



PUBLIC MEETING #1: Meeting Summary

Meeting Location and Time

Date and Time: Monday, November 14th at 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Location: Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Avenue, New Hartford, CT

Introduction and Presentation Overview

Anna Bergeron, the Project Manager for this project at CTDOT, welcomed meeting attendees and provided a brief overview of the project, including its background, purpose, and team. Anna then introduced Marcy Miller, the Consultant Team Project manager. Marcy asked attendees to introduce themselves before beginning the presentation.

*The agenda and presentation for this meeting can be viewed at the following link: http://www.ctbikepedplan.org/meeting_materials.html

During the presentation, Marcy covered the following key ideas:

- Purpose of the Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and Map Update (2017 Plan Update)
- Statewide progress in bicycling and walking efforts since 2009
- Public outreach efforts for the 2017 Plan Update
- Updated vision, mission, goals, and action strategies
- Data collection for development of Draft Bicycle Network Map
- Methodology for development of Draft Bicycle Network Map
- Draft Bicycle Network Map
- Action strategies
- Next steps

Marcy stated that a key objective of this meeting is to gather feedback and input on both the Draft Bicycle Network and the action strategies for the 2017 Plan Update before opening up the meeting for questions and comments. The following bullets summarize the major points of discussion.

Discussion

Coordination between CTDOT and Local Agencies

VIP Paving Program

- Attendees asked about CTDOT VIP Paving Program after providing the following information about the implementation of the program in their municipalities:

- Plainville: There was little to no communication between CTDOT and the town prior to a major repaving last year. It was unclear how the town was supposed to provide input on the repaving.
- Simsbury: There was confusion over how many feet from the yellow centerline a state road was required to be. This question was in reference to Route 185.
- CTDOT explained that the VIP Program is a policy, not a law. The policy is intended to encourage communication between CTDOT and the municipality or region when state roads within that area are scheduled to be repaved. This provides the local agency an opportunity to request a narrowing of the road and widening of the shoulder. CTDOT's traffic engineers review these requests and consider the roadway geometry, ADT, and other variables to determine whether the restriping is safe.
- Marcy stated that while it is possible miscommunications occurred in the situations described by attendees, the program has been successful overall and is continuing to improve. It's important to note that progress is happening and meetings such as this one allow CTDOT to become aware of any miscommunications that have occurred.

Sharrows and Signage

- An attendee asked whether municipalities are responsible for the paint and maintenance for sharrows and restriping efforts.
- Attendees discussed whether sharrows were permitted on state roads.
 - Marcy stated that while sharrows are successful at raising a certain amount of awareness, it is unclear whether they do improve safety for bicyclists. Many municipalities are in the process of trying to replace sharrows with protected bike lanes.
 - Examples of bike lanes in Connecticut:
 - New Haven is in the process of constructing a protected bike lane near the train station.
 - Hartford has painted bike lanes (though not protected) on Broad Street.
 - Burnside Avenue is the first road diet and bike lanes on state route.
- In response to an attendee's comment about the desire for more signage in Bolton, Marcy stated that the purpose of the Plan Update is to help guide CTDOT's engineers and to identify roads that need improvements for bicycling, including signage.

Local Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans

- CTDOT recommended that municipalities and regions develop a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that outlines the local priorities. Once that has been approved, it signals to CTDOT that the Plan has the support of the political officials and the community.
- An attendee asked about State Routes which serve as a critical link in a local network, and gave the Route 44 bridge of the Park River North Branch in Hartford as an example.

Draft Bicycle Network

- An attendee stated that Route 44 is not safe and should not be included as a preferred route in the Draft Bicycle Network.
- An attendee noted that it will be important to consider that people who bicycle as a mode of transportation are much more diverse than the representation at public meetings.
- An attendee noted that many of the longer-term segments proposed in the Draft Bicycle Network could more frequently be used by recreational bicyclists. He stated that bicyclists who are commuting usually do so in urban areas. This attendee requested additional focus on the state's cities.
 - Marcy stated that the Draft Bicycle Network is focused on creating those longer-term segments across the state as the foundation for more local bicycle networks. Hopefully municipalities and regions will build off of this statewide network to strengthen local connections for bicyclists. The focus also must be on state routes since they are under CTDOT's jurisdiction.
- An attendee suggested that the Draft Bicycle Network should indicate the bicyclist skill or comfort level in some way for each connection. This would help bicyclists choose routes that were appropriate for them.
 - Marcy stated that an updated suitability map of all state roads will be produced as part of the 2017 Plan and Map. This map illustrates how suitable a road is for bicyclists based on the width of the shoulders and the average vehicle miles travelled (ADT) on it.
 - However, the suitability map is limited because it doesn't provide CTDOT's engineers with clear direction as to where bicycling and walking efforts should be focused.
- An attendee suggested a virtual version of the Bicycle Network Map that includes a list of contacts by geography that the public could access to learn about bicycling opportunities in their areas.
 - Marcy explained that such an effort would likely be difficult due to the expense and time required to keep all the relevant information up-to-date.

Roadway Design and Speed Limits

- Attendees discussed the need to reduce speeds on roads that encourage bicycling through both design and posted speed limits.
 - Attendees discussed the opportunity to learn from other states where speed limits have been changed on state roads to increase safety for all modes.
 - Attendees discussed the need to design and engineer for the type of road that CTDOT wants in the future, instead of according to existing traffic speeds.
- Marcy stated that many other elements can encourage slower speeds along roadways.
 - Increased development and land uses that encourage pedestrian traffic provide visual cues for vehicles to slow down.
 - Traffic calming efforts, such as those in West Hartford, can also slow speeds.

- Attendees requested that traffic calming and other methods to encourage slower speeds be included in the 2017 Plan Update.

Enforcement

- An attendee stated that the 2017 Plan Update should include recommendations for improved enforcement of laws intended to protect bicyclists by police and other officials.
- One attendee stated that he and five of his co-workers have been hit by vehicles while bicycling. This attendee felt that law enforcement officers did not act on his behalf and that there was a need for improved training of such officers.
 - Attendees discussed enforcement of laws such as the Vulnerable Users Law as a local issue.
- Most police departments update their training manuals annually. Municipalities can reach out to police departments to provide educational material on the latest safety laws so these updates are included in the updated police manuals.
- Attendees cited the following organizations that have developed resources that municipalities can provide to law enforcement to encourage education laws related to bicyclists and pedestrians:
 - CTDOT:
 - Website with numerous safety tips, resources, training workshops, etc.: <http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=2314&q=433254>
 - Bike Walk Connecticut:
 - Website: <http://www.bikewalkct.org/share-the-road.html>
 - “Share the Road” Rules Brochure (8.5” x 14”) <http://www.bikewalkct.org/uploads/1/1/8/5/11852691/saferoads4.pdf>
 - Town of Simsbury
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian State Law Guide 2016: <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/police-emergency/files/bicycle-and-pedestrian-state-law-guide-0>
 - Bicycle Safety – Share the Road Presentation: <http://www.simsbury-ct.gov/police-emergency/files/bicycle-safety-share-the-road-presentation>
- Attendees also discussed the need for improvements to the process by which crashes involving bicyclists are reported.