

Third Ward: Mobility Workshop | NOTES

June 6, 2018 | 6 pm - 8 pm

Meeting Organizer Velyjha Southern

Type of meeting In-Person

Location Trinity East Methodist Church
2418 McGowen St.
Houston, TX 77004

Attendees

Third Ward Community

City of Houston Transportation Planning Team

Dr. Inge Ford, Education Director, Bike Houston

Maya Ford, Chair of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, (BAC)

Topic: Discussion of Proposed Bikeway Routes | **Speakers:** Velyjha Southern, Jennifer Ostlind, Peter Eccles, Inge Ford and Maya Ford

AGENDA

- I. Welcome & Introduction [Jennifer]
- II. Presentations [Inge, Maya, Velyjha & Peter]
- III. Small Group Activity [Velyjha]
- IV. Discussion [Peter]
- V. Closing Remarks [Velyjha]

TRANSPORTATION TEAM

Approximately 40 people attended the 6:00 p.m. meeting. Representatives from Precinct 1, Bike Houston, the community, Alameda/OST Redevelopment Authority, METRO, TEI, Ford Momentum, HR Green, Houston Southeast, University of Houston, Canfield Oaks Civic Club, Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC), Houston Public Library, Link Houston, Sankofa Research Institute, etc.

The meeting started out with Jennifer Ostlind framing the workshop by introducing the planning process and explaining the purpose of the meeting. Next Dr. Inge Ford, Bike Houston, Education Director, and Maya Ford, Chair of the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), spoke on the health and economic value that biking adds to the transportation system. Velyjha followed the presentation with discussions on how the proposed bikeway routes were selected and Peter talked about the bikeway toolbox options. The remainder of the time was spent on the workshop activity which was a small group discussion based around the below facilitator questions. The meeting went well, good support from the attendees. However, some of the matters of concern were the various types of bike lanes and the safety of them all.

Summary:

Facilitated discussion questions:

- What does success look like in this project?
- Do you go to these destinations? Did we get them right?

- Is there anywhere else you want to ride your bike to?
- Which of the proposed routes are you most excited about?
- What concerns you about the proposed routes?
- Which of the bikeway options do you like the best and why? (Facilitator should mention trade-offs for preferred bikeway routes)
- Indicate your most important mobility goals (i.e. safety, vehicle delay, pedestrian accessibility)
- MAP EXERCISE: Identify key transportation gaps in the community. What major destinations (parks, schools, job centers, trails, etc.) should this project work to improve transportation choices to?
- What are the biggest challenges and opportunities to mobility in this area?
- Did we get it right?

1. Safety

The community members explained that bike lanes will likely improve safety by reducing crime because there will be more eyes on the street. Currently, some safety concerns include people loitering in areas (Wheeler & Live Oak) and people driving too fast (Emancipation Ave.). Other general safety concerns were brought up about the vicinity between the Columbia Tap and Scott and Tuam and Holman to I-45. Specifically, some residents stated that even though Columbia Tap is popular, it feels scary due to lack of lighting and crime. One participant noted that many street lights are just burned out, not seriously broken. Unsafe intersections discussed during the small group include MacGregor at Tierwester, Cleburne at Alameda, Tuam and Scott, and Holman and Scott.

People are requesting more lighting in the area, maybe a police presence on bicycles. Emergency buttons along the trails and push buttons for cyclist at intersections. Additionally, the citizens were interested in maintenance matters as well. If we create these lanes – which municipality is going to be responsible for the upkeep of the areas? We can't just build them and forget them, this would also relate to and bring on safety issues. For example, if the grass were to get too high. Walkability was an issue, because they were concerned about being able to be mobile and safe without a bicycle.

2. Destinations

Elgin and Emancipation were brought up several times partly due to their access to several destinations including Riverside Hospital and schools on Elgin, Emancipation park and businesses along Emancipation. The residents compared Emancipation Ave. to Westheimer because of its proximity to bars and the fast driving at night.

Other important destinations mentioned are grocery stores: the future HEB at McGregor and 288, Kroger at Cullen and Polk; HEB at OST and Scott, Main Street Rail Line, churches, existing bike trails along bayou and Columbia Tap trail, Downtown, MacGregor Elementary school, Hermann Park, and access to northern destinations such as the EaDo Stadium.

3. Parking

The residents at the table agreed that parking was an issue along Emancipation, however, opinions differed on whether implementing a bike lane would improve or worsen the parking issue. Some residents thought that putting in a bike lane would deter people from driving cars while others figured that if a bike lane was installed on Emancipation then drivers would instead park on the neighborhood local streets. The residents also brought up the fact that some businesses need the on-street parking for valet and may not support the removal of parking. Residents seemed to be ok with removing one lane of parking on Wheeler and other streets. It was pointed out that most of the parkers on Wheeler and Holman are students. Some wondered whether TSU students parked on Wheeler because the university garage was full or because they preferred not to pay for the parking pass. Neighborhoods south of Wheeler have residential permit parking.

4. Routes

The residents offered suggestions on the type of bike lanes and preferred routes for the community.

- Cleburne: proposes standard bike lane
- Tuam vs. Elgin: residents believe that Elgin is a better option for a bikeway than Tuam because Tuam doesn't have any destinations. They also mentioned that Elgin is becoming "livelier" with the impending renovation of Riverside hospital and restaurants around the Elgin and Ennis vicinity.
- McGowen and Ennis: community stated that they believe that short-term bikeway projects can be implemented on both streets.
- Wheeler Transit Center: The community pointed out there was no direct connection to Wheeler Transit Center which is an important destination. The community was open to the location of routes as long as it connected Third Ward to the transit center.
- Emancipation might be better route than Hutchins due to faster speeds on Hutchins and more existing and future destinations along Emancipation.
- Cleburne is a better east-west route than Wheeler because it's straight, doesn't go through the congested TSU campus, and connects to Midtown. Also connects to several schools.
- Most UH students head west on Wheeler then south on Canfield then west on Blodgett to avoid congested TSU campus. Canfield may be better north-south route than Tierwester.
- Excited about:
 - Hutchins as a north-south connector, but Emancipation began generating interest because there are more destinations (restaurants, clubs) along Emancipation.
 - Cullen – a great connector close to UH with a direct connection to Brays Bayou
 - Austin/Caroline as a north-south connector through Midtown. McGowen as east-west connector from Midtown to Columbia Tap (pleasant street to ride down).
- Concerned about:
 - Holman and Tuam – mostly safety-related concerns (crime). Also, there are no destinations on these streets, only abandoned buildings. Suggestion to partner with TSU and Southeast Management District to mitigate crime and stray dogs in these corridors.
- Would like to see:
 - Route on Alabama because it connects three universities

- Route on Emancipation (most-discussed route)
 - Connects to Stadium, connects to Southmore, businesses, and parking would not be an issue because people currently park there illegally
- Route on Southmore and Blodgett
 - Southmore could be a potential partnership with METRO
- Improvements on Polk

5. Design

- Residents also touched on design during their conversation. Safety was at the core of most of the design suggestions. It was agreed on that lighting is essential, buffers are needed on busy streets, speed bumps or other traffic calming measures should always be used no matter how busy the street is or isn't, and crossings of busy thoroughfares should be made more visible (e.g. Columbia Tap). Additionally, the community stated that the bike facility types (e.g. Buffered lane vs shared lane) should be flexible and context sensitive (could change block to block) and the design should ensure that conflicts with bus stops are minimized. Finally, residents mentioned that bike lanes between curbs and parked cars won't work because people will park in the bike lanes

6. Questions/Comments

There were some questions/comments that the residents raised throughout the discussion.

- Residents stated that crossing I-45 from Third Ward is very challenging.
- Residents were confused about the bike lane and bulb out that is on Hutchins/Tuam. However, after it was explained that the bulb out is a traffic calming tool, the residents said that the bulb out served its purpose because most people slow down or stop when they see it because they don't know what it is.
- Residents were curious as to why the Lamar Cycle Track randomly ends at Polk and St. Emanuel rather than extend further down Polk to the Columbia Tap Trail.
- The residents also questioned whether TSU would want the Tierwester route to bring bike traffic through their campus.
- College Oaks residents don't support a dedicated bike lane on Wheeler through their neighborhood.

ACTION ITEMS

- ❖ Relay feedback learned from the workshop to Precinct One and the engineer/design team working on the project.
 - ❖ Determine feasibility of priority routes identified by the community.
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