



## PUBLIC MEETING #4: Meeting Summary

### Meeting Location and Time

Date and Time: Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Location: Fairfield Public Library – Main Branch, 1080 Old Post Road, Fairfield, 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](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

#### Draft Bicycle Network

- An attendee asked how recommendations will be decided and implemented on the routes identified in the Draft Bicycle Network.
  - Marcy explained that the first step is to determine whether the routes that have been identified are the correct ones. The next step will be to determine what

facilities will be appropriate for each segment by looking at each one in further detail.

- Marcy announced that input and feedback on the Draft Bicycle Network can be submitted by submitting a comment on the website ([http://www.ctbikepedplan.org/contact\\_us.html](http://www.ctbikepedplan.org/contact_us.html)) or by emailing Mary Miltimore at [mmiltimore@fhiplan.com](mailto:mmiltimore@fhiplan.com). If possible, please mark up the worksheets that illustrate the Network and then submit a photo or scan of the marked up sheet by email to [mmiltimore@fhiplan.com](mailto:mmiltimore@fhiplan.com).
- Marcy explained that the Preferred Local Alternatives will not be developed very extensively because CTDOT only has jurisdiction over state roads (not local roads).
  - Since this project is focused on determining what CTDOT can do to improve bicycling and walking, recommendations need to be focused on roads and facilities on which CTDOT has authority to implement such recommendations.
- Attendees from both Norwalk and Stamford expressed that they were pleased that Route 1 was included in the Draft Bicycle Network.
  - They stated its importance in connecting commercial centers and that the majority of Route 1 from Bridgeport to Stamford is bicycle friendly with wide shoulders. The attendee from Stamford also explained that many people who live along it in Stamford do not have access to a car and rely on bicycling as their primary mode of transportation.
- An attendee stated his concern that the Draft Bicycle Network includes a relatively small number of routes in southwestern Connecticut. He stated that while the area does likely have a stronger bicycle network than other parts of the state, it's possible that there is a greater need for additional routes since this area of the state has a denser population.
- An attendee suggested that an additional segment should be added to account for the length of time it will take for the development of the Merritt Parkway Trail.

#### Education and Encouragement

- Attendees discussed the importance of improved education for planners and engineers at both CTDOT and municipalities to help encourage a stronger bicycle and pedestrian culture across the state.
  - Attendees discussed the potential to focus on active transportation and the newest legislation, such as the complete streets law.
- The need for continuing education and potential training for engineers was emphasized since Connecticut is one of the few states in the country that does not have any continuing education requirements for engineers.
- Attendees discussed whether bicyclists frequently ride in Connecticut during the winter. Many factors contribute to bicyclists' decision to do so, including personal preference and comfort level.
  - Attendees emphasized that if the facilities exist and are well maintained, people will use it. The high number of bicyclists during the winter in Wisconsin was cited as an example of a successful encouragement program.

## CTDOT

### *VIP Repaving Program & Construction Project Review*

- Attendees expressed concerns with the VIP Repaving Program. One attendee described the difficulty in gaining approval for a lane that is under 11 feet.
  - Anna at CTDOT explained that the VIP Program is a policy that 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.
- Anna stated that CTDOT will pay for sidewalk construction as part of the repaving as long as the municipality is willing to maintain that sidewalk and take ownership of it.
- An attendee asked what the process was at CTDOT to review road construction projects to ensure that elements to encourage safety for bicyclists and pedestrians are incorporated when appropriate.
  - Anna stated that the Intermodal Department reviews all road construction projects at 30% completion of the design, 60%, and 90%. This allows the Intermodal Department to review each project multiple times and provide comments and suggestions such as adding sidewalks or providing ADA accommodations.
- Anna stated that approval is needed from CTDOT before any new facility can be placed on a state road.

### *CTDOT and Communication*

- Attendees expressed frustration with the process for communicating with CTDOT. Many municipalities end up spending a significant amount of time finding the right person to talk to at CTDOT.
  - Attendees felt that there should be a clearer process established for municipalities to contact CTDOT.
  - Anna stated that she understands these concerns and explained that while CTDOT is understaffed at the moment, the Department is working to hire a full-time Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator.
  - Other attendees expressed that while it may appear that CTDOT isn't changing fast enough, people need to understand that the process of change is inherently slow. It's important to note that CTDOT has greatly improved in their communication as well as in their investment and attitude towards bicycle and pedestrian planning over the last twenty years. It is clear that they are continuing to progress in the right direction.
- An attendee stated that there should be a better process through which municipalities and the public can report items that should and can be quickly fixed, such as a malfunctioning signal.

### *Safe Routes to School*

- An attendee stated that CTDOT should be careful to avoid outsourcing work to engineering firms who don't prioritize bicycle and pedestrian planning.
  - He suggested that an organization like Bike Walk CT could earn revenue from managing a program like Safe Routes to School. Bike Walk CT would then be in charge of working with school districts to join the program. This would be pending Bike Walk CT's agreement to do this.
- Anna explained that the Safe Routes to School contract ended in September 2016 because CTDOT did not choose to continue it. However, towns across the state can create their own Walkability Audit.

### Facilities

- An attendee expressed that the Western New England Greenway will need signage along Route 7.
- Attendees described the unique ways that they have successfully undertaken projects to improve bicycle facilities in their towns:
  - Stamford received approval to put buffered bicycle lanes on High Ridge Road as long as the city paid for them.
  - Stamford received approval for a painted bicycle lane through a federal funded project, which has higher standards than the state.
  - Fairfield partnered with the Health Department to create various bicycle routes, including the Fairfield Shoreline Bike Route.
  - An attendee stated that each town has a Local Traffic Authority (LTA) and it can be very helpful to work with them on any bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts.
- In response to an attendee's question, Marcy explained that an ADA Transition Plan will not be included in the 2017 Plan Update.
- An attendee suggested that the 2017 Plan Update consider incorporating guidance on the use of advisory lanes, which have been FHA approved.
  - An advisory bike lane is used on low volume, narrow streets. It is similar to a regular bike lane except that it is marked with a dotted line to the left side of the road. The markings are intended to give a space for bicyclists to ride, but also indicate that motorists are permitted to use the space to pass oncoming traffic if needed.
  - Danbury is considering advisory bicycle lanes.
- An attendee from Norwalk stated that while separated bicycle lanes are becoming increasingly popular, their cost should be considered in any recommendations.
  - Additionally, new research has recently been released that demonstrates that since bike lanes are often implemented in a piecemeal way due to their high cost, the result can be a disjointed bike network.
- An attendee recommended that consideration be given to e-bikes in the 2017 Plan Update as they grow in popularity. For example, there is a vendor in South Norwalk.

- Benefits include assisting those with mobility challenges as well as the elderly. They also allow commuters to do difficult rides without needing to take a shower.

#### Economic Development

- Attendees recommended that economic development should be emphasized in the Action Strategies. An example are the opportunities that exist along the Western New England Greenway, which connects NYC to Montreal.

#### Transit

- Attendees stated that the connection between bicycling and walking, and transit should be a primary focus of this Plan Update.
  - Attendees discussed the difficulty in successfully implementing basic improvements and infrastructure to areas around train stations. Many suggested the process for submitting a proposal to CTDOT for such things needs to be improved.
- An attendee suggested that an inventory of all bicycle and pedestrian facilities around transit stops should be done. The inventory would include ADA accessibility, pedestrian push buttons, crosswalks, and more.
  - An attendee suggested such an inventory could be done in cooperation with municipalities by using something like a Google form.

#### Next Steps

- Anna and Marcy thanked all attendees for their attendance and explained that the input heard throughout all four Public Meetings would be incorporated into the 2017 Plan and Map Update. The project team will work to develop a draft Plan and updated Draft Map in the upcoming weeks. Once completed, the Draft Plan will be shown to all the regions to ensure that it is line with the vision that the regions and municipalities have the area.