

Meeting Minutes

Salem Bicycling & Shared Path Advisory Committee

Wednesday, November 2, 2022 | 6:30 p.m.

98 Washington Street, First Floor Medium Conference Room
and via remote participation

Members Present: John Wathne (Chair), Cat Seiferth, Matt Caruso, Michael Jaros, Connor Ryan, Walter Morrell, Josh Gillis, Alex Maranto, Eric Papetti

Members Absent: Annie Wolf, Colleen Downie

Also Present: Tom Devine, Senior Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Wathne called the meeting to order.

Welcome New Members

New members Walter Morrell and Cat Seiferth introduce themselves to the Committee. Devine states that another new member, Annie Wolf, is unavailable tonight but plans to attend next month.

Public Comment

Wathne opens the meeting to public comment.

Vance Perry of Marblehead introduces himself. He is on the MassBike Board of Directors and wishes to see what the Salem Committee is working on and discuss opportunities for collaboration.

Staff Update

Devine asks Wathne to recap his meeting with Traffic & Parking Director Dave Kucharsky. Wathne says he was amazed at all that the City is working on. He requested producing an interactive map to track progress implementing the 2018 Bicycle Master plan and to show the network being built out. Devine says staff will develop this in the coming months.

Wathne reports that Councilor Jeff Cohen is leading development of bike parking zoning requirements. The Council tabled the matter when Papetti and other were concerned it was not being addressed adequately in an early ordinance. Cohen has called a meeting with Wathne and Papetti to work on this.

Josh Nagle of 35 Washington Square says that as someone who bikes with children he wishes to emphasize the need for parking for bikes with cargo.

Bluebikes Bikeshare Program Data, Promotion, and Expansion

Document reviewed: Salem Bluebikes Data through 10/31/2022

Devine summarizes Salem's history with bikeshare for the new members and presents ridership data through Halloween. Ridership spiked in September and October. The system was expanded to 14 stations in September and one more is coming shortly. In October Salem performed better than the "peers" of Everett, Chelsea, and Revere, but remains behind the systemwide high ridership. Downtown and Salem State stations have the highest ridership. Stations that continue to have low ridership may be relocated in the future.

Caruso asks if there is a person dedicated to redistributing bikes throughout the city. Devine says Bluebikes is rebalancing bikes in Salem multiple times per week, in contrast to constant rebalancing in the busier core of the system. Caruso also asks for an update on the prospect of a Vinnin Square station. Devine says that the current expansion's final station will be added this week to North Street. And the City secured grant funding for three more stations. One of those will be in Vinnin Square in light of advocacy from both this Committee and Salem State University. Devine says this will result in a system of 18 stations and he does not think the City could sustain a system any bigger than that.

Gillis asks if the City tracks when stations are out of bikes. Devine says it is tracked as "rideability" where stations are neither full nor empty, so that someone can take or dock a bike at a station. The contract requires that stations be "rideable" in that sense about 90% of the time. There is also specific data available tracking when each station is full or empty and for how long. The group discusses implications of the effectiveness of rebalancing on ridership.

Devine reports that the City offered a free month of membership to Salem residents during October.

North Street Implementation Update, Volunteer Monitoring Opportunity, and Group Ride

Devine reports that green paint, flexposts, and signage are still coming, but the white lines are down and the project is effectively implemented. Gillis reports there is some improper parking. Devine reveals that the City is going to ease into enforcement, considering this is a change. The City is beginning enforcement this week, but starting with warnings only before issuing actual fines.

The group discusses the dialogue on social media and elsewhere in response to the project's implementation. Caruso says he believes there is naturally a lot of conversation when something new is done. He also saw a photo circulating of a car that was clipped. Papetti says he sees drivers pulling up behind parked cars and has observed cones being placed to make the new traffic pattern clear. Seiferth says she rides the route a lot of has heard strong support from neighbors and businesses. She heard objections earlier and encouraged people to contact the City. Papetti thanks the City for this project.

Devine states that the City seeks volunteers to collect ridership data on the corridor. Wathne noticed what looks like a bike counter in the pavement on the Ayube Bridge Street Bypass and wonders is something like that could work on North Street. Devine will follow up by email regarding the monitoring.

Devine remarks that the Committee had discussed earlier the idea of hosting a group ride on North Street. Downie wonders if the group would be interested once the Bluebikes station is deployed, perhaps in the spring, in having the ride. Members are interested in doing this. Caruso suggests doing this early in the spring, riding not just on North Street, and using it as an opportunity to distribute material for Bluebikes. Cat suggests considering collaborating with the Slow Ride organizers. The Committee will revisit this as spring approaches.

Josh Nagle says that the Salem Bike Party has events the last Friday of each month with a mass of people who ride together.

Update on Fort Lee Bike Trails

Devine follows up on an earlier discussion to provide this update. The City is working to secure funds to plan and design restoration of the historic fort. This will include delineating where bikes are allowed and prohibited. The City is not currently taking action to prohibit riding at the fort aside from limited signage. At the same time, Devine suggests that riders should avoid the fort, since it is an historic asset that will be improved in the future with the expectation that it will gain in visibility and appreciation. Wathne says he would like there to be discussion with the Committee when work advances on the fort and would welcome the Preservation Planner to attend a Committee meeting.

Other Business

Vance Perry says he encourages the Committee to partner with MassBike and looks forward to crosspollination among communities. MassBike is a statewide nonprofit for education and safety. They are working with Worcester to roll out 100 e-bikes and track the program. They are looking for volunteers to hand out bike lights. The organization is funded through memberships, donations, and grants.

7/6/2022 Meeting Minutes

Gillis motions, Jaros seconds, and all vote in favor to approve the 7/6/2022 minutes.

Adjourn

Gillis motions, Jaros seconds, and all vote in favor to adjourn at 7:05 P.M.

Approved by the Bicycling & Shared Path Advisory Committee on 3/1/2023.