

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Meeting
Saint Cloud Public Library Bremer Room
May 14, 2019

Attendees

- Alison Henning, Chairperson.
- Vicki Johnson.
- Kurt Franke.
- Madison Peters.
- Kim Hoff.
- Allison Dudek.
- Mariah Schyma.
- Dave Broxmeyer.
- Brian Gibson.
- Nate Keller.
- Jake Rueter.

Meeting was called to order at 2:33 p.m. Chairperson Alison Henning presided.

Guest Speaker – Jake Rueter

Ms. Henning introduced guest speaker, Minnesota Department of Transportation's Office of Transit and Active Transportation Pedestrian and Bicycle Planner Jake Rueter.

Mr. Rueter presented on three (3) topics: the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT's) District 3 (D3) Bicycle Plan, an update to the Statewide Bicycle System Plan, and an overview of the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan.

- *D3 Bicycle Plan*
 - Mr. Rueter said the D3 bike plan originated from the Statewide Bicycle Plan. He said MnDOT's Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) had heard feedback from the public about needed facilities. He said the Statewide Bicycle Plan was good, however, there needed to be a much more regional focus. Mr. Rueter said throughout the eight (8) MnDOT districts across the state, MnDOT was working with cities, counties, and public health agencies to develop a district-level bicycle plan.
 - Mr. Rueter said the goal of the district plans were to support local bicycle networks and to assist in prioritizing investments for bicycle facilities. He also said the plans were designed to identify actions for MnDOT district staff to take in advancing bicycling across the state. Mr. Rueter said the district bicycle plan outcomes were to connect stakeholders through conversations, identify key MnDOT projects where bicycle improvements would have a high impact, inform maintenance and safety improvements, and take steps towards estimating bicycle infrastructure needs for future investments.
 - Mr. Rueter said the district bicycle plan project took approximately two (2) years. He said each district had a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that was excited about biking and learning about what improvements could be made throughout each region.
 - Mr. Rueter said the strategies implemented to develop the district bicycle plans were to: use bicycle investment routes to guide MnDOT investment, continue coordination with district bicycle plan TACs, measure performance (investment and participation), develop a way to catalogue local bicycle planning efforts, and explore innovative maintenance approaches and potential partnerships.
 - Mr. Rueter said local bicycle efforts were being worked on at the community level, however, there was no real centralized location to view the progress of this.

- Mr. Rueter said potential partnerships could be designed similar to highway cleanup partnerships. However, these would focus on bicycle trails instead.
- Mr. Rueter said maps were used to help develop the district bicycle plans. He said participants agreed upon where those bicycle routes should be and worked to together to provide improvements to the state bicycle map.
- Mr. Rueter discussed the Suitability of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Environment (SPACE) analysis. This analysis used information from the community about where people were more likely to ride bicycles. From there, Mr. Rueter explained MnDOT was able to determine various hotspots for where investment in would make the best sense and would provide the highest return. Mr. Rueter said each district developed its own set of priorities. These were factored into the creation of a heat map interactive tool that created a framework to estimate bicycle need and activity.
- Mr. Rueter took questions on this presentation.
 - Mr. Keller asked how the heat map was generated.
 - Mr. Rueter said the map was generated using ArcGIS software. He said all of the data incorporated into the map was public data. Mr. Rueter also explained that the map was developed by looking at characteristics of the people and the community.
 - Mr. Franke asked if the information that came from the TAC was valuable in developing the plan.
 - Mr. Rueter said it was. He also stated the map is publically available.
- Mr. Rueter addressed the following questions that were part of his presentation:
 - Are there ways that you can see the District Bicycle Plans being useful in your work or advocacy?
 - What would make it easier to understand/navigate/use the District Bicycle Plans?
 - What is missing from the District Bicycle Plans? Where does MnDOT need to focus its planning for people and bicycling?
- Mr. Franke said equity is a huge part of this plan. He said he liked the overlay of the map and its existing facilities. He said he will get use out of it.
- Mr. Keller said the information provided could have the potential to further justify to developers the need for trails and sidewalks to be considered during construction. He said he appreciated the tool coming from an outside agency.
- Mr. Franke said he has gone to many meetings that seem to focus more on bicycling as a recreational use. He appreciated the fact that this plan is aimed more at a transportation use.
- Mr. Gibson said this plan can be considered good and bad. He said on the one hand this will be helpful in programming projects in the region. On the other hand, Mr. Gibson said this plan only addresses facilities that the state operates like highways which are not always the friendliest for bicyclists. Mr. Gibson provided the example of Division Street.
- Mr. Keller agreed provided the example of Highway 15.
- Mr. Franke disagreed. He said he felt it is much more dangerous to bike on Third Street than on Division.
- Mr. Keller asked if MnDOT has considered off-road paths on semi-heavy roadways.

- Mr. Rueter provided the example of a roadway in Mankato. He said this roadway is a four (4) lane divided highway that has separate trail facilities. Mr. Rueter noted that the problem with this set up was the access to local businesses. Mr. Rueter said the district plans were careful not to dictate which types of facilities would be placed in specific corridors. He said this plan was teasing MnDOT up for where to look at biking and what facilities would be right for certain areas.
- Mr. Gibson asked if MnDOT was accepting public comments on these plans.
- Mr. Rueter said the plans were completed, but MnDOT is always taking comments.
- *Statewide Bicycle Plan*
 - Mr. Rueter said the Statewide Bicycle Plan was last completed in 2016. He said a new plan is due by 2021. He said scoping for the plan will begin in late 2019. He said the new plan will mostly be an update that will include changes to reflect the lessons learned by completing the district bicycle plans.
 - Mr. Rueter said the main focus would be on short trips since most of the comments received (approximately 70 percent) use bicycling for short trips to the grocery store. He said the plan will try to figure out how to make roadways feel safer and more comfortable for riders.
 - Mr. Rueter said MnDOT will be considering the next US Bicycle Route designation, a process that will start in late summer to fall of 2019. Mr. Rueter said Minnesota has two US Bicycle Routes – the Mississippi River Trail that runs through the Saint Cloud metropolitan area and the North Star Route that connects Saint Paul to Grand Portage. Mr. Rueter said MnDOT will be developing a methodology to select the next priority corridor.
 - Mr. Franke asked how the state breaks down funding for bicycling in terms of the Twin Cities metro and outstate Minnesota.
 - Mr. Rueter said funding for bicycling gets divided evenly across all eight (8) MnDOT districts over a twenty (20) year period.
- *Statewide Pedestrian System Plan*
 - Mr. Rueter said the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan is part of the Minnesota GO family of plans. He said this plan is designed to provide guidance to MnDOT for identifying and making investments in places for people to walk.
 - Mr. Rueter said this plan was based off of two big policy documents – MnDOT's Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and the 2016 Minnesota Walks Plan.
 - Mr. Rueter said the purpose of the pedestrian system plan will be to tell the story of why pedestrian networks are an important part of the state transportation system. He also said the plan will help prioritize investments through a tool that relies on equity, land use context, and public engagement results. He said he hopes the plan will develop policy, implementation guides, and provide training opportunities for MnDOT staff to improve outcomes for people walking throughout Minnesota.
 - Mr. Rueter said the pedestrian plan will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He said this will be accomplished through outlining the minimum expectations and determining what is legally mandated. He stated the main focus would be on sidewalks and curb ramp conditions. Mr. Rueter said there is an ADA transition plan at the MnDOT level to ensure ADA

compliance for infrastructure to be completed over the next fifteen (15) years.

- Mr. Rueter said the state's pedestrian plan will go further than what is required by ADA. He said the plan seeks to meet expectations of where people want to walk. He said the development of this plan will assist in guiding investment.
- Mr. Rueter said MnDOT is still in the early process of developing this plan. He said MnDOT will be working to engage the public. He said MnDOT is starting work on prioritization similar to what was conducted during the district bicycle plans. Mr. Rueter anticipates having a draft pedestrian plan available by April 2020. After this time period, Mr. Rueter said he hopes to come back to the community and by the end of 2020 host training sessions with MnDOT staff.
 - Mr. Rueter said some of the engagement strategies he would like to see are walking workshops. He said these workshops would bring together groups of people to experience what is being discussed in the plan. Mr. Rueter said he hopes to tap into local walking groups and/or do different types of classroom activities, piggybacking off of what is currently being done with Safe Routes to School.
 - Mr. Rueter said he hopes to incorporate more traditional listening sessions and focus groups. In addition, Mr. Rueter said he is hoping to do in-person surveys to learn about the perspectives of pedestrian safety and how to prioritize improvements. He said MnDOT will utilize pop-up engagements.
 - Mr. Rueter said one of the more exciting and daunting tasks would be once the draft plan is complete MnDOT hopes to do two (2) demonstration projects to give people the chance to experience the space with changes that are being proposed.
 - Mr. Gibson said if MnDOT needed help advertising these events to let Ms. Henning know. Mr. Gibson said he guessed that walking between towns was not identified as a priority for MnDOT.
 - Mr. Rueter said within communities MnDOT has created content zones such as downtown cores and suburban areas. Then various criteria will be established for these plans.
 - Mr. Franke asked if bike and pedestrian counts would be considered a factor. He brought up the HAWK crossing in Saint Cloud as an example of a response to a need.
 - Mr. Rueter said in the lead up to the project counts would be conducted. Mr. Rueter provided the example of a Mille Lacs tribal nation project around Highway 169 of how counts were used to determine an investment plan. Mr. Rueter said HAWK crossings are the highest level of pedestrian infrastructure. However, Mr. Rueter did point out the fact that installation of rapid flashing beacons was much more common.

Announcements – Spring Bicycle Count Overview

Ms. Henning did a presentation on the spring 2019 bicycle and pedestrian counts. She presented on the twenty-six (26) locations the APO staff collect data. Ms. Henning explained how she had updated several sight lines for the counts.

Mr. Gibson explained the counts were done during a two hour period during the afternoon peak time – from 3-5 p.m.

Mr. Peters asked if there is a set time frame for conducting the counts that would act as a control variable.

Ms. Henning said these counts have a set time frame and are conducted twice a year.

Ms. Henning discussed the continued use of manual count data.

Mr. Franke pointed out the fact that there is a permanent trail counter on the Beaver Island Trail. He was wondering if APO staff used the data from that. He also asked if there were portable counters that could be deployed as well.

Mr. Gibson stated APO staff have debated over the purpose of continuing to do manual bicycle and pedestrian counts. He said staff have been gathering data since 2012. To his knowledge, Mr. Gibson believes the reason data was gathered was to have some type of bicycle and pedestrian data on file for a long-range plan. He said that no trend can be determined from the manual point-in-time counts due to the inconsistencies of when the counts are conducted. He also said weather plays a major role in influencing the counts.

Mr. Gibson acknowledged MnDOT's counter on the Beaver Island Trail. He also stated MnDOT has entrusted APO staff with portable counters that can allow staff to monitor off-road trails for a period of two (2) weeks at a time. He stated APO staff are utilizing these methods to compile and compare data.

Mr. Gibson said there are limitations to using the portable counters. He said the portable counters will not work at intersections because the counters will tally motorist traffic as well. He said staff is in the process of attempting to redevelop the methodology and strategy to do counts along with establishing goals for those counts. Mr. Gibson asked BPAC attendees to provide comments or feedback on this.

Ms. Henning said she is placing portable counters out at various sites for one (1) week at a time. These will be used on off-road trails. She said she is still wanting to do other count at intersections. Ms. Henning said she is considering manual counts for those.

Mr. Gibson said another option would be to use a camera to record an intersection for a forty-eight (48) hour period.

Mr. Gibson again posed the question to the group if there was any value in doing manual counts twice a year. He said he does not believe the data is able to inform anyone.

Mr. Keller said the automatic counter would be more beneficial provided there would be no conflict with vehicles (vehicles being counted in addition to bicycles and pedestrians). He said with the current data fluctuating so much it would be hard to justify the validity of the data.

Mr. Franke inquired about how APO staff would be able to count pedestrian and bicycle traffic for the desire paths on U.S. Highway 10.

Mr. Gibson said that would be part of this discussion. He said during the MnDOT interchange project research, APO staffers had set up a camera to monitor pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Broxmeyer asked if APO staff would be looking to conduct counts at locations similar to the ones currently being counted.

Ms. Henning said they would be looking at more trails such as the Healthy Living, Beaver Island and Pinecone Road trails to deploy the portable counter. She said it would be harder to deploy the portable counters near intersections. Ms. Henning said she was wondering if doing manual counts would be needed for these and other locations. She said as of right now twenty-six (26) locations are too many locations for APO staffers to count given the lack of volunteers participating in the counts. Ms. Henning said if the portable counters were deployed on trails the focus could be doing manual counts at the remaining sites.

Mr. Keller asked if the data gathered would be used similar to Average Daily Traffic (ADT) for roadways.

Mr. Gibson said the goal of the counts is to gather a fair and accurate representation of bicycle and pedestrian traffic in the Saint Cloud metropolitan area. He said APO staffers do not just want to count trails because not everyone uses off-road trails. He said staffers are working to figure out the best way to do counts for sidewalks and intersections.

Mr. Keller said using intersection count data would be good information to have in prioritizing projects. He said this information could be used for upgrading intersections. But without having a good judgement of how many people cross at the intersection it makes prioritizing projects more challenging.

Announcements – Trail Pavement Survey Update

Ms. Henning presented on a new trail pavement survey APO staffers hope to test out during summer 2019. Ms. Henning said she had to section out all of the off-road trails manually into half-mile segments. She said her goal is to use the survey to evaluate the Beaver Island and Healthy Living trails this year. Ms. Henning said once those trails are completed she would like to move on to the Lake Wobegon Trail within the APO's metropolitan planning area.

Ms. Henning presented on a sample section – section 98 – of the Healthy Living Trail she surveyed. She stated that it was a lot of work to complete a half-mile section. Ms. Henning anticipates the Beaver Island Trail will take a lot of time due to the condition that parts of the trail are in.

Mr. Gibson said the reason APO staff are working on assessing pavement condition was because roadway pavement condition was being surveyed by a third-party company this summer. He said he asked this company if they could do an assessment of on-road bicycle lanes, which the company said they could. Mr. Gibson said there was a lack in off-road trail assessments. He said he wanted to develop some kind of system to measure the quality of the pavement. Mr. Gibson said the pavement condition company – GoodPointe – has developed an app to assess off-road trail pavement. He said GoodPointe would like APO staff to beta test the product. Mr. Gibson said if the app is successful, GoodPointe would provide the APO with the software technology for free.

Ms. Henning said her goal is to survey the Healthy Living Trail manually using the paper survey APO staff developed. Then she wants to reevaluate the Healthy Living Trail using the app.

Mr. Gibson asked Mr. Rueter if anyone in the Twin Cities region was conducting off-road trail pavement surveys.

Mr. Rueter said MnDOT District 1 was looking at off-road pavement conditions using a bike outfitted with lots of sensors.

Mr. Franke said he had attended a workshop where he had heard of a group in Iowa using a trailer with sensors to evaluate trail conditions. He said it was implemented using iPhones that would record conditions as the trailer traveled along the trail.

Mr. Keller suggested the APO reach out to Saint Cloud State University students to assist in the survey.

Ms. Henning said her goal is to take all of the ratings from the survey, color code them, and put them into GIS. She hopes to provide these to cities and counties within the APO to help determine and prioritize projects.

Ms. Henning asked for volunteers to conduct the pavement assessment.

Mr. Franke said educating volunteers on how to do the survey and what to look for would be important. Mr. Franke provided an example of educating volunteers on overhanging vegetation.

Announcements – New Bicycle Parking in Saint Cloud

Ms. Henning said twenty-two (22) bright green bicycle racks had been placed within the downtown Saint Cloud area. Ms. Henning said Saint Cloud City Engineer Steve Foss said the racks were painted bright green to align with MnDOT's color scheme for active transportation.

Mr. Franke said the city is planning on painting the older bicycle racks in the city bright green as well.

Mr. Gibson said the color is nice and visible without being obnoxious.

Ms. Henning said it was nice to see the bicycle parking out during Earth Day in April.

Mr. Keller said the bicycle parking was a perfect example of build it and people will use it.

Announcements – Upcoming Bicycle and Pedestrian Events

Ms. Henning handed out a flyer she created about local bicycle, walking, and running events within the APO's planning area. She said other events can be posted on the APO's website.

Mr. Keller asked if the City of Sartell's Bike to School Day event could be added to the flyer and/or website.

Mr. Gibson said Ms. Henning will be beginning the active transportation plan for the Saint Cloud metropolitan planning area.

Ms. Henning said she is in the process of scheduling meetings with the city of Saint Cloud.

Mr. Keller announced the City of Sartell had applied to be a bicycle friendly community. He said after being awarded an honorable mention, the city re-applied this past fall and was awarded a Bronze level. He anticipated doing a press release later in the week.

Meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Vicki Johnson.