

**Houston Bike Plan
Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) - Meeting # 3
Wednesday, September 9, 2015
611 Walker, 6th Floor, Raia Conference Room**



Attendees:

BAC Members:

Carra Moroni & Michelle Caruso (COH – HDD)	Patrick Walsh (COH – P&D)
Capt. Satterwhite & Sgt. Peña (COH – HPD)	Lisa Lin (COH – Sustainability)
Anita Hollmann & Jeff Weatherford (COH – PWE)	Rachel Die (COH – HPARD)
Clark Martinson (Energy Corridor MD)	Lonnie Hoogeboom (Downtown MD)
Chip Place (HPB)	Jason Morgan (METRO)
Andrew Pompeii (H-GAC)	Matt Starr (Neighborhood Centers)
Sue Page (Alief Independent School District)	Cheryl Smith (HISD)
Michael Payne & Mary Blitzer (Bike Houston)	Neil Bremner (Bike Barn)
Will Rub (Houston B-cycle)	Fab Ordonez (Critical Mass)
Steve Parker (Super Neighborhood Alliance)	Cedric Douglas (Neighborhood Rep.)
Jay Blazek Crossley (Complete Streets Coalition)	Ann Taylor (ULI)

City Council:

Melissa Arredondo (CM Costello)	Evan Austin (CM Martin)
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City Planning and Development (P&D) Staff:

Cathy Halka	Amar Mohite
Matthew Seubert	Margaret Wallace – Brown

Consultant Team:

Geoff Carleton (TEI)	Shaida Libhart (TEI)
Alex Weinheimer (TEI)	Christof Spieler (Morris)
Mandi Chappa (Morris)	Zakcq Lockrem (Asakura Robinson)

1) Welcome and Introductions

Patrick Walsh, Director of the Planning & Development Department (P&D), welcomed BAC participants. Director Walsh provided an overview of the agenda and mentioned that this meeting the planning team will introduce the bicycle planning ‘toolbox’ and explain to BAC members how tools will be used.

Cathy Halka (P&D), Project Manager, summarized work completed to date. This includes public feedback on vision and goals, including about 2,900 survey responses from the public and over 800 map comments. Ms. Halka has also recently briefed the Planning Commission and the Transportation, Technology, and Infrastructure (TTI) Committee of City Council.

2) Bike Plan Presentation

a) Survey Overview

Geoff Carleton (TEI) continued the presentation. He noted that areas with high rates of public participation tend to correspond to areas that already have more comfortable bicycle facilities. Mr. Carleton summarized survey responses regarding the self-categorization or segmentation of types of bicyclists, including gender breakdown and comparison with peer cities. Survey responses indicated a higher proportion of 'enthused and confident' riders than seen in peer cities. Mr. Carleton summarized the survey responses regarding goals, in which enhancing safety and improving connectivity and access in a low-stress network were most commonly cited. The gender breakdown of the survey results showed that women were more concerned with safety than men. A safer network will be needed to attract a greater number of 'interested but concerned' riders. Most respondents did not agree that Houston currently has a well-connected, safe bicycle network. In terms of network preferences, respondents favored a bike lane (preferably separated) or an off-street bike path. Respondents favored a variety of bicycle parking options, including bike lockers, bike racks and other types of parking.

Jay Blazek Crossley (Complete Streets Coalition) requested that survey responses be cross-tabbed by gender.

Lonnie Hoogeboom (DTMD) noted that the survey did not reach many non-riders and asked how best to reach them. Mr. Carleton responded that the 'interested but concerned' category captures some non-riders and that it will be important for the Plan to show benefits to the public at large, including non-cyclists.

Mr. Crossley asked if the 'no way, no how' respondents indicated a reason for their response. Michael Payne (BikeHouston) noted that we are trying to reach the 'interested but concerned' people. Mr. Carleton added that everyone needs to see the benefit of the Bike Plan.

Ann Taylor (ULI) asked about the use of exclusive bike paths. Mr. Carleton replied that the BAC will examine this in the 'bicycle toolbox.'

b) Update on Goals

Mr. Carleton summarized the revised vision and goals, which incorporate previous feedback from the BAC and from the Mayor's office.

c) Bike Plan Toolbox

Mr. Carleton explained that the toolbox includes projects, policies, and programs. He noted that the League of American Bicyclists (the League) awarded Houston a Bronze-level bicycle-friendly designation partially because it has good educational programs, although it falls short in terms of existing and planned projects compared to peer cities. Mr. Carleton noted that the toolbox explicitly does not include existing substandard bicycle facilities.

Christof Spieler (Morris) explained that projects would focus on improving level of comfort, and would include, for example, improving bike lanes and intersections. Mr. Spieler continued that policies might include regulations relating to bike parking, design manuals, or coordination with transit.

Zakcq Lockrem (Asakura Robinson) explained that partner organizations will often be responsible for program development. Programs could include certification from organizations such as the League, outreach from organizations such as BikeHouston, and programs focused on improving bicycle ownership and access, facility maintenance, education and data collection. Mr. Carleton asked the BAC to notify the planning team if tools are missing from the draft list in their handouts.

3) Create a Bike Plan Group Mapping Exercise

Mr. Spieler explained the instructions for the Create a Bike Plan mapping exercise. The BAC worked through the exercise in five small groups. At the conclusion of the group exercise, Mr. Carleton used a 'clicker' to survey the participants on their approach to developing their small group Bike Plan. Key answers are summarized below:

Question 1: What destinations were your priorities?

The most common answers were jobs, retail, schools, and multi-family residential.

Question 2: Who were you primarily trying to serve?

The most common answers were commuters, choice riders, and low-income households.

Question 3: How did you handle the tradeoff for roadway space between bikes and cars?

The most common answer was to add a bike facility.

Question 4: What was your approach?

The most common answers were to create a more direct path and to add off-street paths.

Mr. Spieler led the discussion on the group exercise. He observed that individual groups tended to start with the off-street trails, easier streets, and college areas while the transit centers were left until later. Some groups created a grid system, while others prioritized 'low-hanging fruit.' Connecting neighborhoods to each other was a lower priority than other connections, such as to downtown, parks, and colleges.

The BAC began a general discussion. Fab Ordonez (Critical Mass) observed that the reality of bicycling in the City is that riders favor the low-volume streets.

Jeff Weatherford (PWE) noted that the BAC generally did not hesitate to remove traffic lanes to add a bike lane, but that in practice, PWE often hears objections from the public when proposing to remove a traffic lane.

Mr. Spieler noted that there was a good discussion of the pros and cons of adding traffic signals. He noted that several of the small groups were challenged on how to address connections to low-income neighborhoods.

Sue Page (Alief ISD) noted that a safer facility might be especially important for lower income communities, where bicycle riders might be less likely to use helmets or lights. Mr. Spieler noted that no group put a bike facility in the high income neighborhood, probably because its existing street design and low traffic volume is already relatively bike-friendly.

Cedric Douglas (Neighborhood Representative) asked what the next steps are. Mr. Carleton responded that a next step would be for the Houston Bike Plan team to develop a draft network for Houston considering the approach and ideas from this exercise.

Mary Blitzer (BikeHouston) asked about the distinction between the job and retail categories, given that many people work at retail jobs. Mr. Carleton responded that there might be overlap between categories.

Will Rub (B-Cycle) asked the planning team to try to ascertain bicycle demand. Mr. Carleton stated that the Plan would try to serve the most people, with the most service to the public for the lowest cost.

Mr. Carleton conducted the 'clicker' survey a second time, using similar questions, following the general discussion that had taken place. Survey results were generally consistent with the first round of surveys, and are summarized below.

Question 5: What destinations would be your priorities?

The most common answers were jobs and multi-family residential.

Question 6: Who would you primarily serve?

The most common answers were low-income riders and choice riders.

Question 7: How would you handle the tradeoff for roadway space between bikes and cars?

The most common answer again was to add a bike facility.

Question 8: What would be your approach?

The most common answers were to create a more direct path, and to focus on both on- and off-street facilities.

Mr. Carleton noted that in some instances, a four-lane road can be converted to a three-lane road with bike lanes without a substantial negative impact to vehicle drivers. Mr. Rub noted that there are also four-lane one-way streets with excess capacity. Ms. Blitzer asked for a comparison between bike lane capacity and traffic lane capacity. Mr. Carleton responded that the capacity of a single traffic lane on an urban street is approximately 700 vehicles per hour. Some bike lanes receive over 700 trips per hour, but none currently do so in Houston.

Mr. Ordonez asked how to get children safely to school, since many parents (and schools) will not allow their children to ride alone. Mr. Carleton agreed that this is a challenge, as the share of children who walk or bike to school has dropped over time. Mr. Spieler noted that the 'rolling school bus' has had some success in getting children to school more safely.

Mr. Crossley noted that some changes – such as converting one way to two-way streets, are difficult to achieve. Mr. Spieler noted that this is a reality that we face as we develop the Bike Plan. In many case, developing the Plan must consider constraints resulting from decisions that were made many years ago.

4) Wrap Up/Next Steps

Ms. Halka congratulated the BAC on their work. She explained that the next steps include refining the bicycle toolbox. The consultant team and staff will work on drafting a bicycle network in late September, which will be shared with the BAC prior to their next meeting. Ms. Halka added that there will be a women's bike focus group in late September, as well as a second focus group that will look at a specific neighborhood. Ms. Halka explained that the BAC will be provided with meeting materials prior to the next meeting, and that in the meantime, outreach efforts would continue. Mr. Hoogeboom mentioned that the Downtown District and the City are co-hosting a 3-day bicycle planning workshop for the downtown area October 14-16, and the BAC is invited to attend the public sessions. Mr. Carleton mentioned that the Bike Plan will be coordinated with planning efforts from management districts.

Next BAC Meeting: TBD in November or early December. Details will be forthcoming.