STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #3

Meeting Minutes

Time: Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 at 9:00 AM
Location: Connecticut Department of Transportation, Conference Room A, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06111

Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Ken Shooshan-Stoller	FHWA
Bruce Donald	East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA); CT Greenways Council (CGC)
Anna Stokes	Bike Walk Connecticut
James Kulpa	VHB
Charlie Beristain	Bicyclist
Dan Bolognani	Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area
Laurie Giannotti	CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CT DEEP); CT State Parks Trails and Greenways Program
Ray Rauth	Weston Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee, Sound Cyclists; CT Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board (CT BPAB)
Neil Pade	CT Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board (CT BPAB)
Sandy Fry	City of Hartford
Francis Pickering	WestCOG
Samuel Alexander	NECCOG
Eric Sanderson	NECCOG
Sam Gold	RiverCOG
Emily Hultquist	CRCOG
Stephen Dudley	SCRCOG
Matt Fulda	MetroCOG
Rick Lynn	NHCOG
Mark Nielsen	NVCOG
Will Britnell	CTDOT Highway Design
Charles Harlow	CTDOT, Traffic Engineering
Anna Bergeron	CTDOT
Kevin Tedesco	CTDOT
Melanie Zimyeski	CTDOT, Policy and Planning
Roxane Fromson	CTDOT, RPO Coordination
Grayson Wright	CTDOT, RPO Coordination
Sara Radacsi	CTDOT, RPO Coordination
Marcy Miller	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Ken Livingston	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Mary Miltimore	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

Introduction and Presentation Overview

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

Marcy Miller gave a presentation that included a review of the previous meeting, including the updated and finalized vision and mission statement as well as the decision that the Map Update will define a Statewide Bicycle Network. Marcy then reviewed the "nodes and lines" activity that occurred during the previous Steering Committee and explained that the Project Team used this input along with additional data layers to define the Draft Statewide Bicycle Network.

Marcy then explained each step in the Project Team's methodology to define the Draft Bicycle Network. These steps, also clearly illustrated in the presentation material, are summarized below.

1. Define the key destinations and connections that should be included in the network
    - Data layers included in defining the key nodes for the statewide network:
        - Nodes from the Steering Committee
        - Major transit facilities
        - Population density
        - Employment density
        - Isolated major employment locations
        - Colleges and universities
    - Data layers considered in drawing the lines (or connections) of the network
        - Lines from the Steering Committee
        - Additional lines from Project Team

        *For the purposes of this exercise, the lines on the map are oversimplified for clarity.
2. Overlay the 'draft network' with existing and planned facilities to see if there is already a way for bicyclists to travel along the connection defined in the bicycle network.
    - Existing and planned facilities that the network were compared to:
        - Off-road paths: existing, under construction, in design, planned
        - 2009 Cross State Routes
        - Regional On Road Facilities
3. Identify the 'remaining segments' of the network on which there is no defined route for bicyclists to travel
4. Identify the best route along state roads for each of the remaining segments.
    - While routing the segment is subjective to some level, the following information is taken into consideration:
        - CT Bicycle Suitability (ADT and width of shoulder); CT Strava rides
    - If applicable, identify the preferred local alternative route
        - The preferred local alternative route will identify a route that is already frequently used by bicyclists but travels along local roads or a combination of local and state roads.
        - The identification of this route acknowledges the importance of local roads in the bicycle network, while allowing for the identification of a state route that will assist CTDOT to determine which roads to prioritize for bicycle improvements.

Marcy emphasized that the main objective of this meeting is to determine if the draft network has been identified correctly and whether the Committee has any questions or comments regarding the methodology. The project team asked for input on these topics and the following bullets summarize the major points of discussion.

Discussion

Purpose of Statewide Bicycle Network

- The statewide bicycle map will serve two primary purposes: (1) the network identifies key connections for bicyclists across the state; and (2) it provides CTDOT guidance as to where future improvements should be focused.
- An attendee asked how the statewide bicycle network should be considered. Should it be the main network that deserves the primary focus of all government and advocacy groups? Or should it be considered the main bicycle arterials and local routes should build off of it?
    - Marcy stated that the draft bicycle network should be considered the main arterial and local routes should build off of it. She also clarified that the statewide bicycle network does not include every regional and local bicycle facility; its primary goal is to provide connections between key destinations across the state.
- An attendee asked whether there were criteria that verified that the 2009 cross state routes are safe routes for bicyclists.
    - Marcy clarified that the cross state routes are a planning tool and don't necessarily indicate safe bicycling routes. They were one result of the 2009 Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and Map.
    - The focus of the 2017 Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and Map Update is to define a statewide bicycle network, which CTDOT will use to prioritize.

Segment Routing: State Routes & Preferred Local Alternative

- An attendee asked for clarification on the relationship between the priority state route and the preferred local alternative route. For example, if a local alternative is sufficient for safe bicycling, will the state still prioritize improvements on the state route?
    - Marcy clarified that there won't always be a local preferred route. These are only identified when the state route is considered unsafe by bicyclists, who clearly prefer an alternative route along local roads or a combination of state and local roads.
    - The question of how states routes will be prioritized when a preferred local alternative has been identified will be addressed at the next Steering Committee meeting.
- Attendees were pleased that local roads will be considered in the Bicycle Network.

Data considered in defining key destinations and connections

- Following connections across CT River:
    - Bridge connection between Glastonbury and Wethersfield
    - Connection between Rocky Hill and Glastonbury ferry

    - Putnam Bridge has a sidewalk but no connections on either side of it
        - Kevin Tedesco stated that a project is already in place to install bicycle and pedestrian amenities on either side of this.
- High schools
- Census blocks of low car ownership
- Abandoned rail lines
- Lightly used freight lines
- Utility corridors that can be used for bicycle routes
    - Consider production of schematic maps to show opportunity areas regarding utilities
- Frequently used bicycle trials used in adjacent states
    - The quickest way to travel to a location in CT often involves routes or trails that exist in an adjacent state.
    - Francis Pickering offered to provide this data layer.
- Input from local businesses
    - There might be opportunities for economic development if network provides access to local businesses.
- Mountain biking locations

Loop Trails

- Loop trails were previously considered in the 1996 Bicycle Plan and the Committee discussed whether they should be included in the Bicycle Network as destinations or nodes.
    - Some Committee members felt it was important to acknowledge loop trails that are preferred by recreational bicyclists.
    - Other Committee members expressed that the bicycle network cannot include everything; it needs to be remain focused on establishing key connections.
- Much of the Committee agreed on the following points:
    - Loop rides should be considered if part of one exists along a state route and can be incorporated into the bicycle network.
        - Potential test case could be a project that is currently in active design: Hartford spur of East Coast Greenway provides a connection from Terryville through Bloomfield along Routes 187 and 189 from Route 315.
    - A different statewide department should be responsible for the promotion of loop rides. Two suggestions were either the CT Office of Tourism or the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Currently, it is unclear if there is any department that is responsible for focusing on recreational trails.
- Laurie Giannotti explained that DEEP has recently released the "CT Rail Trail Explorer," which is a pilot program of an online mapping tool to assist people in planning their route along one of four State Park Rail Trails in Connecticut.
    - While this is a pilot program, there was discussion about the possibility to start adding regional recreational routes.

Limited access roads

- Committee members requested information on limited access roads. How were they defined? Once a road has been identified as a limited access road, can it be re-designated? Can the network travel along limited access roads?
- Marcy explained that it is possible to identify certain segments of the Bicycle Network in the Plan that travel along limited access roads and recommend that their designation be reconsidered.
- Limited access roads that could be considered for re-designation are as follows:
    - Route 187 and Route 189 in Bloomfield is designated as a limited access road because it has on- and off-ramps, but it has very low levels of traffic and is frequently utilized by bicyclists.
- Case study in Portland, Oregon:
    - Bicyclists are permitted along roads similar to CT's limited access roads as long as there are clear markings and signage to help guide bicyclists
    - Potential to suggest similar recommendation on a case by case basis.

Rails to Trails

- The Committee discussed the desire for improvements to the Rails to Trails process and program in Connecticut.
    - Rails to Trails currently exists in Derby and there is potential for another project to occur in Southington and Plainville.
- Many expressed a need for guidance on how to address that proposals for such projects are frequently rejected without thorough consideration because it is assumed there are too many challenges and hurdles.
- Request to include an appendix in the 2017 Plan Update that highlights the best practices for Rails to Trails projects. Potential content would include:
    - How to get access to utility ROW; how to combat preconception that Rails to Trails projects have too many challenges; policies already in place; case studies

Interim Updates

- An attendee suggested that the Map Update should be a living document so that local and regional stakeholders would have the opportunity to either update the map or submit amendments.
    - Another attendee suggested that all RCOGs could be supplied with the mapping files to continually update.
- While CTDOT has discussed the potential for mechanisms that allow for continual updates, it would be challenging to ensure that all the RCOGs remained consistent in providing updates and avoided submitting multiple versions of updates.
- An attendee suggested the possibility of preserving part of state connectivity funding for interim updates.
- Regions and municipalities will be encouraged to build upon the Statewide Bicycle Network and focus their efforts accordingly.

Additional Comments

- An attendee asked why pedestrians weren't also being considered in the mapping effort since this is a Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and Map.
    - Connecticut is a complete streets state so the ultimate goal is that every state road will be appropriate and user friendly for all modes, including pedestrians.
    - However, due to the limited of funding, it is necessary to prioritize what improvements will be made first. Defining a bicycle network will provide the state with that guidance while also defining improvements that are achievable within the next 5 – 10 years. This kind of incremental progress is necessary to improve conditions for both bicyclists and pedestrians across the state.
- In response to an attendee's question, Marcy confirmed that policy recommendations, such as the inclusion of safe crossings for pedestrians at transit stops, will be included in the 2017 Plan.

Mapping Exercise & Next Steps

Four 36"x48" posters focused on the following four missing segments in the draft bicycle network:

1. Danbury segment
2. Meriden to Middletown
3. Middletown to Manchester
4. Willimantic to Norwich to New London

The posters highlight the two points that needed to be connected on maps that include information on the existing roadways and on-street bicycle network as well as bicycle suitability data and Strava data for those roads. Attendees were asked to pick the map that they are most familiar with and identify the best route for bicyclists to travel between the two points using only state routes. If there was also a commonly used route that is comprised of local roads or a combination of local and state roads, attendees were also asked to identify this as the preferred local alternative.

Upon completion of this activity, a member of each group briefly described their discussion and what they mapped to the Committee. These maps were collected by the project team and are currently being incorporated into the Draft Bicycle Network, which will be updated accordingly.

The updated Draft Bicycle Network will be presented during the four public meetings in November so the public can provide their input. The four public meetings will take place from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM with a presentation at 6:15 PM. They will cover the same content and take place in the following cities and towns: Fairfield, New Haven, Hartford, and Willimantic. The Project Team recognizes that these locations aren't ideal for everyone in the state but an effort was made to choose locations that are centrally located and easily accessible by all modes (including bicycling and walking) to make it as convenient to as many people as possible. The limited number of public meetings is due to the very large outreach effort that recently took place for *Let's Go CT*.

Steering Committee Meeting #4 will be held in the winter of 2017 and the meeting topic will likely focus on a prioritization system for the Statewide Bicycle Network. More details on a specific day and location will be announced at a later date.