

Charlottesville Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting

August 5, 2021
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Meeting Participants

Amanda Poncy
Carl Schwarz
Jessica Hersch-Ballering
Peter Ohlms
Stephen Bach
Frank Deviney

Lena Seville
Ben
Brennen Duncan
Erin Ryan
Molly Conger

Action Items:

- Send questions/comments on JPA/Brandon/Ruppel Drive to Amanda by sometime next week.
- Consider asking the PDC/MPO to include funding for bicycle and pedestrian counting in their work program.
- Think about locations for future walk audits.

Meeting Agenda

Idea to improve JPA/Brandon/Ruppel Intersection (Brennen Duncan)

Brennen Duncan, City Traffic Engineer, explained that UVA is redeveloping the northeast corner of Brandon/Ruppel/JPA and will be eliminating vehicular access on Grounds at Ruppel. However, they would like to maintain Ruppel Dr. as a bicycle/pedestrian route. Brennen presented an idea to provide a bike turn lane with 2' buffer in lieu of the existing left turn lane on JPA onto Ruppel. The roadway cross-section would provide an 11' travel lane, and continue the eastbound 5' bike lane to the intersection, where it would end.

Below is the feedback received from committee members:

- With this project, UVA should make a continuous bike lane along JPA near Brandon
Response: The bus stop doesn't leave enough space for a bike lane. There is no westbound bike lane west of Monroe Ave.
- Will there be a bike signal for bikes on Ruppel?
Response: Could leave it timed as it currently is and change the heads to bike-only signals. Or could consider a pedestrian scramble at this intersection and allow the cyclists to travel during the pedestrian scramble phase.
- As a bike/ped route, there should be a ramp at the end of the Hospital Drive cul-de-sac to provide a continuous route to the Corner.
- Can we include a sharrow or signage as you approach the bus stop to alert drivers to cyclists merging to use the travel lane?
Response: The conflict is generally just when there is a bus. Staff will consider a sharrow.
- There was general agreement that the bike left turn lane was a good idea.

5:20 Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Update (Jessica Hersch-Ballering and Amanda Poncy)

TJPDC Bicycle and Pedestrian Count

Jessica Hersch-Ballering, Transportation Planner at the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, shared an update on the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Volunteer Count Effort. Counts were conducted during typical commute times. The data can be found on the TJPDC's Bike and Pedestrian Planning Page. All active projects will be linked from that page. <https://tjpd.org/our-work/bike-and-pedestrian/>

Jessica explained that they have not done any major analysis on the data yet. Many of the locations were chosen because they either had or will soon have bike/ped investment. Generally, this is a lot of "before" data. The goal is to be able to compare bike/ped activity across time at the same locations to see if new infrastructure changes any numbers. She also noted that not a lot of TJPDC staff time is set aside for these kinds of counts and analysis. If there is interest in having the counts continue and more time set aside for analysis, BPAC should advocate for it.

She explained that demographic information was collected, but was not attributed to transportation mode. In the future, it might be worthwhile to consider this.

Jessica also clarified that volunteers were not used in locations with automatic counters and therefore the recent counts could not be used to validate the count data. It was discussed, but did not occur during this count initiative.

Amanda Poncy noted that there was a lot of discussion about the timing of counts conducted during the pandemic at a recent webinar about volunteer counts. Pandemic commute times are not actually representative of actual patterns. She suggested that maybe in the future we should expand count times to provide a more representative sample. Frank Deviney suggested that Old Lynchburg Rd is mostly recreational, so counting during commute hours doesn't accurately capture the number of people riding.

Peter mentioned a recent report released by Roanoke as a good example for bike/ped counts and analysis. They will be attending the next regional Bike/Ped meeting hosted by the TJPDC.

City Automatic Counters:

Amanda Poncy gave a presentation about the data that has been collected with the City's Eco-Counter equipment. Since 2015, 1,535,898 bicycle and pedestrian trips have been counted and this does not include any locations on Grounds or the Downtown Mall.

She described the evolution of bicycle and pedestrian counting in the city starting with a volunteer effort organized by the Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation in 2009. The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission took over that initiative in 2011 to support the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

An Eco-Counter tube counter was purchased by a UVA ph.D student interested in estimating bicycle travel demand in 2013. Both the TJPDC and City were interested in the research and plans for purchasing additional counters began to take shape with the PDC taking the lead. Due to some staffing changes and the length of time it took to work through the procurement process, the City became the owner of the new equipment and our first counters were installed in 2015 on W. Main Street as a result of the on-going planning efforts on the corridor. We expanded our equipment two other times – in 2016 and 2018 with the hope of collecting before/after data for some projects under development and recently completed. All but one of those counters was installed in 2019 and have been counting continuously ever since. The last counter was installed last October.

In total, the City has **10 counters** with a mix of temporary and permanent counters – some only count bicycles, the rest count both bikes/pedestrians but only one of those distinguishes those modes. They are installed on both **shared use paths, as well as on-street facilities**. 2 of our

counters automatically send data to a cloud daily. The rest require a site visit to manually download the data, typically once a month.

In May 2021, the League of American Bicyclist and Eco-Counter announced a data competition for Bike Friendly Communities and Advocacy organizations to receive free technical assistance to support count initiatives. The City applied to the competition and we were selected for the award, which included professional analysis of our bicycle count data.

Eco-Counter reviewed data for our bike counters, which are located on Emmet St, Preston Avenue, John Warner Parkway, Riverview Park, Hillsdale Drive and West Main Street, in an effort to answer 3 key questions:

1. How do our count sites compare to one another?
2. What is the change over time on West Main?
3. What are the cycling trends as a result of the pandemic?

The attached presentation shows the results of the data competition along with some limited staff analysis for the Emmet Street pedestrian counter.

The committee asked the following questions:

What do you recommend for future monitoring?

Can we get a counter that shows the total - or something that lets people know that counting was happening?

Amanda noted that we need some count locations south of town - Ridge Street for instance. Also, we might consider putting counters where the scooters have high counts. Eco-Totems, the counters that show volumes in real time, cost around \$30,000 (figure from Arlington County per Peter Ohlms).

5:45 Walkability Audit Debrief/Discussion of Future Routes (Carl Schwarz)

Carl described his experience with the recent walk audit organized by a citizen advocate with support from the Piedmont Environmental Council. He offered some ideas of ways to improve should the group be interested in hosting walk audits in the future. The group was asked to consider recommendations for places to conduct walk audits in the future.

Other:

Meetings will remain online until sometime in October pending City Council action.

2021 BPAC Meetings

September 2

October 7

November 4

December 2

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