

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
APRIL 5, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Nancy Rosett, Chair; Jud Aley; Christine Bisceglie; Sam Ebert; Tanner Thompson; Barbara McCabe

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner; Gerritt Bolella, Asst. Director of Transportation, Mobility and Parking; Transportation, Audrey Cozzarin; Theresa Argondezzi; Health Educator

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CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Rosett called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Paul Chenard introduced himself and said he is the new manager of transportation and planning at the Norwalk Transit District and he wanted to join the call to see what is going on related to bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and how the Norwalk Transit District can also facilitate on greater walking and biking within the City of Norwalk. Mr. Grotheer asked Mr. Chenard in what ways he feels the Transit District can assist in biking and walking. Mr. Chenard said in his opinion as the manager of transportation and planning all cyclists and pedestrians are also transit users and with having the bike racks on the buses and the routes they have within the City of Norwalk are part of that piece and hopes to be partners with the Bike/Walk Commission. Mr. Thompson said that he would be interested to meet with Mr. Chenard off line to learn more about the Transit District and would also like to discuss bus shelters.

Mr. Luis Estrella introduced himself and said he is the Executive Director of the Cleaner Connecticut Coalition and he is also a member of Keep Norwalk Beautiful and he really likes what the Bike/Walk Commission is doing and he is happy to learn more. Mr. Thompson said that he had met Mr. Estrella at the ground breaking for the NRVT and he is a super engaged member of the community.

2. APPROVAL OF MARCH 1ST MINUTES

**** MR. ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** MR. THOMPSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Rosett reported and said that she had spoken at the March Traffic Authority meeting in favor of reverting the traffic flow on Strawberry Hill @ Westport Avenue back to its previous configuration.

Ms. Rosett said there was a groundbreaking ceremony held last month for the NRVt's Missing Link and several of the Commissioners had attended. She said it is the piece along Riverside Avenue and will provide pedestrian access on one side of the street. She said she hopes that some of the Commissioners will attend the grand opening which will take place late summer/early fall.

Ms. Rosett said that Mr. Carter along with Charlie Tanny who is the President of the Friends of the NRVt had met with Mr. Livingston, Ms. Shannahan and Mr. Heuvelman of the Common Council at 148 East Avenue which is the big gap in the Harbor Loop Trail and all agreed that we need to work on getting that piece linked in which will make the trail on the east side of the river almost continuous. She encouraged those that have never been on the trail to go because it has some wonderful views of Norwalk, and she will be hosting a walk on the Harbor Loop Trail and she will keep the Commission updated on that.

Ms. Rosett said she contacted Mr. Roberts regarding placing the repair stand at Calf Pasture Beach and he agreed as long as the Commission would take responsibility for installing and maintaining it which the Commission cannot do but TMP has offered to take on that responsibility. She said they will be meeting next week and that there is also a bike rack that is very close the NRVt trailhead which is where the Commission would like to place the repair stand and she is hoping it will be done in April so an event can be held introducing it to the public in May which is national bike month. We hope to move the bike rack to the trailhead also.

Ms. Rosett said that she received an email from Johanna Zanvettor who is the Transportation Coordinator for the Board of Education stating that she has spoken with the Principal at Tracey School and they have started the new procedure and are very happy with the change, and that a permanent resolution needs to be met but for now they are working with the new pattern and it has been successful. She said the situation is much better than it was but Ms. Zanvettor and Mr. Yeosock are going to see if they can further improve the situation because there is still some stacking on the street and as more students return to school the stacking will increase. Mr. Grotheer said that things seem to continue to go well and in his observations whatever stacking there was on the street in the mornings is very minimal and the timeframe that there was stacking was compressed. He said that he has some ideas of other modes that he would like to discuss with Mr. Travers and Mr. Bolella in the future. Ms. Cozzarin said that this is great news and suggested using this as a model at other schools that are having problems with pick up and drop off. Ms. Rosett said that she will contact Ms. Zanvettor who is familiar with traffic patterns around the schools.

Mr. Thompson said after the last meeting the responses to the surveys that went to the parents were sent to the commission and only 20% responded that their children either walk or take the bus and 80% drop off or pick up their children at least a few times a week which to him was staggering in such a walkable neighborhood. He said he is curious to what the answers to the survey would be now that the traffic has

subsidized with the new pattern. He also said he would like to see if there is any willingness to send out additional survey questions. Mr. Grotheer said as a parent at the school he did not love the survey and suggested more data points. He also said it was very ambiguous in terms of the pickup and drop off language and was more focused and suggestive of vehicular as opposed to walking. Mr. Thompson said he would be willing to donate some time and meet with someone from the school and workshop some more questions. Ms. Rosett suggested that Mr. Grotheer put Mr. Thompson in touch with the President of the PTA.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Transportation Planner Update

Mr. Pacelli reported and said we revised the application for the connectivity grant to include 5' bike lanes and 10' travel lanes in some of the roadway segments and some of the area does include sharrows but were able to double the length of the bike lanes. He said the design is currently being finalized and will be sent to the Traffic Authority for approval later this month and to the state for short term review and is hoping to begin the installation later this year.

Mr. Pacelli said that TMP has been discussing revising the travel lane width to allow for 10" lanes with the DPW Engineering Department and others in the city to align better with the grant and to increase ridership. Ms. Rosett requested that Mr. Pacelli let her know if there is anything the commission can do because the commission whole heartily supports TMP in this effort.

Mr. Pacelli said another grant opportunity that has come up over the last week and there is a possibly of federal funds for shovel ready pedestrian facility projects and is called the Connecticut Community Grant and have just learned about it 10 days ago. He said staff has been working on putting together a detailed list of projects that have already been prioritized and are shovel ready from the Bike/Pedestrian study including pedestrian infrastructure projects. He said in the last 10 days we have put together a list of approximately 50 pedestrian improvement projects and the request totals approximately \$10 million dollars' worth of infrastructure. He requested that the commission write a letter in support of the grant application that can be included in the submission and the deadline for the submission is Friday by noon. Ms. Rosett said that she will contact Mr. Pacelli in the morning to discuss the details of the letter. Ms. Biselgle requested to also join because she would like to add language regarding her recent activity with the League of American Bicyclists. Mr. Grotheer requested a draft of the application be sent to the commission so we know what projects are. Mr. Pacelli said a lot of the projects are from the previous bike/pedestrian plan. Mr. Bolella said that Mr. Pacelli said is working on some of the GIS mapping and suggested that he share it with the commission once it has been completed. Mr. Aley said if anyone on the commission needs a copy of the plan to send him an email.

Ms. Cozzarin asked if there is any line item on the grant for bus shelters. Mr. Pacelli said we have focused on pedestrian facilities as long term plans but agreed that bust shelters are needed and can be dealt with as a short-term plan. Mr. Bolella said they were not included because in looking at the previous studies that were conducted there were a lot of gaps in the network to get to the bus stops that we want to fill first, and he will be reaching out to Mr. Chenard regarding the existing routes. Mr. Pacelli said in the near future we would like to engage the commission on inventorying missing segments of concrete sidewalks because that would help staff to determine where they are needed.

Mr. Grotheer asked what percentage of the sidewalks are concrete and what are bituminous. Mr. Pacelli said because the grant is federally funded, they will need to be all concrete sidewalks.

b. Bike Plan

Mr. Aley reported and said the bike plan sub-committee is currently on hold because staff is reviewing the study from 2012 as well as the short-term list.

Mr. Aley said in the past the possibility of using the already approved bike share locations was discussed for the five bike racks but many of those locations already have bike racks but there are six locations that do not currently have bike racks that he recommends. He also said there is a pending approval to install a bike rack at the Stop & Shop on Connecticut Avenue. He asked Mr. Pacelli what the next steps would be to have the bike racks installed. Ms. Rosett suggested that this be discussed at the next bike plan committee meeting since there are more locations than bike racks.

c. Events

Ms. McCabe reported and said Ms. Green that had said that each year on April 1st through April 7th is National Walk Week and that specifically Walk Day is on Wednesdays which this year will be on April 7th and she will be posted NorWALKer routes and hopefully next year be able to do something bigger. She also said that May is Bike Month and there was a meeting held last week to discuss what we can do to bring some visibility to the commission and the thought was to use the new bike repair station as a focus, and are hoping to have one installed at the trailhead of the NRVT and at the beach by May and have an event around that will a small group of people with a giveaway table.

Ms. Bisceglie thanked staff for attending the meeting and suggested to Mr. Chenard doing something on a bike rack demonstration for the public on the buses which was a suggestion made through the League of American Bicyclists and suggested having a discussion off line.

Mr. Grotheer said that New York does a great job regarding putting out public information via Facebook and Norwalk is doing a good job as well on certain things and suggested working with the Transit District and TMP on posting information. Ms. Cozzarin also said the Library is happy to distribute public service types of flyers and said she would be happy to design them.

d. Pedestrian Plan

Ms. Cozzarin reported and said the last meeting was held on March 23rd and the committee celebrated some of the projects that are underway, revived and approved and heard from Mr. Pacelli about the Transportations Management Plan. She said Ms. Rosett also discussed the latest plans for the NRVT and Jackie Lightfield also discussed the Harbor Loop Trail. She said that Mr. Livingston also attended the meeting and had stated that Norwalk is a forward-thinking city and wants to reduce the car centric concept of transportation and he and Mr. Pacelli both said that the plan would be data driven and would include short- and long-term plans. She said the committee also now has two Norwalk police officers on the committee which are Sergeant Orr and Sergeant Calese who is also the traffic enforcement supervisor. She said there are currently three traffic enforcement officers and were giving approximately 270 traffic violations per month and the goal is to increase that to 1,000 and they may add a fourth officer. She said they also discussed giving a warning rather than a ticket all of the time.

Ms. Cozzarin said that she will be leading a walk next Wednesday at Oak Hills Park. She said she would like to do more community outreach and she looks forward to continuing to bring safety for pedestrians and cyclists in the city.

e. Social Media

Mr. Thompson said he has nothing new to report but that he continues to post on Facebook and have recently had some new followers however, re-sharing content and information by other is good idea and if there is content that others on the commission see on Facebook and see good content that should be reposted to email or text him

f. Strategic Plan

Ms. Rosett said there will be a fourth quarter progress report provided at the next meeting.

g. Walking

Ms. Argondezzi reported and said that take the opportunity National Walking Week and all of the walking Wednesdays in April to try to better promote the NorWALKer program and find clever ways to get people walking that are not large group walks by posting videos and pictures on the healthy4lifect page. She also said they are trying to get more of the maps in Spanish on the websites and are currently working on the translation of those. She said they are also trying to do more work in heath equity specific to Covid-19 but also beyond that and are hoping to get more community health workers and messengers involved in preventing chronic disease prevention in general.

5. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Calf Pasture Beach Parking Lot Funding

Ms. Rosett said there is a proposal for reworking the parking lot at Calf Pasture Beach and it is a two phased approach and the first is to repave and restripe the actual parking lot. The second phase is to rework the perimeter road which will include a bike lane. She said she is requesting that the commission for an approval of what she had distributed with the agenda to support both of these efforts. She said she will also be sending it to the Common Council for their support for the \$700,000 in the capital budget request for fiscal year 2021-22 and the enhancements in fiscal year 2022-23.

**** MR. ALEY MOVED TO APPROVE TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL AS WRITTEN.**

**** MS. BISCEGLIE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

b. League of American Bicyclists National Summit

Ms. Rosett said that Ms. Bisceglie had attended the National summit for the American league of Bicyclists.

Ms. Bisceglie said the American League of Bicyclists had their annual summit and was held via zoom and worked well. She provided an overview of the summit and said cumulation of this event besides the workshops with people from all over the country was called "The Day on The Hill" where we met with representatives of Senators and discussed two bills and one is the enhancement of the complete streets bill and the other is the infrastructure and having more federal funding. She said we met representative's from Senator Himes; Senator Blumenthal and Senator Murphy's offices and explained why it is important to fund complete streets and to provide cities and towns funds to make streets safer and more pedestrian friendly. She said for those who would like to lobby there is a workshop being held on April 16, 2021, at 1:30PM on how to lobby.

Ms. Grotheer said he noticed that e-bike incentives were discussed and he had read that a Senator from Oregon is trying to get that passed through legislation which would be a tax credit for e-bike purchases. Ms. Bisceglie said that was discussed at length during the summer and will be the next big movement. Mr. Grotheer asked if the incentives are included in one of the bills or is that a separate talking point and bill. Ms. Bisceglie said she believes it separate but she will confirm and report back.

Ms. Bisceglie said that she had sent a link to the Dutch Embassy Cycling Documentary and asked if anyone had watched it. Mr. Thompson, Ms. McCabe and Ms. Cozzarin said they had watched it and Ms. Cozzarin said she felt encouraged after watching it as to what came be done in this country.

Ms. Rosett said that Ms. Bisceglie has requested to add an update from the American league of Bicyclists as a monthly report on the agenda so starting in May will be a standing item on the agenda.

c. SONO Collection and Bicycle Parking

Ms. Bisceglie said that she had discovered where the bike parking was at the SONO Collection but suggested adding signage so people are aware they are there and what they are. Ms. Rosett said that she will contact Ms. Taber and suggested Ms. Bisceglie meet with her to show here where the signs should be placed and that will also need to contact SONO Collection to get their approval. Mr. Aley said there are also bike racks on the other side of the mall on the I-95 side there are also bike racks. Mr. Grotheer said there are also bike racks in the plaza near the church as well as the intersection on North Water Street.

d. Measuring the Effectiveness of the East/West Bike Route

Mr. Thompson said that he has spoken with Mr. Travers and said he has found a measuring instrument that the city owns. Mr. Bolella said that it is a camera and in additional to capturing vehicles it can do counts and speeds for bicycles and pedestrians and we have a few units in inventory. Mr. Thompson said that Mr. Travers had stated that they are on board to measure some

base line counts for the east/west bike route before they are installed so the data can be compared to the same time next year.

Mr. Thompson asked if anyone has a subscription to Strava Metro that can be used. Ms. Rosett said she is pretty confident that the state did not renew the license because the data was not being used.

Mr. Thompson said he also found a company called Street Bike data and they purchase location data. Mr. Pacelli said that they had done a presentation and they do great work but the price is very high. Mr. Grotheer suggested looking into obtaining just city data. Mr. Pacelli said that staff will look into it and report back.

7. ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. MCCABE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. EBERT SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd