narrow and low speed. Gillis says he rides this road frequently and agrees that the traffic from the side streets is not intense. Gillis asks whether the Fort Ave. bike lanes will still end up with physical separators. Devine says the temporary orange cones were there to guide people through the changing traffic pattern. A small number might remain at key places. Gillis says the lanes are a very good amenity. Caruso asks when the power plant fencing came down. Devine and Papetti do not have that information. He says it makes the area feel much more open.

Caruso wonders whether the Committee provided the project team any research beyond its comments. Papetti provided examples of contraflow lanes in similar settings in the region. Papetti asks what the project schedule is. Devine will follow up with that information. Papetti asks Devine to convey the Committee's thanks for the detailed response but also that the Committee wishes to have additional follow up and details.

Discussion of Bicycling and COVID-19 Response

Wathne states that it is harder to get around. Bikes and cars are the safer ways to get around now. Public transportation is challenged. Devine says he saw that speeding violations were up statewide. In addition, the fatality rate had increased. Papetti says many places are taking bold action to implement bike facilities faster than expected. People may be unwilling to use public transportation as we open up and bikes can be a good option. Papetti suggests advocating for these things with your elected officials. Wathne is concerned that if we temporarily are moving away from transit that we will become more auto dependent. Papetti says action should be taken now before cars come back.

Update on Ferris Junkyard Redevelopment

Document reviewed: *Juniper Point Investment Co., LLC, 16-18-20R Franklin St, Salem, MA, dated 3-12-2020.*

Devine states that a revised project design is before the Planning Board and may be voted on tomorrow night. He screenshares the plan showing the revisions overlaid on the earlier plan. The 10'-wide stonedust riverfront path remains. The change is to remove the development from two parcels that the developer is conceding belong to the City after previously disputing their ownership. The developer still proposes to construct the pathway through one of these parcels to connect to Furlong Park. Papetti thinks the stabilized surface may be appropriate at this location, but it is not great with snow. Papetti is unable to attend the Planning Board meeting. But he still supports having a wider path. The 10' path is a minimum required by law for Chapter 91.

Meeting Minutes

Wathne motions to approve the April 1, 2020 minutes, Downie seconds, and all vote in favor.

Adjourn

Caruso motions to adjourn at 7:48 p.m., Wathne seconds, and all vote in favor.

Approved by the Bicycling Advisory Committee on July 1, 2020