

Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)

Meeting Minutes for January 4, 2017, Town Hall Room 408 at 7:00 PM.

Submitted by Kristin Schreiber

Members present: John Bowman, Jacob Meunier, Kristin Schreiber, Cynthia Snow, Tommy Vitolo, Brian Sutherland (police liaison)

Members absent: Bryan Decker, Mark Lowenstein

Public: John Dempsey, D. Eisler, David-Marc Goldstein, John Harris, Mitch Heineman, Jeremy Hutner, Ken Kaplan, David Kroop, Sue Regan, Uran Ugozy.

December 2016 meeting minutes –approved

Discussion of Babcock Street bike accommodation alternatives:

A decision on Babcock Street changes is expected from the Transportation Board at their meeting this month. Four options are currently under consideration: two new options that include bike lanes on Naples Road, plus previously vetted options 4 and 6 for Babcock.

A lengthy discussion included prepared notes from John Bowman, which were shared at the meeting, as well as comments and ideas from the BAC and members of the community in attendance. The following principles and specific points were voted on and unanimously approved, to be given as recommendations to the Transportation Board in a letter that Ms. Snow will draft:

Overarching Principles:

1. The bicycle accommodations proposed for Naples Road are welcome, but Naples is not a viable alternative route to Babcock for most commuting cyclists, because it is a substantially increased distance, uphill, and has no signal at its intersection with Harvard St. For this reason, the BAC strongly recommends that Babcock be bicycle friendly on its entire length. Babcock serves as a connector for cyclists to the east and north via John, Dwight and Freeman Streets, and as a direct connector between Commonwealth Avenue and Harvard Street in the heart of the Coolidge Corner Commercial district.
2. When Babcock is resurfaced with smooth pavement, the motor traffic will naturally travel faster, making it even more important to provide for pedestrian safety and for safe bicycling by using either protected bike lanes or significant traffic calming to decrease traffic speed on its entire length.
3. Although there are understandable concerns from residents about retaining parking, in the balance of street uses, parking should be secondary to safety for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists, and we generally advocate for removal of parking spaces in key spots where required to improve safety (allowing better sight lines for crosswalks, intersections, or space for bike lanes in key segments).
4. A continuous cycle track or lane would be the safest and best option for Babcock, but where this is not possible, there should be measures to give added safety at transition points where bicyclists are most vulnerable. For example, when there is a transition point from bicycle lane to shared lanes with sharrows, there should be a traffic calming measure, so that cyclists can safely merge with traffic.
5. Speed reduction and traffic calming should be a priority, not only for the safety of cyclists, but for that of pedestrians and all users of the street.

Recommendations:

None of the proposed options is ideal, but in our view the best available options are **option 4 for Babcock St with the Naples Rd bike lane**, with the following specific proposed modifications:

1. Babcock westbound at Harvard: At this point of transition, it is important to have visibility and safe options for bicyclists transitioning onto Harvard. Contingent on a queuing feasibility analysis, we recommend a continuous bike lane to the intersection, merging into a bike box at the head of a single lane for left and right turning motor traffic. If the queuing analysis does not support this single vehicle lane option, a second choice is to have a left turn bike lane in the left half of the right turn lane for vehicles; this would allow a safe left turn for cyclists to the right of left-turning vehicles and to the left of right-turning vehicles, precluding vehicular turns in front of cyclists.
2. At the opposite end of Babcock in the last section approaching the junction with Commonwealth Ave, having protected bike lanes on both sides of Babcock at least until the first alley is extremely important to facilitate safe bicycle turns on and off Comm Ave. To allow the bike lanes, we strongly recommend removing parking spaces on one side of the street and note that it may be preferable to remove the 5 on the southeast side because of the loading zone on the other side of the street (which perhaps should be extended to serve businesses on Commonwealth Ave).
3. For the length of Babcock Street, we generally recommend narrower travel lanes and markings for parking lanes, as these have been shown to decrease speed of motorized vehicle travel. In no parking areas (e.g., in front of the triangular parks at Freeman and Dwight), the area between the curb and parking “fog” line should be hatched to indicate no parking.
4. For the length of Babcock Street, raised crosswalks or speed humps will serve to calm traffic in this residential neighborhood adjacent to the Devotion School, making the street safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, as shown in Option 4. We appreciate these traffic calming measures to increase safety at intersections and at—for cyclists—the difficult and potentially dangerous transitions from bike lanes to shared lanes with sharrow markings. At the approach to the fire station from Harvard, there is a dangerous pinch point, where the street narrows and shifts slightly. By either extending the bike lane past the fire station, or by placing a speed hump in advance of this transition, bicyclist safety and comfort would be greatly improved. Consideration might be given to having speed humps or raised crosswalks of a single material, to decrease unevenness when brick or stone elements are affected by frost heaves or use.
5. We recommend **against** the proposed bike lanes in front of the two small parks where Freeman and Dwight meet Babcock, as the negative aspects in creating shifts and transitions likely outweigh the benefit of these short stretches of bike lane.
6. We recommend **against** installing the proposed cycle tracks on Freeman Street; the proposal shown in option 4 would make cyclists’ turns onto Freeman much more difficult. We will study this intersection and make recommendations at a future time to be added to the *Green Routes Plan* and undertaken as a separate project.
7. The Naples and Gibbs intersection has an awkward geometry with problematic sight lines; a green painted lane across the intersection to connect the bike lanes on Naples on each side of Gibbs would clarify where bicyclists should ride and where motorists should expect to see them. We suggest further study of any bump-outs in the intersection—perhaps a shift from the east to the west side.
8. We recommend **against** painting a double yellow line on Naples Rd, as this has been shown to increase vehicle speeds over the ambiguity of approaching vehicles deciding how to yield to each other.

At least two other substantive suggestions were made and considered, although these were not included in the committee vote to be forwarded to the Transportation Board:

1. Mr. Meunier recommended creating a chicane configuration (slight bends in the road) using a “checkered” parking scheme. “Checkered” parking, a term used in the NACTO *Urban Street Design Guide*, refers to alternating parking between one side of the street and the other. For example:
 - Between Harvard St and Dwight St: parking on the northbound side
 - Between Dwight St and Freeman St: parking on the southbound side
 - Between Freeman St and Comm Ave: parking on the northbound side

The advantages of this configuration are to (a) reduce vehicle speeds by breaking up sight lines along Babcock; (b) eliminate the need for hatching in front of the triangular parks at Freeman and Dwight (because parking would be added to the southbound side of the street; and (c) add new parking spaces near the triangular parks where currently there are none; these new spaces could compensate for spaces that are removed elsewhere on Babcock in the interest of safety.

2. Mr. Kroop suggested extending the current parking prohibition from 8 to 10 AM northbound (toward Commonwealth Avenue) all the way from John St (currently it starts at Freeman St). Marking on the pavement in the parking lane “Bikes only to 10 AM” would create a de facto bike lane for cyclists travelling toward Commonwealth Avenue during the morning rush hour.

2018 Capital Improvement Project Budget (Bicycle Accommodation line eliminated)

There has been some funding in each CIP budget since at least 2010, resulting in improved bicycling facilities throughout Brookline. The BAC is very concerned about not having any improvements funded for the coming year, and Mr. Vitolo proposes to work as a Town Meeting member to restore some funding at a lower level than originally requested for a smaller project such as traffic signal responsiveness to bicycles and additional bicycle parking.

Proposal for Climate Week 2017

The following proposal was approved for BAC participation in Climate Week 2017: The BAC can have a table and wall space for a map at the 3R depot at Pierce School on Saturday, April 1 (10 AM-2 PM) as part of Climate Week 2017. People can be invited to mark on the map (with push pins or sticky dots) the points between which they would like to bike in Brookline; the points can be connected with pencil lines or pieces of yarn. Then they can tell us verbally or in writing on clipboard forms or sticky notes what would make it possible for them to feel safe biking between those points. This can be a good starting point for conversations with those of us staffing the table to discuss what people think needs to be done to make Brookline more bicycle-friendly.

The blurb for the Climate Week brochure might go something like this:

Where and how would you like to bike?

Show and tell the Brookline Bicycle Advisory Committee where and how you would like to bike in Brookline. On a large map of Brookline, you can mark where you would like to bike. And you can tell us what kind of bike accommodations would make you feel welcome and safe to do so.

Green Routes Plan: Revisions for 2017

- Proposed changes and additions to text and addition of Appendices were approved.
- The Babcock street description will be modified to reflect recommendations discussed this evening.
- Reviewed revised map showing types of accommodation; with a few additions/corrections it will be Appendix A

Next meeting: Monday, February 6, 2017

2017 meeting dates, all meetings in Room 408, Town Hall: (First Monday of the month unless noted):
WEDNESDAY, January 4; February 6; March 6; April 3; WEDNESDAY, May 3; June 5;
WEDNESDAY, July 5; August 7; WEDNESDAY, September 6; October 2; WEDNESDAY,
November 1; December 4