

Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee Bikeshare Position Paper to City Council

1 February 2014

Issues

Improving Human-Powered Transportation: Bikeshare stations improve cycling, offering an alternative or supplement to driving or riding public buses or Metro. The Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee strongly supports efforts to improve and increase opportunities to bike and walk in our city. The Committee urges the Takoma Park City Council to continue seeking ways to make cycling and walking safer, easier, and more convenient.

Improving Bikeshare Connectivity: The Committee supports the recent installation of Capital Bikeshare stations in Takoma Park and would like to see further development of this network. Toward this end, the Committee believes it is very important to increase efforts to encourage the District of Columbia to install a Bikeshare station at the Takoma Metro, so that residents can connect at this location.

Maintaining Current Gazebo Location: Additionally, rather than moving the existing Gazebo location, which could cost up to \$25,000, the Committee instead urges a focus on maintaining the locations of the existing stations while working to build new stations.

Background

Currently, Takoma Park has four stations within city limits, and more stations are expected in 2014 in Takoma Park and nearby communities. At the Old Town Gazebo, a Bikeshare station is currently installed in the planting strip between the sidewalk and curb. Recent City Council meetings raised the issue of relocating the Old Town Gazebo Capital Bikeshare station. Community members raised the following concerns:

- Aesthetic
- Impacts to Gazebo activities

Prior to installation of the Gazebo Bikeshare station, the same area was occupied by planters, benches, and trash bins. The area could not effectively be used for crowd overflow from Gazebo activities. These items were removed and replaced with the Bikeshare station.

There are several positive aspects of its current location. The station does not block pedestrian traffic, nor impact street parking or traffic flow. Additionally, when the bikes are not in use, they could be used as seats for viewing Gazebo performances. The bike seats even provide a better view because of their slightly elevated height.

Additionally, reports across the Bikeshare network indicate that businesses with Bikeshare docking stations in close proximity enjoy an increase of customer traffic and spending, and property values and rental rates appreciate.

Recommendation

After carefully examining the issue, we advocate that the City Council reaffirm its commitment to the Old Town Gazebo Bikeshare station and put its weight behind accelerating development of new Bikeshare stations, particularly stations near the Takoma Park and Fort Totten Metro stations for the system to live up to its full potential.

Furthermore, at a potential relocation cost of \$25,000, once a station location is chosen, it should not be moved absent serious problems. We think City resources are better spent on other priority projects that would enhance pedestrian and bicycle usage. The station occupies the exact same space previously occupied by trashcans. It's hard to imagine how trashcans are more attractive than a well-thought-out Bikeshare station with its muted tones of gray, black, and dark red.

Aesthetics aside, we believe the council needs to take a holistic view of the utility of having a Bikeshare hub at such a central location in the city. Most activities at the Gazebo never cause overflow into the walking area, and the handful that do were not previously able to use the area where the Bikeshare station is currently located. The station has not reduced standing room at the Gazebo. But even if there has been a small impact to standing room, equal weight, if not more, should be given to the 350 or so days a year when no activities are taking place at the Gazebo.

The Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee unanimously believes that the Carroll Avenue Old Town Gazebo area could benefit from the increased business foot traffic and property value that may come with a Bikeshare station. We look forward to the city championing more smart, safe, and accessible transit programs like Capital Bikeshare in Takoma Park in the future.