

West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission Monthly Meeting Minutes

Monday January 8, 2024, 7:00 PM

Room 400, Town Hall

1. Call to Order 7 pm

Attendance (quorum achieved)

Ed Pawlak Y
Jill Morawski Y
Paul Hogan Y
Jen Bowman Y
Ed Perzanowski Y
Colin Gillespie Y
Jon Wenz Y
Tristan Sokol Y
Andrea Belli N

2. Introductions - FHI Studio, Residents, Bike West Hartford, and Town of WH Officials, and more represented

3. Approval of previous meeting's minutes 1st Ed Perzanowski 2nd Jon Wenz. Approved unanimously.

4. Old Business

a. Vision Zero Task Force update

- Final Action Plan draft will be made available to the public on Friday Jan 12, at the project website
- On Jan 17 the final draft plan will be presented to the CPED Subcommittee, finalized and then reviewed w/ full Town Council approximately 2 weeks later

Of note:

- Pace of changes/implementations has been a key point to discussion. Quick build will take back seat to road safety audits ... but many have input they would like to see both in concert.
- Also schools safety zones reviewed
- Some would like to see speed limits comprehensively reviewed
- All versions on <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/government-services/vision-zero>
- Request made by Jack from BWH that info could be passed more broadly and quickly. Ed Pawlak said he would push for this.

b. Bicycle Network Map (BNM) revision project: FHI Studio question/answer

- FHI Studio working on a revision to the BNM
- Francisco Gomes (FHI Studio) introduced himself reviewing comprehensive CT and WH understanding and related key experiences especially around Pedestrian and Bike accessibility.
- Parker Sorenson (FHI Studio) also in attendance
- Ed Pawlak reviewed Commission survey from 2021 - spoke of almost 60% of respondents feeling unsafe biking in WH

- Ed also shared PBC prioritization of roads where bicycle facilities should be installed
- **Question:** are separated bicycle facilities (SBF) possible? FHI: limiters are cost and accessibility to space needed. Very challenging in residential and commercial areas. Severe challenges to feasibility of SBFs. Compensating for right-of-ways is possible but also a challenge. Safety challenged by right of ways (entrances to roads, business entrances, and driveways). Parking as a buffer can be used but has challenges as well including sight lines.
- **Question:** What is better - two unprotected bike lanes on one road or putting the lanes on two roads, one for each direction? FHI indicated that unbalanced facilities can promote bike riding in the wrong direction (contra-flow) which is very dangerous. Bikes riding with traffic are 3 times safer than contra-flow bike riding.
- **OF NOTE:** FHI brought up how some bike facility costs are inexpensive (striping, signage, etc.) but some can be expensive if infrastructure changes (e.g. move a curb 4-5 feet) are required.
- **Question:** how do you choose where to spend the key pockets of money? Especially considering significant orders of magnitude differences between some recommended changes? FHI stated these are the choices to be made with limited resources. And large, expensive projects will take much longer (years).
- **Question:** why is it not feasible to do the hard stuff when many other towns have done? FHI stated that they recommended not cutting corners - they are cautious. And WH is very dangerous especially because of all of the driveways. And indicated that the key risk is implementing something that seems safe but has inherent risks.
- **OF NOTE:** WH has a map, and FHI has been asked to develop selection guidance. And a tool box: measures and tools/techniques that can be involved.
- **Question:** why not use bollards / armadillos / planters for a middle level / middle cost solutions. This could be part of new WH tool box.
- **COMMENT:** cyclists have a lower crash statistic than pedestrian crash rate. Tabled as this was a bicycle facility discussion.
- **Questions:** how many bicycle throughways are feasible or necessary? FHI answered that a bicycle network is about access to it, so what may feel redundant to homeowners may be important to a cyclist. Redundancy also allows for projects to be completed in sequence.
- **Question:** will any homeowners be told about before final decisions are made on FHI recommendations? Answer: there will be published drafts.
- **Question:** Will FHI recommend raised crosswalks, or any other traffic calming measures as part of their revision of the Bicycle Facility Plan. No, this would be outside of scope.
- **Question:** will there any circumstances where a parking lane can help buffer a bike lane? FHI states generally no, this is not a good solution.
- **Question:** What are the differences and similarities for West Hartford Plan to Hartford plan? FHI: Hartford Plan was more robust. But much of same ground covered between the two.

- **Question:** will WH plan be addressing connecting adjacent communities? Not in direct scope, but FHI is mindful of surrounding communities and connectivity.
- **Question:** can WH designated recreational loops be improved in this project? FHI stated that these are relatively safe roads and don't need significant improvements.
- **OF NOTE:** FHI stated that sharrows are not a tool like a proper bike lane and need to be used judiciously.
- **Question:** how can bicycle safety on Mountain Road be improved? FHI stated that widening pinch points could be looked at. Also stated that Mountain Road is very challenging - topography, right of ways, and more make it tough. Current width of lanes can be addressed as well as bike lane treatment at intersections (part of bike toolbox).
- **OF NOTE:** WH is generally considered "urban" ... so intersections are the main cause for bike accidents.
- **Question:** Should public right-of-ways tension between motor vehicles and bikes be addressed? FHI - yes.
- **Question:** Can a tool be used via cell phones to record data on usage? FHI - yes. Very expensive but available. Also can use Strava to see recreational use.
- **Question:** as you increase bicycle facility protection do you see a rise in usage? Is there data on this? FHI said yes as proven by data in other projects ... and the more robust and separated the facility, the more the usage and "diversity of ability" goes up.

5. New Business

a. Engineering update

Greg Sommer:

- New Park Avenue complete streets project. Advanced concept plan with VHB. Look to revamp plan and will follow-up with more outreach plans in summer 2024.
- Trout brook trail phase three - will be started in construction season - summer fall 2024.
- Park Road improvements - road safety audit completed and recommendations being incorporated. Concept plans being created and outreach will occur. Of note: Project moved from a resurfacing project to much, much more.
- Sidewalk ramp accessibility grant application: 650 ramps will be improved and 350 fully replaced costing \$750K now and more funds to come. Also on way - 7 accessible signals completed and another 5 to come.
- West Hartford Center Improvement project - bicycle facilities will be considered.
- New question to Town: what about the use of green paint? Greg stated this will be considered more and more.

b. P&Z update - No update

6. Around Town

- Discussed recent pedestrian death on Mohegan and Albany.

7. From the Library

8. Announcements

Jan 18 - Mobility Justice Event at BiCi Co. - dinner, presenters and more

9. 2/12/2024 PBC meeting - email items you would like included on the agenda to Ed Pawlak (ecosys88@gmail.com)

10. Adjourn

1st Jon Wenz 2nd Ed Pawlak, approved unanimously.