

**City of Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee**  
**Monthly Meeting, March 13, 2014**

**MINUTES**

1. The meeting convened at 7:35p.m. with the following committee members in attendance: Kacy Kostiuk; Scott Williams; Joe Edgell; Ryan Morden; Sylvia Borenstein; and Liz Cattaneo.
2. The proposed agenda was as follows:
  - a. Housekeeping (agenda and last month's meeting-minutes approval) – Joe (5 mins)
  - b. Public comments (if any) – Public (5 mins)
  - c. Transit Issues in Ward 1 – Seth Grimes (30 mins)
    - i. Any direction crossing at Old Town intersection
    - ii. Getting more kids to walk to school
    - iii. Reducing the speed limit on Philadelphia Ave (410), between Chicago Ave and Piney Branch Road, to 25 MPH, to match the limit for the rest of 410 in Takoma Park.
    - iv. Evaluation of relocation of the Old Takoma BikeShare station to a location near 7000 Carroll Avenue.
    - v. Pedestrian safety at Carroll & Tulip.
  - d. Making Takoma Roads Safe for Bikes and Sidewalks Safe for Peds After Snow Storms: follow-up notes – Joe (5 min)
  - e. Garland & Boyd Traffic Calming – Ryan (20 mins)
  - f. Outreach: Information for accessing the Safe Roadway's Email & Twitter Feeds – Scott (5 min)
  - g. Outreach: Committee website – Kacy & Joe (10 min)
  - h. Outreach: Montgomery County bicycle committee meeting dates – Scott (5 min)
  - i. Bike & Peds: Bikeways open house/New map – Liz & Joe (5 mins)
  - j. Next month's meeting date & agenda suggestions – All (5 mins)
3. Kacy distributed copies of the minutes from the February meeting and asked committee members to clarify the exact name of a committee discussed at the last meeting. Joe looked up the name of the committee, and Kacy changed the name in the minutes from “the Montgomery County committee” to “the Montgomery County Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee” (#6, b, ii).
  - a. Sylvia proposed an amendment to a sentence regarding Joe's report on what Sylvia had learned when speaking with the police department regarding data (#6, c, ii). She clarified that “some data” may require a FOIA request and asked that the minutes be amended to make it clear that not all data would require a FOIA request.
  - b. Ryan moved to approve the minutes with these two changes. Scott seconded the motion. All committee members in attendance voted to approve the minutes.
4. Joe asked if members had amendments to the proposed meeting agenda for this meeting. No one reported any amendments. Ryan moved to approve the agenda. Scott seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously to approve the agenda.
5. There were no members of the public present, so there were no public comments.
6. Seth Grimes, councilmember for Ward 1, was invited to speak about traffic issues. He addressed several issues that committee members had asked him to speak about, as well as some additional ones.

- a. Seth noted that he had just come from a Victory Towers Senior Association meeting and that residents of Victory Towers, who are elderly low-income residents, have been expressing several concerns regarding traffic safety.
  - i. These residents expressed concern regarding the safety of the crosswalk at the Carroll Ave and Tulip Ave intersection in front of Victory Towers. Since the residents are elderly and may have disabilities, many feel that the length of the light for crossing Carroll Ave is not long enough. Seth said that he put in a request through the state's online system to lengthen this signal approximately six weeks ago and has not heard anything.
  - ii. Seth said that there is also concern that there is no traffic light facing Tulip Ave, only a stop sign (with traffic lights on Carroll only). He suggested that this may be a spot for the Safe Roadways Committee to take a look at.
  - iii. Seth said residents also had concerns that cars were speeding at this location and that it was hard for cars to see pedestrians as they came around the curve from the direction of the fire station. He said the traffic speed at that location was measured, and it was not found that there was a high proportion of speeders (defined as going 10 or 12 MPH over the speed limit).
  - iv. Kacy asked for clarification regarding whether there was interest in adding a traffic light and/or pedestrian signal on Tulip Ave. Seth said the primary discussion has been about a traffic light but that a pedestrian signal would also need to be considered if a traffic light were added.
  - v. Ryan asked how long the crosswalk and traffic light have been at that intersection. Seth said he believes it has been there during the entire time he has lived in Takoma Park, so at least 17 years.
  - vi. Seth said that he previously served on the Takoma Junction Taskforce, which made recommendations to the state regarding the state-operated roads at that location. He said it can be challenging to make changes but that the taskforce was successful in getting some changes made.
- b. Another area of interest for Seth has been safety on 410 (Philadelphia/Ethan Allen Ave). Residents are interested in reducing the speed from 30 MPH to 25 MPH, as it is on state roads in other parts of the city. He said that he is interested in improving safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. He and Joe have previously worked on improving signage for bikes, including "share its," markings that delineate a space for bikes as are currently painted on portions of Carroll Ave. Seth said they have not been able to make progress with the state on this issue.
- c. Joe asked how the committee could help improve these interactions with the State Highway Administration (SHA). Seth said he didn't know if there were specific things that could be useful. He said SHA gathers its own data when considering making changes.
  - i. Seth noted that residents have concern about the intersection at Philadelphia and Grant Ave. He said that several years ago there was an 11-year-old girl hit by a car when the car pulled around a bus that was stopped at the bus stop at that location. Seth noted that he feels bus stops before intersections are not well located for this reason.
  - ii. Seth said that SHA violated its agreement with Takoma Park when it adjusted the signals at the intersection of Maple and Philadelphia without consulting the city. He noted that the closure of Sligo Creek Ave and lack of progress on the construction on New Hampshire Avenue that has caused this closure have been frustrating.
  - iii. Seth said that the Takoma Junction Taskforce he previously served on and the city requested a pedestrian crosswalk from the corner of Grant Ave and Ethan

- Allen Ave and that this has been approved and is scheduled to be installed during the next period. The progress the taskforce and city made on this was aided by letters from state legislators. He noted that Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot, who lives in that area, helped and may help with other issues if asked.
- iv. Joe said it seems that negative pressure on the SHA does not work and he wondered if there is a way to put positive pressure on the SHA to make these sorts of changes the city desires. Seth said that in the past there have been considerations for putting a plan into the state budget for a certain project but that this is difficult to achieve because the state legislators cannot add money to the state budget – only the governor can. He noted that there are some ways to work around this, but these may or may not work and were not tried in the past.
- d. Seth said that he supports a reduction in the speed limit on Philadelphia from 30 MPH in some sections to 25 MPH on all parts of the street located in Takoma Park. However, he said that the police chief does not seem to support this and this has been a reason why it has not moved forward. He suggested that an effort to get the speed limit reduced could be part of a larger effort to improve bike safety on 410.
  - e. Joe asked Seth about the possibility of creating a multi-directional pedestrian crossing at the Carroll/Laurel Ave intersection in Old Town. Seth said he would support this but does not know if the SHA supports diagonal crossings in their regulations. Joe asked whether the city needs to have the state paint crosswalks in a case like this, where the timing of lights and other issues would not be affected. Seth said the city does have policing power on the state-owned roads but that this may or may not extend to other things such as this. Seth suggested that the committee look into the standards required but the SHA and see if there is an option for diagonal pedestrian crosswalks. He noted that most of their standards come from the federal regulations. Seth also said that he would want to consult the business association in the area before supporting the addition of such a crosswalk but that he doesn't think there would be much resistance.
  - f. Seth noted that there was an idea on the agenda for him to speak regarding getting more kids to walk to school. He said he supported this but did not have any plans regarding it at the time.
  - g. Seth discussed the relocation of the existing bikeshare station by the gazebo in Old Town. Seth said that he saw the position paper that the committee had sent to the city council on this issue.
    - i. Seth said that he feels it would be a positive to move the location closer to the Laurel/Carroll Ave intersection, as there are more businesses located there. Only one business owner in the area has supported the current location, and most have been indifferent.
    - ii. Seth said that the Takoma Recreation Committee has the position that the current location disrupts the use of the city-owned gazebo for activities such as musical performances.
    - iii. Seth noted that although there were previously planters and benches at the location of the current station, these were narrower and less disruptive. He estimated that it could cost about \$1,200 to move the station equipment itself (not including other changes if the new location requires such changes).
    - iv. Seth noted that there have been similar changes made to existing new infrastructure in the past. When Maple Avenue was repaved years ago, the speed bumps were put in according to the new standard, which made the wider and lower. Seth said that residents had been promised that the speed bumps would be the same size as before, so after they were put in, the city spent about \$8,000 to replace them with shorter, higher speed bumps.

- v. Seth said that other bikeshare stations in the DC area have been relocated. Liz noted that such a cost to the DC government is less than what it would be for Takoma Park, which has a more limited budget.
  - vi. Liz asked about the process for selecting the existing location for the bikeshare station. Seth said that the city did a poll to help determine the locations but that it was not exactly and focused on general areas such as the entire Old Town area. He said that city staff recommended the existing location and the city council voted to support it. He said that he voted for it and feels now that this was a mistake.
  - vii. Seth said that city staff have suggested it would cost approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 to move the bikeshare station if it is necessary to create a surface that is level with the sidewalk rather than the street. He suggested that the committee may want to look into whether there is a law requiring a station such as this be level with the sidewalk rather than the street. Joe noted that it seemed strange, since bikes are not legally allowed on sidewalks in the city.
  - viii. Seth discussed the possibility that the landlord of the building where he has his office might change the parking lot he owns to provide additional parking space, which would reduce any concerns about lack of parking if a parking space needs to be removed to relocate the bikeshare station at the intersection.
  - ix. Seth said there is currently no anticipated vote regarding this issue and that Tim Male and the mayor do not support moving the station, but he feels there is support to move it. He does not want to propose moving the station until a new location can be determined.
- h. Seth said another traffic concern is the proposed development at the Takoma Metro station. He said that a new building there would increase congestion and impact traffic throughout the area. He has recommended that the developers reduce the number of parking spots for residents of the new building and that the Metropolitan Bike Path nearby be expanded to create more public transportation demand and options.
- i. Liz asked whether Seth thought the planned Busboys & Poets opening would create more traffic concerns. Seth said that this may increase congestion and that residents on Maple, Willow, Cedar, and Holly Ave have been complaining about parking after the opening of Republic last year, but they do not want metered parking on their streets.
  - ii. Seth said that Busboys & Poets seems to be working with other parking lot owners to see if they can get space in their lots for their patrons.
  - iii. Seth said he thinks it will be necessary to be in reactive mode rather than proactive mode regarding these issues because it's difficult to know ahead what will transpire with all the changes.
  - iv. Seth said he has asked the city manager to consider adding another half-time or full-time parking enforcement officer.
  - v. Seth also noted that one Cedar Ave resident suggested making a roundabout at the intersection near the Metro station but that this is located entirely in DC, so it is not something the city of Takoma Park would be responsible for.
7. Joe reported on the follow-up to the position paper regarding snow removal that the committee sent to the city council. He said the issue did come up at the last city council meeting but there was no specific mention of the Safe Roadways Committee. He said the mayor made a decision to put the topic on the agenda for a future meeting. Joe noted that the Safe Roadways Committee may be invited to attend that meeting but if not, members could attend in a less formal way.
8. Ryan discussed the proposals by residents to create traffic-calming measures on Garland and Boyd Avenues. Ryan distributed copies of the proposals and the city's initial responses.

- a. Kacy said that she frequently travels on Boyd and that she would support some traffic calming measures, as the other parallel street (Lincoln) already has speed bumps, which may direct traffic toward Boyd at the current time.
- b. Sylvia asked if there is a consensus by the city regarding methods for traffic calming. She noted that there are several roundabouts in her area and that she prefers these to other measures.
- c. Joe said that there is a sidewalk installation planned for Boyd Ave (though perhaps not finalized) and that this may help with safety issues.
- d. Ryan said the city does not appear to currently have data on volumes of traffic or average speeds on these roads.
- e. Ryan said the public works department is planning neighborhood meetings regarding the proposals. He will keep an eye out for these announcements and will notify the committee.
- f. Joe said that he feels there is a certain amount of traffic in the city and that slowing traffic in one location often just pushes them to another street, making it difficult for those residents. He noted that it's important to consider the secondary effects of any change.
- g. Scott said he feels that it is possible to calm traffic to some extent even if reducing overall isn't possible.
- h. Sylvia said that it seems to make sense for there to be more traffic on 410 than on arterial roads, so traffic calming measures seem to make sense. Kacy added that she feels it would be positive to direct traffic toward the main streets that are designed for this purpose and then to focus efforts on making those streets as safe and pleasant as possible.
- i. Joe said that in many cases, traffic planners expect a certain amount of traffic to take alternative routes and rely on this in their planning; this was the case with the planners he worked with regarding New Hampshire Ave. Kacy said though this may be the case, traffic calming measures will still be needed because speeds on side roads could be greater than on a congested main road.
- j. Joe asked if the committee would be interested in sending an e-mail or writing a position paper on the topic, possibly with the focus of recommending data gathering prior to making a decision on these traffic-calming measures proposals.
  - i. Liz noted that it seems like there is a pattern of reactivity and that the city addresses whatever comes before them and in the easiest, cheapest way, but she noted that she should be clear that we aren't aiming for "perfection."
  - ii. Joe said that this issue is related to an overall master plan for the city.
  - iii. Ryan asked whether the committee would want to work on gathering notes regarding traffic calming measures. Joe said the committee could ask the city council to refer the two proposals to the Safe Roadways Committee for review.
- k. Ryan and Joe proposed the possibility of sending an e-mail to the city council regarding these proposals on Garland and Boyd.
  - i. Liz said she did not support asking the city council to refer the proposals to the committee for review.
  - ii. Scott said that he was concerned this might make the committee a target for the residents anger and frustrations regarding traffic in their neighborhoods. He said it may be better to focus on the level of city policy and what works best (i.e. data gathering is recommended prior to making decisions like this).
  - iii. Ryan said that there is a traffic code regarding calming policies and that speed bumps were not recommended by the city for these locations, though other measures could be taken. He noted that speed bumps are not good for bicyclists.
  - iv. Joe said that speed bumps affect the capacity of emergency vehicles to reach their destinations quickly and that studies in Austin and Boulder have recently shown this.

- v. Kacy said she was not comfortable e-mailing the city council if the e-mail focused specifically on the Boyd and Garland proposals.
  - vi. Scott proposed an e-mail that said the committee supports the use of data before making decisions about traffic calming measures.
  - vii. Ryan noted that there seemed to be three different considerations: (1) the e-mail regarding these proposals and data, (2) a possible position paper on speed humps, and (3) a possible position paper supporting data gathering in general.
  - viii. Liz proposed that the committee send a brief e-mail to the city council that suggests conducting data gathering and utilizing that data in making decisions regarding the Garland and Boyd proposals. She noted that another option would be a longer position paper regarding traffic calming measures in general.
  - ix. Sylvia suggested a brief e-mail stating the committee's position and suggesting to the neighborhoods that data gathering be utilized.
  - x. Scott moved that the committee write a short position paper endorsing data gathering related to traffic-calming measures and decisions to create new ones. Ryan seconded the motion. The committee members voted unanimously to create this position paper. Scott said that he would write a draft and distribute it to all members for review.
1. Scott reported that he has accessed the city's e-mail for the Safe Roadways Committee and that it is possible to set up forwarding and an autoreply. He sent to the committee members a proposed text for the autoreply and asked committee members to send any suggestions or changes before Monday, Feb. 17. He will set up the autoreply message after that date unless there is further discussion regarding the wording.
  - m. Joe noted that the Safe Roadways Committee Twitter account is active and that he will send the password to any committee members who would like to access it. He noted that this could be a way to share information and get information from other city offices, as many have Twitter feeds.
  - n. Kacy briefly discussed her ideas regarding content for the Safe Roadways Committee webpage. She sent an e-mail to the committee earlier in the week regarding this topic. She suggested that it might be useful to start a location for sharing articles and research related to traffic calming, either as a place for the committee members to access and comment and/or as a place for other interested public parties to find information on these topics. She said she will e-mail samples of these options to committee members with a discussion of the possibilities.
    - i. Joe reminded the committee that the city has added some content to the Safe Roadways Committee webpage and will add more soon, including minutes and final agendas.
    - ii. Ryan asked whether the webpage should include notes about terms and vacancies on the committee. Joe suggested that the committee discuss the issue of vacancies at a future meeting.
  - o. Scott briefly discussed the Montgomery County bicycle committee meetings. He said the website listed their last meeting as being in September, so he's not sure if it is a very active committee. He e-mailed one member who forwarded his message to the chair of the committee, but he has not yet heard back.
    - i. Joe asked if Scott would reach out to the Metropolitan Council of Governments' committee on traffic safety. Scott agreed to make contact with the committee.
  - p. Liz reported that there is an upcoming bikeways open house and that she will attend on behalf of the committee. Liz noted that she is a "novice" biker and does not bike as much as some members of the committee. Joe said that he would attend the meeting with Liz if he can but may have a conflict. Ryan said that he will check his schedule but may be able to attend.

- i. Joe noted that there was a new map for bike routes and that Erkin is interested in getting feedback on it.
- q. The meeting agenda for the April meeting was briefly discussed. Joe said he would like to talk about committee terms and vacancies. Sylvia said she would like to add an item regarding the county's efforts to reduce panhandlers on medians. Kacy said she would like to discuss changes that could be made to the city website to improve accessibility and comprehension. Joe will collect these items and any others and will compile a draft agenda for the next meeting.
- r. Liz moved to adjourn the meeting. Sylvia seconded the motion. All committee members voted to adjourn the meeting.
- s. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02p.m.