

CONNECTICUT BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD

Report pursuant to Section 2(h) of Public Act 09-154, An Act Concerning Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

January 15, 2010

I. Background

The Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board has met twice – first on December 3, and then two weeks later on December 17, 2009. Both meetings were hosted by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department) at its headquarters in Newington. The first meeting included presentations by Jeffrey A. Parker, Deputy Commissioner of Transportation and James P. Redeker, Bureau Chief for Public Transportation and Interim Bureau Chief for Policy and Planning.

During the second meeting David Head, Office of Intermodal Planning and David Balzer, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, discussed the new State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the Department's recent Share the Road campaign. Thomas Harley, Chief Engineer, presented material on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations for Road Design. Commissioner Marie joined us to introduce himself to the Board.

Pam Sucato, Department Legislative Program Manager, coordinated both meetings.

During the inaugural meeting Ray Rauth was elected to the post of Chairman, Erin Sturgis-Pascale, Vice-Chairman and John Ferguson, Secretary.

II. Report on P.A. 09-154 requirement 2.(h).(1&3) “...the progress made by state agencies in improving the environment for bicycling and walking in this state.” & “...specific action taken by the Department of Transportation in the preceding year that affect the bicycle and pedestrian environment.”

The Department submitted a list of bicycle and pedestrian projects awarded between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009. This illustrative period was prior to Public Act 09-154 becoming law on July 1, 2009. The list summarized 41 projects totaling \$9,902,000. The total funding for construction, maintenance and repair of roads in Connecticut was \$523,631,282. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access projects accounted for \$9,902,003 of that total, or about 1.9 percent. Of those 41 projects, 39 were specifically dedicated to pedestrian access. Moreover, 50.9 percent of the Bike-Ped project funds was set aside for one public project, a pedestrian bridge connecting the Science Center and the Convention Center in downtown Hartford. The two multi-use (bicycle and pedestrian) projects awarded, located within the Town of Suffield and East Granby, total \$861,697, or 8.7 percent of total bicycle and pedestrian access projects. These projects, part of the Farmington Valley Greenway, include installation of 0.4 miles of 12-foot bituminous surface on an inactive rail corridor, two prefabricated bridges, rehabilitation of a 266-foot inactive railroad bridge and the approaches to that bridge.

This seeming imbalance between bicycle and pedestrian funding is probably a fluke of reporting for this trial period. On the one hand some funding, such as Safe Routes to School, may not have been adequately recorded or brought to our attention. Other ongoing projects, such as the provision of on-street bike lanes in some of our towns, may also not be reflected in the funding totals.

In addition, significant funding across multiple years will not show at all, as, for example, funding for next year's work on the Farmington Valley Greenway.

The Department has also undertaken measures to comply with the bicycle and pedestrian-related sections of the 2008 Transportation Bill, enacted as P.A. 08-101. This legislation included the requirement that the Department establish a share the road educational campaign and established three feet as the minimum distance for a motor vehicle passing a bicyclist on the road. The Department has established a "Share the Road CT" website (<http://www.sharetheroadct.org>). The media campaign for the 3-foot law included bus board ads on Connecticut Transit Buses and Public Service Announcements (PSA's) on local morning radio shows.

The final version of the 2009 Connecticut Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan was recently published online. This important document is rigorous and, when followed, will integrate Bike/Ped planning throughout the Department and provide metrics to measure progress. *Over the next several years the most significant action that the Department can take is to implement this plan.* A design toolbox, providing extensive design guidelines, is an appendix to the plan.

In addition, a new statewide bicycle map will shortly be released online. This map is keyed with a suitability index that informs cyclists of shoulder width and average daily traffic. That, coupled with indicators for hills, will help cyclists select appropriate routes. The map also identifies cross-state routes. These roads are numbered and will allow the Department to properly maintain and improve these important routes.

To control costs these documents are currently online rather than printed.

The Board is greatly pleased by the production of this document; it demonstrates a willingness and desire to integrate multi-modal transportation into the planning process.

Towns such as Hartford, Glastonbury, New Haven, and West Hartford have made notable progress toward creating bike-friendly communities. A number of groups like Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance (CCBA), Elm City Cycling (ECC), Glastonbury Bikeways, Merritt Parkway Trail Alliance, Greenwich Safe Cycling and the Sound Cyclists Bicycle Club (SCBC) are actively working with their communities to improve Bike/Ped access. These efforts appear to have popular support from the citizens

The Board will be working with other agencies in the coming year. Of specific interest are the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Public Health, and Department of Public Safety. Other Departments and Agencies may also be contacted.

III. P.A. 09-154 requirement 2.(h).(2) *“recommendations for improvements to state policies and procedures related to bicycling and walking”*

While the Board is encouraged by the willingness of the Department to be more proactive towards Bike/Ped needs, there is a tremendous amount of work to be done. For example, Connecticut ranks near the bottom – 44th – in the current ranking of “bicycle friendly” states by the League of American Bicyclists. In addition, of the 123 municipalities rated as “bicycle friendly” by the League, none are in Connecticut.

The Board is developing a list of specific policies and procedures which we feel will assist the Department in providing better access to cyclists and pedestrians. For example, one simple low-cost item that we have recently discussed is an overhaul of edge striping. We expect that this, by increasing shoulder width when feasible, will provide a better allocation of asphalt. The Department is currently evaluating this and may change its policies in this regard.

The Department is also encouraged to work fully with Bike/Ped activist groups. For example, offers were made, but not accepted due to time frame requirements for the grant application, to work with the Department on the “Share the Road” campaign. Inclusion of stakeholders, the essential component of Context Sensitive Design, is never harmful and may be helpful.

We also are pleased by the Department’s willingness to emphasize bicycle “spine routes.” These cross state routes have already been identified and “named” (CTB5, for example, from New Haven to North Canaan). The Board and the Department must continue to work as a team on this project.

The Board also needs methods to track municipal funding for projects, and the information provided for projects should be more detailed. We will work with the Department toward resolution of these issues.

Department’s Share the Road Campaign was enthusiastically received. We hope that funding for this important driver – and pedestrian/cyclist – education will be continued in the coming fiscal year.

The Board understands that funds are scarce and the citizens of this state have financial difficulties. Nevertheless we feel that it is very important to print the new State Bike/Ped Plan in sufficient volume to provide those with a “need to know” proper access to the material. The map should also be printed and distributed to the many cyclists who require this information.

IV. Chair’s Remarks

I am very optimistic about the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Board and the Department working as a team. The members of our Board are dedicated and thoroughly professional. We come from a diverse constituency with wide experience in advocacy for cyclists, pedestrians and transit users. The Department has shown itself very willing to inform the Board and to take our advice seriously.

I believe that if the Board and the Department continue to work together with the same willingness and enthusiasm that we have thus far great things will happen for Connecticut.

But cooperate we must, for the stakes are high. While recently working with the City of Norwalk on connectivity issues for their new downtown redevelopment I received an email from a Norwalk resident and fellow cyclist. I quote a paragraph from that email: "... *I think something should be done.... It is a miserable walk/ride, and it basically means you have to drive everywhere if you live in the area. This (having to drive everywhere) is one of the main reasons my wife and I will, in all likelihood, join the other 25-34 year olds that are leaving the state in droves and eventually move.*"

Regards,

Ray Rauth, Chairman, Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board

Links:

Bill P.A. 09-154: An Act Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Access:

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/ACT/Pa/pdf/2009PA-00154-R00SB-00735-PA.pdf>

2009 Connecticut Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan:

http://www.ctbikepedplan.org/documents/2009_CT_Bike_Ped_Plan_01-08-10.pdf

Attachment:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Transportation Project List