

Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PBTSAC) Meeting Minutes

3.25.21

Attendees:

Kristy Daphnis
Heidi Coleman
Dave Helms
Jeremy Martin
Peter Gray
Rick Morgan
Michael Paylor

John Hoobler
Shawn Brennan
Jesse Cohn
F Gilman
Kandese Holford
Lee Keiser
Marybeth Cleveland
Sanjida Rangwala

Leah Walton
Wade Holland
George Branyan
Sara Morningstar
Sonia Moore-Williams

WELCOME

Chair K Daphnis called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

K Daphnis: Introduced Rick Morgan

Rock Creek Parkway

R Morgan: Representative of People’s Alliance for Rock Creek (PARC), we seek to protect the natural resources of Rock Creek Park; for 40 years we have pushed to keep the park car-free – we pushed for the car-free weekend portions in the 1980’s; today I want to talk about Beach Drive in DC; Beach Drive is mostly a commuter highway even though it is in a National Park; right now is a good time to reevaluate upper Beach Drive for permanent car-free recreation zones – pushing for the same area that has been car-free for 40 years to be permanent; I ask the PBTSAC to join PARC in requesting the car-free zones on Upper Beach Drive permanent and spread the word

H Coleman: I am one of the counters for this effort (count traffic numbers for different modes); what kind of statement are we signing on for?

R Morgan: We have a two-page Q&A factsheet

D Helms: What are the limits?

R Morgan: The gates – MD line gate at Boundary Bridge and Broadbranch Road; different sections

G Branyan: Open segments are also for vehicles to access parking lots

R Morgan: Access to picnic grounds similar as before

K Daphnis: Officially, this group advises the Montgomery County Council on ped, bike, and traffic safety issues

R Morgan: The decision on this is made by National Parks, not DC Government; no reason Montgomery County cannot influence that in the same way the DC Government could

K Daphnis: I would recommend that individuals who support this effort contact Rick to sign on; for the Committee to do this we would need to involve the Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) – to the group, do we want to do that?

H Coleman: It would require coordination but earlier this week the DC Council had a hearing about this; there is a direct benefit to residents of Montgomery County as a safe and pleasurable way to enter DC; it is in our interest and I would support submitting something to OIR

J Martin: I heard there was not a community engagement process involved with removing these streets from vehicular use, is there engagement there?

R Morgan: There was a roundtable last week with DC Council which had a lot of community input; they are considering a modification of the general management plan

D Helms: I support this; it adds synergies to what Montgomery County is already doing

R Morgan: We are already reaching out to the Montgomery County Council, having the Advisory Committee would be a big help; there is definitely synergy in our activities

K Daphnis: Need to make sure our support is not improper

Moved by H Coleman and seconded by D Helms: To write a document that supports the maintenance of the status of Upper Beach Drive beyond COVID if we get clearance that it is not improper for us to officially weigh in

Discussion

K Daphnis: We should see if this is appropriate

M Paylor: There have been unintended consequences on the network from other changes Parks has made; we would need to review this in more depth

S Morningstar: There is some question to the procedure here – and there is a good chance the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) would be interested in looking at this

K Daphnis: I support this, open streets are a great thing, but we want to be careful about a scope creep

S Morningstar: I agree

Vote: Motion passes unanimously

Crash Data Update

K Daphnis: W Holland is going to go over some crash data; he will give an update on the plan at a future meeting

W Holland: We will review the 10 Year Action Plan for Vision Zero (VZ) at our April meeting; we are working on a series of five listening sessions

W Holland: Unfortunately, Captain McBain has an emergency and cannot join us tonight, but I am going to go over recent crashes

W Holland: Presentation on Preliminary 2020 Crash Totals; fatal crashes up in 2020 – prior 4 year average was 29, we had 32 in 2019 and 39 with 41 fatalities in 2020

W Holland: In the US in 2020 from January to September, even though vehicle miles traveled (VMT) went down 14.5%, fatal crashes, ejections from vehicles, and speeding all went up

W Holland: Normally a recession shows VMT go down and that corresponds with a decrease in fatalities; in 2020 there was a very steep drop in VMT

W Holland: Increase in fatalities in 2020, highest since 2010

W Holland: Two pedestrian deaths this year on New Hampshire Avenue

W Holland: 12 bike crashes this year, one serious injury

D Helms: Citations from traffic patrols seem to have gone down significantly, is there an explanation?

W Holland: Everything shut down initially with the COVID hit – communications were focused on COVID and purchasing was frozen if not addressing the crisis, a lot of motor units were put in reserve to back up patrol officers in case they fell ill so we could still meet levels of coverage

D Helms: I think that influenced people to speed; there were examples of extreme speeding

H Coleman: As things normalize, are we getting back to normal patterns?

W Holland: Sample size is small

K Daphnis: Anything else for Wade before we move on to J Cohn's presentation?

W Holland: Speed kills

MNCPPC Vision Zero Activities Update

J Cohn: I lead VZ for Park & Planning (MNCPPC) and will be sharing on our projects

J Cohn: VZ Work Plan includes developing a VZ Toolkit; engaging hard to reach communities; educating community members, agency staff, and appointed/elected officials; and a VZ electronic newsletter

J Cohn: Many ongoing projects to help support the development of the Predictive Safety Analysis

J Cohn: Interactive Web Map – depicts crashes from 2015-2019; crash map is not an exact 1 to 1 from the VZ map the County has, we developed scripts to help better define locations from the crash reports

J Cohn: Walkthrough of how the interactive crash map works

J Cohn: VZ Community Toolkit

J Cohn: We are identifying key crash types to make sure we are both covering the majority of crashes but also recommending relevant countermeasures

J Cohn: After we identify the crash types, we develop a statistical model that will estimate the number of crashes that will occur at that location annually; various factors play a role including volumes for different modes, speed, intersection approaches, crosswalk presence, etc.

J Cohn: Lots to go through in a short time, any questions?

D Helms: Thanks for the briefing, I have a lot of comments, the County has the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT), the Road Code, and the Master Plan for Transportation Highways; there are specified target speeds for many roads in urban areas by the Road Code; are you considering target speeds based on that?

J Cohn: As part of Complete Streets Design Guide (CSDG), there are target speeds associated with those and we will be referring to that going forward once it is approved

J Hoobler: Correct, once the CSDG is approved we will be looking at that and are starting to move that direction now

K Daphnis: Is the CSDG still on track? And are schools being treated appropriately? And when will the Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Committee meet again?

J Hoobler: CSDG is still on track, the school treatments are going to be a part of a complementary document

K Daphnis: Will it have the same weight as the CSDG if it is done that way?

W Holland: The CSDG weight is still “guideline” weight, so it should not be an issue in terms of providing guidance and input

J Cohn: We presented the results of the survey from the Ped Master Plan Advisory Committee to the Planning Board

K Daphnis: Any other questions for Jesse? Seeing none, thanks so much for your presentation

Committee Business

K Daphnis: S Morningstar do you have any updates on happening in Annapolis?

S Morningstar: Yes, there are three bills moving forward; two have passed the house and pending in the Senate, one on lowering speed limits and one for transferring the automated traffic enforcement programs – they are being considered by the Senate delegation tomorrow and then will go through the regular committees

K Daphnis: There is a hearing 4.1.21 for the enabling legislation

S Morningstar: Yes, it first has to be considered by the Senate delegation

K Daphnis: I was asked to testify and I will send a note re: that (to S Morningstar)

S Morningstar: The County sent a letter of support for the bill as well

S Morningstar: Delegate Solomon’s bill for school ped safety is also advancing, K Daphnis testified on that and did a nice job

K Daphnis: That bill would require schools, before getting funding to construct new schools or redevelop, to do community engagement and engagement with State and local transportation authorities for pedestrian safety so adjustments in design could be made

K Daphnis: Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm