

Packard Bikeway Task Force Minutes

Virtual meeting -- November 16, 2020

Convened by Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition (WBWC)

Attendees:

Raymond HessAnn Arbor Transportation Manager
Eli CooperAnn Arbor Transportation Program
Bonnie WesslerYpsilanti Public Services Project Manager
Mike HoffmeisterYpsilanti Township Residential Services Director
Craig LyonPittsfield Township Utilities & Municipal Services Director
Matt CatanzaritePittsfield Township GIS Manager
Ryan Buck.....Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) Director
Brent SchlackWashtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) Asst. Dir. of Eng.
Elena YadykinaWashtenaw County Road Commission
Nathan VoghtWashtenaw County Economic Development Specialist
Brian Pawlik.....SEMCOG Bicycle & Pedestrian Planner
Forest YangAAATA (TheRide) Planner
John WatermanProgram to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC) Executive Director
Bob KrzewinskiYpsilanti Non-motorized Advisor Committee
Seth Peterson.....WBWC vice chair
Larry DeckWBWC board

Seth Peterson called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. After calling on the participants to introduce themselves, he reviewed the purpose of the task force, and he showed a series of current photos of the Packard corridor from Eisenhower Parkway to Cross Street. Seth moderated the remainder of the meeting to address long-term visions, obstacles, short-term opportunities, and next steps.

Brent Schlack described the preventive maintenance project that the Road Commission plans on Packard in 2021 -- milling and overlaying from Carpenter to the Ypsilanti city limits. WCRC has not yet decided on whether again to mark a narrow lane or put a sharrow on the outside lane, and Brent asked to hear people's thoughts.

John Waterman described the difficult biking conditions on the corridor.

Raymond Hess described Ann Arbor's experiment with the narrowing of Packard from Eisenhower to Platt. The city adjusted the signal timing at Platt and later shortened the narrowing by a block to Rosedale. Despite these adjustments, during the p.m. peak there was a period of about 30 to 60 minutes with some traffic delays, and some drivers expressed concern. Raymond said that there may be opportunities for developing a shared-use path on the corridor.

Matt Catanzarite asked why Packard east of Carpenter had a speed limit of 45 mph (higher than the rest of the corridor). **Brent Schlack** answered that the speed was set using the 85th percentile method, which is state policy.

Eli Cooper said that, for the portion of Packard in Ann Arbor, the city's long-term plan calls for improving facilities by widening the street to provide more room and/or building off-street infrastructure. Creation of a low-stress route may require either a cycle track behind the curb at sidewalk level or a shared-use path. Whatever is done, agencies need to work together, and partnerships can make projects more attractive to funders. Available funding depends on the type of project.

Ryan Buck said that WATS can help compile consistent data regarding things like traffic volumes, lane widths, and pavement quality.

Brian Pawlik said that, to attract a broad range of bicyclists, it is important to design for a high comfort level. Facilities should be wide enough and situated suitably to provide comfort and safety. It is best to "do it right" rather than to build a bare minimum that requires exceptions from proper designs. And well-designed facilities are more likely to secure funding.

John Waterman said that designs should meet the needs of people with disabilities and people on tricycles. Tricycles require more width than bicycles.

Forest Yang said that, since Packard is a high-frequency transit route and frequency may increase in the future, it is important to consider the interaction of buses and bicycles. An on-street bike lane can lead to conflicts between buses, bikes, and people boarding a bus. AAATA prefers bike facilities to be separated from the street. And it's worth the money to build a high-quality facility.

Nathan Voght compared the issues on Packard and Washtenaw, for which the ReImagine Washtenaw project has prepared cross section sketches for three different segments. Washtenaw has more traffic and commercial buildings than Packard. The ReImagine designs were done to accommodate an expected 12% increase in traffic over the next 10 to 20 years. For Packard, there is a need to get data on current and projected traffic volumes. The Washtenaw designs provided for 8 feet on each side to accommodate a bicycle facility without specifying a particular design (to allow implementation flexibility).

Larry Deck said that he thought that, in regard to WCRC's 2021 resurfacing project, even narrow bike lanes would be better than sharrows, and if vehicle lanes could be narrowed, that would help to calm traffic and make more room for wider bike lanes.

Nathan Voght agreed that even narrow bike lanes would be better than sharrows, and that possibly the vehicle lanes could be narrowed to make more room for bike lanes. He said that with narrow bike lanes, extra attention must be paid to cleaning the debris that accumulates along the edge.

Eli Cooper said that Ann Arbor's recent resurfacing and remarking of a 5-lane segment of Plymouth Road with 10-foot vehicle lanes had allowed wider bike lanes and helped to

calm traffic. Seth showed photos of the improved segment of Plymouth. Eli suggested the same treatment of Packard for WCRC's 2021 project.

John Waterman mentioned that tricycles (which some people with disabilities use) need over two feet of width.

Ryan Buck asked whether Ann Arbor's recently implemented re-marking of Granger Avenue with an advisory bike lane was preferable to a sharrow and whether that technique would be useful on Packard.

Raymond Hess answered that the Granger marking was an allowed experimental treatment that is also used on Seventh Street at intersections (where the bike lane fades away). He said that he thinks that advisory bike lanes are more appropriate for low-speed, low-volume streets than for streets like Packard.

Larry Deck asked who or whose agency could help prepare some sketches of cross sections of alternative designs for the corridor.

Ryan Buck answered that WATS could assemble data on things like traffic volume and lane widths. This information would provide a basis for subsequent sketches of alternatives. Perhaps another agency could help with those sketches.

Brent Schlack said that WCRC is swamped with work designing next year's projects. He will check on their capacity to help, but he can't commit to helping.

Seth Peterson reminded people to fill out the follow-up form (which is linked from the agenda) if they are willing. WBWC will circulate the responses together with the minutes as background for our next task force meeting (yet to be scheduled). Seth thanked participants and concluded the meeting just after 12:00 noon.