

Minutes
Rural Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee
Portage County Combined Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Project
4:00 PM, Monday, November 1, 2013
Conference Room 5, 1462 Strongs Ave
Stevens Point WI 54481

Committee Members Present: Bo DeDeker, Nathan Check, Gary Garske, Mike Juris, Jim Menzel, Butch Pomeroy, Dave Wilz, Jim Hamilton, Dennis Hess, John Jury, Brad Mapes-Martins, Neil Prendergast

Committee Members Absent: Sarah Brish, Bud Flood, Steve Retzki

Consultants/Staff Present: Tom Huber, Toole Design Group; Jeff Schuler, Sarah Wallace, and Patty Benedict, Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

Others Present: Bob Fisch

Juris called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He thanked any veterans attending for their service.

1. Approval of minutes of October 1, 2013 Rural Steering Committee meeting
(NOTE: The October 1 meeting took place on a Tuesday, instead of Monday.) Motion by Hamilton, second by Jury, to approve the minutes from October 1, 2013. Motion to approve carried by voice vote.
2. Review and Discussion on Draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Recommendations
Huber encouraged members to comment, ask questions, and fill in anything missing on the recommendations. He said this is the first of a three stage process. The second stage is receiving the draft plan, and the third is the final plan, coming in the next couple of months. The draft plan should be available around Thanksgiving. Photos may be missing and the layout may be choppy, but the draft will contain all of the maps, tables and it will be close to what the final plan will look like. Members will have an opportunity to comment on the draft plan and the public can comment at the open house.

Huber suggested dealing with content, anything missed, or needing further explanation at this meeting. Grammatical changes can be sent to him.

Huber said the goals and objective pages should look familiar. Referring to Goal F, Policy F1.2 – Provide bicycle and pedestrian educational materials on the County webpage, Juris feels the materials are educational for adults, but suggested information should also be geared toward younger bicyclists and pedestrians as part of classroom activities and school use.

Huber said a comment was received regarding using the word “stings” (Goal F, Objective F3, Policy F3.1). Huber said “walkout” is preferred.

Hamilton said, approximately 30 years ago, the Stevens Point Journal recognized a citizen of the week with a photo in the paper and a gift certificate, for behavior such as observing traffic laws and allowing pedestrians to cross. He believes it is important to include positive reinforcement, either under Encouragement or Enforcement Recommendations. He thinks it is more effective than enforcement, and publicizing in the newspaper gets the message across better and to more people.

Mapes-Martin referred to Goal F, Objective F1, Policy F1.1: Provide/promote bicycle education events such as bicycle rodeos and other activities. He felt more explanation is needed so people

know how the events, such as bicycle rodeos are educational. Schuler said it is a timing issue for the document. There is more detail later in the document, but the term is used first without any context. Huber said reference could be made to the description later in the document.

He asked if there are any civic organizations that hold bicycle rodeos. Wallace replied police/sheriff's departments have held rodeos at schools. She added the Village of Plover held a Community Safety Day, which included some bicycle education and helmet distribution for children. Huber said the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) has a course teaching safe bicycling which they will present regionally. Portage County sponsored an event 2-3 years ago. Huber suggested checking other Wisconsin communities or the DOT to see if there are write ups on holding a bicycle rodeo, and include in the appendix of the plan. Juris said he would like to see an organization such as the Lions/Lioness or scouts sponsor an event during one of their community celebrations. In the smaller communities, Huber said it could take place every other year. Jury mentioned Kevin Quinlan, Boys & Girls Club, as a resource. Wallace and Huber said the DOT has mini grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 if enforcement agencies or an NGO wants to sponsor a bicycle education event.

Huber mentioned another possible use for a DOT mini grant. He said Portage County is very active and has an interested staff, with Sheriff Department involvement. He said the number one concern of bicyclists is not bicycle or roadway facilities, it is the way they are treated by other road users. Law enforcement officials become involved when there is an accident, but in cases when a bicyclist reports a complaint, such as when a vehicle brushes or buzzes a cyclist, often a ticket cannot be issued. However, if a license plate is taken, law enforcement may write a letter or call the driver. A driver may also report a bicyclist not following traffic laws. A mini grant could be used to have the Bureau of Transportation Safety educate one or two law enforcement officials. A website could be set up with a focus on bicyclists and motorists to report complaints or problems, which are forwarded to an officer for follow up. Huber said Madison has a website called "Report a Problem". He would like to see a program started in a Wisconsin county. Huber stated reported behavior would not appear on an individual's record, but there will be documentation in case of future incidents. The goal is to make bicyclists feel more comfortable. Huber said it may also improve the communications between law enforcement and bicyclists.

Huber pointed out that maps receive most of the attention in a plan. The Non-Infrastructure Recommendations – Encouragement, Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation do not involve engineering and are not tied to maps. He said the trick is to get people to read the narrative.

Huber said bike mapping, especially in the rural areas, was recommended, but he does not feel it is covered well in the plan. Bike mapping often leads to economic development and travel plans for people. Huber said it is fairly easy to develop a map with recommended routes to have available on the website. It was noted to add references to bike mapping under the Encouragement recommendations.

Schuler said this is the section to include more about bike rodeos and encouraging local service organizations to sponsor a rodeo. Prendergast referred to Goal G, Objective G1: Create a permanent Bicycle and Pedestrian Group(s), suggesting this could be a responsibility of the group. When the group is organized and depending on who members are, Schuler said the structure and role of the group should be decided. Huber said an advisory committee could take on the task of organizing events such as a bike rodeo. Prendergast said an advisory committee could have information on how to conduct a rodeo and pass on to an organization that would follow through. Huber said service organizations can have other roles under the Encouragement and Education recommendation sections. Huber said there has been discussion about assigning potential responsibility for the recommendations. Service organizations can be identified as possible partners.

On page 11, under Track Facilities, "Using the determined prioritization criteria, ..." Mapes-Martin said he could not find the criteria listed anywhere. Huber said this had been discussed a little. A lot has to do with how roadways are rated in terms of its current bicycle suitability. Criteria that help sort out where projects fall include: What is the short term potential for reconstruction where paved shoulders, a bike lane or a bike path can be added? What are the long term prospects? Costs involved?

There was discussion regarding Stevens Point being named as a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Community, and how to reach a silver designation. Wallace said the application is very detailed. She feels the County could come close. In addition to the county, the recommendation encourages at least one community reaches the silver designation. Fisch feels Stevens Point has the potential, but all parties must be pushing in the right direction. He explained bronze is the entry level, followed by silver, gold, platinum, and diamond. Huber said it is unusual for a county to pursue the designation. Juris asked if the criteria are realistic for urban communities. Huber suggested including what communities in the county are currently doing makes a stronger application. He feels having a newly completed plan will be helpful.

Discussion took place on the Speed Enforcement section (page 9), "The enforcement of posted speed limits through warnings, ticketing and yard sign campaigns can quickly make compliance the rule of the neighborhood." Wilz commented yard signs reminding motorists to slow down are important. Huber believes yard signs are most effective when they are posted for several weeks then taken down. Menzel feels it is important to have the committee design and choose wording for the signs. Huber said signs are transitioning toward positive reinforcement, i.e., "Thanks for driving the speed limit", or "Thanks for yielding to pedestrians".

Prendergast said the motorcycle community has done a good job in creating awareness. He said bicyclists sometimes have a stigma against them as road users. In considering language for signs, he suggested stressing safety, all users, etc. and help people see the goals of pedestrians and bicyclists as the same as motorcyclists. For a sign campaign to be effective countywide, Juris suggested signs are made available rotating between urban and rural communities. Prendergast also suggested including all symbols for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and vehicles on signs to give a visual of all users.

Wilz referred to Grant Writing on page 12 and asked if there are many grants available. He sees possible obstacles in creating a countywide approach in terms of infrastructure, either on county, town, or village roads. Some municipalities may want to participate, but budgets may not allow. Huber said there are some large grants through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), available every other year. Wallace said preliminary applications are due December 14. If chosen, final applications are due in March. She said there is not much time. Wilz said it may be an approach for the future, to identify infrastructure in need, but budgets may not allow for a while.

Huber said there are two ways to fund facilities. A large majority of the projects being recommended for the plan are bike way and pedestrian improvements incidental to the overall project. When the county reconstructs a road it is the best time to include paved shoulders to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. TAP funds could be used for what are considered independent projects, for example, a path. Juris said there are disjointed sections that need to be tied together to form a cohesive system.

Wallace explained there are two grant funding types. Planning grants have a minimum of \$30,000, and infrastructure, having a minimum of \$300,000. Prendergast asked if continuing the connection of the Tomorrow River Trail would qualify. Wallace said attempts are being made. There is funding allocated for the project; however, there are land acquisition issues.

Huber referred to the Recommended Bikeway and Pedestrian Facility Types, saying it is an important explanation leading to the section on Rural Area Bicycle Facility Recommendations. Jury feels involving civic leaders is important to determine what type of facility works best in specific areas. Huber added a resource information section will be included on bicycle facility planning and design. Wilz said there can be disconnects in terms of road reconstruction between local governments and DOT guidelines, and he would appreciate any information provided.

Juris referred to the photos of the facility types. He said the Village of Amherst has lined areas that he does not believe meet specifications for bike lanes. Huber said if they are not marked as bike lanes, they are shoulders and should not be referred to as bike lanes. It was suggested a photo of paved shoulders should be included. Paved shoulders provide a sense of security for bikers and walkers. Jury suggested using photos showing examples from around the county and captioning with the name of the town.

Huber started a slide presentation featuring the maps for the plan. He talked about the conditions map, which is being updated. He referred to page 25, pointing out there is about a mile in the county recommended for paved shoulders. The reason is because most of the county roadways are low volume. There are a number of county highways not good for cycling, but are parallel to roads selected. They will still recommend some county highways for paved shoulders that are not part of the recommended system. There are approximately 327 miles of recommended bike routes. There may be 25-30 miles of the 327 miles recommended for treatment, such as paved shoulders. Roadway conditions are evaluated by the road width and volume of traffic, with secondary factors being percent of solid yellow line and percent of truck traffic.

Huber said the map covers the county and state highways. He said the majority of the town roads have a low volume of traffic, less than 300-400 vehicles per day. Based on the low volume of traffic, most of the town roads will be considered suitable for cycling. He said they will not be able to consider the secondary factors on most town roads as the percent of truck traffic is unknown, and most town roads do not have a center line, so they will rely on traffic volume and road width.

Juris asked to have the Tomorrow River Trail identified in the legend similar to the Green Circle Trail, and on page 25, in the first recommendation where the Ice Age Trail is mentioned, the Tomorrow River Trail should also be mentioned. Arterials and collectors are mentioned on pages 24 and 25. Juris said, when differentiating for bicycle or pedestrian uses, they are pretty much the same. All village streets are virtual bike ways, but it may not be the same in the city.

Near the Village of Rosholt, Wallace pointed out a connection is needed between Birch Road and County Road A along County Road I to make a loop.

Hess feels it would be good to use letter, number, or name designations for routes. Huber said it is recommended to pair bike route signs with a route number or a supplemental plaque identifying where the route leads. The plan does not recommend one way over another for wayfinding signs. The committee leaned toward naming routes.

Huber said the initial idea, at the beginning of the plan process, was to make connections between the urban area and villages. The committee is also in favor of loop routes. Some will be part of the plan related to marketing and development of signage plans.

Huber said the southwest area of the county does not have a lot of paved roadways. Prendergast said a route to get to Wisconsin Rapids would be nice. Huber said there are two connections. Menzel doesn't feel coming up with routes is a problem.

Wallace said the Planning and Zoning Department has received a lot of contact regarding the various forms the map could take, i.e., online or active mapping, what the content on the map

should be. Ultimately she said there needs to be cohesive, marketed loops, not multiple organizations or groups putting out their routes. Loops and routes should be determined, providing wayfinding, information, and marketing so locals and visitors can find their way around and be comfortable going to different areas to do a loop.

Jury pointed out Polonia, a popular destination for bicyclists, is not on the map. Wallace said Polonia and Custer are not incorporated, but are considered destinations. She added for their Grain Tour, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau had driving routes connecting the breweries, and recently developed bicycle routes.

Huber asked if anything else was missing on the map. Prendergast suggested adding the parks. Mapes-Martin said a key for the parks depicting those with bicycle facilities would be helpful. Fisch said villages and towns may want to highlight routes in their newsletters.

Huber said the maps presented are for this committee, as advisors for the plan, and the maps will be included in the plan. With a few changes, the maps can be made into user maps. One of the recommendations will be for the county and municipalities to create user maps. The plan is being marketed and routes are being promoted via the website. A next step is to sign the routes. Huber added routes can be promoted and recommended without signage.

Schuler stated parking and staging areas should be included for visitors to access loops and routes. Huber agreed the plan and maps should identify parking areas. Schuler said it may be a local municipality's decision where to allow parking, how many spaces, maintenance, etc. Juris agreed parking areas are important. Bicyclists are more likely to patronize local businesses if they have a vehicle parked nearby, versus those passing through. There was discussion about locating staging/parking areas in village and county parks, and making route information available. Schuler believes the concept should be included in the plan. Huber agreed attention should be drawn in the plan to recommend identifying parking areas for people traveling in to ride loops and routes, or establishing areas where they do not exist. Fisch said it could be included in the Encouragement section.

Regarding pedestrians, Huber said paved shoulders will be recommended; however, he asked how to convey the importance of sidewalks, both in the urban area and villages. He suggested mentioning, in a general way, the busier, main streets should have sidewalks, preferably on both sides, with guidelines included. There has been interest in identifying places where sidewalks belong in the urban area. Huber said this has been tried in other areas, which has caused controversy. Juris said the Village of Amherst has a sidewalk plan. Implementing the plan is a matter of resources and opportunities. He feels location of sidewalks should be left up to municipal officials. Huber said he realizes a lot of sidewalks may not be built until street reconstruction occurs. He questioned how detailed should sidewalk location be in the plan. Schuler asked what is the best way officials can use the information in the plan? If a municipality has a sidewalk plan, Juris recommended not superseding, but possibly suggesting revisiting and updating plans. Huber said language can be worded so municipalities can consider at the time of reconstruction or mention other important cyclings to prioritize. Huber asked if lines should be put on the map? While doing inventories, Huber said they were impressed with the number and quality of sidewalks in the villages. In many municipalities, sidewalks are assessments to the property owner, who must maintain and keep clear. Wilz said the Town of Hull does not have sidewalks. He would like to see options in the plan, but allow municipalities to make decisions. Juris feels there should be strong language to encourage the development of pedestrian walkways, leaving the specifics to the individual municipality.

There was discussion regarding speed limits in the rural areas. Pomeroy mentioned County Road HH, saying there is heavy traffic, no shoulder, and terrible for bicycling; however, after crossing County Road J, the speed limit is reduced to 35 miles per hour, and is a nice road for bicycling. It

was pointed out that postings on county roads are based on traffic studies and population. Huber said the default speed limit in rural areas is 55 miles per hour. Certain density situations allow speed zones, which can be set by the jurisdiction in charge of maintenance. On rustic roads, the jurisdiction is allowed to reduce the posted speed to 45 miles per hour. Nathan Check, Portage County Highway Commissioner, verified speed studies are needed for local jurisdictions to lower limits.

Check stated there are a number of one and two acre subdivisions and asked if the county or towns have any interconnectivity ordinances requiring an easement through lots to connect with adjacent subdivisions. This keeps traffic within the subdivision versus coming onto a collector. Schuler said it is a local issue, there are no blanket requirements. Huber said this is something that would be included as part of a subdivision approval.

Committee members were asked to email any additional comments or suggestions by Thursday (November 14).

Discussion on Upcoming Meetings and Open House

Wallace said the complete preliminary draft will be shared with committee members. Tuesday, December 3 will be a joint Urban and Rural Steering Committee meeting, tentatively at 4:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Center (Aging and Disability Resource Center). A public open house will be held after the meeting. Wallace encouraged members to attend the open house. Committee members and the general public may provide comments. Information will be presented to municipalities, requesting their feedback. Comments and feedback will be sent to Toole Design Group by January 14. A final draft will follow.

Juris verified the Village of Amherst Board presentation will be November 26 at 7:00 p.m. Other municipalities are invited to attend.

Huber said the public open house will feature stations for people to learn about the rural and urban area plans. He said there will not be a formal presentation, but an announcement informing people of the different stations. He welcomed ideas.

Motion by Hess, second by Wilz to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Benedict, Recording Secretary
Planning & Zoning Department

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.