

Mayor Tracey Furman

Council Member Darin Bartram
Council Member Nate Engle



Council Member Conor Crimmins
Council Member Ann Lichter

Notes

Pedestrian and Bicycling Access and Safety Working Group
February 28th, 2024, 7:30 pm
Town Hall

PARTICIPANTS: Chris, Al, Leslie, Anne-Marie, Alan, Nate

NOTES:

Member bios

- Bios are meant primarily for us to use as a WG to know what skills and interests we all bring to the table. That being noted, if you haven't done so already, please draft it in a way that you would still feel comfortable with this being posted on the Town's website so the rest of the community knows who is supporting the WG (this is a secondary purpose, but we can accomplish both objectives with just one set of bios).
- Link is here:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wLDJk1no1okWQ4D3eUcOekhmpN7Ux2Zk/edit?usp=sharing&oid=111390833455214579627&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Workstream updates

1. Public art and PBAS – "Tactical Urbanism"
 - Alan and Anne-Marie recapped on MTC meeting in February where this was discussed as a follow up from the Council presentation in January. Idea is to pilot something at Metropolitan, Kensington Parkway, and Ferndale intersection for temporary solutions. Town engineer already has a sketch concept that will be shared with the Workstream. **Workstream to receive plans from Matt and think through how to implement the project (e.g., how to solicit artists, plan a community event around it, etc.).**
 - Second option is to continue to pursue the Knowles/Detrick intersection. Will build from ongoing discussions between the Town and SHA.
 - Calvert Place and Kensington Parkway is more appropriate for a permanent solution, but any project here will require ensuring there is demand and support from residents, especially those most directly affected.
2. CSX crossing (and Metropolitan Ave)
 - Al and Chris gave an update on the workstream, based on the attached report prepared by Carole.
 - **Nate to talk with Matt about Federal grants issues for engineering design.**
3. Bicycling education and infrastructure
 - No update this month. **Leslie to pick up on this again and start with a table to highlight a few issues to compare competing/conflicting policies/rules/regs.**

State funding opportunities

- WG to let Nate know if anyone plans to attend the workshop on behalf of the WG. The District 3 workshop session will be held 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesday, March 13 – State Highway Administration District 3 Office Auditorium, 9300 Kenilworth Ave., Greenbelt.
- Al put together a list of funding opportunities. Shared with the group a spreadsheet that lists Federal \$ administered by the State. WG to update as we become aware of more opportunities.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PNppfCDgtZF22tT2KsEbWeKXblZR4W6JcrLN46CHtno/edit>
- **Nate to also share with Sustainable Kensington.**

Next meeting proposed for: Tuesday, April 23rd, 7:30pm – Town Hall

UPDATE FROM RAILROAD SAFETY WORKSTREAM: 2-28-24

Streetlight improvements: MCDOT approved our suggested lighting improvements for Metropolitan Ave., between St. Paul and Wheatley. Take place within next 6 months-1 year.

The changes to the railroad parking lot lighting that we requested has been completed.

Signage improvements: A rapid flashing beacon sign was recently approved by SHA for the crossing at Wheatley and Metropolitan and is expected to be installed by this summer.

Improvements to Train Station North Parking Lot:

Matt Hoffman informed us that the parking lot shrubs that reduce visibility of pedestrians and bikers are now on a CSX trimming schedule. We raised concerns with Matt that this is insufficient; bush removal and/or improved signage at crossing behind Ayoub Rug facility needs to be discussed in greater depth. We also introduced the idea of applied speed bumps to that crossing.

Meeting with TOK, MTA and CSX on Station Crossing:

A small onsite mtg took place at the RR station with Matt Hoffman present, along with one rep each from MTA and CSX. Matt provided the following briefing:

- 1) CSX allowed the installation of additional visual warning cues; hence, the new banner installed by the town, with plans to add visual prompts on the hard surface leading up to the crossing platform. They made it clear they are not supportive of more long term/warning signage, as they believe it is “overly signed”.
- 2) A system wide pedestrian safety signalization warning system will be implemented over several years with enhancements along the whole line. (*It is estimated this is 2-3 years out; MTA is considering different mechanisms, both audio and visual.*)
- 3) CSX refused any improvements to existing track crossing, either in widening it or improving the surface, as they do not recognize it as an “official crossing”. Asphalt or concrete is unacceptable to CSX, citing the need to remove it whenever track repairs are required. The only reason the crossing is there is because they have an agreement with MTA to allow MARC passengers access to the passenger trains. There are concerns expressed by MTA that if we continue to raise this issue with CSX, it could result in unanticipated negative consequences, such as restricting the crossing to MARC passengers only. Matt shared that MTA is looking for a suitable material that could be substituted for the current one but have yet to find a good replacement. The other concern we have regarding widening the crossing was sidestepped at the meeting.
- 4) Matt will be working with Nate to draft a “carefully crafted letter” expressing our continuing concerns about the safety of the existing crossing to MTA. It may need to go before the TOK Council for approval. No timeline was given as to the crafting of the letter, and Nate indicated our group may want to contribute to the letter as it is drafted.

Grant Funding Opportunities

The town's proposal for Federal funding planning grant directed at the expansion of the Connecticut Ave overpass was denied. Matt explained that there were two categories of grants offered by the Feds: planning and implementation. Before applying, the Feds had advised the town to apply for a planning grant, which they did, but then when denied, were told their proposal was actually better suited for the implementation category. But they have now been advised to reapply this year, which they will do. They expect to be funded and will be working with an engineering company. Matt sees this as an opportunity to explore with whomever they hire, the possibility of an over or underpass located at the station, as we had suggested.

He also noted that MTA is putting in a Federal grant application for an engineering evaluation for an overpass in March and Kensington was invited to be included for this year. There are a few challenges, however: we currently do not yet own the M&T property (or the dog park property), and the funding requires a \$300K matching grant, so we would need to secure these matching funds. Matt will keep us updated on progress with both funding opportunities.

Next Steps

Group members are:

- Developing a list of Contacts to begin to hold conversations with identified key players/supporters.
- Assembling a list of talking points in preparation for meetings with these players.
- Tracking relevant funding and legislative initiatives and appreciate PBAS members passing along anything they hear of.
- Continue to monitor town efforts at advancing our issues with MTA and assist where possible.
- “Think big” in advocating an underpass/overpass and exploring the idea of lowering the tracks through Kensington.

Will share progress as we continue.