

Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)

Meeting Minutes for March 7, 2016, Town Hall Room 408 at 7:00 PM.

Submitted by Kristin Schreiber

Present: Cynthia Snow, John Dempsey, Bryan Decker, Tommy Vitolo, Kristin Schreiber, Nathaniel Fink, and Sgt. Brian Sutherland

Absent: Don McNamara

Boston University Representatives: Elizabeth Leary, Director of Community Relations/Interim Assistant Vice President.; George Cole, project consultant from Stantec; and Meredith Mooney, Director of Government Policy

Public: Ray Schwartz, John Harris, Mitch Heineman, David Kroop, Andrew Moulton, John Bowman, Alyssa Yanover

Minutes: The February meeting minutes were approved as circulated

Public Comment: Mr. Schwartz of Babcock Street expressed his concern with regard to possible changes on Babcock Street, particularly regarding any that might violate the Americans with Disabilities Act. He was told that the plans for Babcock Street bicycle accommodations are being designed by a Transportation staff appointed committee that would be meeting the next night. He also expressed his consternation about cyclists who fail to obey all traffic laws.

Plans for proposed black box theater at Boston University: Mr. Cole described the project, which will be presented to the Town Planning Board on Thursday night, March 10th, at 7:00.

Where: Essex and Dummer Streets (behind 808 Commonwealth Avenue)

Project: Theater arts facility, one theatre building (60 feet tall) with underground parking; long, low building with several small workshops (20-30 feet tall) along Dummer St; “arts plaza” on Commonwealth Avenue. Theater will present small student productions, usually at 7 or 8 pm; all existing surface parking and new underground parking (used during day as well as for performances) will enter on Essex and exit on Dummer St.

When: construction potentially as early as this summer

Why: Increasing the use for theater program at BU; 808 Commonwealth Ave already in use for fine arts, gallery on first floor, the rest surface parking at present—most with entrance via Comm Ave

Relevance to biking community:

1. Vehicular access to site changed- Most currently from Commonwealth Ave; all traffic to the site would go in off of Essex, leading to a large increase of right turns from Essex into theater complex (across existing bike lane)
2. Potential conflict with southbound bicyclists as cars turn right into the facility off Essex; concern for right hook of bikers going by as people turn into the parking garage; box trucks coming in and out to service theater and workshops
3. Possible increased left turning cars from Dummer to Essex to get to parking entrance or to reach Commonwealth Ave could conflict with bikes going straight southbound to contraflow lane beyond Dummer.

Previously planned mitigation:

1. Queuing within the site on an internal drive to the parking facility
2. One way out to Dummer street (no entrance here), partly at request of neighborhood
3. Actual site of loading off the street, internal to the complex

Suggestions made to improve the plan from bicyclists' perspective:

1. Keep site open at the corner of Dummer and Essex, making it easier for cyclists and motorists to see each other
2. Consider raised intersection at Dummer and Essex to slow traffic
3. Don't change the corner (i.e. do not make this a smoother, wider turn; a tight corner will decrease vehicular speed)
4. Decrease width of sidewalk slightly and put in cycle track along Essex to increase awareness of cyclists and add protection
5. Painted green bike lane in Dummer/Essex intersection to increase awareness of cyclists crossing intersection (especially for cars coming from Dummer)
6. BAC will send link to recently released Mass DOT publication on Separated Bike Lane Design <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/ManualsPublicationsForms/SeparatedBikeLanePlanningDesignGuide.aspx>

Some facts from previous bicycle surveys: peak hour morning bidirectional bike traffic is 180/hour at Dummer/Essex intersection, primarily southbound (121/hour)

Climate Week (March 28-April 3)—BAC events on Saturday, April 2

- Morning bike ride—John Dempsey and Bryan Decker will lead ride starting and ending at Town Hall to visit and familiarize cyclists with existing and planned bicycle infrastructure
- Bike repair—help and advice—Bryan Decker and other volunteers, including mechanic from Ferris Wheels shop
- BAC information table—adjacent to bike repairs; would be good to have it staffed as feasible
- Complete Streets panel: Chris Dempsey, moderator; Scott Englander on Complete Streets Policy, Abby Swaine on transit, Bob Sloane on walking, Cynthia Snow on bicycling. Brief presentations by panelists, with plenty of time for public questions and discussions
- Announcement of these events will be sent out soon to entire BAC list

Bike crash report

Important points made by Sgt. Sutherland, who provided the report:

- Large volume of moving violations written in 2015 (about 1,000 bike, 19,000 vehicular moving citations)
- 170 citations written for double parking in the bike lane; typically only write a ticket if person is actually out of their car; otherwise ask that they move
- Difficult to have a lot of enforcement at peak times because traffic officers are busy directing traffic at key intersections around town
- Reporting of crashes is done using a standard state form, which does not allow for a lot of detail
- Sgt Sutherland thinks it might be possible to try to increase reporting on all bike crashes

Questions to be resolved/potential action items:

- Can meter monitoring personnel write tickets for double parking in the bike lane? If so, can we push for more of this/education about this?
- Could we help implement a system of increased collection of relevant information about crashes that would help improve bike safety?

Revisiting the bicycle comfort scale and accommodation scoring:

Key points discussed about the point scale for new development:

1. The overall goal is to create a lower stress biking environment, using whatever items off the menu are appropriate for the particular development site. Reaching this goal will require some input and recommendation at the time of discussing each new project that is to use items on this new “accommodation

menu.” A disclaimer should be attached to this chart that points will only be granted if appropriate to the site.

2. We should provide any new developers with further references to Mass DOT guides and generally view this scale as an educational opportunity, and a way of being involved in new development design.
3. The benefits and drawbacks to scaling points according to comfort levels (ABC) were discussed. In many cases, scaling may not be appropriate, and should in fact be inverted. On the other hand, in order to ensure that bike accommodations are given high priority in C areas (compared to pedestrian or transit accommodations), we need some degree of scaling to “compete.”
4. Consensus that cycle tracks should receive higher points than lanes or sharrows
5. Some additional items were added: runnels on staircases and annual training program by certified instructor
6. BAC members gave input on scores for various items; these numbers will go into an averaging process to come up with a final draft to be sent out for approval in the coming weeks, with a plan to discuss and finalize at the next meeting.

Brookline and Emerald Network

1. Opportunity for connections in the regional Emerald Network greenways being developed by Livable Streets Alliance
2. Grant deadline for applying for technical assistance on a project is March 28th; simple application
3. Would provide technical assistance for 12-18 months, e.g., feasibility studies, building public and political support
4. Potential projects that might be candidates for this type of assistance:
 - a. Focus on south Brookline, around golf courses, where there is more space in the roadways for a real off-street shared use path or cycle track
 - b. Hammond Pond Parkway, Lee street/Clyde street
 - c. Grove street- opportunity to safely get kids from Baker school area to Larz Anderson
 - d. Alternatively, focus further on doing more with breaks in Emerald Necklace, e.g., at Netherlands Road

Updates

- *Babcock Street*--plans coming together; meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 9
- *Hubway*—Current contract is up at end of 2016; four communities in process of getting together (Brookline is only 5% of the contract); one bidder—Motive--wants a longer term contract, contingent on finding another financial sponsor, probably based on the San Francisco model (company owns everything, has more control, provides the capital for the project). Andy Martineau of the Planning Department would like BAC to be more involved and will be invited to the next meeting to provide more information.

Next meeting: Monday, April 4

2016 meeting dates, all meetings in Room 408, Town Hall: (First Monday of the month, except as noted): January 11, February 1, March 7, April 4, WEDNESDAY May 4, June 6, WEDNESDAY July 6, August 1, WEDNESDAY September 7, October 3, November 7, December 5