

City of Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee
Monthly Meeting, April 10, 2014

MINUTES

1. The meeting convened at 7:30pm with the following committee members in attendance: Kacy Kostiuk; Joe Edgell; Ryan Morden; Liz Cattaneo; Sylvia Borenstein.
2. The committee had invited representatives from the police department to speak. The representatives attending the meeting were Sergeant Kurt Gilbert, administrative sergeant, and Captain Tyrone Collington, commander of the operations division. The meet began with their presentation/question-and-answer session with the usual meeting business to be handled afterwards.
 - a. Joe explained to the police representatives what the committee has been doing and thanked them for coming to speak at the meeting.
 - b. Captain Collington said he gets complaints every day regarding roadways issues, and the police tries to go out and do a survey of areas to assess the situation when a problem is reported.
 - c. Regarding crosswalks:
 - i. Sergeant Gilbert said that in past, the police department used to do details on crosswalks a lot; now it is not done as frequently. However, police officers are doing other details on which they may observe issues related to crosswalks and are compiling data while enforcing general traffic laws. Sergeant Gilbert pulled stats on number of pedestrians struck in Takoma Park this year – 11 pedestrian-related accidents (6 in crosswalks, 1 involving a drunk driver, 2 involving bicycles, and 2 in parking lot). The police crime analyst recently left for a new position, but the police department is interviewing other people for the position. Joe clarified that the statistics include bicyclists as pedestrians, and Sergeant Gilbert said that was correct.
 - ii. Sergeant Gilbert said that the crosswalk in Langley Park used to be a hotspot for problems and the department would assign an officer to patrol that area frequently, but improvements have made this area safer and now officers may patrol a variety of different crosswalks. He added that as the weather is getting nicer, they expect more pedestrians and bicyclists and will start doing more enforcement and education.
 - iii. Joe mentioned that Maryland law says pedestrians have to be in the crosswalk in order for cars to be required to yield for them, and pedestrians can't abruptly step off the curb. He noted that this made for a difficult situation when there was heavy traffic, particularly at the 410 and Elm intersection. Captain Collington said that many officers would tend to favor the pedestrians since Maryland law requires yielding in the crosswalk; he noted that there can be issues both for drivers and for pedestrians.

- iv. Captain Collington said he recently received an e-mail asking whether cops have the freedom to decide whether to give a ticket or warning. He also noted that his wife was once a crossing guard and was hit by a car in this position, so he understands the need for pedestrian safety.
 - v. Liz noted that pedestrians are more likely to step out into the crosswalks in Old Town, but she notices that pedestrians crossing at the 410 and Elm intersection frequently struggle to get across 410 at the crosswalk. She said it is common to have 5-10 cars pass before a driver will let her cross, even though there is a crosswalk there. Sergeant Gilbert said they would take a look at this area and assign some patrols to the area to assess the situation.
 - vi. Sylvia said that she sees cars go through the pedestrian-crossing lights on University Ave or New Hampshire Ave (she wasn't certain which). Sergeant Gilbert said there is going to be a better signal there in the future with the improvements in the area. Captain Collington said a lot of pedestrians are hit in this location. There are speed cameras there to slow people down, but people know where speed cameras are and then speed up after passing them. He likes the idea of a "speed corridor" to prevent this – one camera, then another in a location afterwards. Sergeant Gilbert noted that University Ave is a "speed corridor" with this arrangement.
- d. Sergeant Gilbert addressed the next question on the agenda, which was about how the police department sets priorities.
- i. Sergeant Gilbert said that calls from people are helpful in finding out what the issues are or problems in the community. They will assign details to traffic officers if something is reported and will do a traffic log reporting what they saw, the number of violations, warnings given, etc. Reports then come to Gilbert, who reviews them.
 - ii. Joe asked whether priorities were largely set by resident complaints and notifications. Sergeant Gilbert said that this was a major focus. Officers have an idea of where to focus on for safety, but they have to give some attention to other areas if Gilbert receives a report and asks them to do a detail in that location.
 - iii. In January, the police department purchased a new machine called MetroCount. The department previously borrowed a machine like this from Montgomery County for assessing Elm Ave when Sligo Creek Parkway was closed to New Hampshire. MetroCount is a machine that's hooked up to an air hose going across the roadway and measures vehicle size, speed, and time of day. Over a period of 7 days, it can give police an indication of what traffic is like in that area and is much easier than sending officers to take counts. The department purchased two of these machines and will be training officers on using them in the next couple of weeks. They plan to be able to set these up and get quick, accurate data after get complaints from residents.
 - iv. Joe asked how many traffic officers there are. Sergeant Gilbert said there is one permanently assigned to traffic, and Captain Collington added that Sergeant Gilbert is also focused on it in his position. There is a civilian who works for him

generating all reports. Other officers do work on traffic issues but aren't permanently focused on it. Sergeant Gilbert said they have discussed the idea of increasing the size of the department with the chief, but at the moment, the system involves each patrol officer who works a beat knowing about hotspots and traffic work in their particular area. Reports listing all violations are generated every Thursday and shared with the public.

- v. Kacy asked what the police department does with the data they collect either through officers taking counts or use of the new MetroCount machine. Captain Collington said that if they get high data on traffic problems in an area (i.e. lots of speeding or running lights), they will focus on heavily enforcing traffic laws in that area. The same drivers typically use the same roads, so seeing law enforcement in that area over a period of time will result in slowing down or taking a different route.
- e. Joe asked about the visibility of officers on traffic patrol. He noted that if police are visible, that causes people to react (i.e. slow down), but if they aren't visible, people might act more like they typically do, and this might result in more accurate data on speeding and other safety issues. Sergeant Gilbert said that both of these methods are utilized. Captain Collington added that "invisible deployment" (sitting back where can't be seen and observing before moving out to be seen) can be done and that unmarked cars can also be used for this purpose. He noted that in the past, there has been a desire for more visibility rather than invisible deployment.
 - i. Captain Collington mentioned the MetroCount device again and noted that this would help collect data on where traffic officers might be most useful on patrol.
 - ii. Sergeant Gilbert said that the police department shares information from data collection with Public Works. Recently there was a complaint on Philadelphia Ave requesting a lower speed limit (from 30 to 25MPH). Data was collected and showed that the average speed in that area was actually 3 miles below the speed limit, making a change in speed limit seem unnecessary.
 - iii. Sylvia asked whether the committee could get raw data from the police department. Gilbert said it was definitely possible for the committee to get access to the data. Joe suggested making that data available on the City website, and Captain Collington said it's a work in progress. It's tricky because the Police Department has to go through an employee with the City who designed the website, rather than post things directly themselves.
- f. Joe mentioned that traffic calming is an issue the committee is interested in. He asked what the police department has seen in terms of the effect of speed bumps and other traffic calming measures on emergency response times. Sergeant Gilbert said it doesn't seem to slow police cars down in a significant way.
- g. Ryan asked what kind of input from pedestrians would be useful. He also asked whether resident-collected data would be considered reliable or would just be considered "input." Sergeant Gilbert said that any existing data would be helpful but that the police department would conduct their own survey as well. Captain Collington added that the MetroCounter can be requested, so residents could ask for a survey and report.

device mentioned by the police department. Ryan said he thought a position paper would appear more serious than an e-mail, and Sylvia agreed. All members present were in favor of making the content a position paper rather than e-mail to the City Council.

- b. Liz made a motion to approve the existing content of the e-mail with the addition of a note about the MetroCount device and the plan to use the content in a position paper rather than e-mail format. Ryan seconded the motion. There was a brief discussion to clarify the meaning of the motion. Ryan also asked whether the committee wanted to add photos to the position paper. It was decided that photos might be included if Ryan had some relevant ones but that otherwise, they were not necessary.
 - c. All committee members presented voted in favor of the motion to approve the existing content of the e-mail, add a sentence about the MetroCount device, and reformat it into a position paper. Kacy offered to write to Scott to let him know that this was the committee's decision and to ask if he wanted to work on reformatting or if he would prefer her to do the reformatting.
7. Liz reported on the Bikeways public meeting she attended.
- a. Liz noted that there were about 6-7 people at the meeting, most of them informed and active in the bike community, but only one of these people knew of the Safe Roadways Committee.
 - b. Liz said that there were two requests from the other meeting attendees: one was an issue with the lights and pedestrians on Flower Ave, and the other was an issue with the intersection near the Capital City Cheesecake and autoshop in Old Town Takoma. Liz said she took notes from the meeting and would share via e-mail with the committee members. If there seemed to be something for the committee to pass on to the police department, perhaps this could be done as a first step toward reviewing the safety in one of these places.
 - c. Liz said that she learned there are some sustainability funds available for use by the City at the moment and suggested that different committees might make recommendations to the public works department about how to use those funds.
 - d. Ryan also attended a portion of the meeting and mentioned that he spoke with Erkin Ozberk, city manager. He said that Erkin told him the county ordered flyers related bikeshare and that the city took 12,000 flyers and will put them into the next newsletter along with a coupon for bikeshare. He also shared contact information for Sande, who is the Montgomery County outreach person, and mentioned that we might invite her to a future meeting. He also noted that statistics on bikeshare use were shared at the meeting and that it spiked in use when the station at the Metro station was installed. He also noted that the weather is getting nicer, which might be a reason for the increasing usage. Ryan suggested that bikeshare might set up a tent at one of the local festivals and allow people to pay their annual fee and register right there for instant use.
8. Kacy reported on some outreach topics.
- a. First, she discussed whether the committee wants to start using some kind of site for sharing research or articles with each other and/or the public. She said using a site might help accumulate these materials in one single place. It might be something for

the committee members, or possibly to share with the city council. Alternatively, it could be public with a link from the Safe Roadways Committee Webpage.

- i. Sylvia asked whether there should be a goal to outreach done by the committee.
 - ii. Kacy said she thought the committee could have a goal. She noted that having a site for sharing materials might be a way the committee would be gathering and sharing expertise with others and a nice opportunity to show what the committee is doing. She noted it doesn't have to involve anything controversial. Mostly, it would involve sharing research information that it might be hard for people to collect or aggregate themselves.
 - iii. Kacy suggested using a site like Springpad or Diigo. Joe asked whether she had considered Basecamp, and she said she had not worked with it before. Kacy noted that Springpad is nice because it allows you to save things in different formats (i.e. webpage, attached pdf or other file, photos, notes, etc.), whereas some of the others are more limited.
 - iv. Liz suggested that a site like this could include highlights and notes about long documents and/or direct people to relevant pages, since something like a 300-page document is daunting. She asked whether a site like this might help the committee focus and pull out text and excerpts.
 - v. Kacy said she felt that a tool like this would help with pulling out notes and highlights. She said Springpad is her personal choice but that the others also seem to work well. She said Diigo allows for highlighting within a webpage and would work very well for pulling out specific highlights but that she's not sure how it would work with PDFs.
 - vi. Liz said she thinks it's important to be clear about the goals for the site and outreach, including what the most practical, tangible things are that the committee wants from the site. This would help in picking the tool best suited for these purposes.
 - vii. Ryan asked how committee members should know when something new was posted. Kacy said the site would notify members of the group if they chose this preference when signing up.
 - viii. Sylvia asked what the criteria would be for posting things if it's fully shared with the public. She noted that information overload would be a potential problem.
 - ix. Kacy said her primary goal with the idea of creating a page like this for sharing information was to organize the information already shared among committee members on the discussion list. She said she would make a sample site on Diigo and Springpad and would send links to the committee members so that they could take a look and send feedback.
- b. Kacy also reported on the review she had done of the transportation page on the Takoma Park City website.
- i. She said she would send around an edited version of the information to see what committee members thought and to ask for additional input. She asked how the committee would like to proceed and whether this was something the committee might want to work on.

- ii. She mentioned that the committee might want to work with CASA de Maryland or other groups to help with a translation of the site into Spanish, since there does not appear to current be a translation available.
 - iii. Liz mentioned the brochure that Erkin had shared and wondered whether it might make sense to speak with him about making changes to the transportation part of the city website. She offered to contact him and ask if he might be open to some feedback on the website from the committee.
9. Time in the meeting was running low. Ryan motioned to extend the meeting by 5 minutes. Kacy seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of the motion.
10. Joe discussed terms and vacancies on the committee.
 - a. Jason Cheek resigned from the committee because he was moving out of the area.
 - b. Joe noted that some committee members were assigned one-year terms and others two-year terms. She said this was an attempt to balance the committee, but there now seems to be a relative lack of people with two-year terms. To create a balance, Joe suggested that one of the members with a one-year term might volunteer to change to a two-year term, and then the City Council could formalize that. He noted that all members could choose to continue on the committee for another term if interested but that it would be nice for the committee to be on a 50/50 cycle with one-year and two-year terms.
 - c. June 30 would be the date that the term would expire for the committee members with one-year terms.
 - d. Ryan asked about getting others interested in the committee. He said that Erkin collected e-mail addresses for attendees at the bikeways meeting and suggested that sending a message to this group might be a good way to drum up interest.
 - e. Liz noted that it would be helpful to have clearer information about what the responsibilities and commitments of the position might be before people apply, since she felt she did not know very well when she applied.
 - f. Liz offered to reach out to her councilmember, Tim Male, and Ryan offered to ask Erkin to share information about the committee with the attendees of the bikeways meeting.
 - g. Liz asked whether the committee wanted to change meeting dates for future meetings, since Thursdays seemed to be problematic for several members recently. Meeting on Tuesdays instead worked for all members of the committee who were present. Joe said he would e-mail Scott and Sheryl to ask if this would work for them.
11. Joe asked if there were items to be added to the agenda for the May meeting. Ryan suggested discussing the traffic-calming paper if it had or had not be sent to the city council by that point.
12. Joe also encouraged as many committee members as possible to attend the City Council Meeting presentation scheduled for Monday, April 21. He asked anyone who wanted a speaking part to let him know.
13. Ryan motioned to adjourn the meeting. Liz seconded the motion. All members present voted in support of the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:04pm.