

Burke Gilman Trail Redevelopment Project
August 15, 2006 Citizens Advisory Group Meeting

Meeting Summary

Attendees

Tim Ahern
Gary Elmer
Tom French
Mark Gibbons
Michelle LeMoine
Sandy Koppenol
Dean Peterson
Alison Starling
Jon Skamser
Jeff Weissman
Mark Withers

King County Staff

Deborah Browne
Jesse Israel

Design Staff

Kristen Lohse
Terry Reckord
Michael Reed

Facilitation Staff

Maureen Dunn
Margaret Norton-Arnold

Welcome and Overview

Margaret Norton-Arnold

Margaret welcomed the CAG and the members of the public. The goal of the meeting was to finalize votes regarding the design evaluation. A draft of the CAG's *Phase Two Report* will be prepared after this meeting and sent out for review to the group. The following handouts were available at the meeting:

- Agenda
- Facilitation memo
- Yield discussion points
- CAG July Meeting Report
- CAG Design Evaluation Summary
- CAG Phase Two Report Draft Outline

Public Comment

Six members of the public made comments at the meeting:

- One commenter reviewed the CAG Charter guidelines, and observed that one member of the CAG has several times talked of lawsuits and was not abiding by the guideline that says “CAG members will seek a constructive format for resolving differences.” The commenter said that this member should resign from the Group if he is unwilling to abide by the guidelines.
- Another commenter said that he has seen a total of five cars in three years of bicycle commuting. Stopping at driveways and stop signs are an impediment and an unfair burden for cyclists. Further, they are dangerous because there is a lack of visibility. There is a strong need for improved sight lines.
- A commenter was interested in reviewing the guidelines regarding bike behavior. She said that many cyclists ride too fast and are impolite. She hopes the trail ambassador program changes the behavior of cyclists.
- A commenter stated that 147th and Edgewater Way are easements, not public roads. Public right-of-way (the trail) takes precedence over private driveways. Bicycles are not required to have speedometers. The trail should be posted at 15 mph.
- Another commenter discussed the Memorandum of Agreement that had been signed between King County and the City of Lake Forest Park. He said that this portion of the Burke Gilman Trail is unique, specifically where the right-of-way narrows around 147th. When the CAG comments on encroachment, it is important to understand the history of vegetation management in the area. Although the fences and plantings were done by King County, residents have since been maintaining those plantings south of that. He informed the CAG that there was a fully executed permit by the Burlington Northern Railroad which allowed the trail to cross the roadway. Further, at that time there was a lease that allowed the public to landscape within fifteen feet of the pedestrian stairway.
- The final commenter said that not enough people were notified about the May public meeting. He emphasized that the trail is a public facility. Bicycles are vehicles and should be accorded the right-of-way. Trail traffic far exceeds vehicular traffic in this area/at the crossings. Neither the stop nor the yield signs at the driveways should be considered viable alternatives. The MacLeod Reckord design should be accepted. The trail speed should be set at 15 mph, just as it is for the rest of the trail. Only 3% of the cyclists go over 17 mph. A lower posted speed will not result in slower cyclists, just less respect for the posted signage.

Continued Discussion and Conclusions on the Design Evaluation

The bulk of the meeting was devoted to the Group's continued review of the MacLeod Reckord design schematics. While Group members had completed individual checklist evaluations earlier, they had only had the opportunity to discuss a few of the items as a full group during their July 18 meeting. This meeting was intended to finalize the opinions of the Group.

As was done at the July meeting, Group members indicated their *yes*, *no*, or *unsure* opinions regarding design elements. All eleven members present on August 15 were voting members of the CAG.

1. Does the MacLeod Reckord design remove all existing chicanes and other impediments that contribute to unsafe conditions?

Result: NINE members said NO.
TWO members were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- The Atelier Report had recommended the removal of all bollards, chicanes, and other impediments to trail use. A majority of CAG members had agreed with this recommendation. The MacLeod Reckord design proposes the use of bollards at intersections, to serve as a warning device to cyclists that they are approaching a crossing. The nine members voting *no* disagreed with the use of bollards.
- Terry Reckord said bollards are useful to notify trail users that they are entering a different zone, such as an intersection. Bollards can serve to calm trail traffic, in the sense that they channelize and serve as a warning that a crossing is near. Bollards are flexible so emergency vehicles can access the trail. They do, however, require regular maintenance.
- CAG members arguing against their use said there is ample evidence that bollards break and are hazardous to trail users. They said that the second most common accident to cyclists is hitting an obstacle such as a bollard. Alternatives to bollards include changing the signal, signs, and striping to indicate a new zone.
- Those opposing the use of bollards said that they should be removed entirely, as it is possible that maintenance staff would forget to remove the center bollard. Further, when it is dark and the ground is slippery bollards can be hazardous to cyclists.

2. Does the MacLeod Reckord design adhere to the design speeds delineated in the Atelier Report?

Result: TEN members said YES.
ONE member was UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- AASHTO guidelines state that the design should accommodate 85% of all users. Terry stated that the design speed is 20 mph, which matches this requirement.

3. Does the MacLeod Reckord design work in any way to affect trail behavior, especially speeding cyclists?

Result: NINE members said YES.
TWO members said NO.

Background and Discussion

- One of the most-frequently cited issues of concern in this segment of the Burke Gilman Trail is the behavior of cyclists -- those going too fast, those not warning pedestrians of their approach, etc. The CAG had had a number of discussions about the degree to which trail design can actually serve to influence the behavior of cyclists.
- Those indicating a *yes* response said that the design team has done as much as possible to affect the behavior of trail users. Of course, it is not always possible to actually control this behavior – that will require additional enforcement from King County.
- The exact number of informational and directional signs have not yet been determined.
- Common courtesy should be the ultimate goal. Signs might be posted that ask people to “share the trail.” Terry said that, while this is a good idea, there is a threshold for the number of signs that should be posted – too many cause confusion.
- Hanging signs at the crosswalks could play the same role as a bollard. The sign could be a different color and be made of reflective material so it would be highly noticeable. This could become a new standard for enforcing behavior.
- There was a question about whether there would be flashing lights at driveways. Michael Reed said that it may not be possible to treat the driveways in this manner.
- The CAG had recommended in the past that there should be more places to rest, stop and move off of the trail. This appeared to have been forgotten in the design schematics. Terry said that the design team would consider more of these types of improvements in the next phase of design.

4. Does the MacLeod Reckord design improve drainage on the trail?

Result: SEVEN members said YES.
FOUR were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- Drainage has been one of the most important areas in need of improvement through the redevelopment project. Although most members were confident that drainage would be improved by the design, those who were *unsure* were concerned that they had not yet seen the detailed drawings for these specific improvements.

5. *Does the MacLeod Reckord design remove/replant vegetation but also maintain fencing/screening that protects privacy?*

Result: SIX members said YES.
FIVE were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- Given the lack of detailed design drawings, a number of members were unsure about the degree to which existing vegetation and fencing would be replanted and replaced. Some members said vegetation replacement should comply with the same standards of East Lake Sammamish Trail. Terry agreed, but said that there are a number qualifying considerations, most notably reasonable cost and accommodation for sight lines. Vegetation will be replaced in-kind where it is possible and appropriate to do so. Vegetation that is replaced will be similar in nature to what is removed, but not necessarily identical.
- A member wondered who would maintain the vegetation. The construction contractor will be responsible for the first year; King County will take over after that on public right-of-way vegetation. Plantings on private property are the responsibility of that homeowner.
- A member said it is important to preserve views and access, specifically at the pocket parks. Terry agreed, but also said that there is a compromise between preserving views and protecting residential privacy.

6. *Does the MacLeod Reckord design ensure that all land currently under public ownership is maintained to accommodate necessary improvements, including buffering and mitigation measures?*

Result: EIGHT members were UNSURE.
TWO members said NO.
ONE member said YES.

Background and Discussion

- This has been a key point of discussion from the beginning of the trail redevelopment process. Those who were *unsure* said that the public right-of-way is not fully utilized. They are concerned about the level of encroachment from private property owners that has occurred on the public right-of-way. They believe that it is unfair to trail users to narrow the trail at certain areas in order to accommodate, or lessen the impact on, adjacent homeowners.

7. *Has the trail design been completed with an appropriate and effective level of public involvement?*

Result: SEVEN members said YES.
THREE members said NO.
ONE member was UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- Those answering *no* to this question said that more trail users should have been informed about the project and the public meetings. All city residents, they said, not just those in close proximity to the trail, should have received the newsletter.
- Jessie responded that all residents within three miles of the trail were notified of the meetings.

8. Has King County addressed ongoing issues of trail maintenance?

Result: SEVEN members said NO.
FOUR members were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- Although not directly related to the design, the issue of ongoing trail maintenance has been a major point of discussion with the CAG throughout their committee process. Members have wanted reassurances that King County has a strong and comprehensive plan in place to maintain the trail. The *no* and *unsure* votes indicated a lack of confidence among members that King County would commit the resources and time necessary to fully maintain the trail.

9. Has King County addressed the ongoing issue of the enforcement of posted trail speeds?

Result: NINE members said NO.
TWO members were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- Although not directly related to trail design, the enforcement of posted trail speeds has been an issue of significant concern for many trailside homeowners. As indicated by the voting, most CAG members are not confident that these speeds are being adequately enforced.

10. Should the speed limit be posted at 10 mph or at 15 mph?

Result: TWO members said that the trail speeds should be posted at 10 mph.
NINE members said that the trail speeds should be posted at 15 mph.

Background and Discussion

- Because so many trailside homeowners have been concerned about the posted trail speed for cyclists, MacLeod Reckord had recommended a 10 mph posted speed.
- Most members disagreed with this decision, saying that their typical cycling speed is between 10-15 mph. When they are riding at this speed, or even when they are riding up to 17-18 mph, they do not feel that they are dangerous or a threat to other trail users.

- Another member said that 85% of users ride under 18 mph. The problem cyclists are riding between 23-25 mph.
- A posted speed of 10 mph, some members felt, would still result in cyclists riding at 12-13 mph.

11. Does the MacLeod Reckord design remove stop signs at private driveways and minor crossings, and does it make necessary stop sign/intersection improvements at key intersections?

Result: NINE members said YES.

TWO members said NO.

The MacLeod Reckord design recommends that these stop signs be removed, and a *yes* answer indicated agreement with this design element.

Background and Discussion

- One of the most contentious issues of the trail redevelopment project has been the existence of stop signs at about seven private driveways and minor crossings on the trail. The Atelier Report had recommended that these stop signs be removed, and the majority of CAG members agreed with this recommendation in their *Phase One Report*. The *yes* and *no* answers recorded at this meeting reiterated the earlier CAG opinions expressed about this issue.

12. Should yield signs be used in place of the stop signs? Under this recommendation, yield signs would be placed at minor crossings and private driveways. Trail users would yield to vehicles at these crossings (there are approximately seven of them in this segment of the trail).

Result: SIX members said NO.

THREE members said YES.

TWO were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- At their July 18 meeting, CAG members were presented with a proposal from the City of Lake Forest Park, which was that yield signs would be installed in place of the stop signs currently installed at approximately seven private driveways and minor crossings along the trail. King County and MacLeod Reckord had said that such yield signs would be contrary to both the AASHTO guidelines and standard best engineering practices. In fact, MacLeod Reckord had said that they would not put their professional engineering stamp of approval on the drawings if yield signs were included as part of the design.
- In contrast to this opinion, Huitt Zollars (HZ), an architect/engineering firm hired by the City of Lake Forest Park, said that, in their professional opinion, yield signs are the best solution for controlling the interaction between trail users and vehicles. The HZ representative said that such yield signs are consistent with other areas of the Burke Gilman Trail and that, in fact, cyclists and pedestrians

should be required to yield to motorists in these areas. Because the Burke Gilman is a recreational facility, its users should be required to yield to vehicles.

- Several members of the CAG sharply disagreed with this recommendation. They stated that the Burke Gilman is a public right-of-way, and, as such, its users should have precedence over vehicle crossings.
- Other members, however, felt that this would be a reasonable compromise to what has been a difficult issue. Several cyclists on the CAG said they rarely encounter vehicles when they ride past these driveways and other crossings, and that they thought the yield signs could be helpful to prevent accidents should vehicles and cyclists be in the same place at the same time. They urged the other members to consider an approval of the yield signs.

13. Does the MacLeod Reckord design resolve the question of automated traffic lights at intersections?

Result: TEN members said YES.
ONE member said NO.

Background and Discussion

- Earlier discussions of the CAG had explored the idea of automated traffic lights at intersections as a way to increase safety between cyclists and vehicles. In its *Phase One Report*, the CAG had recommended that such lights only be installed if other safety measures proved to be ineffective. The answers expressed at this meeting echoed the earlier CAG opinion. The one dissenting member felt, however, that this potential solution should be thoroughly investigated.

14. Does the MacLeod Reckord design present a viable alternative for the three driveways at NE 151st Street?

Result: SEVEN members said YES.
FOUR members were UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- This was one element of the Atelier Report that had been problematic for the CAG. They asked that better design alternatives be created for this area. Currently, one homeowner backs out onto the trail in order to leave his driveway.
- Terry Reckord presented a new alternative at the meeting, describing how the homeowner could back out into the right-of-way instead of onto the trail.
- The homeowner, who was present at the meeting, said he was certainly open to discussing this option, and that he wanted to continue working with the County on this issue.
- Those answering *yes* on this question said they were satisfied that MacLeod Reckord had presented a reasonable alternative. Those who were *unsure* continued to have questions about whether or not the alternative would truly prove to be viable after a more detailed design analysis had been completed.

15. Does the MacLeod Reckord design address the concerns, questions, and issues that have been raised by the public since the Atelier Report and the CAG's Phase One Report were issued?

Result: SEVEN members said YES.

THREE members said NO.

ONE member was UNSURE.

Background and Discussion

- Those who were *unsure* or said *no* were primarily concerned that adjacent property owners had not had enough opportunities to review and comment on the design.
- The comment was made that the Question-and-Answer sheet that was posted on the website has a number of inaccuracies. Jessie said she was happy to take comments/edits on the Q and A sheet, and that she would work with CAG member on the specific changes.

Schedule/Next Steps

Margaret distributed a *Phase Two Report Outline* to CAG members, and asked them to provide their feedback on the document. Margaret will continue working on the report and will be getting a draft out to members within the next week.

Jessie said that the CAG's *Phase Two Report* will conclude this phase of the Group's work. There will be two more CAG meetings, one when the design is 60% complete, and the final meeting at 90% design. There will be one more public meeting. Construction was originally set to begin in 2007, but due to the anticipated needs of the permitting process, it will now commence in late 2007-08.

MacLeod Reckord/King County will consider the opinions and recommendations of the CAG as they move into the 60% design phase.