



PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES FOR March 7, 2013 MEETING of the PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, and TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE Executive Office Building, Lobby Auditorium 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Members Present: Colleen Mitchell, Vice Chair; Ramin Assa; Cpt. Tom Didone; Darrel Drobnich; Benjamin Fulton (representing Councilmember Valerie Ervin); Steve Friedman; Angel Garcia-Ablanque; John Hall; Arthur Holmes, Jr.; Alan Migdall; Alyce Ortuzar; Anyesha Mookherjee, MSHA; Reemberto Rodriguez; Jack Strausman; David Sharp (by phone)

Members Absent: Erwin Mack, Chair; David Anspacher

Erwin Mack
Chair
Colleen Mitchell
Vice Chair

David Anspacher
Ramin Assa
Thomas Didone
Darrel Drobnich
Valerie Ervin
Steve Friedman
Angel Garcia-Ablanque
John Hall
Arthur Holmes, Jr.
Alan Migdall
Peter Moe
Alyce Ortuzar
Reemberto Rodriguez
David Sharp
Jack Strausman

County Staff: Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator; Nadji Kirby, MCDOT; Fred Lees, MCDOT; Michael Subin, County Executive's Office

Guests: Ari Mendelson, Resident; Michael Mendelson, Resident; Margaret Dieringer, Resident – Battery Park; Nancy Balz, Resident – Battery Park; Peggy Dennis, WMCCAB

Vice Chairman Colleen Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

1) PBTSAC Committee Business:

Colleen Mitchell, Vice Chair

Welcome and Introductions: Purpose of Tonight's Meeting - Colleen Mitchell welcomed guests and committee members and guests introduced themselves.

Review of Minutes from January Meeting – Approval/Changes - The meeting minutes from January were introduced (first item in packet).

MOTION: A motion was made to approve the January 3, 2012, minutes; approved unanimously.

Update on Reappointments (Dunckel) -: The County Executive has appointed Arthur Holmes, Jr, John Hall and Anyesha Mookherjee. Now the council needs to approve his appointments. This is scheduled for the March 19 Council Session.

PBTSAC Annual Report – 2012 (Mitchell) – She wants to finalize before the meeting with the County Executive Leggett in two weeks.

MOTION: A motion was made to preliminarily approve the draft of the Annual Report; approved unanimously. Colleen Mitchell asked for any additions to be provided to her by COB Friday, March 8, 2013.

Letter from Leggett regarding the Committee's Request for Pedestrian Safety Education Funding

– This was a response to the letter sent in January requesting additional funding. The Executive responded that the Committee's request will be considered during the course of development of the next Operating Budget. This budget submission is due to be announced by the Executive next week, March 15, according to Arthur Holmes, Jr. The idea of the Committee was to expand the educational program funding countywide. Education associated with school bus cameras was not specified in the request, though it was recommended by the Committee last year.

Department of Transportation

Pedestrian Collision Data Analysis/2013 Fatalities – Caption Didone reviewed the year’s fatal traffic collisions thus far. 4 of the 5 fatal collisions have involved pedestrians. This year a drunk drove across the grass and hit a pedestrian walking his dog. Driver had no record of past DUIs (first offense). This one was a fluke – no way to prevent – no road involved. Second case was a pedestrian who slipped on ice and fell in front of a moving car. On February 11 a 59 year using a walker was hit on Georgia Ave at Heathfield – unmarked crosswalk, a dark road, and he was wearing dark clothes. Pedestrian had the right of way. On February 26 (passed out flyers) around 7-8:15 pm a 53 year old female got off the bus on Connecticut Avenue and was struck by an unknown vehicle. Driver fled the scene, leaving her for dead. Again, an unmarked crosswalk and it was a dark road. Passer-by found her, but she succumbed to her injuries. The next day they posted over 2000 flyers. The following day Police were able to announce the type of vehicle. Have a crime solvers alert. It’s a very aggressive and active investigation. The 5th traffic fatality was not a pedestrian, but involved a drunk driver who hit a car and killed a passenger who was not wearing a seatbelt.

The Committee had a discussion about the different types of crosswalks and who has the right-of-way. It is an ambiguous legal definition – ultimately up to a judge’s interpretation as to who has right-of-way.

2) Follow-up on January PBTSAC Bicycle Meeting

Steve Friedman

Two major issues that came out of the January PBTSAC meeting were how to increase ridership and how to modify driver behavior. The Committee talked about improving infrastructure and BikeShare. Members felt the meeting was very successful – had open dialogue between groups that had never met before.

Issues Raised - Steve Friedman stated he needs to meet with Jeff Dunckel to come up with action items from the meeting. They will have this ready for next meeting of the Committee. Issues of note include the need for more bike lanes, the need to provide bike lanes when repaving occurs, and adherence to the Bicycle Master Plan.

ACTION: Dunckel will distribute the minutes of the January meeting to the participants at that meeting, both PBTSAC members and guests, and request suggestions for action items for the PBTSAC to consider. Friedman will coordinate the responses for discussion at the May meeting. Mitchell suggested that participants look for specific examples where the Master Plan is not being adhered to as a method to increase bike infrastructure.

HB 339 – Mandatory Helmet Laws - First general assembly with multiple bike advocates. Got together to visit the General Assembly last week when Bike MD was going on. One of the focus points was the new helmet law being voted on. Maryland would be the first state with a mandatory adult helmet law. Friedman stated helmets do not prevent injuries; they give you some protection if you fall. They feel that passing this law will cause less people to actually ride. The local bike groups are against the mandatory helmet law because of the potential to decrease bicycle ridership – they agree that everyone should wear a helmet, but it shouldn’t be required. No Montgomery County Delegates are supporting the bill. BikeShare could be affected because they do not provide helmets or rent them, which would stop people from the short bike trips that are the mainstay of the BikeShare program. Weather affected the voting schedule, so Friedman is not sure where the vote stands. Also concern over implications to the Contributory Negligence Law. Nancy Floreen did make a statement to the Legislature supporting the helmet law; she is concerned about the increased number of cyclists riding without helmets because of BikeShare. Jack Cochran, bicycle advocate, has a challenged people to carry around a bike helmet for a day, everywhere you go, to see how difficult it is.

Maryland Transportation Fund - There is a push for an increase in funding, which may be used for funding more bicycle facilities.

Modifications to 3-Foot Rule and Riding on Sidewalks Bills – Neither got out of committee.

3) Pedestrian Crossings

Colleen Mitchell, Fred Lees,
Anyesha Mookherjee

A number of items were raised by the disabilities community in the September PBTSAC meeting. The issues identified were put into categories. Some issues are educational for the group to understand current policies; some issues brought up concerns with infrastructure and policies. The purpose of this March meeting is to discuss crosswalks and pedestrian crossing facilities. Fred Lees discussed County policies; Anyesha Mookherjee discussed State policies. The first topic tonight is understanding the current crosswalk striping policies: what style of striping is used (high visibility versus parallel line), which legs of intersections get marked, and what is the policy for maintenance of crosswalks.

Crosswalk striping (and signal head) policy. For example, at Spring Street and Colesville Rd in downtown Silver Spring, the east leg of the intersection (across Colesville), nearest the library is not marked so pedestrians have to cross three legs of the intersection to get across the street from Spring Street. What is the policy here?

Providing 4 legs in high activity areas (e.g. Spring Street and Colesville) – This is a high pedestrian and vehicular volume area (6 lanes of traffic in a high pedestrian area). The committee asked why the State only has a crossing option on three legs of the intersection. The fourth leg does not have a pedestrian signal head nor a striped crosswalk. Mookherjee explained that adding a pedestrian signal phase on that side of the intersection would slow traffic movements, especially due to high volumes of left turning vehicles from Spring Street. She stated the State has to take into consideration the cycle of the lights and the amount of wait time – Spring Street is a split phase signal with heavy traffic volumes, which limits crossing times. Asked about the process of evaluating pedestrian crossing locations and signals when there is major growth in pedestrian traffic, Mookherjee said the State evaluates any intersections that are requested.

Didone explained the reason Spring Street only has three legs of the intersection marked for pedestrians is due to the turn lanes and the traffic patterns on that street. It's not illegal to cross where it's not marked, but it does disrupt traffic flow. To correct this, they would need to delay one of the turning lanes.

Action: Mitchell requested that the State study the Colesville Road and Spring Street intersection for the possibility of adding crossing facilities (signal head and striped crosswalk) to the north leg of the intersection. Mitchell requested that the marked, unsignalized crosswalk across Colesville just east of the intersection leading to the library be re-evaluated due to safety concerns (multiple threat location, high speeds, etc.)

Fred Lees talked about the County's Signal Head Policy (at signalized intersections) and the installation of crosswalks on County roadways, which is leaning towards ladder bars style crosswalks (like on the Beatles Album "Abby Road") – still working on the best spacing of bars to reduce wear. Studies show ladder bars (high visibility) are more visible to motorists. . Nobody was clear if high visibility (perpendicular bars or diagonal bars) or parallel line are better for visually impaired people.

ACTION: David Sharp would check with the disabilities community to see if there was any advantage to either ladder style crosswalks or parallel lined crosswalks.

The State only uses diagonal line high-visibility crosswalks at school crossings, freeway ramps and in urban districts unless there is a special exception based on a request. The State installs crosswalks at signalized intersections where there are ped heads, all school crossings, hiker/biker crossings, where there are pedestrian crossing warning signs, and mid-block/non-intersection crossing locations. Ortuzar questioned the policy of restricting the use of high-visibility crosswalks; the State will consider other locations on a case-by-case basis if requested.

High Visibility versus Parallel Lines? Mitchell questioned whether high visibility crosswalks at signalized intersections are needed given the added expense compared to parallel line crosswalk markings.. With proper spacing of bars, County expects cost of maintenance to be reduced for ladder

style high-visibility crosswalks. County has not used the zigzag style of crosswalk from England. This zigzag isn't a style of crosswalk, it is actually a longitudinal line treatment used to warn motorists approaching a crosswalk or other hazard. Mookherjee cited the need for crosswalks to comply with the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Asked whether the County considered using signals that stopped all traffic for pedestrians to cross diagonally at the intersection (Barnes Dance), Lees replied the County is not currently doing this because it adds significantly to the cycle length – requiring both pedestrians and vehicles to wait longer at intersections.

There are more and more federal requirements for timing. The trend is to get longer and longer cycles.

Maintenance Goal: The County got an increase in the budget this year for installing and restriping crosswalks; the goal is to restripe crosswalks on a 3 year cycle. MCDOT will be going out this spring to start the restriping process. The State will also be remarking crosswalks– the priority is school zone locations. MCDOT doesn't put crosswalks at all bus stops. There is a website operated by Ride On that shows the bus stops that are improved with crosswalks and signals or relocated closer to safer crossing locations. This highlights the need to limit speed where transit riders are trying to cross the roadways (relating to the speed camera issue.)

Placement of speed cameras on State roads in relation to crossings (example: Georgia Ave between Spring Street and 16th) - In order to install a speed camera, the location must have a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less, or be a school zone. Speed cameras are only installed in residential areas. The area between 16th Street and Spring Street is a corridor- - trying to slow down drivers before they get to Spring Street which is why the fixed camera is where it is. MCPD are trying to get approval to mount a portable camera unit in the area. MCPD will pick stops in the corridor for the portable camera units, and will move them periodically. The ultimate goal is to get people to slow down in the residential zones before drivers get to the commercial zones. Mitchell feels the speed camera is too far from the volume of pedestrian crossings and the bus stop. Pedestrian factors are taken into consideration, but are not the only factor. The location of a bus stop is just one factor in determining the location of the camera. A prime factor is the speed drivers are going and whether there is anything that could be hit by a speeding vehicle. Mitchell requests that consideration be given to putting speed cameras closer to locations where pedestrians are crossing at uncontrolled locations (such as Georgia and Noyes Drive) and bus stops.

Marked, unsignalized crossings with high vehicular speeds – Ortuzar felt more crosswalks are needed on State roadways where speeds are higher; Mitchell disagreed, stating marked, unsignalized crossings on major roadways are shown in studies to be more dangerous. Assa stated the answer was more paid police officers on the street issuing tickets because the officers can deal with more than just speeding.

Unmarked, unsignalized crosswalks – policy of State and County – where appropriate, MCDOT will mark a ladder pedestrian crosswalk with signage on roads with pedestrian facilities, even if it is a multi-lane roadway. Any uncontrolled crossing on county roads where traffic engineers determine people should be directed to cross will be marked, regardless of speed. Speed will help determine where the engineers want to have people crossing.

Use of Hazard Indication Beacons (HIBs) in advance of crosswalks/Pedestrian Activated Signals: (MD117, MD320) SHA is considering areas to place these, but the findings have shown that people don't obey Pedestrian Activated Signals – they get so used to the road that they don't notice the red lights when pedestrians activate them. Mookherjee offered to check to see if SHA is currently testing any of these types of signals. The PBTSAC expressed interest in pursuing more use of this technology in the County. In Rockville, there are four Pedestrian Activated Signals at crosswalks that are not at traffic signals. The Rockville's experience is that these work well. SHA has had technical issues with theirs. HIBs are placed by SHA, and then given to the County to run. Alan Migdall has used the one at Clopper Road. After hitting the button, a red light came on, and a voice said there would be flashing

lights, but he didn't see the flashing light, confusing him. Turns out it was 350 feet behind him, but he had no idea at the time. Dunkel reported a similar situation at the new HIBs on Piney Branch Road. The State will need to reconsider the design to be more user friendly – letting the waiting pedestrians know something has been activated.

ACTION: Alan Migdall and Anyesha Mookherjee will meet at the Clopper Road HIB to review the operation for possible improvements that could be made and report back to the PBTSAC.

4) New Business/Comments

Committee

Street Smart Campaign– 2013 (Dunkel) – New campaign. Going to launch on April 9, 2013, and hit the streets on April 15, 2013. The name of the campaign is “Tired Faces.”

Annual Meeting with Isiah Leggett - March 19, 7:00 pm (Mitchell) – Asked is anyone wants to attend. This one-on-one meeting with the County Executive hasn't been done for the last 3 years, as he has instead met with all of the committees in a large group in one session.

Seneca Valley High School (Didone) – Follow up to the fatal collision involving a student. We have an educational and enforcement campaign that will be going out in April, and will probably carry it over to Northwest High School. We are trying to make something good out of something bad that happened.

Blair Walk Project – Train-the-Trainer (Kirby) – This was a few weeks ago. Twelve Blair High School students were trained to teach the elementary school students safe pedestrian behaviors with crosswalk simulations. This is for kindergarteners and first graders. She will be undertaking a similar program at Seneca Valley HS. Reemberto Rodriguez requested that Nadji Kirby notify him of when this is occurring so he can alert the community of this positive activity.

5) Open Discussion

Bike Coordinator Update – According to Arthur Holmes, Jr. the hiring process is proceeding. His department is now in the interviewing stage in order to select a person to fill this upgraded and currently vacant position.

Sandy Hook Elementary – a group is riding down to the area sometime next week. Friedman is working on getting the route and dates.

Next Committee meeting will be held on May 2, 2013.

6) Adjourn - Colleen Mitchell ended the meeting at 9:08 pm.