

**City of Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee
Introductory Meeting, November 12, 2013**

MINUTES

1. Meeting convened at 7:30pm with the following committee members in attendance: Sheryl Gross-Glaser; Kacy Kostiuik; Jason Cheek; Sylvia Borenstein; Liz Cattaneo; Scott Williams; and Joe Edgell.

2. The proposed agenda was approved and follows:
 - Introductions (all)
 - Committee Responsibilities (city staff)
 - Committee Communications & Public Records (City Staff, Joe)
 - Committee Structure (all)
 - Meeting schedule (currently the second Tuesday of the month)
 - Discussion of things committee should focus upon (all)
 - Agenda items for December's meeting

3. Everyone introduced her or himself and explained why they had joined the committee and what they hope to accomplish.

4. Jessie Carpenter, the City Clerk, presented on committee housekeeping details, including the Open Meetings Act, interface with the City Council, and committee responsibilities. Jessie noted that Maryland law now requires one committee representative to take the Open Meetings Act training and asked us to appoint one person and notify her who this would be. She noted that the committee's meetings would be open to the public and that as a result, we should try to set our meeting dates and locations in advance. Joe asked whether the City would provide a listserv for the committee. Jessie suggested that the committee use a commercial service like Google or Yahoo Groups, as the City does not provide that service. She noted that any online group established by the committee would be subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act requirements for disclosure, should a request be made for those records.

5. Erkin Ozberk, the City's planner, attended the meeting. Erkin discussed planning, which is a City function under the housing and community development department and involves commercial streetscapes, lights, bins, and designs/styles. He noted that the designs of City Planning are installed by the Public Works Department, which typically oversees residential vs. commercial matters, and does the work of improving crosswalks, moving curbs, etc.

Erkin noted that he has worked on getting more bike facilities in City. He started a bike-to-work day a couple of years ago. He has also helped apply for and win money from a state program so that the City could make bike-friendly improvements.

Erkin said that the City Planning Division also works with way-finding signs.

Erkin discussed the challenges of long-range transportation planning and the need to work with many other nearby jurisdictions and partners (i.e. WMATA, DC government, State Highways Association, etc.).

Erkin mentioned the Safe Routes to School program and said that the coordinator (Lucy) works with five schools on education, as well as projects such as installing bike and scooter racks at schools and organizing a 5K race.

Erkin discussed other projects such as like "Grant Avenue berm" and noted that there are a variety of resources available on the city website under the link "transportation," as well as "standards and guidelines." For example, there is information about a recent bike and pedestrian safety study. He noted that if the committee were interested in doing research and collecting data through things such as bicycle or pedestrian counts or observations, he would be happy to provide guidance. He has started collecting some data on pedestrian use of the intersection near East-West Highways and New Hampshire Avenue.

Sylvia asked Erkin if there has been research related to the new transit center in Langley Park. Erkin noted the cross-jurisdictional nature of this work and said that other organization lead the effort there (including the State Highways Association's pedestrian safety audit for Langley Park). There has been no funding for improvements, however. He noted that the planning for the transit center came about because of concerns for pedestrian safety, as there are approximately 12,000 pedestrians using the area daily. Some upcoming improvements include improving crosswalks and getting a new signal by Rite Aid. This is the first part of the project before the transit center is installed.

Scott asked if Erkin had any hopes or fears related to this committee. Erkin noted that he appreciated the multimodal approach. Scott also asked how the community currently expresses concerns about transportation and whether there is a systematic collection of this data. Erkin said that a lot of the questions go to the Public Works Department, as well as the Police Department. They respond and react, but he does not believe there is a clearinghouse across city departments on information about concerns or complaints related to transportation issues. Erkin himself has been collecting information related to bike-related concerns. Scott asked whether a clearinghouse would be helpful, and Erkin said it might be.

Liz asked about working with committees similar to the Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee in different jurisdictions. Erkin wasn't specifically aware of these groups. He mentioned that a lot of cities have bicycle advisory committees. Liz noted that she met someone who is on a committee in Silver Spring that is similar to the Safe Roadways Committee. Erkin added that it might be beneficial to look into the Arlington Transportation Partners group and the Mobility Lab.

Sylvia asked about cross jurisdictional issues and who we should contact first if we have questions better directed toward Montgomery County staff than the City. Erkin said we

could reach out directly or work with City staff first.

Scott noted that most of Takoma Park's "major" roads are not City roads, and Erkin added that for the most part, the "numbered" highways are controlled by the State Highways Association. Piney Branch, Carroll Ave, New Hampshire Ave, East-West Highway (Philadelphia/Ethan Allen Aves), and University Ave are all owned by the state. Flower Ave used to belong to the state but is now a city-owned street. He briefly discussed the city's Flower Avenue Green Street project.

Erkin noted that it could take time to make changes related to the streets owned by the State Highway Association (SHA). The city must submit plans for things such as adding a sidewalk (which they recently did across East-West Highway near the Co-op) and that it could take a year for approval. The SHA has many different priorities and is focused not just on our city.

Sheryl asked whether the SHA is more traffic-flow oriented rather than interested in pedestrian and bike concerns. Erkin thought this was probably the case. The group discussed bike standards as statewide vs. district and whether it would be useful to work with SHA on things such as updating their standards more frequently. Sheryl asked about ASHTO vs. NASHTO, and Erkin noted that ASHTO is warming up to the idea of cycle tracks.

6. Committee structure was discussed. Ideas tossed out were: operating the group with no chairperson, having a single chairperson, or having co-chairs. Several members expressed a preference for the structure that a chairperson can bring to the group. Joe Edgell was nominated to chair the committee. He accepted the nomination and was selected by consensus of all in attendance.

7. The Open Meetings Act training was discussed. Sheryl volunteered to take the training for the committee, and it was agreed by unanimous consent that Sheryl would be the committee's representative for the Open Meetings Act.

8. The committee discussed starting a listserv. The merits of Google and Yahoo were discussed and debated. The committee decided to set up a Google Group, and Scott volunteered to establish the group. The committee decided unanimously to establish the group as a private discussion group.

9. The committee discussed minute taking, including the possibility of rotating this responsibility or assigning it to one person. Kacy volunteered to be responsible for taking meeting minutes, with Liz as a backup.

10. Meeting times were discussed. The second Tuesday and the second Thursday of each month were considered. The group is leaning toward the second Thursday, but due to conflicts, decided to keep it on the second Tuesday for December with the understanding that the date of the January meeting will be finalized at the meeting next month. The next meeting date was set for Tuesday, December 10, at 7:30 p.m.

11. The committee did a roundtable in which each person discussed the issues they were most interested in working on. The following people and topics were mentioned:

a. Sheryl -- Most interested in pedestrian issues and creating opportunities for safe walking

b. Kacy -- Also interested in walking issues. Also interested in focusing on parts of the city outside the main downtown area. Mentioned that it can be difficult for the average person to give input related to transportation issues; she is interested in finding a way to make this more open to average person.

c. Jason -- Most interested in high-traffic streets that do not have sidewalks and biking infrastructure (specifically on Maple Ave).

d. Sylvia -- Interested in pedestrian safety, particularly in the Langley Crossroads area (jaywalking concerns). Also mentioned that it may be beneficial to synchronize traffic lights in this area.

e. Liz -- Interested in pedestrian safety, bike lanes, streets without sidewalks, and building a resource guide for community members. Suggested working with CASA and other community groups. Also concerned about street lighting issues.

f. Scott -- Focused on the bikeability of the city and particularly bikeability to schools. Interested in collecting data and citizen input, possibly to map trouble spots. Also noted issues with the RideOn bus and its lack of reliability.

g. Joe -- Interested in creating traffic calming solutions that are data-supported, changing laws to be more friendly to human-powered transportation such as biking and walking, working towards a bike and pedestrian master plan for the city, and getting transit organizations to be more responsive to concerns (RideOn was given as an example).

12. Erkin noted that an important outcome of the committee might be producing a report for the City Council. As tips for making that report more effective, he suggested making a few clear recommendations rather than scattering too many ideas into the report and making it overwhelming. He noted that the committee should be sure not to get ahead of the City Council on any issues. He distributed the Takoma Park "who-to-call" cards with information about where to call for issues such as streetlight outages, downed trees, etc. He discussed how to report light outages to PEPCO and where the pole number is so that this information can be reported to PEPCO. He suggested that the committee might consider encouraging a systematic way of getting people in each neighborhood to check on lights and report outages.

13. Joe noted that there is a lot of third-party software that could provide data to the city at low cost. He noted there is an app that measures rough streets and can report that data to city staff. He noted there are apps that allow citizens to report problems to their government and suggested that the committee might investigate these and inform the City Council about ones that might be useful.

14. Sheryl was a member of the previous Safe Roadways Committee and noted that

it was primarily focused on bike-related concerns. She noted that the group dissolved as the members got busy and meetings became infrequent and then ceased.

15. Joe said that he would make a list of everyone's top issues/interests and incorporate them into an online survey so that people can rank their preferred priorities in hopes that there might be a consensus on what the committee will focus on.

16. The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.