

Burke Gilman Trail Redevelopment Project
July 18, 2006 Citizens Advisory Group Meeting

Meeting Summary

Attendees

Tim Ahern
Kate Comtois
Tom French
Sandy Koppenol
Dean Peterson
Jon Skamser
Ed Sterner
Stuart Strand
Jeff Weissman

King County Staff

Gina Auld
Deborah Browne
Jessie Israel

Design Staff

Kristen Lohse
Michael Read
Terry Reckord

Facilitation Staff

Maureen Dunn
Margaret Norton-Arnold

Welcome and Overview

Margaret Norton-Arnold

Margaret welcomed the attendees and gave a brief overview of the meeting. There were a number of handouts available for committee members and guests including:

- Agenda
- Facilitators Memo
- May CAG Meeting Minutes
- CAG Evaluation Checklist
- Question and Answers
- Property Owner Meeting Report
- Public Meeting Report
- Section 1 Standards Review Summary
- Huitt-Zollars Memo
- Draft Reponse to Huitt-Zollars

Public Comment

Several members of the public made comments:

- The notice and informational materials for this meeting were not sent out with enough advance time for the public.
- The design schematics should be dubbed the “Cascade bike plan”. These changes will allow the trail to be a bicycle freeway and tax dollars should not be spent for this project. Speed bumps have been proven to slow down traffic; they should be used for the trail.
- The Huitt-Zollars report is an intellectually dishonest document for the following reasons: 1) The RCW is clear that users entering and crossing the public right-of-way should yield; 2) this is not a unique area of the trail simply because it is a single family residential area and; 3) critical users are mobility impaired.
- Bill Moritz read from a document that summarized his comments on the Huitt Zollar Report. The full document is attached to this meeting report.

Remarks from Mayor

Mayor Dave Hutchinson

Mayor Dave Hutchinson thanked members for their time and effort to serve on the group, and invited them to attend an event commemorating Lake Forest Park volunteers on July 21. The Mayor said that it was his strong desire to ensure that the trail is safe and comfortable for all users. He urged the committee to consider recommending that yield signs be placed on the trail instead of the stop signs that are currently at about seven driveways and streets. The yield signs, he believes, will be a good compromise, and will encourage cyclists to slow down and pay attention, and will thus lead to greater safety on the trail. He also hopes that King County's planned Ambassador programs will encourage more responsible behavior on the part of cyclists.

Review of Huitt-Zollars Report

Ed Sterner

Ed Sterner discussed the Huitt-Zollars report, which was an independent review of the proposed design in the Atelier report to provide the City and its Council with in depth expertise with regard to how to have the best possible trail through Lake Forest Park, and which was commissioned by the Lake Forest Park City Council. Over the next few months, the City Council will consider a new ordinance outlining requirements for the trail design; these could be used as the standards by which the City will determine whether or not to grant the permits necessary in order to construct the trail improvements.

The purpose of the ordinance is to define a multi purpose trail, and will cover: 1) signage and the traffic control to govern trail crossings and trail users; 2) ways to approach the interface of trail and neighboring use; 3) ensuring that the trail works well for all users; and 4) ongoing maintenance.

The ordinance will also address trail speed enforcement, including an interlocal agreement between King County and the City to make certain this enforcement occurs.

The ordinance will be presented at the next City Council meeting; if the Council determines it wants to continue to pursue the ordinance, there will be a formal public hearing before it is adopted. The CAG will also have the opportunity to discuss the ordinance if members want to.

Discussion of the Group's Design Review

CAG members had individually completed a review of the design schematics, using the recommendations they had made in their *Phase One Report* as a checklist for the design. Members began working through the evaluation, asking clarifying questions and discussing issues in more detail. At the end of each question, Margaret asked the group to register their "yes" or "no" or "uncertain" answers one final time. These answers will serve as the basis

for the group's "Phase Two" Report, which will be issued in late August-early September. The discussion follows:

1. *Trail Width: Does the trail design widen the trail appropriately, ensuring that all users have room to use the trail comfortably and safely?*

Result: All eight voting CAG members present said YES to this question.

Key Discussion Points:

- There were still some questions about the three-foot/one-foot widths on either side of the trail. Terry Reckord maintained that this will allow for pedestrians to comfortably walk two abreast, should they want to leave the main trail to allow for passing cyclists, etc. for some reason. The one-foot width on the other side will enable a single pedestrian to use that side, and also provides a safety area for cyclists.
- There were still concerns about the type of surfacing material that will be used for these side trails. Terry Reckord said that the recommended crushed rock, if maintained properly, is comfortable, safe, and flexible for a wide variety of uses. Some members want to see other options explored, however, it is important to have ribbed concrete or other materials that will provide the greatest mobility for the highest number of users. They suggest that there may be other surfacing materials that are easier to maintain and ultimately more comfortable for these users.

2. *Trail Width: Does the trail design widen the trail in a way that is a reasonable "middle ground" for trailside homeowners?*

Result: Of the eight voting members present, seven members said YES to this question. One member answered UNSURE, with the comment that pedestrian space on the trail was possibly being sacrificed for more asphalt.

Key Discussion Points:

- This is a great opportunity to reduce tensions with property owners by limiting changes on the east side of the trail. Expand the trail on the west side as long as it is not prohibitively expensive.
- It is important to find a balance with privacy, safety, access and cost.
- There were still some concerns that a wider trail will allow cyclists to go faster. Other members feel, however, that widening the trail will make it safer for all users.

3. *Crossings: Does the trail design install overhead lighting and striping at all intersections and driveways?*

Result: All eight voting members present answered YES to this question.

Key Discussion Points:

- There was still some concern that, even with additional lighting, Ballinger Way will not be improved. Traffic engineer Michael Read agreed that the area is shady, and stated that the new lighting will significantly improve visibility, especially for dusk and dawn users.

4. Crossings: Does the trail design remove stop signs at private driveways and make necessary stop sign/intersection improvements at key intersections?

As this has been one of the most contentious issues in the design process, it was the focus of lengthy discussion at the meeting. A “final answer” was not taken on this question, and it will be raised again at the next CAG meeting.

The group was interested in understanding the laws regarding intersections. Michael Read explained that the law states that the trail or roadway with the largest number of users has the right-of-way. In this case, the Burke Gilman Trail has more users than the driveways or roadways that cross it, except, of course, at major intersections. At the “minor” crossings (driveways and streets with a low level of activity) cars are already yielding to trail users, and will continue to be required to do so. The stop signs that currently exist at approximately seven driveways or minor streets are dangerous, as they only serve to cause confusion and are often disregarded by cyclists anyway.

At the major intersections, traffic will be controlled by a signal light. Trail users will be required to stop for both pedestrians and for vehicles, just as would be regulated at any intersection crossing. The intersection at 165th, which has been frequently discussed, is still considered a minor crossing. Vehicles will be required to stop at a stop sign, and cyclists will have yield signs that will require them to yield to pedestrians in that intersection. Some CAG members continued to urge that cyclists be required to stop instead, especially given the volume of children crossing the intersections during the summer months.

Pertinent to the suggestion from Mayor Hutchinson, a couple of members suggested that the stop signs currently in place at the driveways be replaced by yield signs instead. This would serve as a signal to cyclists to pay more attention and slow down, and could improve the safety of both cyclists and drivers crossing the trail. Under this scenario, both cyclists and motorists would have yield signs in these areas.

This idea sparked considerable debate. Several group members said they would be willing to consider this compromise, but wanted to better understand, first, how the placement of these signs would affect liability. One member said that, although compliance to the stop signs is currently low, the yield signs would lead to changes in trail use behavior. Further, he felt that if the stop signs are removed it will lead to more accidents between cyclists and motorists.

The MacLeod Reckord design team responded by sharing information about their responsibilities, since final design and construction does require the stamp and seal of state-licensed professionals. They said that they will be unable to endorse any solutions that are contrary to standard/best engineering practices. Both stop and yield signs for

cyclists are contrary to these standards. They only serve to cause confusion and are dangerous. King County is adhering to these national and statewide standards.

Ed Sterner responded that it was his understanding that the AASHTO guidelines are only guidelines and not mandates. He disagreed that MacLeod Reckord would not be able to put its engineering stamp on the design drawings. He said that the City of Lake Forest Park wants the trail to be welcoming and accessible to all users, and further stated that King County could be sued and that such suits could make sure the trail does not get improved if the County does not demonstrate more flexibility with regards to the trail signage.

Next Meeting

Several dates for a next meeting were discussed; Margaret will poll all members to determine the date that works the best for the majority of the group.

Section 1 – “Standards Review”

1. **Says AASHTO Guide is due for review. True, but this process is just getting underway. \$250,000 has been requested for FY 2007. It will take YEARS before that effort is finished and available. Bicyclists will continue to be the primary users of the BGT (2004/05 counts show 77-85%). H-Z vaguely suggests that since there may be changes in AASHTO 1999, it is somehow suspect. It is the current ‘standard’ and the one the County is bound to use. What would they have us use instead?

2. **Claims BGT in LFP is unique. This is simple not true. In Seattle, north of Mathews Beach there is a section where many homes have no vehicle access. North of NE 125th there is a private crossing that serves 3 homes from a steep ‘hidden’ driveway and has a STOP sign for the crossing. There is a private crossing north of NE 77th that serves an 80 unit condominium where the crossing YIELDS to the trail. There is also a pool at NE 77th.

**The recently opened E. Lake Sammamish Trail has very similar conditions with two groups of homes having no vehicle access and many very closely spaced private crossings. ELST: 66 crossings in 10.5 miles vs. 11 in 2 miles in LFP. H-Z points out that there are 8 crossings in the southern mile in LFP. On ELST there are THREE one mile sections that have 10, 11, and 13 crossings. In LFP the 7 private crossings serve 27 homes. On ELST the 33 private crossings within those three 1 mile segments serve a total of 96 (21, 25, and 50) homes. 8 of those 33 private crossings have STOPS for cross traffic while another 21 have YIELDS on the crossing.

****Suggests that “high speed recreational bicyclists use Lake City Way.”** This is ludicrous and hardly deserves comment. SR522 has NO facilities for bicyclists. As noted, the 1995 Idaho Plan suggests providing bike lanes on a parallel street. Is LFP prepared to add BL’s to SR 522?

Further, LFP police have stopped and ticketed cyclists who ride in the “Transit Shoulder.” Transit operators do not like bikes in that lane. The northbound shoulder is narrow with many driveways – some with very poor sight distances. And where, exactly, would that leave cyclists? Answer: Dealing with a very busy 4 lane arterial with ZERO shoulders in Seattle.

3. Titled “options for increasing safety” but contains ZERO specifics.

4. **Design Speed. Again claims uniqueness that doesn’t exist (see 2 above). The only reason sightlines are inadequate now is that adjacent property owners have encroached on the PUBLIC ROW. No grade changes will be required to provide safe sight triangles.

**AASHTO (pg 36) says the MINIMUM design speed should be 20 MPH. It further states that, while cyclists can travel faster than 20 MPH, “to do so would be inappropriate in a mixed-use setting.” Thus AASHTO accepts 20 MPH as OK on shared use paths.

****Posted Speed** Given that the 85th percentile is 17-18 MPH, the appropriate speed is either 15 or 20 MPH. Sight distance will be taken care of by removing encroaching vegetation and structures. Those claiming a concern for pedestrian safety should support a separate 5-6 foot pedestrian path separated from the 12 foot paved trail by a 3 foot buffer (see below). The 50 to 100 feet of PUBLIC ROW has more than sufficient space.

**I certainly agree with their last comment: “Overly restrictive signs should be avoided to maintain the credibility of all signs along the path.” Perhaps they didn’t notice Transpo’s STOP compliance data – less than 3 out of 100 stop at the existing STOP signs. We already a classic example of overly restrictive signs that serve no purpose!

5. Speed control. H-Z refers to page 67 AASHTO and claims it deals with using obstructions to control speed. Page 67 deals with MARKING obstructions (like abutments and piers) that cannot be relocated out of the bicycle travel way. This has NOTHING to do with speed control.

6. Federal funding. The reality is that unless this facility is designed in accordance with accepted guidelines and standards it will NOT qualify for federal funding.

Section 2 – Suggested Conditions for Conditional Use Permit Ordinance

Again the claim is made that the BGT in LFP is unique. Untrue (see above). Of the 7 bulleted items on page 5, the first 6 apply to the ELST. And shopping is adjacent to and at each end of the ELST.

****1. GOAL (pg 6).** The discussion in 1.1 does not conform to the MUTCD and good engineering practice. Specifically they violate warrants for STOP and YIELD signs that give priority to PUBLIC rights-of-way over PRIVATE crossings. Further, they ignore the clear guidance that higher volume traffic should have the ROW over those with lower volume.

**On pg 7 they imply that MUTCD has a different set of requirements depending on the ‘mass’ of the vehicles entering an intersection. No citation is given because none exists. At the end of the 1st paragraph they cite Section 5 of the Manual. They fail to point out that Section 5 deals with “Low Volume Roads” which are defined as having AADT’s of less than 400. Traffic on the trail can exceed that number in 1 hour. Section 5 is simply not applicable here.

**Later they cite MUTCD Section 9B (STOP and YIELD) but they fail to present the underlying warrants for these signs that appear in MUTCD Section 2. For example, “STOP signs should be installed in a manner that minimizes the number of vehicles having to stop.” And, “A STOP sign should not be used on a major street unless justified by an engineering study.” (Sec 2B.05). The engineering study has been done – by Transpo – and they concluded that the private crossings should YIELD. H-Z present no alternative study or analysis.

At the bottom of pg 7 they imply that traffic signals (RED-YELLOW-GREEN) might be called for at some of the trail crossings! Who are they kidding? Signal warrants generally start with the minor crossing having at least 140-200 crossings PER HOUR. It is hard to imagine ANY driveway generating that much traffic in a week let alone an hour!

Section 1.3 (pg 8) is titled: “Identify crossings for bicyclists” but then lists signs that would appear to those crossing the trail.

****2. GOAL (pg 8).** Screening adjacent property from the trail.

**Let’s all keep in mind that virtually all of the present screening and fencing is well within the PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY. Allowing adjacent property owners to have the private, exclusive use of public land is unacceptable and perhaps unlawful. Any fencing and screenings that the County might chose to erect should be placed on the edge of the public ROW. If the adjacent property owner wishes to add additional screening, they may do so on their property at their expense. The government should not spend public money to screen private property from a public trail. Where else in LFP has the City erected screening of a public ROW for any private property owner?

**One does wonder how many of the present fences and hedges violate the cited LFP Zoning Code minimum 15 foot setback (see H-Z 2.3.iv pg 8) from the developed trail shoulder? I checked– the vast majority are not in compliance with the Zoning Code.

****3. GOAL (pg 9).** Provide safe interface between different path users.

3.1 The article referenced reports the development of a bicycle level-of-service tool that can be applied to the NON-INTERSECTION portions of shared use paths. Wider trails have a higher level of service when the other variables are held constant! The tool has NO ability to forecast use and does not distinguish between user types.

It is interesting that the article highlights wide trails as enhancing safety and trails with separate lanes that allow users to segregate themselves by speed (see directly below).

**3.2 We keep hearing opponents of the County’s plan SAY they want to provide a safe facility for all users. If they are being sincere, then here is a cross-section they should be supporting:

1’ shldr – 5’ to 6’ sidewalk – 3’ grass buffer – 12’ paved bike path – 2’ shldr. Total = 24 feet.

**3.2.i.c H-Z claims that the LFP section has higher fraction of non-bicyclists than other parts of the trail. Untrue. In fact, in the most recent trail survey (May 2005) LFP had the LOWEST fraction of non-bicyclists of all 4 stations. Figures for Sat/Tues – Gas Works: 34%/28%; LFP: 18%/13%; Woodinville: 27%/31%; Redmond: 31%/46%.

Under 3.2.i. H-Z refers to AASHTO’s minimum design speed of 20 MPH and implies there is some flexibility. True – but here is a sentence they failed to include: “Lower design speeds should not be selected to artificially lower user speeds.”

A bit later they allude to allowing “a more park like and aesthetically pleasing setting” along the trail by “enhanced screening and buffering.” Sorry – but presently in many sections the trail experience is one of passing along a ditch with no views whatsoever. Moving the screening back to the edge of the ROW will open up views and truly create a “park like” setting.

**3.2.ii. Suggests posting a speed limit (but offers no guidance) that will be respected by cyclists. I couldn’t agree more. Such a speed limit must be reasonable and consistent with user’s experiences on the trail. For long stretches of the trail through LFP there are no intersections and often very few users particularly during AM commute hours. The Basic Speed Rule applies to the trail and should be sufficient. Posting 10 MPH, for example, along the entire 2 mile section will see the same level of compliance as seen at the current (unwarranted) STOP signs on the PRIVATE driveways.

3.2.iii and .iv. Again implies there is some way to forecast use. Given a minimum 50 ft ROW, there is plenty of room to safely accommodate ALL users (see above). Providing separate treads for different speeds will truly make for a more enjoyable trail experience for lower speed users.

4. GOAL (pg 10).

They just can’t help themselves – again, this segment of the trail IS NOT UNIQUE! Saying this repeatedly does NOT make it so.

4.2.i. “Yield to Crossing Traffic” is not an appropriate ‘park use’ sign. Each crossing should be signed based on accepted standards and consistent with how other sections of the trail (in Seattle for example) are signed. Consistency throughout the system is critical tenet of the MUTCD.

4.3.ii. Refers to an alternate route for southbound cyclists without indicating what that would be. If they mean SR 522, see earlier comments.

5. GOAL (pg 11).

5.1.i. King County already has a set of Trail Rules which is sufficient for all sections of the trail. There is nothing unique about the trail in LFP that would require special rules.

Appendix A – Documents Reviewed

H-Z should perhaps update their reference books. The current edition of AASHTO’s Green Book is 2004 (vs. the 1994 version they cite.) They fail to cite the edition of the MUTCD that they used. The current edition is 2003.

The Idaho Plan referenced was done in 1995 – 4 years before the latest edition of AASHTO.