

MINUTES FOR September 16, 2008
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Members Present: Alyce Ortuzar; James D'Andrea for Sylvia Morrison, MCPS; Larry Cole for Charles Kines, MNCPPC; Linda S. Katz; Peter Moe, MSHA, MHSO; Alan Migdall; Detective Bruce Werts (Traffic Division) for Lt. Ronald Smith, MCPD; John Britton, Maryland Municipal League

Members Absent: Bill Frick, Chairman; Bill Bronrott, Vice Chairman; Gerald Donaldson; John Howley; Steve Friedman; Erwin Mack; Ken Hartman, B-CC Regional Service Center

County Staff: Art Holmes; Tom Pogue; Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator; Andrea Turner

Guests: Richard Hoye for Councilmember Trachtenberg; John Wetmore

Agenda Items:

1. Introductions
2. Committee Business
3. Pedestrian Safety Week: The County Executive's Announcements
4. Pedestrian Safety Education: Walk Safe DVD
5. Status of new State Safe Routes to Schools Grants
6. Other Pedestrian Safety Activities
7. Committee comment/Issue follow –up/Open discussion/ identification future topics
8. Adjourn

Item 1: Introductions. The meeting came to order at approximately 7:05 p.m. A smaller group was assembled due to other conflicting activities occurring on the same evening, including a meeting on BRAC being held at the BCC Regional Services Center. Due to the Chair and Vice Chair being absent, the meeting was conducted by Jeff Dunckel. Mr. Dunckel announced that there were 11 applications for the 3 current PTSAC members being replaced: Bill Frick, Linda Katz, whose terms expired, and Gerald Donaldson, who sent an email indicating he was resigning. All departing committee members have expressed a desire to continue to be involved and to support the mission of pedestrian safety. Though unable to attend this meeting due to being sent to Texas on short notice, Bill Frick has agreed to continue chairing the PTSAC meetings until the new members are appointed. Erwin Mack has volunteered that he would like to be the next Chairman. The issue was put forth for discussion. No objections were raised. Mr. Dunckel expressed his opinion that Mr. Mack would be a good chairman, given the experience Mr. Dunckel had with Mr. Mack as Chairman of the Multi-jurisdictional Task Force for Pedestrian Safety in the Takoma Langley Crossroads. The May PTSAC Minutes were put up on the web site. Roselle Paquette has been out with an illness the last two weeks; the status of the July minutes is uncertain. These will be available before the next meeting in November, along with the minutes from this meeting. The web site has been revised and updated, with modifications to the menu to include a page of recent

“Actions.” The web page will now be updated periodically. The web site should reflect the interests and needs of the committee. Mr. Dunckel asked for feedback from the committee on what is posted, and what should be posted on the web site. Introductions of all those attending the meeting were then made.

Item 2: Committee Business. Mr. Dunckel asked members about the use of subcommittees in the past. Previously the committee had formed several subcommittees, including subcommittees for Engineering, Enforcement, and Legislative issues. There are currently no active subcommittees with the PTSAC. New subcommittees can be activated when the need arises in the future. Mr. Dunckel provided an update on meetings with the Implementation Group and the Steering Committee. The Implementation Group (comprised of technical staff responsible for implementing the Ped Safety Initiative) continues to meet monthly. The key mission of this group has been to prepare an Action Plan (formerly referred to as the Strategic Plan) to define how the County Executive’s Ped Safety Initiative will be accomplished. The first draft of the Action Plan was completed in August, it is now being circulated among the Divisions of MCDOT, after which it will be reviewed by the Implementation Group and revised prior to being submitted to the Steering Committee (Chaired by Art Holmes, comprised of all Department heads and agency heads – essentially the “Board of Directors” responsible for the success of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative.) The PTSAC is the advisory group, comprised of the advocates and stakeholders that advise the County on the implementation of the Ped Safety Initiative. After the Steering Committee has reviewed the Action Plan, the plan will be available to the PTSAC and the public for comment. The committee asked for a rosters of the Steering Committee and Implementation Group (see attachment). There are no minutes from either the Steering Committee or the Implementation Group meetings. PTSAC Committee members expressed a desire to be kept informed of what takes place in the Steering Committee and the Implementation Group meetings. The agendas of the Implementation Group and the Steering Committee meetings will be included in future PTSAC meeting packets. Richard Hoye offered perspective on other groups that may be important to pedestrian and bicycle improvements, citing the recent efforts of the BRAC activities and the improvements that were made to his neighborhood (near NIH/Navy Medical) under Renew Montgomery efforts and improved bicycle and pedestrian access efforts as part of BRAC. Several small, but very beneficial links were made through his neighborhood that greatly improved ped and bicycle connectivity. Storm grates were also cited as presenting difficulty and hazards to cyclists. These should also be addressed (Mckinley, east of Old Georgetown Road). These improvements were able to be made because of the use of local knowledge of connectivity needs that were employed on the project - - locals were able to tell the County/BRAC staff where the important connections were needed. How can similar knowledge be used to help make changes to ped and bicycle connectivity most effective in the Renew Montgomery program and other County projects? Local input can be very helpful to identify the most important needed ped and bicycle safety improvements. Alan Migdall observed that his experience with Speed Humps revealed an enthusiastic population of residents who could be tapped for input and context sensitive design. Question was asked about whether BRAC was addressing gaps in pedestrian ROWs on Cedar Lane, east of Rockville Pike. Mr. Hoye was not sure what

was being done there: there are still major gaps in the ROW that precludes building more sidewalks there. Storm grates: is there anything being done systematically to eliminate the cycling hazards these old grates present. There was uncertainty over what the County is doing; The state apparently responds when notified by concerned citizens.

Suggestion was made to add to the Ped Safety web site a description (with photos) of hazards storm grate conditions and a link to where to report such observed problems so they can be corrected. System should be able to acknowledge receipt of reported problem as well as a response in a reasonable period of time, and the ability to track a response. County-wide 311 citizen inquiry system is in development and should do all these things. Notification after standard working hours is also an issue of concern: who do citizens call on weekends or in the evenings. Police 911 are supposed to know to contact DOT depot emergency numbers after hours.

Item 3: Pedestrian Safety Week: The County Executive's Announcements. Mr.

Dunckel explained that the County Executive had declared the first week of September as Pedestrian Safety Week, holding 5 press events in 6 days. Each press event highlighted a major aspect of the County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative. Though exhausting for County staff to support so many back to back press events, the surge did accomplish the objective of focusing a lot of public attention on the issue of pedestrian safety. Dr. Gridlock gave a very thorough accurate summary of the County Ped Safety programs in his Sunday Column (September 14). Art Holmes wanted to make sure the PTSAC understood that the Road Code changes that were done by a group of 24 interested citizens, the Stakeholder Group, not by MCDOT. MCDOT did not draft the changes but rather the changes were drafted by citizens over a one year process. The Executive branch promulgated the rule change, but the proposed changes were made by the Stakeholders Group, with the use of facilitators and consultants. Mr. Dunckel told the group that Bill Frick, who could be at tonight's meeting, had suggested the Road Code, the subject of the second press event on September 4, should be a topic of discussion for the PTSAC. The 177-page Road Code is available through the County and the MNCPPC web site. Alan Migdall suggested the group should review the Road Code and make comments on whether there appeared to be any bias towards vehicles over pedestrians and cyclists in the proposed changes, or whether the committee supports proposed changes. Mr. Migdall offered to set up a list serve to facilitate committee discussion on line of the new Road Code. There was concern about the facilitators was expressed by Alyce Ortuza. She felt that the process as run by the facilitators was too closed and not welcoming to other concerned parties who were there to listen and possibly participate - - that some on the committee protested efforts of the facilitators to control the process and the agenda.

The first press event on September 2 was about the work beginning on the first High Incidence Area (HIA) on Piney Branch Road, between Flower Avenue and the Prince Georges County Line, which includes the worst intersection in the County at Piney Branch and University. Mr. Dunckel explained the process: a comprehensive Road Safety Audit will be conducted, where the County, with the State, will get out onto the street and into the community to evaluate what improvements need to be made. Mr. Dunckel shared (passed around) a similar study done for MD 500, Queen's Chapel Road

to show what could be expected from the field audit. The audits will be conducted in early October. Work will get underway on the first HIA this fall. That was the announcement made at the first press event.

The third press event on September 5, following the second event announcing the Road Code, focused on education, with the release of the Walk Safe DVD. This DVD was developed by Esther Bowring of the Public Information Office to be used with at risk immigrant populations through use in ESOL programs. Copies of the DVD were distributed to the committee. Four 5-minute sequences provide language lessons while demonstrating safe and unsafe pedestrian practices. The county has distributed 900 DVDs in the first week of distribution; demand has been great. The DVD can be downloaded off the ped safety web site; Peter Moe reported he had been problems with his attempts to down load the DVD. The intent is to make the DVD widely available to all who could use it to benefit pedestrians.

The fourth event on September 8 was to announce the dedication of \$4.8 million of revenue generated from speed cameras to be dedicated to fully implementing the Pedestrian Safety Initiative by funding the annual recurring costs of the program. Much discussion ensued on whether speed camera revenues were good or bad; Ms. Ortuzar expressed her opinion that speed cameras were not being fair to drivers who were otherwise driving carefully and should not be cited for speeding. Ms. Ortuzar felt cameras should not be capturing cars driving downhill that are safely coasting to save gas. Mr. Migdall pointed out that the purpose of speed cameras was to slow traffic down. Mr. Dunckel clarified that the legislation for speed cameras would not allow the funds to be used to supplant existing program funding. This is expected to significantly boost the ped safety program in the County.

Mr. Dunckel described the fifth and final press event on Arcola Avenue, which was very well covered by Dr. Gridlock and the area media. Speeds have dropped from 44 to 32 MPH on this stretch of roadway that used to be 4 lanes, but is now 2 lanes in the pedestrian-heavy section of roadway. Drivers are now stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalks. And elderly residents are reporting that they are now able to cross the road where before it was very difficult.

John Britton discussed the City of Rockville's use of speed camera revenues. Three or four additional strobe light enhanced crosswalks are being installed in Rockville. When these are installed, an educational outreach effort was suggested by Mr. Moe, alerting drivers and pedestrians to the proper use of these crosswalks. Mr. Britton was also impressed by the traffic calming improvements (road diet) made by the County at Connecticut Avenue and at Arcola; he would like to explore using a similar technique on old Darnestown Road, east of Glen Mill Road to slow traffic and provide safe ped crossings between Fallsgrove and Rockshire. Ms. Ortuzar expressed support for the imbedded lights at the Twinbrook Parkway crosswalk and asked about the cost differential was between the imbedded lights and the strobe light enhanced crosswalks. Mr. Britton described Rockville's attempt to work with the County to reduce the trucks

using the road; Mr. Britton would like to incrementally change the road to a more pedestrian-centric roadway, from the current truck and auto-centric use.

Item 4: Pedestrian Safety Education: Walk Safe DVD. Mr. Dunckel discussed Esther Bowring's (Public Information Office) plans for FY 09 - - to develop a drivers' education version of the Walk Safe DVD that would target young male drivers. Much discussion ensued as to whether this was the correct at-risk group to target in the next educational push. Linda Katz pointed out that the regional Street Smart campaign targets 18 to 28 year old male drivers. Peter Moe pointed out that diversion programs for people who receive certain types of traffic citations can be effective; perhaps DVD could be part of remediation program. Remediation can be targeted based on the types of citations received. Some citations indicated a higher probability that young driver will be involved in ped collisions. Mr. Dunckel suggested tabling the discussion until Esther Bowring could join the PTSAC to discuss her proposal and ways it could be targeted and used. The group agreed.

Item 5: Status of new State Safe Routes to Schools Grants. Mr. Pogue provided the committee with an update on efforts to hire a new Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator; nine candidates will be interviewed before the end of the month. Several candidates are from out-of-town. School outreach and engineering improvements: Mr. Pogue will be supporting and participating in the Walk to School Day campaign on October 8. This will be at the Piney Branch Elementary School. The County is support this effort with distribution of reflective materials. Engineering improvements are now planned for 11 different schools [These schools are Cannon Road ES, Clearspring ES, Flower Hill ES, Georgian Forest ES, Greenwood ES, Kingsview MS, Thurgood Marshall ES, Martin Luther King MS, Olney ES, Rosa Parks MS, Stone Mill ES] Mr. Pogue noted DPWT's contracted trainer will be available to support Mr. D'Andrea to do another training push as needed.

Item 6: Other Pedestrian Safety Activities. Mr. Dunckel described plans to participate in a Vigil event to commemorate World Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims, designated by the United Nations and the U.S. Congress as the third Sunday of November. The County supported this effort last year with a night vigil held at a synagogue on Connecticut Avenue. This year, it will be celebrated with a more upbeat message that "good things are happening." It will be a concert event at Blair High School on November 13. This event is in the planning stages. There is also a new regional publicity and enforcement push being planned for Street Smart, following the election on November 4. A second campaign is proposed for March.

Item 7: Committee comment/Issue follow –up/Open discussion/ identification future topics. Monday, September 22 is World No Fuel Day where everyone is to leave their cars at home. Metro is planning a promotion of this event. Bus and Bus Shelter advertising posters have been placed all over the County. Future agenda items: Ms. Ortuzar would like to discuss the role of roadside trees in slowing traffic and creating

better streetscapes, needed intersection changes for sidewalks and bike lanes as opposed to cars, MNCPPC's "disregard" for roadside trees and their efforts to weaken Councilmember Elrich's forest preservation legislation, and public campaigns targeting parents and doctors that promotes kids walking to bus stops, not driven - - and how families can inculcate exercise, especially walking and cycling in communities that have sidewalks. Mr. Migdall would like to discuss the new 311 system.

Item 8: Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will take place on November 18, 7:00 p.m., in the EOB's 10th floor conference room.

Minutes prepared by Jeff Dunckel, MCDOT.

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