

**Bismarck/Mandan Bike Commuter Meeting**  
**February 19, 2007**  
**Bismarck Public Library, Room C**

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**In Attendance**

Brian Beattie, Jason Doerr, Alan Dohrmann, Mark Liebig, Ron Luethe, Anita Thomas, Pete White

**Meeting Summary**

Steve Grabill and Joel Quanbeck from Ulteig Engineers presented an overview of the Long-Range Transportation Plan for Bismarck/Mandan, with special emphasis on bicycle-related projects. The plan projects transportation needs 20 years into the future by taking into consideration numerous factors that affect new and existing transportation facilities.

During and following a PowerPoint presentation by Steve Grabill, a number of items relative to the Long Range Transportation Plan were discussed and are summarized as follows:

- What is the southern bridge corridor? *Steve said that it is located in concept only at this time, approximately straight west of 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue South in Bismarck.*
- Why haven't on-road bicycle facility improvements been planned and funded more in our area? *Steve responded that it was his belief there was a greater demand for separated bicycle facilities. He added that if the Bike Commuter Group was interested in seeing more of these facilities implemented, it was important for them to be more involved in future planning efforts. Further, Steve was not aware of any of the Federal Transportation Enhancement fund applications having been submitted for construction of on-road facilities.*
- What is meant by "bicycle facility projects"? *Steve said these consisted mostly of paved off-road paths.*
- Is there a mandate for specific levels of paths or how is system being planned? *Steve said that the planning is primarily being undertaken by the park districts, although MPO and area transportation project planning typically includes consideration of bicycle user needs.*
- Is it assumed that roadways cannot have bikers? The bicycle commuter traffic is not compatible with the slower traffic and kids found on the off-road facilities. *Steve responded that the starting point for transportation planning was the Long Range Transportation Plan. He suggested that perhaps local staffs need to consider whether a policy is needed regarding facilities more conducive to bicycle commuting.*
- Are there opportunities to develop on-road bicycle facilities on existing roadways or only on future roadways? *Steve responded that both are possible, although many existing roadways may not have adequate room to add bike lanes without significant impacts. He added that it was likely that some existing roadways do have adequate room for addition of bike lanes.*
- Is there a database with existing right of way and lane width information? *Steve said the GIS databases in both communities most likely have this information.*

- Do bicycle parking, signage and lock-up facilities fit within the role of metropolitan planning? *Steve responded that they could, although it would probably be more from a funding and policy standpoint than from individual locations standpoint.*
- An example of signage that would be beneficial would be to provide “Share the Road” signs so that motorists don’t crowd the bicyclists. *Steve responded that sign use would need to be consistently applied, which would require adopted policy.*
- What is the difference between a path and a trail? *Steve said that a path has a paved surface, whereas a trail has an unpaved surface.*
- The Bike Commuter Group is preparing a map that would place existing roadways within one of three categories (good, fair, poor) depending on how conducive they are to serving as an on-road bicycle facility. Washington Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street were listed as having low commuter route potential, whereas 26<sup>th</sup> Street was listed as having high commuter route potential.
- What are the sidewalk width requirements for a walkway to be considered useable for bikes? *Steve responded that 8 feet was considered the narrowest, and many are now being constructed at 10 feet or 12 feet. He added that bicycle facilities need to have 2 feet of horizontal clearance from any obstruction.*
- Steve asked whether there were any specific project needs that they felt should be included in the Long Range Transportation Plan. *The Group responded that a dedicated path or wider shoulder for Lincoln commuters was needed.*
- Commuter Group members mentioned that there were a number of locations within the area that have obstructions. *Steve responded that he didn’t know whether local staff was aware of these locations.*
- The Commuter Group mentioned two locations on the Long Range Transportation Plan Trails Maps that were inaccurate:
  - There is an existing trail starting at Memorial Bridge and extending northwest. This was shown in the category of, “other suggested trails”.
  - Some of the sidewalk along Washington Street is too narrow to be considered a bicycle facility. Steve said that while this is true, it was the position of staff that it was unlikely the facility would ever be widened due to space limitations.
- Who is the MPO? *Steve said the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is comprised of the Cities of Bismarck, Mandan, Lincoln and Burleigh and Morton Counties. He also explained how their Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board was staffed and functioned.*
- At a minimum, the Commuter Group would like to see at least one north-south and one east-west bicycle commuter route across the metropolitan area. These routes should have an on-street focus in order to operate for real commuter activity.

A Bismarck/Mandan SAFETEA-LU map of existing and future trails was distributed near the end of the presentation for the attendees to review. [Note: Copies of the SAFETEA-LU map will be made available at the next meeting in March.] Comments and suggestions on the proposed placement of short- and long-range paths/trails in the plan were shared (see above).

Steve suggested the commuter group should consider providing input to a technical advisory committee during the development of future long-range plans (scheduled to begin later this year). Bike Commuter Group members indicated they were interested in being involved in

development of the next Long Range Transportation Plan. They also expressed interest in possible future meetings between the Commuter Group and area technical staff to discuss mutual areas of interest. Perhaps the MPO would want to be involved in hosting such a meeting. In the meantime, Steve offered the opportunity for the group to identify major issues or possible projects in the Bismarck/Mandan Metropolitan Area related to bicycling commuting for possible inclusion in the current transportation plan. The deadline for sharing issues or project concepts is April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

Following the presentation, the 'Bike to Work Week' and 'Bike Safety Basics' brochures were reviewed. Minor revisions to the text of both brochures were suggested. These changes will be made and final versions will be printed with the intention of having copies ready for distribution by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

An update by the 'Best Commuting Routes' group was put on hold until the next meeting.

There was discussion on how to coordinate our outreach efforts leading up the BTWW. There were numerous ideas shared on activities that could be done to promote the week, including a focus story in the Bismarck Tribune and Mandan News, television and radio spots, public support by Governor Hoeven and Mayors Warford and LaMont through state- and city-wide proclamations, distribution of the brochures, etc. Alan Dohrmann suggested a media rollout plan be developed to organize the efforts, and he offered to provide a template (by way of an Excel spreadsheet) for that purpose.

There was additional discussion regarding the selection of a specific day during BTWW as the 'big push' to encourage people to commute by bike. There was consensus on having a single day as a focus, since many people won't be able to bike every day during the week. The pros and cons of different days during the week were discussed. Friday (May 18<sup>th</sup>) was more-or-less decided upon, owing to the fact that the *League of American Bicyclists* has chosen that day for the rollout of their national effort. It seems prudent, however, to begin our outreach efforts to some degree with the press the week before BTWW so as to allow people the weekend to prepare their bikes and gear, as well as provide ample time for the selection of good commuting routes.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 19<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Bismarck Public Library (Room C). A tentative agenda for the meeting includes a presentation by the 'Best Commuting Routes' group, discussion of the BTWW media rollout plan, and review of a proposed project for possible inclusion in the current Long-Range Transportation Plan.