

CITY OF AUSTIN
BICYCLE ADVISORY COUNCIL (BAC)
MEETING SUMMARY

One Texas Center, 8th Floor Large Conference Room
505 Barton Springs Road
July 15, 2014
6:00 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS:

Christopher Stanton - BAC Vice Chair
Sophia Benner – BAC
Tommy Eden – BAC
Eileen Nehme – BAC

David Orr – BAC
Tom Thayer – BAC
Pete Wall – Alt BAC

Tom Wald – Alt BAC
Alison Kaplan – Alt BAC
Noni Jarnagin – Alt BAC

GUESTS:

Michael Cospers
Toni House
Southanly Outhavong
Eric Anderson

John Woodley
Patrick Jones
Joel Meyer

Stanton Truxillo – UTC
Michael Sledge – PAC
Scott Johnson

STAFF PRESENT:

Aleksiina Chapman
Marissa Monroy

Neil Kopper

Robert Anderson - PAC

1. Introductions – Mr. Stanton begins the meeting with introductions.
2. Review and Approval of June Minutes – **Mr. Thayer moves to approve the minutes with amendments. Ms. Benner seconds. No dissent. Mr. Eden abstains, Ms. Nehme abstains. The minutes are approved.**
3. Items from BAC –

Briefing and Possible Action: Distracted Driving Study Group – Scott Johnson

Mr. Johnson introduces the distracted driving study group. The effort for the group came substantively back in 2007 when the city put together the street smart taskforce. There were two recommendations that were discussed: text messaging while driving and hands-free cell phone use. In 2009, the existing ordinance was passed which covers text messaging while driving.

One of the weaknesses of the current ordinance is the lack of clearly defined wording, and improving the wording is a large part of what the study group is trying to look at so that the ordinance becomes more enforceable. The study group is also looking at which vehicles will be covered. The idea came up to cover pedestrians, but the focus now is to look at motor vehicles but also all two wheeled vehicles including bicycles. None of what is presented has been voted on yet. The next meeting may be as early as next week if not on the 23rd of July. All of the BAC is invited to join. Mr. Stanton asks if the recommendation will have a differentiation will be included between bikes and trucks for levels of risks. Mr. Johnson says that the fines will be graduated from a particular violation. With respect to different vehicles types- that could be a recommendation to the legal department. Mr. Jones asks if there is data to back up the effect of distracted biking or if that is inferred from treating bikes like vehicles. Mr.

Johnson says there is a possibility to ask for more time to look for more research on distracted biking. Mr. Johnson has not seen a study that speaks to distracted biking. Mr. Truxillo asks why the recommendations are not restricted to vehicles in motion. That is because you could be stopped at a stop light or stop sign texting and that would not be a violation otherwise. You would need the vehicle to be in “park” with the engine off before it would be legal to text. Mr. Stanton asks how that would apply to pedicabs and if a pedicabber would be expected to get off and walk to the sidewalk. Mr. Johnson’s person opinion is that if a pedicabber is in a parked zone that it would be okay for them to make a call. Mr. Jarnagin asks about the differentiation for headphone types – over the ear versus ear bud – and what the definition of a headset would be. Mr. Johnson thinks that there could be potential for APD to have trouble differentiating between someone wearing a headset and someone wearing headphones. There has not been agreement within the study group on whether or not headsets and headphones should be addressed in the recommendations. Mr. Orr thinks the existing ordinance is good enough as it only applies to automobiles and that the BAC should take no action. Ms. Benner asks if they would consider simply not including bicycles in the entirety of the ordinance. Mr. Johnson says that all the community members believe that it should be included. Ms. Benner asks if it would be helpful if someone from the BAC went and spoke at the next meeting. Mr. Johnson says yes. Mr. Eden senses that the BAC is generally opposed to including bicycles in this ordinance and that the BAC should take action to state their position similar to what the PAC has passed, specifically to bicycles, and to explain the reasoning behind specific concerns that they BAC has. Mr. Woodley is deaf and wears a hearing aid. This ordinance would prohibit his ability to ride a bicycle. Also, bicyclists frequently use phones mounted to their handlebars to keep track of physical activity. Mr. Woodley also thinks that bicyclists tend to be more aware of their surroundings. Mr. Johnson says that it’s not a given that if the phone were in a slot that that would be a violation. Mr. Wald thinks that a lot of people’s intuition is that there is not a problem with distracted bicycling and that if there is indeed a crisis of people being killed or injured by distracted biking then there needs to be an incredible amount of evidence of this before an ordinance is passed banning it. Mr. Wald would like to see evidence that distracted bicycling kills more people than undistracted driving. The last fatality due to a bicyclist was 10 years ago. Mr. Johnson believes that there is equity in having things apply to all vehicles. Mr. Wald would be okay including requesting further study and a report back. Ms. Kaplan thinks that legislation would hurt cyclists. Mr. Stanton asks if there is a motion on the table. Mr. Orr asks if we could say the existing ordinance is good enough. Mr. Anderson says that APD doesn’t enforce this ordinance because it’s currently unenforceable as written. It’s written too narrow that you can’t tell what the person is doing on their phone.

Ms. Benner moves that:

The BAC recommends the removal of bicyclists from the proposed distracted driving ordinance because the inclusion of bicyclists in a proposed distracted driving ordinance creates a false equivalency of the dangers of driving a motor vehicle versus a bicycle, distracted or not. The BAC recommends considering the dangers of distracted bicycling, if deemed necessary, in a separate discussion. Mr. Orr seconds the motion. No dissent. No abstentions. Motion passes unanimously.

Briefing and Possible Action: Bergstrom Expressway Update (US 183 from 183 to HW 71) – Neil Kopper

Mr. Kopper introduces the Bergstrom Expressway project. There are a few reasons why the Bicycle Program is not pushing to include the underpass at the Colorado River, previously brought up last meeting. One is because there is a grade crossing proposed at Montopolis, which will connect to the neighborhood east of 183. There is also a shared use path crossing proposed at Patton Ave for the connection to ABIA. Another reason is because while there are plans for an urban trail east along the

Colorado River, including at this location, construction could be 30 years in the future at which point, we would be tying into a trail of degraded quality. Because the bridge decks are not proposed to move with the Bergstrom Expressway project, the space under the bridges won't be lost and can still be used in the future.

Briefing and Possible Action: Pleasant Valley at Longhorn Dam Update – Neil Kopper

There is a concept that had been created on Pleasant Valley at the bridge which would remove vehicle lanes for bicycle lanes. It had been presented at a Holly Shores Planning meeting when really it deserved a dedicated meeting. The meeting did not go over well and there was a lot of negative community feedback. The concept for a road diet has been dropped and the bike program has been looking at other interim solutions including removing the jersey barriers and narrowing the lanes and creating a shared-use path on one side of the bridge. This discussion is on hold right now until the bike plan is completed, at which point this discussion will be brought back up. Mr. Sledge asks if the interim solution includes bike lanes to get to the bridge. The interim solution would have a north bound bike lane and south bound you would be on the shared use path connecting to the trail. The trail south of the bridge would remain aggregate. Mr. Kopper mentions that the interim concept would also include heavy traffic calming on the bridge. Mr. Stanton asks what a reasonable timeline would be for the interim solution to be implemented. Theoretically it would be possible to accomplish the interim solution by this time next year. Mr. Jarnagin asks about if there is a political aspect about taking away vehicle capacity hindering the possibility of urban rail being passed. Mr. Kopper has no comments.

Mr. Wald moves that:

The BAC recommends prioritizing the implementation of better bicycle facilities on Pleasant Valley in the vicinity of the Longhorn Dam with the possibility of implementation by summer 2015. In the interim period the “Bicycles May Use Full Lane” signs should be reinstalled on the bridge. Mr. Thayer seconds. No opposition. Motion passes unanimously.

4. Items from Staff –

Briefing and Possible Action: La Crosse Parking and Bike Lanes, Notice of Substandard Width – Aleksiiina Chapman

La Crosse is a median divided street with 24 feet on either side of the median. Next to a curb, 10.5' is the narrowest that the bike program and the traffic engineers are comfortable with using for a vehicle travel lane. That leaves 13.5' for a parking lane and a bike lane. In the past we have implemented 8' parking lane and 5.5' bike lane on streets of similar configurations.

Mr. Wald moves that the lane configuration on La Crosse is an acceptable compromise given the constraints. No opposition. Motion passes unanimously.

Briefing and Possible Action: Consideration of removal of Nueces bicycle lane due to Rio Grande cycle track – Neil Kopper

When the Rio Grande cycle track was installed there was an agreement to remove the Nueces bike lane because there would be Rio Grande one block to the west and Guadalupe two blocks to the east as

viable alternatives. Originally, the agreement wasn't to remove the bike lane on Nueces until the cycle track was completed but because the cycle track construction has fallen behind schedule, there is a request to remove the bike lanes between MLK and 24th. Ms. Kaplan asks if there are any way-finding signs planned with the removal of the bike lane that would point cyclists to one of the two parallel routes. Mr. Kopper thinks that way-finding is a larger discussion that needs to be looked at city wide.

Mr. Stanton moves:

The BAC approves the bicycle program's plan to convert the Nueces bike lane to a parking lane and to add shared lane markings between MLK and 24th prior to the previously agreed upon timeline. Ms. Kaplan seconds. No opposition. Motion passes unanimously.

Briefing and Possible Action: Discussion of Guadalupe Cycle Track 1) southbound right turns at 21st and 22nd and 2) southbound approach at MLK – Neil Kopper

Southbound Right Turns:

There is a concern about southbound right turning vehicles across the bike lanes at 22nd and 21st on Guadalupe. Mr. Thayer doesn't think it seems intuitive for motorists to look back for approaching cyclists when they're turning. Mr. Kopper thinks that other countries have warning signs for this movement. Mr. Thayer likes the light-up signs along the LAB. Mr. Wald asks how we determined the turning radius. Mr. Kopper replies that it was made as sharp as possible and planters were placed as close as close to the turn as possible. Mr. Kopper says that in a traditional bike lane if a car is to turn right, there would be zero warning before it turns into you on a bike. In this configuration, a vehicle practically has to make its full turn before there could be a conflict. Mr. Kopper thinks that there would be drainage concerns with a raised bike crossing. Mr. Jarnagin asks if the vehicles are legally bound to yield to the cyclists, and if they are, if the COA bike program can look at putting in signs. Mr. Kopper says that the lit signs are massive and expensive and it might not be realistic to install them. Mr. Eden thinks lit signs might make sense because there are more conflicts along this cycle track than others in the city. On-street legends that say "Caution Bike Lane" could be an option.

Mr. Jarnagin moves that City of Austin Bicycle Program staff investigate options for possible signs at 21st and 22nd to alert motorists to yield to cyclists. Mr. Thayer seconds. No opposition. Motion passes.

MLK and Guadalupe:

Traditionally, when a turn bay opens up, the bicycle path is dashed across the start of the turn bay. This is slightly different because the turn bay starts slightly sooner than when the bike lane crosses. The existing configuration reduces the amount of exposure that cyclists have when crossing the turn lane. Mr. Hollenbeck thinks that the green paint doesn't register much for most people and that the smooth transition for vehicles into the turn lane gives the impression that they have the right-of-way. Mr. Eden suggests that the sidewalk be widened so that the bike lane direction will be more obvious. Mr. Eden has had problems with cars backed up into the right turn bay and perhaps a "Do Not Stop in Bike Lane" sign would be effective. Mr. Kopper says that there are discussions about widening sidewalks in the larger conversations about the drag. Mr. Woodley thinks that the bike lane could be straightened to align with the vehicle travel lanes or else a "Yield to Bikes" sign should be added. Mr. Reeder had an experience where a car thought that he was coming off of the sidewalk. Mr. Jarnagin likes the idea of

straightening the bikeway. Mr. Anderson thinks that the street is too wide there and that a good solution could be a through bike lane where the bike lane continues alongside the right travel lane and where motorists are expected to yield to cyclists. Mr. Anderson thinks experienced bikers ride where the bike lanes are supposed to be anyways.

Briefing and Possible Action: Bicycle Plan Status Update – Neil Kopper

The public information office is editing and improving the language of the existing document. It is planning on going to council on August 28th. Mr. Wald asks if the bike plan implementation has been added to the next bond election. Mr. Kopper does not know. Mr. Orr asks about the planning commission. The bike plan only went to the Planning Commission with only 5 commission members present- the bike plan only got 4 out of 5 votes of approval but because you need to get the majority votes of all of the planning commission members (9 total), whether they are present or not, the bike plan was not approved. The plan is still planned to go to council on August 28th regardless of support from the Planning Commission.

5. Proposed Items for Future Meetings –

6. Announcements/Adjourn –

Mr. Eden believes we need to set up an election committee to prepare for upcoming elections. Ideally, people who are not up for re-election this fall + Volunteers.

Mr. Anderson mentions that some members of the PAC have been talking about a joint project to look at vision zero to look at the overall safety concerns to look under a united vision. Mr. Eden asks what “vision zero” is. Mr. Anderson says that there can be zero tolerance for traffic related fatalities in the transportation system including all modes.

Mr. Jarnagin moves to adjourn. Mr. Thayer seconds. No dissent. Meeting is adjourned.