

## **Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)**

Meeting Minutes for June 1, 2015

Submitted by Don McNamara

The meeting took place in the Town Hall Room 103 at 7:00 PM.

Present: Cynthia Snow, Bryan Decker, John Dempsey, Nathaniel Fink, Don McNamara, Thomas Vitolo, and Officer Kevin Sullivan

Absent: Chris Dippel

Town Employees: Todd Kirrane, Daniel Martin

Public: Craig Bolon, Matthew Danish, Eran Egozy, Janice Dolnick, Joe Meyer, Jeanne Traxler, John Bowman, Ken Danzig, Cindy Danzig, Paul Johnson, Alicia D'Aloia, Guus Driessen, Patricia Garcia-Rios, Rebecca Albrecht, John Harris, Lois Dargo, Richard Nagle, Harriet Samuelson, Kate Ewen, Nick Schmidt, Richard Ishkanian, Carol Ishkanian, Mitch Heineman

Handouts: agenda.

### **Introductions**

- The BAC members introduced themselves.
- Ms. Snow outlined the procedures for the hearing, and Mr. Kirrane explained that Babcock, Greenough and Newton streets had unexpectedly come up for repaving due to severe deterioration over the winter and that, unfortunately, the review of bicycle accommodations was therefore a more hurried process than normal. He noted that through state mandate, streets being repaved are to consider accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians, and that the staff is guided by the Bicycle Advisory Committee's *Green Routes Bicycle Network Plan*, which is revised and accepted each year by the Transportation Board.

### **Review of Bicycle Accommodations on Babcock Street**

- Mr. Kirrane presented three options for Babcock Street:
  - Cycle track on one side of Babcock, sharrows in opposite direction, removing parking
  - Bicycle lanes in both directions, removing parking
  - Sharrows in both directions, preserving parking
- The committee asked questions of Mr. Kirrane for clarification and then opened the meeting to public comment, during which time the following comments were made.
  - Craig Bolon, TMM, stated concern over the public notification process for the meeting and that there had been no meeting about these proposals in the neighborhood. He also stated that, by his count, 66 parking spaces would be removed.
  - A cyclist who uses this corridor regularly said that road conditions are horrible, there are occasional parked cars, and the parked cars result in a stressful maneuver for a bicyclist. He preferred continuous bike lanes in both directions.
  - Babcock Street should be treated either as a connector street or a local street. If it is a local street, then traffic calming is needed. The cycle track and sharrows were not a good solution. If this is a connector street, using bollards between bike lanes and traffic would provide a higher level of comfort and safety for the bicyclists.
  - A father who bikes with his young children prefers the bicycle lane solution. He stated that the cars on Babcock drive at a high rate of speed and often do not respect sharrows.
  - Bicyclists and cars should be separated where possible and that the bike lane in the first block of Babcock from Harvard Street should be between the parked cars and the sidewalk, not between the parked cars and the moving traffic.
  - A woman who lives in a condominium on Babcock Street does not have on-site off-street parking, and said that elimination of parking on Babcock Street would be especially

detrimental to her and the other people living in condominiums. She stated that option 3 was the only viable option.

- There is a need for more signage, sharrows are confusing to drivers, and that more awareness is what we need. Parking spots are needed for repairmen.
- Elimination of 66 parking spaces is profound and warrants more discussion. The neighborhood was not involved in the process, and it should have been. Would it be possible to widen the street to avoid losing parking?
- Another cyclist stated her preference for bike lanes over sharrows and noted that cars travel very fast on Babcock Street and suggested that stop signs and raised crosswalks would be a good way to reduce the speed of cars on Babcock.
- Bike lane markings may confuse children using the crosswalk, and bicyclists do not stop for children in the crosswalk.
- The public comments concluded and the committee discussed the plans and public feedback.
  - Mr. Vitolo observed that there was a no parking rule from 8-10AM for part of the street and that it could be expanded to the entire street to help morning commuters. He also asked if there were any additional concerns due to the fire station. He stated support for option 3 and cited the interest of the neighbors who attended the meeting.
  - Mr. Dempsey stated that we need to consider the 7th and 8th graders in the town and that he supported option 2.
  - Mr. Decker stated that Babcock is a key route to get to Comm Ave and that he did not support the sharrows.
  - Mr. McNamara stated that the speed of traffic on Babcock was a concern and expressed concern over the parking for the residents on Babcock without driveways. He voiced support for options 2 and 3.
  - Mr. Fink stated option 1 was the least favorable and expressed a concern for parking. He stated that by adding more crosswalks that motorists could park on cross streets more easily.
  - Ms. Snow stated support for option 2 and that the sharrows were not good for Babcock Street. She stated that Babcock is an important connection to Commonwealth Avenue and the future Charles River changes.
- A vote was proposed to suggest option 2, continuous bike lanes on Babcock Street from Harvard Street to Commonwealth Avenue in both directions eliminating parking on Babcock. The vote passed with one dissenting vote.
- Mr. Kirrane re-stated that the next step in the process would be a public discussion and vote at the Transportation Board meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup> and that Babcock Street residents and those within an 800 foot radius of Babcock street would receive notice of the meeting.

### **Review of Bicycle Accommodations on Greenough Street**

- Mr. Kirrane stated that any work on Greenough Street would have to be done before school is back in session.
- Mr. Kirrane presented two options for Greenough Street:
  - Bicycle lanes in one direction, sharrows in the other direction, removing parking
  - Sharrows in both directions, preserving parking
- The committee asked questions of Mr. Kirrane for clarification and then opened the meeting to public comment during which the following points were made.
  - All residents indicated support for keeping the parking spaces and suggested that the parked cars slow down vehicle traffic.
  - Traffic is not light even at off peak hours, especially going from Greenough onto Somerset and Stanton.
  - Parking spaces are poorly marked which leads to inefficient usage.

- Many parking spaces are used by high school teachers as part of the permit program and by other specialists and therapists who move from school to school.
- A letter submitted by David Holmstrom suggested eliminating parking only from Washington Street to the first driveway on Greenough Street (eastbound) and tightening the radius of the corner from Washington to Greenough (westbound).
- The intersection of Stanton and Greenough should also be tightened to reduce pedestrian crossing and to slow traffic.
- The committee discussed the plans and public feedback. The consensus was support for option 2, sharrows in both directions from Washington Street to the high school, but also eliminating parking from Washington Street to the first driveway on Greenough to facilitate traffic (including bicycles) turning onto Washington St. There was also general support for tightening up the intersections to slow down turning traffic, especially at Washington/Greenough and Stanton/Greenough. The committee voted and unanimously approved the motion.

### **Review of Bicycle Accommodations on Newton Street**

- Mr. Kirrane presented two options for Newton Street from Horace James Circle to the Newton town line:
  - Buffered bicycle lanes in both directions, removing parking
  - Non-buffered bicycle lanes in both direction, preserving parking
- The committee asked questions of Mr. Kirrane for clarification and then opened the meeting to public comment:
  - Residents present (and who had called Mr. Kirrane) objected to removing parking and stated support for the second option.
  - Most bicycle traffic occurs on the weekends when the riding clubs are out.
  - Placing 5 foot bike lanes directly adjacent to parking places puts bicyclists in the door zone.
  - The road is dangerous as it is now, so it is not being used by people—young people in particular—going to Skyline Park, but if safer, it could be a useful and important corridor to the park.
- The committee discussed the plans and public feedback. The committee consensus was to support option 2, bike lanes in both directions, preserving parking for most of this section of Newton Street, but to install a buffered bike lane from Princeton Street to the circle and eliminate parking on only that block.

### **Review and Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

- The committee approved the May meeting minutes.

### **Gateway East Proposal**

- The committee discussed the Gateway East proposal and will recommend to the Transportation Board that it supports the excellent bicycle accommodations from Brookline Avenue to Washington Street and would like to see similar accommodations from Brookline Avenue to the Boston line, as many participants in the public hearing in May suggested.

### **Harvard Street Bicycle Lanes at Devotion School**

- The committee discussed bicycle lanes in front of Devotion School.
- It was proposed the committee request the town consider removal of the 4 parking spaces in front of Devotion School to make the bike lane continuous, along the lines suggested by Mr. Vitolo, who wrote (as a private citizen) to the Transportation Board.

### **Bike Parade**

- Ms. Snow thanked Mr. Dempsey for all his work to make the 2015 Brookline Bicycle Parade a great success. Committee members and members of the public made a few suggestions for minor changes.

#### **Upcoming Meetings**

- The committee discussed upcoming meetings. Chris Dippel will chair the July meeting.

#### **Meeting Adjourned**

- The meeting was adjourned at 9:43PM.