

Bicycle Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes for December 8, 2008
Submitted by Cynthia Snow

The meeting took place in the Devotion School Lounge at 7:00 P.M.

Present: Mitch Heineman, Harry Margolis, Tommy Vitolo, John Dempsey, Don McNamara, Cynthia Snow, Peter Furth

Public: Sam Comerchero, Rebecca Albrecht, Jackie Douglas, Chris Scoville

The minutes from the November meeting were reviewed and accepted with minor changes

Introductions and Welcome

Report on Transportation Board Meeting – Furth and Vitolo

- Bicycle network plan was not on the agenda because Mr. Kirrane wants DPW to review it and tighten cost estimates before plan is submitted to the Selectmen. There was concern that delay will miss inclusion of bike budget in this year's budget cycle.
- **Carlton Street:** The committee is extremely pleased to see so many improvements proposed in DPW's plan that promote bicycle safety. The committee also understands the need to minimize the impact of parking loss out of concern for the convenience of residents and the vitality of the St Mary's commercial area. The committee offers the following recommendations.
 1. Between Monmouth and Beacon Street, the committee maintains the importance of offsetting the centerline so that there can be a bike lane northbound. The desired behavior there is for northbound bikes to bypass the queue of cars waiting at the Beacon Street light. The markings should promote this desired behavior by shifting the northbound lane away from the curb and leaving space for bikes to pass. Given the low speeds there, a bike lane as narrow as 3.5 ft (42 inches) will serve the purpose of enabling cyclists to bypass the queue. Given the very low number of trucks using this street and the low speeds in this section, travel lanes as narrow as 9 ft can be used, consistent with national research showing no loss of safety on urban arterials with 9-10 ft lanes as compared with 11-12 ft lanes.

In the same block, offsetting the centerline is also important for the southbound direction. With a lane 11.5 ft wide (like the existing condition), expected lane-sharing behavior is ambiguous – some motorists will think that bikes should squeeze over to let them pass, while others will think it's too narrow to pass a bike unless the opposing lane is empty. Sharrows will not eliminate this ambiguity and the associated stress the current lane width creates for both bicyclists and motorists. Unless the lane can be made wide enough for genuine lane sharing (13 ft), it's better that it be so narrow (9 to 10 ft) that it becomes clear to all that in order to pass a bicycle, a car will have to encroach on the opposing lane.

2. Colchester Street becomes wider as it gets closer to Chapel. Where it is wide enough, we prefer that a bike lane be marked in both directions; that will make it easier for cars to pass bikes safely. The northbound bike lane can vary from 4 to 5 ft (and in the sharp curve, where there is extra pavement, it might even be 6 ft); the southbound lane can be 4 ft wide.
3. On both the southbound and northbound approaches to Beacon Street, we recommend that the stop line be set back at least 12 ft from the crosswalk and that a bike box be provided. Coloring the bike box here as well as at Longwood is optional (we know that color tends to be expensive). In addition to the usual benefits of a bike box, a bike box here will provide a means for bicyclists on Beacon Street to make a 2-stage left turn onto Carlton Street: first, they cross Carlton Street, staying to the right; then they wait in the bike box; then, when Carlton gets the green, they cross Beacon. Two bike routes meet

at the intersection of Beacon and Carlton, and in the future we hope to erect destination signs for bicyclists such as “this way to the BU Bridge.” That will require that we offer a clear and legal means for bicyclists to turn left.

4. Northbound between Beacon Street and Ivy, we maintain the need for eliminating parking on the east side of the street. Northbound traffic here is heavily platooned, and because of how wide Beacon Street is, by the time bicyclists get to the first parked car, the passing motor traffic stream is well established and moving faster than a bicycle. At the first parked car, cyclists have to make an S-maneuver and merge into this dense traffic stream – a maneuver that is unacceptably dangerous. Eliminating 2, 4, or 6 parking places doesn’t solve the problem; it simply shifts it to another location. For bicycle safety, parking has to be removed from this side of the street until Ivy Street, at which point most bicyclists will turn onto Ivy, and at which point the platoon of traffic released from the traffic signal at Beacon Street will have passed all but the fastest bicyclists.
5. In order to minimize the parking impact, we suggest that the Town consider shifting parking from the east side of Carlton to the west side between Ivy and Churchill. Southbound bicyclists coming from the BU Bridge can use Chilton-Churchill, and therefore will be unaffected by parked cars on this block. (For about 60 ft just south of Ivy, Carlton is especially narrow, so it may be best to prevent parking there – also, to facilitate right turns from Ivy onto Carlton.) However, with parking allowed on the west side, northbound bicyclists will still be subject to the pressure of a “squeeze” because if the centerline is shifted to accommodate a parking area, northbound cars will have to cross the centerline to pass a bicycle. To reduce that pressure, we recommend a bicycle priority lane (see item 8).
6. Between Churchill and Beacon, we maintain our recommendation that there be no parking on either side of the street, and bike lanes provided in both directions. This need stems from the effect of the southbound queue: southbound bicyclists need space to bypass the queue, and northbound traffic (cars and bikes) need space to pass the queue without blockage when the light becomes green.
7. In order to compensate for parking spaces lost on Carlton Street between Beacon and Churchill (2 metered spots and about 4 2-hour spots), the No Parking restrictions on Churchill and Chilton Streets can be removed. Together, they have capacity for about 17 new parking spaces. One-for-one, the closest replacement spaces to those that we propose for elimination on Carlton Street require an additional walking time of only 25 s to reach the St Mary’s commercial area. Additional spaces on Chilton seem ideal for employee parking, so that spaces closer to Beacon Street can be reserved for customers.
8. Because of the importance of the Carlton Street bicycle route for both commuters and for recreational travel (it’s the main link from the Muddy River path to the Charles River paths), the value and visibility of this project will be far greater if we can maintain **continuous bike lanes** in both directions. Northbound, if the recommendations given above can be followed, there will be a dedicated bike lane from Longwood Ave. to Churchill Street, but not all the way to Ivy (where the route turns). Southbound, there will be only two short sections of dedicated bike lane, from Churchill to Beacon and along the wider part of Colchester. In the sections of the bike route where bikes have to share a lane with cars – namely, northbound from Churchill to Ivy, and southbound from Beacon to Longwood Ave. (except for the short section of southbound bike lane on Colchester) – we recommend marking a **bicycle priority lane**: a lane-within-a-lane, with a 4 or 5 ft wide bicycle zone delineated by either dashed lines or by carpet painting (a continuous green band 4 ft wide, as applied in Salt Lake City), supplemented by sharrows (shared lane arrows). For a description of bicycle priority lanes and photos of their application in Salt Lake City, see Peter Furth’s [bicycle priority lane web folder](#).

With dashed lines or carpet painting delineating the bike zone, the public will understand that there's a bike lane in the shared-lane sections of Carlton Street. In both news reports and press releases, the Salt Lake City bicycle priority lane is simply called a bike lane, but one in which cars may drive. Thus, the bicycle priority lane layout offers a way to make the bike lane continuous, even where bikes and cars have to share space. In contrast, sharrows are never understood as a bike lane; if shared lanes are marked with sharrows only, it won't be possible to say that there are continuous bike lanes on Carlton Street. Research shows that sharrows alone are poorly understood by motorists and bicyclists alike, and have limited benefit. For consistency, it is preferred that the same method of delineation (either carpet painting or dashed lines) be applied to the entire corridor.

- The issue of license plates for bikes was sent by Town Meeting to the Transportation Board; the Bicycle Committee suggests that the Transportation Board refer the matter to the Committee for review and recommendation.

Report on CIP Recommendations - Vitolo

There will be two public forums on CIP, Tuesday at the Selectmen's meeting at 7:30 and Friday morning at the capital subcommittee of the Advisory Committee. With the Bicycle Committee's agreement and if he receives approval from the Transportation Board Chair, Mr. Vitolo will speak on behalf of the Committee to request \$110,000 (\$2/resident/year) for bicycle improvements pending the final network plan and specific projects with cost estimates.

NU Civil Engineering Student Senior Projects – Furth

Senior Civil Engineering students undertake projects as a graduation requirement. Mr. Furth will have students design a "green" street, using either Hammond or Lee/Clyde. The design will include transportation, hydrology and other "green" options. The committee suggested use of Lee/Clyde.

Bike Racks - Vitolo

The grant for bike racks has not been renewed, but additional funds may be available in the future. Mr. Margolis has been in touch with Mr. Kirrane about having businesses or residents fund the cost of racks for specific locations, with the town covering installation (and then owning the racks). This is similar to the park bench program.

Website Update – Vitolo and McNamara

Mr. Vitolo and Mr. McNamara will meet to hand off responsibility for the site to Mr. McNamara. There followed an extended discussion of developing a "friends of the Bicycle Committee" group and/or e-mail list to help support bicycle safety efforts in Brookline. Some would like a group that would include other forms of transportation (walking and transit) similar to the Livable Streets model. It was agreed that Ms. Snow will enter e-mail addresses obtained at last year's bike parade to a list that could be used for announcements. It was also agreed to hold a meeting on January 19th to discuss forming a public group of some kind.

Bike Parade – Dempsey

The police have approved Sunday, May 17th at 12:30 for the Bike Parade. However, Mr. Dempsey will be out of town, and an alternate date of May 31st will also be explored. Mr. Dempsey has initiated discussion with the Parks Department regarding whether Amory Park can be used as a start/end point or whether we will need to use Waldstein Park. An after-the-parade event was discussed.

Flag Day Parade – Dempsey

It would be good for the Bicycle Committee to have a presence in the Flag Day parade, perhaps with decorated bikes. Children might participate.

Column in Brookline TAB – Heineman

Mr. Heineman has drafted several possible columns for the Tab. The first of these has been posted on the Tab website, under the heading of “The Muddy Rider.”

January Meeting Date

The next meeting will be on January 5, 2009, at 7 PM at Devotion School.

Gateway East Project – Furth

The Gateway East project is moving forward. Mr. Furth has met with the engineer and will participate in a charette in January to emphasize the importance of connections between Walnut Street and the Muddy River path and the crossing of Route 9.

Assignments:

- John will book Devotion for January 5
- Tommy will book a room at Longwood Towers for January 19 for brainstorming meeting on the possibility of forming a bike/pedestrian/transit committee.
- Don will work with Tommy on the website.
- Harry will work with Todd on a policy for private purchase of bike racks.
- John will meet with the police about May 31st as a possible day for the parade.
- Cynthia will do data entry for e-mail addresses from last year’s bike parade.

Adjournment:

We adjourned at 9:10 P.M.

Open Meeting Rules

- A meeting must be posted to the Town Calendar at least one week before the meeting is to take place.
- Must include time, location, and agenda in pdf format, contact person, and contact e-mail address.
- Within two subsequent meetings we must post to the website a copy of the minutes in pdf format.
- An email will be sent to all TMM and other officials about the meeting.
- Therefore, Todd needs information from BAC 1 ½ weeks before the meeting.