

Brookline Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)

Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, May 6, 2020, via Web-x, 7 PM

Members present: John Bowman, Elena Huisman, Mark Lowenstein, Cynthia Snow, Len Wholey

Members absent: Jacob Meunier, Kristin Schreiber, Brian Sutherland (Police liaison), Ali Tali (Transportation Board liaison)

Others present: Jules Milner-Brage, David Kroop, Todd Kirrane (web-x host), Perry Grossman, John Harris, Ann Lusk

Minutes: The April 2020 meeting minutes were approved as circulated by roll call (unanimous)

Updates:

- **Transportation Board:** Plans for a bus and bike lane on Beacon Street during July work on the Green C-line was discussed at the April 13 virtual meeting. The chief concern expressed was the proposed use of large Yankee buses which are not accessible to those with disabilities; accessible buses will run only every half hour. This item will be on the Board's agenda on May 12 for discussion and action. After discussion of the shortcomings of the bus-bike lane, especially next to parked cars, the committee voted unanimously by roll call to endorse the bus-bike lane, suggesting that it might serve as a trial of such accommodations for other streets such as Harvard and Washington. Ms. Huisman will also check on whether there have been modifications to the plan since the last Transportation Board meeting and how the lane will affect the current pedestrian-bike lanes in Coolidge Corner.
- **Sustainability Transportation Working Team:** Mr. Harris reported that the committee has not been active given that there are currently no projects under staff consideration. Ms. Lusk reported that she is applying for a Mass DOT grant to analyze use of temporary cycle tracks throughout Massachusetts. When she has a one-slide presentation prepared, members of the BAC said they would provide feedback. Pete Sutton is the Mass DOT contact for the program.
- **Working Group on Pilot Projects:** The group has not met, but Mr. Lowenstein reported that he has inventoried, photographed and made note of particular hazards in a number of bike lanes and submitted those to Mr. Kirrane, as requested. He also contacted Ms. Gallentine about the condition of Dudley Street, which has been damaged by the heavy equipment working on the Brookline Reservoir. She said she did not know of plans to repair the street but would check with DPW.
- **Other Updates:**
 - No date has been set for the Transportation Board to hear the appeal of Davis Street residents regarding the approved cycle track next to Cypress Field. They asked for the hearing to be postponed until the Board can meet in person, but depending on how long that takes, the issue may be scheduled for a virtual meeting.
 - The staff working group on micromobility will be appointed by and work with Mr. Kirrane; he has invited a member of the BAC to participate. He hopes to start work by the end of May.
 - Mr. Kirrane did not express an opinion on whether the BAC's mandate should be expanded to include micromobility. No decision has been made on appointment of a separate advisory committee, if not added to BAC. Those decisions may await the outcome of the working group's meeting.

COVID Sidewalk Expansion: During a discussion of the expansion of the sidewalks/bike lanes in Coolidge Corner and along Longwood Avenue, the following points were made:

- Everyone, especially families with children, need space for fresh air and exercise during this stay-at-home time when schools and playgrounds are closed.
- According to a Mass DOT highway report, despite the 50-70% drop in traffic, road fatalities in April were higher by one than in April 2019—meaning that the RATE of fatal accidents has at least doubled, thus making the roads apparently less safe.

- The expansion of walking and biking areas into the street around Coolidge Corner is a good first step to provide greater safety for cyclists and pedestrians, but it should be extended along Beacon Street (an extension of the staff “Option 1” proposal which was approved by the Select Board).
- Brookline undertook the expansion of pedestrian/cyclist areas early and focused on “essential” travel. Therefore, the Town did not have the benefit of the experience of other cities that have taken further steps to allow for social distancing while people get outdoors for exercise and health.
- It would be good to have a network of slow, safe streets, as has been done in places like Oakland, CA, and Portland, OR, where quiet residential streets are blocked off with barriers across one lane to limit traffic to local traffic, creating networks of safe, open streets.
- Even major roads like Beacon, Washington, Harvard and Cypress are residential streets, whose residents need to use them—while social distancing—to get to important destinations, including quieter roads or parks.
- The Town should also be planning for the resumption of more travel activities and plan for ways to make/keep streets safe for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage those who may still be reluctant to use transit to use these alternatives to cars.

In a roll call of BAC members, it was unanimously agreed that Ms. Huisman, Mr. Meunier, and Ms. Snow would draft a memo to the Transportation Board (with the request that they forward it to the Select Board), with specific short and longer-term recommendations for the kind of enhanced safety for pedestrians and cyclists as noted above.

BAC Applications for Openings: Ms. Huisman noted that this is Mr. Bowman’s last meeting since he has moved out of Brookline. She also announced that because of the current pressure of her work, Dr. Schreiber is stepping down from the BAC. Ms. Snow announced that she is not planning to seek reappointment when her term is up in September, and Ms. Huisman will check to see if we can use this pool of candidates for her replacement.

Eleven applications have been received and circulated to committee members. A three-member subcommittee (Ms. Huisman, Mr. Lowenstein, and Mr. Wholey) will interview all the candidates and recommend 3-5 for consideration by the full BAC at its June meeting. Among suggestions for qualities/experience that would be valuable are: familiarity with Brookline politics and procedures; leadership capabilities; note-taking; engineering knowledge; data analysis; awareness of public health issues. The BAC also needs people with time and energy so that we can have more members/subcommittees working on projects. It might be worth proposing an expansion of the committee for Transportation Board consideration.

Open Items: The status of open items provided by Mr. Kirrane was circulated before the meeting. Of note is that a consultant has been hired to pursue a TIP project for a Washington St. Complete Street Design. The public process is likely to begin in Fall 2020.

Adjournment: 9:03 PM, with thanks and best wishes to Mr. Bowman.