

Cambridge Bicycle Committee
September 9, 2009

Present: John Burckardt, Catharine Hornby, Aaron Ladd, Steve Miller, George Perkins, Chris Porter, Gerry Swislow, Scott Walker, Kathy Murphy, Cara Seiderman, Jim Wilcox, Adam Serafin, Karen Sommerlad

Guests: Eric Minikel, Melinda Koyonis, Jeff Parenti; Laura Kowalski

I. Minutes, Agenda Review, Announcements

1. Minutes of August meeting were approved
2. Cara noted that on the back of the agenda is a list of contacts at the city for various issues.

II. Bicycle Crash Data Analysis

City staff Jeff Parenti and intern Laura Kowalski gave a presentation on an initial round of analysis of bicycle crash data from 2004-2008. Cara noted that a significant amount of work has been put into this over the past two years. For the analysis, 430 2-page police reports on crashes involving bicyclists (with a motor vehicle, bicyclist, or pedestrian) on streets under the city's jurisdiction were obtained and reviewed. The goal was to examine characteristics of crashes (location, type, etc.) to assist in identifying ways of reducing crashes and making the city safer for bicycling. The total number of reported crashes held roughly constant between 2004 and 2007, at about 80 per year, with an increase in 2008 to about 100. This is consistent with past trends of about 80-90 per year since 1990 as reported by the Mass. Highway Department. It is noteworthy that the number of bicyclists in the city has increased significantly in recent years – roughly doubling between 2002 and 2008 – while the number of crashes has increased only marginally, suggesting that the crash *rate* (e.g., crashes per mile of travel) is decreasing. Laura and Jeff discussed the characteristics of crashes.

The following questions were raised:

- 1) Are high-crash bike locations the same as high-crash car locations? A. Not necessarily. High-crash bike locations are concentrated on high-use bicycle routes, especially near Harvard and MIT.
- 2) How many fatalities were observed? A. None.

Next steps will be to look at high-bike-crash locations in more detail, and to discuss findings with other departments, emphasizing the need for outreach, education, and enforcement to reduce crashes. Committee members commented that it will be interesting to continue to track trends over the next five years, and in particular to look at trends in areas where facilities have been implemented or improved. A comment was also made that the data justify a focus on improving safety on main roads, since the vast majority of crashes were reported on these roads.

III. Committee Projects and Planning

A. October 4 Ride

Gerry gave an update on the fall ride planned for Sunday, October 4th. The ride is co-sponsored with the Cambridge Historical Society and is on the topic of the history of political activism in Cambridge. Flyers and food are being worked on. Volunteers were solicited for assistance with various aspects of the ride and Gerry will email the committee for more volunteers. The web site,

www.cambridgebikes.org, has been updated with photos from the May ride and full ride information. People should email photos of the October ride to Gerry.

B. CitySmart

Cara reported that the city is done with this year's round of CitySmart rides in CambridgePort. A discussion will be organized with Stephanie at one of the next two committee meetings re: what to do for the next neighborhood targeted next year.

C. Citywide Network

Cara will be meeting with Wayne Amaral to discuss the options for a BU Bridge-Inman Square route that were discussed at the last committee meeting. Thomas Goff took notes and prepared a mini-report from this discussion. Internal (city) input is now needed regarding the route options. It was determined to continue to work this route out before doing another field survey on another origin-destination set.

IV. Reports, Updates, Meetings

A. Road Projects

Jim W. gave an update on street and sidewalk projects and distributed a handout with this information.

Q: Regarding Prospect Street reconstruction, will the signal at Prospect St. and Bishop Allen Dr. be synchronized with the Mass Ave signal? A: Jim will look into this. They are also adding a left turn pocket onto Bishop Allen Dr.

Q: Will the rest of Oxford St. be improved? A. Yes – this project (Prentiss/Oxford) is “coming up.”

B. Development Projects

Plans have been submitted to DPW for a residential project on New St. behind the Fresh Pond Shopping Center. The committee will want to look at how right-of-way for the Watertown Branch is preserved, accessed, etc.

Catherine H. attended a recent Planning Board meeting and gave bike-related comments on another project which were “politely noted.” Most of the issues with the project involve neighborhood resistance to the scale of development.

C. Policy Report

Sgt. Murphy reported that there were 13 crashes in August, including 2 doorings; and five so far in September, including three doorings. Citations were issued to the motorist in all dooring cases. A few other citations were issued, including one to a bicyclist for running a red light.

D. Regional Bike Share Program

Cara reported that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council has issued a request for proposals for bike-share services for the Boston region, and selected Public Bike Systems of Montreal. The company's “Bixi” (bicycle taxi) program includes modular, solar-powered, and easily removable bike stations. The vendor must now establish a separate contract with each interested city. Boston has committed to having stations installed; Cambridge is likely to do so and is meeting this month with the vendor to discuss how it will work, where to install, etc. [update: meeting postponed]

Q: Would it be possible to remove car parking if necessary to create space for a bike station? A. There should be good opportunities on both public and private land at least to start.

Q: Has the city or company has discussed with MIT and Harvard. Adam S. responded that both are considering being included in the program, as well as Lesley University, which is also launching its own pilot program for faculty and staff.

Q: Who are the target users in Cambridge? Will residents find it useful? A. Target users include residents, workers, tourists, anyone. Where the systems are done well, they are used. It is up to the vendor to demonstrate a market.

Q: Can someone take a bike from one city and leave it in another city? A. Yes.

Q: Is there a helmet on every bike? A. The helmet issue is still being discussed. A proposal has been made to give people coupons for discounted helmets.

E. CitySmart Survey Information

Cara reported that the city has conducted before and after surveys of CambridgePort residents on travel behavior and related issues (via a 400-household random telephone survey) as part of the CitySmart program. 65 percent of households own a bicycle, with an average of 2.6 bikes per household. 11 percent of residents made trips by bike on weekdays, and 15 percent on weekends. The full survey results are available from the city.

F. DCR Bridges

Watch for upcoming meetings on additional bridge reconstruction projects.

V. Announcements

Aaron L. reported that he has observed lots of kids biking to school this year.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 14, 5:30 – 7:30 pm, City Hall Annex.

Minutes submitted by,
Chris Porter