



## **Active Transportation Advisory Group Meeting Summary**

### **Prince George's County Planning Department**

**Monday, September 9, 2024**

**7:00 to 8:30 PM**

#### **Attendees:**

Maribel Donahue

Anne-Claire Frank-Seisay, Cheverly resident

Christine Gillette – Rogers Consulting

Seth Grimes, Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Crystal Hancock, Prince George's County Planning Department

Ellen Huffman, Prince George's County Parks and Recreation Department

Michael Jackson, Prince George's County Planning Department

Kalli Krumpos – Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Ken McCaughey, Bowie resident

Melissa Schweisguth

Brendan Wray

Michael Jackson started the meeting at 7:03 PM with a round of introductions.

**US 1/Baltimore Avenue Bike Lanes** – Michael showed a couple of photos of new bicycle lanes the Maryland State Highway Administration is in the process of installing along US 1 in College Park. The bike lanes feature green paint, green guide marking across intersecting streets and double white lines between the bike lanes and the right hand general travel lanes. The bike lanes extend from Campus Drive to the MD 193 overpass.

**Biking In Prince George's County Through Dutch Eyes** – Cheverly resident Anne-Claire Frank-Seisay presented a power point slide presentation on her comparisons of bicycling infrastructure between the Netherlands and Prince George's County. Anne-Claire was born in France to a French mother and a Dutch father and raised in The Netherlands. She began bicycling at age 6.

Anne-Claire said The Netherlands is flat with mild temperatures. Headwinds are the biggest challenge to cycling. Active cyclists have two bicycles: an upright, practical one, and a road

racing style one. Motorists know the cyclists' perspective since everyone bikes there. The Netherlands was not always bicycle-friendly as the country adopted bicycling as a result of the oil crises of the 1970s. Roadways with a posted speed limit of 30 kilometers per hour (18.6 miles per hour) are shared between bicyclists and motorists, roadways with a speed limit of 50 km (31 mph) have painted bike lanes, and roadways with 80 km (50 mph) speed limits have physically separated bike lanes. Children take traffic exams through the school system between ages 10 to 12 as many students will be eventually biking between 10 and 12 km to attend high schools in adjacent towns. The traffic exams consist of a written exam and a practical exam (i.e., a road test) where police officers stationed along the roadways observe student cycling behavior during the practical examination portion.

Bike parking is provided at urban squares including underground bicycle parking lots. Bicycles may be parked up to 24 hours for free. Rail stations have huge bicycle parking areas and with widespread bicycle rentals available. By contrast Anne-Claire received two big shocks upon arriving in the USA, first in Newark, DE and later in Prince George's County. They were sharing the roadway with motorists without physical separation and bike lanes that randomly begin and end. In The Netherlands motorists are used to looking out for bicyclists and Anne-Claire is used to having bike boxes (i.e., areas of the roadway approaches to signalized intersections between the crosswalk and motor vehicle stop line where bicyclists wait for a green signal in front of stopped motorists). She is also unnerved by free right turns that allow motorists travel across the path of bicyclists at high speeds.

Anne-Claire's Dutch American bicycling wish list includes 1) more bike safe roadway designs; 2) expansion of bicycle education for both motorists and bicyclists; and 3) free bike light distribution to students. Ellen Huffman asked why red was chosen to identify bike lanes and cycle tracks and about the presence of bicycle "superhighways" devoted to accommodating high speed cyclists and where pedestrians are separated from bike riders. Christine Gillette asked if Dutch planners needed to acquire additional land to construct bike lanes. Crystal Hancock thanked Anne-Claire for her presentation.

**The Truth About Cycling In The Suburbs** – Michael presented a video produced and narrated by Utay Lee and funded by TransLink, the Vancouver, British Columbia regional transportation authority and led a discussion following the video presentation. Mr. Lee cited studies to back his assertion that commercial areas, parks, and schools are within easy bicycling distance from suburban homes and the main challenge to increasing use of the bicycle as a travel mode is not distance but the lack of bicycle facilities. He said bicycling on high speed and high-volume suburban roadways is too scary for most people to undertake. He compared two British Columbia cities, Surrey on the Lower Mainland with a 0.6 percent bicycle commute rate with Saanich on Vancouver Island that has an 8 percent overall bicycle transportation rate.

Mr. Lee says the major difference between these cities is the presence of the Galloping Goose Trail, a 34-mile regional rail to trail conversion that is popular for bicycle commuting, which separates bicyclists from motorists. He asserts that the construction of bikeways that

make users feel safe is key to increasing bicycling in the suburbs. TransLink has adopted a planned 850-kilometer bikeway network across 23 local governments in the Vancouver metropolitan area that is scheduled to be completed by 2050. To spur construction TransLink has created the Bicycle Infrastructure Capital Cost (BICC) program which will fund between 50 to 100 percent of the cost of bikeway construction. BICC has expended \$115 CDN in bikeway funding since 2017.

Seth Grimes said Mr. Lee spoke too briefly or not at all on bicycle transportation related issues such as transit connections, the lack of bike parking at major activity centers such as shopping malls, bikeshare programs and electric bicycles. Ken McCaughey said at school dismissal in Bowie the streets are clogged with parents picking up their children. He likes the bike bus concept shown in the video and asked what are the county's requirements for developers to provide bicycle parking at strip malls? Michael responded that the current subdivision code requires developers to provide bicycle parking. Crystal said there are various circumstances that affect bicycle parking requirements and staff works hard to identify those situations where developers can be asked to provide bicycle parking.

Christine Gillette asked if public-private partnerships can be formed to close gaps in bicycle infrastructure, including utilization of education and transit. Crystal provided examples of how staff can work with others to close bicycle infrastructure gaps. Anne-Claire noted that rail to trail conversions are good and whether there were such opportunities in the county. Michael shared examples of the Chesapeake Beach Trail as one opportunity and mentioned the prospect of the Collington Branch rail line being abandoned soon as another rail to trail conversion opportunity. Anne-Claire added that she and her husband have shipped bicycles to his native Sierra Leone which has allowed girls to bicycle in groups to school, thus providing an example of the bike bus concept working in Africa. Consequently, mothers do not have to replace their bicycling daughters' shoes as often.

**Parks and Recreation Department Updates** – Ellen Huffman said an issue with the installation of railings on the bridge that will carry the WB&A Trail over the Patuxent River has delayed the bridge's completion. Two bridges along the Anacostia Trail will be closed in early 2025 for repairs. The bridge that carries the Anacostia Trail across the river north of the Bladensburg waterfront park will be closed in January and a smaller bridge south of the waterfront park will be closed for two weeks in February. New wayfinding signs will be installed along the Anacostia River trails next spring.

**Other Business** – Michael showed photos of how a side path, separated from motor vehicles by a guard rail, was created from an existing shoulder along southbound MD 586/Veirs Mill Road between Aspen Hill Road and Twinbrook Parkway. This sidepath connects the Twinbrook Connector Trail with the Rock Creek Trail. Michael hoped this can serve as a precedent for the conversion of shoulders into protected side paths in Prince George's County such as along the north side of MD 202/Landover Road as it crosses the Capital Beltway. Anne-Claire felt that concept is amazing. Seth announced that the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, the City of New Carrollton and Councilmember Eric Olson are

conducting a safety walk in New Carrollton on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Seth would love to see a similar side path facility along MD 450/Annapolis Road. Ken said a recent repaving of portions of the WB&A Trail was a good improvement.

Melissa Schweisguth asked about the state of public safety on shared-use paths. She mentioned the presence of gas-powered devices, violent crime incidents and noted she was bitten by a dog on a too long leash. She does not see Park Police around on the trails and asked that the Park Police provide a trail safety status update at a future ATAG meeting. Michael said he would investigate her request. Kalli Krumpos is looking forward to discussing the Master Plan of Transportation update. Crystal said the draft MPOT update is scheduled to be presented to the Planning Board soon. Maribel Wong asked if the MPOT update includes a new bicycle network. Crystal said she would let ATAG attendees know when the draft MPOT is available for public review and comment.

**Adjournment** – Michael adjourned the meeting at 8:35 PM and said the next ATAG meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 2, 2024, at 7 PM.

