

MEETING OF THE
BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC)

FEBRUARY 11, 2021
5:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ben Berto, BPAC Chair
Cheryl Longinotti
Mark Birnbaum
Don Magdanz
Mike Howe
Chris Blunk
Steve Palmer

Members Absent: None

Staff: Anne Richman, Executive Director
Bill Whitney, TAM Project Delivery Manager
David Chan, TAM Manager of Programming & Legislation
Scott McDonald, TAM Senior Transportation Planner

1. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. Denise Merleno from TAM conducted a roll call which introduced the TAM BPAC.

2. Committee Member Comments

Committee member Blunk reported that the City of Novato is making some administrative changes to its Bike Plan and will soon open the plan for public comment. The plan will be made available after reviewing it further with the Novato BPAC.

3. Open Time for Public Expressions

Craig Murray, member of the public, commented that TAM should give priority to three 94903 zip code (San Rafael) interchange crossings: 1) Smith Ranch Rd. – with narrow Class 2 markings and a dark and dangerous crossing, 2) South Side of SMART – important area for kids in the community on west side of the highway to get to the east side and an important connection to get to Venetia Valley School, and 3) North San Pedro Road – problems with no or dilapidated facilities, no clear markings, or zones for bicycles/pedestrians in dark areas and where inbound/outbound cars, peds, and bikes intersect.

Jean Severinghaus, member of the public, raised the question about whether TAM projects could be hastened through SB288S and mentioned a two-year window starting January 31, 2021.

Chair Berto mentioned that Caltrans is taking significant strides to explore crossings over highways.

4. Adoption of Minutes from July 8, 2020

Committee member Blunk asked for a modification in the minutes to state that he had recused himself from the Quick Build Project vote. With that change made, Committee member Magdanz made a motion to adopt the July 8, 2020 minutes, Committee member Longinotti seconded the motion, and the committee approved the minutes.

5. TAM Electric Bike Research Study (Discussion)

Scott McDonald presented an overview of the electric bike study, which was conducted with the firm Alta Planning + Design, to explore opportunities around electric bikes, and roles agencies might play to support them. He also referred to a discussion with Chair Berto and Committee member Howe in advance of the meeting to review the study. Scott then introduced Michael Jones from Alta Planning who provided a presentation regarding the Electric Bike Study.

Mike Jones from Alta Planning + Design provided a brief presentation of TAM's electric bike study as a follow up to a presentation from the July 2020 BPAC meeting. The presentation concluded with comments and questions.

Following the presentation, the BPAC discussed the study.

Ben Berto commented that e-bikes fit nicely into Marin and that many of the obstacles, like secure parking, are included in the study. He mentioned that many of the improvements like infrastructure, training, and safe facilities, will help encourage people to bike instead of drive. He also expressed the need to consider further how e-bikes can share space with other users.

Mike Howe described his experience using an e-bike and mentioned that the e-bike is convenient, great for shopping and riding great distances; and that many of his neighbors are looking into purchasing them. He mentioned that narrow roads remain a concern for both e-bike riders and other cyclists, and that this is something that training might resolve, possibly through MCBC.

Don Magdanz commented that the weight of the e-bikes is a constraint, especially if people are unable to lift them onto buses or ferries. He also mentioned that bike shops may sell them in addition to traditional bikes.

Cheryl Longinotti commented that the barriers include infrastructure and going to the Larkspur Ferry crossing the Corte Madera Creek is a challenge, and that e-bikes would be difficult to use at and around SMART.

Chris Blunk mentioned that the cost remains an issue, especially if people are reluctant to park expensive bikes. Chris also commented that e-bike storage facilities should be located and configured in such a way that does not require users to lift the e-bike.

Mike Howe mentioned that the battery can be taken out of the e-bikes, so weight can be reduced if batteries are taken out, and that while good infrastructure is necessary, proper education is important.

Chair Berto stated that e-bikes can reduce sweating enroute to work and people can use them for first/last mile trips. He also stated that agencies will be looking at secure parking.

MCBC Planning Director Warren Wells commented on the importance of secure bike parking and creating e-bike parking in spaces traditionally used for automobiles.

Philip Mooney, member of the public from the City of San Rafael, commented that infrastructure is a limiting factor, but that many families are using e-bikes, particularly to transport kids, particularly electric cargo bikes.

6. North-South Greenway Improvements Update (Discussion)

Bill Whitney presented a status update on TAM's North-South Greenway project.

Chair Berto commented that it is good to see both North-South and East-West improvements happening.

Cheryl Longinotti asked what would happen to the existing sidewalk. Bill responded that the six-foot existing sidewalk would be converted to a shoulder for vehicles and that there will be a much wider path used for bike/peds.

Don Magdanz said that he expects this project to offer a huge difference in the commute at Larkspur Landing southbound. He also commented that it is incredible to see how much progress has been made.

7. Bike & Pedestrian Traffic Monitoring Update (Discussion)

Scott McDonald from TAM provided a presentation on the counts done by TJKM consultants in October 2020. The counts showed that during the pandemic period there was a slight dip in bike use overall and that there was a greater dip in pedestrian activities in the downtown areas. He mentioned that staff is exploring other data sources and that TJKM is planning to develop a traffic monitoring report based on data collected during Summer 2021.

Chair Berto commented that the data points are bi-annual, so there may be fluctuations between 2018 and 2020. He also commented that a lack of tourism is likely a key contributor to the decreases.

8. MTC Safe and Seamless Mobility Quick-Strike Program (Discussion)

David Chan presented an update on the program, sharing that on February 1, 2021, MTC released a call for letters of interest to County Transportation Agencies (CTAs) with \$54.4 million in federal Surface Transportation Program (STP)/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funds, through the one-time, competitive Safe and Seamless Mobility Quick-Strike Program to fund projects that can be implemented quickly to support communities responding to COVID-19, including bike/ped projects. The Quick-Strike Program emphasizes bicycle/pedestrian safety and mobility, connections to transit, and projects that advance equitable mobility.

By March 30, 2021, CTAs are expected to submit project nominations for their respective county areas based on funding targets and that given the quick turnaround staff will do an evaluation based on the limited timeline.

Chair Berto commented that there are projects in the County that could pursue this funding opportunity and that TAM should submit for a larger amount to increase our chances.

David Chan mentioned that MTC staff suggested that a request of three times the target amount would be appropriate.

Warren Wells from MCBC asked about what constitutes "shovel-ready". David responded that it typically means that project sponsors are finished with design.

Jean Severinghaus, member of the public, asked what types of projects people are considering. David mentioned that Mill Valley is exploring funding for a Class 4 project in Mill Valley, and that Marin Transit is considering a project to improve bus stops.

Craig Murray, member of the public, suggested a gap closure project at Hamilton Field to Las Gallinas Ponds.

9. TAM Interchange Study (Discussion)

TAM Project Manager Bill Whitney presented TAM's Interchange Study.

Following the presentation, Chair Berto commented that the interchanges are a substantial impediment to pedestrian crossings and noted the importance of this study.

Cheryl Longinotti commented that she assumed the interchanges were a responsibility of Caltrans. Bill responded that the study also includes the approaches to interchanges.

Jean Severinghaus, member of the public, commented that the study is exciting, and should be coordinated with Caltrans' pedestrian study, with an emphasis by Caltrans on pre-construction activities. Bill responded that this is an independent study to develop potential improvement concepts.

10. Adjournment

Cheryl Longinotti made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Don Magdanz, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

DRAFT