

Charlottesville Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

March 3rd, 2016

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

NDS Conference Room, 2nd floor City Hall

Meeting Participants

Amanda Poncy

Carl Schwarz

Chris Gist

Claudia Elzey

Eberhard Jehle

Jake Fox

Lena Seville

Peter Ohlms

Ruth Stornetta

Scott Bandy

Scott Paisley

Stephen Bach

Items for Further Action or Follow-Up

- Amanda Poncy will determine whether pedestrian count data for Emmet Street shows sufficient traffic to recommend a shared-use path on the eastern versus the western side.
- BPAC will submit its statement to City Council as part of the March 21 meeting.
- Lena Seville will send out a list of *Streets that Work*/Code Audit topics, so that BPAC members can identify the top priorities for study and discussion.
- BPAC members will urge West Main Street merchants to write to City Council in support of a streetscape alternative for West Main Street.

Meeting Minutes

5:06pm HB2 Emmet Street Project Review

Amanda Poncy introduced House Bill 2, which dictates a new process for statewide funding of transportation projects. Charlottesville's application for bicycle, transit, and pedestrian improvements to Emmet Street is moving forward (along with two other applications regarding East High Street and Fontaine Avenue). The components of the proposed Emmet Street project include ADA-compliant crossings, a multi-use trail on the east side of the street, 5-ft bike lanes where space allows, a median extension south of the John Paul Jones Arena, landscaping, CAT and UTS bus stop consolidation and amenities, and pedestrian improvements to the curb island at Emmet/Ivy intersection. The proposal (a collaboration between the City and University of Virginia) is still loosely defined based on University planning, but no extensive planning has been done to ensure that potential connections are being optimized.

Lena Seville asked why it would be useful to have both a shared-use path and bike lanes. Amanda Poncy responded that it is important to consider all users, including those who do and do not feel comfortable with riding a bicycle on a high-traffic-volume road. Jake Fox added that if it proved impossible to purchase 10' of right-of-way on either side of Emmet, as the project proposes, bike lanes would become very important given the heavy traffic and 35-mph speed limit.

Eberhard Jehle remarked that many students currently bike on the sidewalk along Emmet Street; a path would serve them well. However, he suggested that the path be on the west side of Emmet Street, to facilitate connections to the pedestrian bridge and avoid swampy areas on the eastern side.

Peter Ohlms asked whether this project would involve more than paving and restriping—for instance, knocking down the curbs and reconstructing the roadway. Amanda Poncy confirmed that it would, although full demolition would be minimized where possible.

Mr. Jehle said he believed the University has plans to redevelop the Cavalier Inn as a conference hotel and a fine arts facility, which the streetscape project should take into account.

Mr. Ohlms pointed out that, absent plans to redesign the railroad bridge over Emmet Street, a shared-use path underneath the bridge will be constrained there. Amanda Poncy explained that the project includes exploring the feasibility of a bicycle and pedestrian tunnel under the railroad bridge. Jake Fox said that such a tunnel would have to be placed a considerable distance from the street to avoid the abutments of the bridge, and that land uses along the street would complicate this.

Stephen Bach asked whether the University might be willing to make a more straightforward connection from the street to the bicycle and pedestrian bridge from the east side. Mr. Ohlms objected that a shared-use path would make more sense on the west side because the majority of pedestrian destinations—Barracks Road Shopping Center and the John Paul Jones complex—are located. A path on west side would help with speedier pedestrian evacuation after events like basketball games. Mr. Bach proposed that, in that case, the path could become a boardwalk for the length of the creek and wetland area between Massie and Copeley roads.

Amanda Poncy agreed that Barracks Road shops are major destinations, but added that there is substantial student housing—a source of pedestrian traffic—on the eastern side. Mr. Jehle said that this housing is occupied mainly by foreign graduate student families and thus does not generate as much traffic as undergraduate housing does. Mr. Ohlms asked for pedestrian counts to confirm this.

Ms. Seville proposed that a pair of the newly acquired counters be placed on Emmet. Mr. Fox noted that placement would prove tricky because there is no existing bike lane.

Mr. Jehle felt it is important to consider the University's interest in Emmet as a scenic entryway. UVA may not want a multi-use path running along athletic facilities. Ruth Stornetta said, however, that paths and walkable environments can be very scenic.

Peter Ohlms wanted to know if new bus stops would be improved to American Disabilities Act standards and include bus pull-offs. Amanda Poncy answered yes to the first and no to the second question, given right-of-way and other constraints. Installing crosswalks at each bus station would probably not be considered given traffic speeds; however, consolidation of the stops would occur in order to optimize connections to crosswalks and the pedestrian bridge.

5:30pm Streets that Work/Code Audit

Lena Seville explained that the goal of BPAC is to learn about how changes in the City code as part of the Streets that Work initiative may affect the pedestrian and bicyclist experience. The first step is to

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examine a report written by City staff for the Planning Commission a year ago laying out how our current codes and ordinances reflect best practices (or not).

Peter Ohlms introduced his study topic, Street Design. One subtopic of this is access management. Vehicular access techniques may make it less comfortable to walk or bike. Mr. Ohlms noted that the HB2 process awards extra points to applications that include an access management strategy.

Ms. Seville said that although Bill Emory was unable to come to this meeting, he will be tackling pedestrian lighting as a topic. No one has been assigned street furniture.

Scott Paisley next introduced his topic: green infrastructure. It is being used in bicycle and pedestrian improvements—e.g. by including permeable paving in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Carl Schwarz's topic is site and building design. He noted that the *Streets that Work Guidelines* will already include some positive recommendations for how buildings should address and respond to the street.

Lena Seville investigated massing & scale. She observed that step-backs were not mentioned in the staff report and that insufficient consideration was given to the three-dimensional quality that truly makes buildings interesting to the pedestrian (beyond windows and façade features). Ms. Seville also discussed spatial enclosure. She felt that the principle of enclosure could be taken too far, since even in rooms, furniture lines the walls as a buffer; people do not walk directly along the walls. Mr. Ohlms said the idea of enclosure was: the wider the street, the bigger the buildings need to be in order to feel a sense of enclosure. Carl Schwarz remarked that Kurt Keesecker on the Planning Commission adheres to a 1:1 street width to building height ratio. If there is a 60-ft right of way, 60-ft tall buildings are ideal. Scott Paisley said that the Planning Commission has recommended a 15-ft setback for West Main Street. This greater setback is supported by the Tree Commission, to provide room for street trees.

Ms. Seville next turned to density and intensity of use. Staff's report recommended commercial use on the ground floor to activate the street and a lower maximum block size, with pedestrian walkways (not just roads) serving to bisect too-large blocks. This would both counteract neighborhood concerns about too much access and help complete the street grid. Other topics Ms. Seville introduced are semi-private spaces; open space and trails; and housing types and affordability.

Carl Schwarz asked how BPAC will proceed, and whether the next step was to directly examine the City Code. Ruth Stornetta suggested that Lena Seville enumerate the relevant topics, email the list to BPAC members, and then gather feedback on high priorities for discussion. One to two topics could be chosen per meeting. This would make research less daunting. The goal would be to produce a BPAC recommendation on each topic.

5:59: *Streets that Work Demonstration Project*

Amanda Poncy announced that the City, in partnership with a University of Virginia Capstone Class, Toole Design Group, TJPDC, and others, will host a temporary streetscape installation event from 10am-2pm on April 16th, with set-up 7-9am. The goal is chiefly to demonstrate Streets that Work principles with chalk, cones, and planters, and to gather public input. 2nd street was chosen as the location for demo project. The demonstration will also show plans for the Monticello/6th Street intersection as part

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of Safe Routes to School. Amanda Poncy asked for BPAC volunteers and encouraged BPAC to have a presence at the event, for example by demonstrating bicycle and pedestrian wayfaring strategies.

Peter Ohlms suggested BPAC could adopt a block of 2nd Street from Water Street to the railroad tracks, chalking in a climbing bike lane.

Ruth Stornetta said that since Ix is already a pop-up location, one could easily have a food truck at its entrance on 2nd Street. Ludwig Kuttner is always excited about having more visibility for the Ix Art Park. Amanda Poncy said that she had already contacted Oliver Kuttner about the potential for temporary outdoor seating at the Glass House. Jake Fox suggested Sidetracks Music and other businesses across from the Glass House could be invited to participate.

6:10 West Main Street Committee Statement

Scott Paisley introduced the statement he has drafted to make BPAC's recommendation of West Main Streetscape Option 1 to City Council. City Urban Design Planner Carrie Rainey told Mr. Paisley that the statement should be completed by Monday, March 7th at the latest to get it into the council packet for the March 21st City Council Agenda.

Ruth Stornetta affirmed that BPAC likes the direction the document is going. Chris Gist agreed to help Mr. Paisley assemble the necessary links and attachments.

Stephen Bach emphasized the need to keep the statement brief. Ms. Stornetta agreed that it should be condensed into clear bullet points, to get attention. Anyone looking for more details could refer to the links.

Scott Paisley described the West Main Steering Committee's difficulty in compromising on one streetscape design and thus BPAC's potential influence on Council, especially as a group representing both bicyclists and pedestrians.

Ruth Stornetta emphasized that BPAC's statement should be independent, not linked in any way to the West Main Steering Committee or the conflict with merchants along the street over on-street parking. Peter Ohlms agreed that if the statement mentions parking at all, it should be with regard to its value as a buffer for pedestrians.

Carl Schwarz asked for a powerful conclusion that refers back to the beginning of the statement and makes clear that "Option 1 is the best."

6:40pm Diversifying Engagement—Scott Paisley

Scott Paisley discussed Asheville's mobility plan which, instead of planning for bicyclists and pedestrians alone, involved merchants and other stakeholders. He suggested that in light of the approaching Bike Month events (May), BPAC might imitate Asheville in hosting a more inclusive event. This would help BPAC combat the label of "special interest," which allows it to be discredited or discounted.

Amanda Poncy mentioned April Economides, an economist whose firm, Green Octopus Consulting, works with business associations, advocacy groups, and government agencies to plan and implement bike-friendly business practices. BPAC could invite her as a speaker to kick off the dialogue. Jake Fox suggested scheduling the event in conjunction with Midtown Street Fair (held in the late summer).

6:51pm Finalize Bike Counter Locations

BPAC briefly discussed where the two permanent, in-road bicycle counters would be located, in addition to the ones destined for West Main Street. The first location will be Preston Avenue at Fifth Season; the other is on Jefferson Park Avenue (at Maury Road) near a pizza eatery, which will capture traffic in the lane headed towards Fontaine Research Park.

Upcoming events

March 7:	City Council, West Main Street Zoning
March 15-16:	VDOT, HB2 Funding, SYIP Spring Public Hearing
March 16 3-4PM:	APBP Webinar—“Understanding the Funding Process”
March 21:	City Council, West Main Streetscape (Tentative)
March 22 6-8PM:	Ragged Mt. Natural Area Master Planning, Trinity Church
March 24 7-9PM:	Streets that Work Open House, City Space
April 7 5-7PM:	Bike/Ped Advisory Committee Meeting
April 16, 10-2PM:	Streets that Work Demonstration Project
April 20 3-4PM:	APBP Webinar—“Shared and Off-Street Paths”