



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – October 5, 2016 Agenda Item 1

Work Session

Discussion of Safe Roadways Committee Recommendations, Including the Request to Allow Bicyclists to Ride on Sidewalks

Recommended Council Action

Discuss the staff responses to the Safe Roadways Committee Recommendations. The responses entail Council's consideration of possible changes to the City Code as well as new projects and programs for FY18.

Context with Key Issues

The Safe Roadways Committee (SRC) serves in an official advisory and coordination role to the City Council on all matters related to transportation. On November 15, 2015, the SRC presented a set of recommendations to City Council related to expanding the Capital Bikeshare program in Takoma Park, as well as a request to allow bicyclists to ride on sidewalks. Capital Bikeshare is an inter-jurisdictional bicycle transit program that was expanded into Montgomery County, including Takoma Park, in 2013. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation manages the bikeshare program in Takoma Park. Riding bicycles on sidewalks is prohibited by Maryland state law, unless it is allowed by the municipality. Montgomery County Code does allow bicycles to ride on sidewalks, but Takoma Park City Code prohibits it.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All; Environmentally Sustainable Community; Engaged, Responsive & Service-oriented Government; Advance Economic Development Efforts.

Environmental Impact of Action

Expanding the access, convenience, and safety for bicycles as a transportation mode in Takoma Park could result in positive environmental and health impacts for City residents.

Fiscal Impact of Action

Expanding Capital Bikeshare in Takoma Park could entail additional capital and perhaps operations and maintenance costs for the City. Developing a program for free or reduced bikeshare memberships would also entail costs.

Attachments and Links

Safe Roadways Committee Recommendations to Takoma Park City Council to Improve Bikeshare (November 15, 2015)

Responses to Safe Roadways Committee Recommendations

Link: Takoma Park Bikeways Program (current and ongoing projects):

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/housing-and-community-development/community-development/bikeways-program/>

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Responses to Safe Roadways Committee Recommendations on Bikeshare (11/15/2015):

1. Add more Bikeshare stations in the following locations

- Takoma Park Recreation Center (7315 New Hampshire Avenue)
- Takoma/Langley Crossroads Transit Center
- Ethan Allen Gateway (East-West Highway and New Hampshire Avenue)
- Flower Avenue (near Hudson Avenue or Houston Avenue)

Staff Response:

Two new Bikeshare stations are being installed at the Takoma Park Recreation Center and at the Takoma/Langley Crossroads. Capital costs for these stations are funded through FY16 Maryland Bikeways program (\$100,000 award) as well as a match by the City for site preparation. Montgomery County has agreed to pay for the ongoing operations and maintenance costs of these two new stations, along with the rest of the stations in the city.

Additional stations are not yet planned or funded. Construction on the Ethan Allen Gateway Streetscape project and the Flower Avenue Green Street project would need to be completed first before Bikeshare stations could be installed at these two locations, which is expected for FY17 and FY18. Capital, as well as operations and maintenance costs would need to be dedicated for future Bikeshare installations in the city.

2. Expand and relocate some existing Bikeshare stations

- Add docks at the Takoma Junction station and Old Takoma station
- Relocate Old Takoma station from gazebo to more central location in Old Town
- Relocate Garland Avenue station to more visible location in Long Branch – outside city, requires coordination with MCDOT
- Add docks at the Takoma Metro station – outside city, requires coordination with WMATA/DDOT

Staff Response:

City staff is requesting DDOT to investigate expanding the Bikeshare station at Takoma Metro, as well as installing new stations in upper NW DC, especially as new stations in Takoma Park are installed in 2017.

Relocating the Old Takoma Bikeshare station from the gazebo was explored intensively in 2013-2014 at the request of Councilmember Grimes due to concern about its potential impact on the public space at the Takoma Urban Park. Relocating the station to Carroll Avenue would require construction of a curb extension, the elimination of 2-3 on street parking spaces, approval of engineered drawings by SHA and funding for the engineering and construction work. This was not pursued and the station has functioned well in its current location.

An expanded station at Takoma Junction could be made part of the Takoma Junction Redevelopment project, which would require relocation of the Bikeshare station within the site.

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3. Allow bicyclists to ride on sidewalks

Staff Response: In Takoma Park, most roadways and sidewalks are narrow, and some rights of way are hilly. This poses challenges for bike riders, especially those who ride uphill on narrow roads, slowing vehicular traffic. Bike riding on sidewalks is not permitted, although the law is rarely enforced, especially against children.

Bike riding on sidewalks poses two significant safety problems: 1) danger to pedestrians on the sidewalks, especially from fast moving bicyclists, and 2) danger to bicyclists from drivers coming out of driveways; drivers are conditioned to look for fast moving traffic in the roadway and slow moving traffic on sidewalks so bicyclists on sidewalks are more likely to surprise drivers and be hit.

Staff recommends either keeping the prohibition of biking on sidewalks or permitting bicyclists on sidewalks provided they are prohibited from going faster than walkers. Staff continues to identify and improve bicycle routes on wider roads when possible.

4. Develop partnerships with nearby colleges and universities to offer reduced or free Bikeshare memberships to students.

Staff Response: Since the launch of Bikeshare in Takoma Park, City staff has provided and offered coupons (provided by Montgomery County DOT) to residents, workers, and students in Takoma Park. The City Council could allocate funding for additional assistance to the universities if it wished.