Houston Bike Plan
Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) - Meeting # 1
Friday, May 29, 2015

Attendees:

BAC Members in attendance:

Marisol Rodriguez (AARP)
Neil Bremner (Bike Barn)
Laura Spanjian (COH – Sustainability)
Captain Larry Satterwhite (COH – HPD)
Jeffrey Weatherford (COH – PWE)
Joey Sanchez (GHP)
Chelsea St. Louis (H-GAC)
Clark Martinson (Energy Corridor MD)
Cedric Douglas (Neighborhood Representative)
Ana Ramirez Huerta (TxDOT)
Ann Taylor (ULI)
Marisol Rodriguez (AARP)*
Yuhayna McCoy (COH – HPARD)*
Sue Page (Alief Independent School District)*
Michael Payne (BikeHouston)
Carra Moroni (COH – HHD)
Patrick Walsh (COH – P&D)
Matt Starr (Neighborhood Centers)
Fab Ordonez (Critical Mass)
Jay Blazek Crossley (HCSC)
Roksan Okan-Vick (HPB)
Jason Morgan (METRO)
Steve Parker (SN Alliance)
Will Rub (Houston B-cycle)*
Leo Bobadilla (HISD)*
Lisa Lin (COH – Sustainability)*
Lonnie Hoogeboom (DTMD)*

** Attended alternative meeting date*

City Council:

Mayor Pro Tem Ed Gonzalez
Melissa Arredondo (CM Costello)
Laura Thorp (CM Gonzales)
Daniel Santamaria (CM Gallegos)

City Staff:

Amar Mohite (COH –P&D)
Anita Hollmann (COH – P&D)
Cathy Halka (COH – P&D)
Matthew Seubert (COH – P&D)

Consultant Team:

Geoff Carleton (TEI)
James Llamas (TEI)
Tara Mather (Asakura Robinson)
Shaida Libhart (TEI)
Zakcq Lockrem (Asakura Robinson)
Christof Spieler (Morris Architects)

1) **Introductions:**
   Patrick Walsh, Director of the Planning & Development Department (P&D), welcomed BAC participants. Participants identified themselves and associated organization, as well as their goals for the Houston Bike Plan, which include:
   - Ana Ramirez Huerta (TxDOT): Be practical and implementable.
   - Clark Martinson (Energy Corridor): Not be limited by cost, but allowed to dream big to pave the way for the future as funding becomes available.
   - Mary Blitzer (Bike Houston): Be feasible, focusing on efforts that will increase the number of people wanting to ride a bike.
   - Jason Morgan (METRO): Identify connections to transit corridors that improve the overall usability of the transportation system.

- Michael Payne (Bike Houston) – Work to captures the hearts and minds of the citizens as well as city leaders.
- Laura Spanjian (COH – Sustainability): Continue the cultural shift towards a more bike-friendly environment which is evident by recent bike-related introduced over the last several years. We are in our bike renaissance. To achieve this shift, we need a clear road map and funding structure. We need to build on the momentum of our off-street network, and find effective and safe opportunities for on-street bike facilities. This should be our focus.
- Matt Starr (Neighborhood Centers): Identify biking as an important community asset. It should be identified as a health initiative and an important part of active transportation.
- Roksan Okan-Vick (HPB): Identify safer access points to the trail system including the use of green corridors. Improved on-street connections are also important.
- Jeffrey Weatherford (COH – PWE): The Plan needs to be flexible, realistic and provide recommendations which are implementable.
- Cedric Douglas (Neighborhood representative): Get southeast Houston strolling and rolling. The Plan should focus on education and providing resources to get people safely on bikes that may not have them. Facilities are important.
- Joey Sanchez (GHP): Provide a clear understanding of how does Plan work with city's image. For example, how can this Plan be used to attract best and brightest to our city?
- Neil Bremner (Bike Barn): Focus on safe on-street routes that get users plugged into trails along the bayous and in the parks.
- Fab Ordonez (Critical Mass): Focus on getting "butts on saddles". We are in a bike renaissance and so we are reacting to things that are already happening. We need to think bigger than just riding groups like Critical Mass. We need to promote growth of biking in a fashion where people feel safe. We have a base. Let's make it stronger, move forward and see where it goes.
- Steve Parker (SN Alliance): Not omit those individuals who ride a bike as a primary, and not an optional, mode. The east end is a perfect example.
- Chelsea St. Louis (H-GAC): Primary goal is safety. Safety is important for all rider types, not just recreational. Both choice and non-choice riders should be properly planned for.
- Captain Larry Satterwhite (COH – HPD): Focus on safety and mobility for the public not one special group.
- Jay Blazek Crossley (HCSC): Design all streets safely. Plan should be good for bicyclist, children, etc. The Plan should increase the number of tools in our toolbox. We have the bayou greenways and a cycle track, but what's next?
- Patrick Walsh (COH – P&D): Capture the hearts and minds of Houstonians. The Plan needs to appeal to not only the public at large, but area leaders who are ultimately responsible for providing direction towards implementation of the Plan.
- Geoff Carleton (TEI): Establish a platform to host a collective conversation on what we want biking to look like in Houston, how we plan to accomplish it and define a case for action that the public and our community leaders can support.
- Shaida Libhart (TEI): Be equitable in terms of geographic considerations as well as diversity in user types.
- Amar Mohite (P&D): Build consensus among stakeholders and the community, alike. The benefits of bicycling as it relate to public health needs to be better advertised and built upon moving forward.

- Will Rub (Houston B-cycle)*: Develop solutions that can be implemented rapidly and create momentum that will carry over for years to come. Produce a Plan that can be modified and updated.
- Marisol Rodriguez (AARP)*: Encourage the use of street audits with groups like AARP and other volunteers. Think of safety for cyclist of all ages. Work to change cultural perception – it's OK to use other modes that are not a car.
- Leo Bobadilla (HISD)*: Develop suitable path for students biking to and from school. Promote the use of such facilities not just during school hours, but for after school programs and weekend events. Approximately 30,000 students are bused to school. Reducing this number provides a great economic benefit for the public school system. The Plan should also work to establish health and wellness programs which target both children and adults. The goal should be to change the behavior of children, and alternatively adults.
- Ann Taylor (UIL)*: Provide a bridge of communication to the private sector to encourage and educate the benefits provided by a biking culture (i.e. Bike Share Stations of private commercial property). Define Houston as a great city to bike, and be able to promote it as a health and welcoming place. Encourage the use and development of a "Building Healthy Places" toolbox.
- Sue Page (Alief Independent School District)*: Meet the needs of a variety of different type of cyclist, and provide a good, long-term strategy that is implementable and can be funded.
- Lonnie Hoogeboom (DTMD)*: Expose and educate the public about the facilities that already exist. Identify projects that can best support the network in the near-term. While the bayou trails are important, promote north-south, on-street connections between these predominately east-west off-street trunk system.
- Council Member Ed Gonzales: Promote connection to and between communities that are safe safer for all users within the right of way. Work to reduce facilities that are occurring not just in Houston but all around Texas. Establish better coordination between all city entities. Identify not only the problem, but think about how to fix it. Acknowledge that things are changing in Houston. Be proactive and address traffic issues in consideration of all modes, and with all entities/teams working in sync. Where appropriate, reduce lanes and incorporate complete streets.
- Laura Thorp (CM Ed Gonzales): Establish safety is a top priority. Being able to ride a bike through neighborhoods recreationally should be considered.
- Daniel Santamaria (CM Robert Gallegos) – Promote safe and effective biking in Houston.
- Melissa Arredondo (CM Stephen C. Costello): The Council member's office is happy to be here and look forward to future participation. The Plan should be clear and effective
- James Llamas (TEI): Be mindful of the cultural shift. I don't want to feel crazy for biking to work.
- Zakcq Lockrem (Asakura Robinson): Be effective enough to allow for a 14-year old bike commuter to safely traverse Houston roadways. It should also have a strong focus on equity.
- Tara Mather (Asakura Robinson): Appeal to those who don't typically bike. It needs to promote infrastructure that people will continue to use as they age.
- Christof Spieler (Morris Architects) – Encourage all riders to get out and bike. Look at key connection points to buses, trails, etc.

2) **BAC Members and Purpose (Slides 2-8):** Cathy Halka (P&D) welcomed meeting participants, introduced funding partners, coordinating agencies and BAC members. She explained the role of the BAC which is to guide the development of the plan. BAC members were asked to be present

for all BAC meetings, stay engaged, communicate, and provide support in terms of the Plan's development, promotion, and implementation.

3) Case for Action (Slides 9-15):

Geoff Carlton (TEI) continued the BAC presentation. Two poll questions were administered to BAC:

Poll Q1: What is the primary reason you bike?

(Top two Responses)

- Health/Exercise;
- Commuting or other non-recreational
- I Don't Bike*

Poll Q2: What % of all trips in the City of Houston are Home to Work trips?

- BAC Response: Over 50%
- BAC Response*: Less Than 10%
- Correct Response: 14%

The Poll Q2 highlights a general misconception that most trips made are from home to work. Geoff further outlined the case for action highlighting METRO ridership numbers, the importance of health and wellness, and competing markets with peer cities for talent. He explained the large public outreach components are executed in Phase 2 and Phase 5.

Geoff explained the typical segmentation of riders:

- Strong and Fearless (0-4% of people) – will ride anywhere and can readily mix with vehicle traffic
- Enthused and Confident (3-7%) - will ride most places but prefer separated facilities
- Interested but Concerned (50%-65%) – people who would bike more if they had more places they felt comfortable
- No Way No How (30-40%) – people who are not going to bike under any circumstance

The categories demonstrate the largest opportunity to increase ridership being to design for the Interested but Concerned segment of the population.

Discussion:*

Why does there appear to be a larger number of comfortable bike lanes in the eastern rather than the western parts of Houston? When the two least comfortable facility types are removed, it appears that less of the public is serve in the Western parts of Houston.

- Geoff explained that while the map may appear that way, the reality is not so. Gaps are located throughout the network and disrupt a comfortable bike ride for the common user (i.e. Interested but Concerned).
- Amar Mohite noted that while crash data is also indicative of where people are riding on city streets today. The goal would be use this data to not only identify where people are biking but eliminate the near misses and collisions taking place throughout the city.

4) Existing Conditions (Slide 16 – 28):

The city's existing network was analyzed by level of comfort, which was assessed based on factors such as bikeway width, traffic speed and volumes, intersections etc. The network is represented as:

- Green – Off-street bikeways
- Blue – On-street dedicated lane
- Purple – On-street shared lanes

Each color is presented in a gradation where darker colors represent facilities with a higher comfort level (1 being darkest and 4 being lightest). The two least comfortable facilities were removed from the network indicating large gaps within the existing network for interested but concerned riders. Access to employment centers was also analyzed and it was determined that 60% of Houston residents are near a bikeway but only 38% are near a high comfort facility where job access tends to be more concentrated. However, this data is misleading because there are many areas that lack connections in the "last mile" – TMC, for example, is surrounded by bike facilities there are none within the area to get you to your destination.

<u>Discussion presented by the BAC:</u>

- Kingwood is represented as a dark green which indicates a comfortable, off-street bikeway. However, these facilities are substandard trails and do not meet the 10' requirement of recommended trail widths. Can you please explain this?
    - Geoff Carlton explained the shared sidewalk category was created as a facility type to acknowledge these types of facilities.
    - Mary Blitzer (BikeHouston) noted that while the facility may feel safer given the facility type is not directly adjacent to a vehicle, it may not necessarily be comfortable for a user who is trying to commute at higher speeds. She recommended that recreational vs. other type of users be taken into consideration for additional mapping exercises.
- What about roads which are being used today as bike facilities, but are not on the existing network map? Can these be categorized and placed on a future map?
    - Geoff Carlton noted that identifying these corridors is one of the objectives of this Plan, and BAC members should feel free to submit corridor recommendations at any point throughout this process. Similarly, communities will be given the tool necessary to provide this type of feedback as well.
- How can we expand the existing conditions and case for action to target the pocket book? Based on cost and distance, can we better understand when it is more economically viable to take a vehicle vs. a bus vs. a car or a combination thereof?
    - Geoff Carlton explained the modal shift phenomenon and further clarified the need to promote complete streets as an implementation tool to promote multimodal options within the greater transportation network.
- As a city, when compared against our peers, where do we excel as a city? How do we need to catch up?*
    - Geoff Carlton noted Houston as a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community as awarded by the League of American Bicyclist. Education, and the level of effort associated with Goal Zero was one of the primary reasons the designation was awarded. Physical infrastructure and policy, however, were identified as lacking.
    - Amar Mohite noted that crash data for the city of Houston is indicative of where people are riding. It is the city's preference to reduce the number of crashes and near misses to zero. By evaluating this data, the Plan will better understand where

certain treatments can make the biggest impact, improve safety and ultimately, increase ridership.

- Amar Mohite also noted that many cities around the US, such as Washington D.C. or Las Angeles have within the last 5-years started implementing bike facilities; Houston is not far behind.

5) Defining Goals (Slide 16 – 28):

The planning process will take approximately one year and consist of 6 phases. Geoff that at the time of the BAC meeting, the project was in Phase 2 which is all about all about clarifying the vision and goals that the Houston Bike Plan should work to deliver against. Geoff further explained that Phase 2 includes significant community engagement, including four public meetings in June.

Poll Q3: What are the top two goals to focus on to improve biking in Houston?

(Top two Responses)

- Provide a well-connected, low stress bicycle network
- Improve safety for all road users
- Improve community health and wellness*

Poll Q4: What are the two most important barriers to address to improve biking?

(Top two Responses)

- Feeling of safety
- Lack of a network of comfortable bike facilities
- Lack of end-of-trip amenities (e.g., showers)*
- Lack of bicycle and driver education*

Poll Q5: What description below best characterizes you as a bicyclist?

(Top Response)

- Enthused and confident
- Equal votes* – Strong & fearless, Enthused and confident, Interested but concerned.

Discussion:

Geoff Carlton noted that response to this question may change depending on perception or company. For example, when an individual is riding alone, enthused and confident may be deemed appropriate. However, if that same individual is riding with a less experience rider – say child or novice riders – their self-identification takes on a new more cautious identity.

Amar Mohite (COH – P&D) added that perception is changing throughout the city including city departments. For example, with the recent adoption of Complete Streets, Rebuild Houston is no longer trying to clarify why a bike lane is needed, but rather asking the question of why is a bike facility not needed.*

Poll Q6: Of the Bicycle facility types below, which two would you most prefer riding on?

(Top 3 Response)

- Shared-use path or trail
- Separated bike lane
- Shared roadway Neighborhood street

Poll Q7: Of the bike parking facilities shown below, which two would you most prefer using to park your bike? (Top 3 Responses)

- Regular bike rack
- Bike Locker
- Bike Station

Discussion:

BAC members noted that the metric used to determine success to implementing the above type of facilities is based on lane miles built. It was recommended that the metric be revisited to more properly reflect metrics developed by the Houston Parks Board (HPB).

Amar Mohite (COH – P&D) noted that all goals defined by this process need to be tied into and reflected within the General Plan for the city, Plan Houston.

Ann Taylor (ULI) noted that trails are popular in Houston, and trail congestion is often caused by multiple trail users on one trail (e.g. biker, jogger, family with babies, or families with dogs). She noted Vancouver as an exemplary city where facility types and signage properly indicate user types along trail networks.

6) Timeline and Public Engagement (Slide 36 – 40):

Geoff Carleton reminded BAC members that the project is currently in Phase 2 which includes significant community engagement including public meetings. During Phase 2, BAC participants are asked to assist the general promotion of the Houston Bike Plan and encourage constituents to participate in public feedback by attending upcoming meetings or participating on line via online surveys, or mapping exercises.

Once the draft plan is further developed, there will be additional community meetings and other opportunities to provide input to address opportunities to improve bicycling in your community.

Discussion:

The following questions were raised:

- Are you tracking who you are reaching to within the greater public? If so, how?
  Surveys are formatted to request certain demographic data. However, Geoff explained that emails collected up to this point do not track demographic information such as race, age, or gender. Past experience indicates that this information is considered sensitive and may be a deterrent to promoting a general interest list for email distribution. Instead, zip codes have been requested and help to identify future target areas for public outreach.
- Mary Blitzer (BikeHouston) noted that BikeHouston is making a conscious effort to reach out to low-income and minority areas by participating in existing bike rides that already occur in the neighborhood. At these events, BikeHouston is working to promote the Houston Bike Plan and other online activities.
- Steve Parker (SN Alliance) requested that materials be provided in English and in Spanish to expand the reach of the Houston Bike Plan. Geoff Carlton noted that all flyers associated with the Plan are bilingual.
- How will citizens who are unable to attend public meeting be engaged?
  Citizens are encouraged to participate online with interactive discussion forums, mapping tools and surveys.

- You mentioned zip codes and their use for tracking target areas. How are we reaching out to these communities?
  As part of the BAC, the Study Team asks that the BAC help champion these efforts.
- What materials are available to assist with these efforts?
  The Study Team is developing a meeting in a box. These materials will be made available online. Interested parties may download all materials presented during public meetings. This includes a PowerPoint and associated talking points, maps for download and other activities .
- Mary Blitzer (BikeHouston) requested that future public engagement be better coordinated with BAC members. Prior to Phase 5, it is requested that dates of public engagement and locations be better clarified. BAC members may then better coordinate with local organizations to ensure a presence on event agendas.

Remaining Phases (Slides 43 – 49):
The remaining phases of the Plan were also discussed and are highlighted below.

- **Phase 3** – Bicycle Toolbox (July – August 2015): Geoff presented potential toolboxes including policies, programs and projects.
- **Phase 4** – Developing and Draft Plan (July 2015): Phase 4 will result in a Bicycle Master Plan Map and list of potential pilot projects. All recommendations will reflect project goals as agreed upon by the public, BAC and Study Team.
- **Phase 5** – Public Outreach on the Plan (November 2015 – February 2016)
  Phase 5 is intended to develop components of a Bicycle Master Plan to be shared with the public for feedback. Comments will be carefully considered and Plan adjustments made during Phase 5. All recommendation will be aligned with goals defined in Phase 2.
- **Phase 6** – Finalize Plan (February 2016 – April 2016)
  The final Bicycle Master Plan will combine the key deliverables from previous phases of the project into a cohesive document. The document include existing conditions, a case for action, a vision and goals, and a toolbox of policies, programs, and projects that are prioritized and include a funding strategy.

7) BAC Takeaways:

- **Public Awareness/Interest List**: BAC members are encouraged to promote participation at every opportunity. Contact Cathy Halka for more information or to request materials.
- **Material Distribution**: BAC members are encouraged to assist in distribution of promotional materials including posters, flyers, emails, Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets.
- **Meeting In A Box**: The meeting in a box will be available for groups to hold their own meetings and includes the presentation, talking points and other promotional materials.
- **Online Survey and activities**: Encourage people to participate in a survey, mapping activity and discussion forum at
- **Next BAC Meeting:** Tentatively second week in July, details will be provided.

Meeting Report Prepared By: Anita Hollmann