

Bike Plan Information

Dave Nutter, September 29, 1999

The City of Ithaca Board of Public Works (BPW) has put forth its initial proposal for implementation of the Bike Plan. After this proposal was made public, the City of Ithaca Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Council (BPAC) held two special meetings to formulate recommendations regarding the BPW proposal. The Vice-chair of the BPAC, Andy Ruina, and a former chair of the BAC, Dave Nutter, prepared the attached chart to help clarify the issues. For each street section along the north-south route presently under consideration there is a comparison of:

* The recommendation of the Bike Plan by Trowbridge and Wolf. This was prepared on the basis of a series of public meetings and submitted to the City in 1997. It was passed, with various questions, concerns, comments and information attached as an addendum, by the Planning Board, and in October, 1998, by Common Council. This is referred to as the T&W Bike Plan.

* The BPW proposal to begin implementation of the bike plan. This is to be the first of a series of such proposals. Each of these must be passed by the BPW, by Common Council and, if it is to use the \$80,000 in federal ISTEA transportation funds allocated for the bike plan, by the New York State Department of Transportation. This proposed route goes north-south through the flats, entirely across the City of Ithaca on City-controlled streets. This information is from a small map and chart provided by BPW to the BPAC chair.

* The resolutions of the BPAC regarding the BPW proposal including, in some cases, the choice of streets and the choice of treatments on those streets. In several cases the BPAC referred to the T&W Bike Plan as being more complete, more bike-friendly, more flexible in terms of accommodating needs of residents or implementing traffic calming, or having less of a negative impact regarding parking.

* Relevant data and observations gathered by members and attendees of the BPAC to further explain the issues and positions of the BPAC.

The first BPAC meeting passed several resolutions which are attributed to "the BPAC". The second meeting lost its quorum after approving minutes of the first meeting, but the remaining members and attendees continued work and made several resolutions attributed to "the group". Low attendance or lack of a quorum is in part explained by the absence of BPW Vice-chair and voting liaison S. Ehrhardt and most of the BPAC members appointed especially to address pedestrian concerns. The first meeting on 16 September 1999 was attended by BPAC members J. Beach, R. Chapman, E. Gass, D. Kreinick, M. McCasland, A. Ruina, D. Tall, and S. Schenk (non-voting Common Council liaison), and by D. Nutter and D. Persons. The second meeting on 23 September was attended by members E. Bush (who left early), Chapman, Gass, Kreinick, McCasland, and Ruina, and guests Nutter and Persons. Their votes were unanimous by the 5 BPAC members and 2 guests, unless noted otherwise.

Ithaca Bike Plan History

1975: A Cornell class in City and Regional Planning spends a semester producing a detailed plan for bike lanes on streets in and around Ithaca. This only apparent result is signage without bike lanes or space provided for bikes between the Commons and Stewart Park. NYSDOT later add bicycle detectors to the traffic light at Route 13 and Dey Street.

1989: Bicycle users meet to ask for better conditions for bicycling in the City of Ithaca, particularly noting the meaninglessness of existing signage and the lack of safe space for bikes on roads.

1990: Common Council creates the Bicycle Advisory Council and charges it with recommending a network of city streets to receive bikeway treatments and with advising the City on how to become more bike-friendly. The Superintendent of Public Works rejects creation of a liaison from DPW staff, but liaisons from Common Council and Board of Public Works are included. A Planning Department staff member is given 5hr/wk duties as Bicycle Coordinator.

1991-2: Common Council allocates 2budget (\$20,000) toward improving infrastructure for bicycles. No decision is made how to spend it. BAC's initial bike plan proposal is rejected by DPW for not being specific enough.

1993: BAC submits a detailed bike plan which would initially create two cross-town routes of bike lanes or wide shared lanes (total length, 9 1/2 miles). Along a minority of this distance, parked cars would have to be consolidated onto a single side of the street or, in small numbers, moved to another block, according to data

collected by BAC and the Bicycle Coordinator. The plan includes recommendations regarding education, enforcement, and engineering. Washington Park Neighborhood Association (WPNA) members attack the plan for its proposed parking changes and say there must be more public and professional input. Common Council uses the 1993 BAC bike plan to apply for a 4-1 federal matching funds for on-street bicycle facilities. The City commits as its share the funds previously allocated for bicycle infrastructure improvements on the condition that they be paid to a professional to re-write the plan on the basis of public input.

1994: The City's bike plan funding application is successful and acclaimed by state alternative transportation advocates in Albany. 1995: Funding becomes available and the City chooses Trowbridge and Wolf (T&W) as consultants on the basis of their local base and knowledge combined with bike planning experience in several other cities.

1996: Mayor Cohen appoints a Client Committee, including two WPNA members and Ehrhardt of the BPW, to oversee T&W, which holds a series of well-publicized and well-attended public meetings. Funding for the Bicycle Coordinator is cut from the budget, and the seat for the liaison from the BPW goes unfilled.

1997: The Client Committee unanimously approves the Bicycle Plan as presented by T&W and refers it to the Planning Board, recommending adoption as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The new plan recommends policies for Education, Enforcement and Encouragement, better facilities and maintenance, expansion of the Bicycle Coordinator role, support for the BAC, and coordination with other agencies. A chapter discusses bicycle-friendly traffic-calming methods. The plan includes a map of proposed Phase One routes and specific treatments for early implementation in order to make a functioning network, and a map of long term routes to be implemented later or as the opportunity arises. Proposed treatments include a choice of bike lanes or stencilled wide shared lanes in many places, and climbing bike lanes on hills. The long-term plan adds more streets, including some shared roadways and candidate streets for bicycle-friendly traffic-calming, but does not specify details. Phase One in particular attempts to minimize parking impacts.

1988: Mayor Cohen declines to fill vacancies on the BAC saying it must take on pedestrian concerns as well. The BAC and former members continue to meet even though official membership declines to two out of seven voting members. The BAC et al drafts legislation to expand concerns to include traffic calming and pedestrian issues, and expand voting membership to 11, including a liaison from BPW. Voting membership is Mayor Cohen's criterion for appointing BPW liaisons. Common Council abolishes the BAC and creates the BPAC. According to the Planning Board's recommendation, Common Council adopts the bicycle plan as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan, attaching an addendum of comments, information, questions, and concerns to be resolved. Common Council directs BPW to propose steps to implement the plan to be approved by Common Council, and directs that any parking removal be preceded by written notice to residents of the street. NYSDOT must also approve plans before federal funds are spent. BPW members meet with BPAC members and others to suggest routes for initial implementation.

1999: BPW-BPAC meetings recommend four initial cross-town routes for implementation with the \$80,000 in federal money, two north-south and two east-west. In each pair, one would concentrate on more heavily traveled State Roads and one would use mainly City-controlled streets. BPW proposes one route to receive public comment and schedules a public hearing.