

WALKBIKE SPRINGFIELD AUGUST 12, 2021 MEETING NOTES

Attending: Jim Scheffler, Paul Bongiorno, Deb Huber, Jeff McCollough, Lucy Friedman-Bell, Betsy Johnson

I. Safe Routes to School – welcome Lucy Friedman-Bell

Lucy is taking over from Patrick Higgins as the representative from SR2S for Springfield. She has been already working with other communities in the Pioneer Valley. We reviewed the projects underway at the Rebecca Johnson School and Homer/DuBerry. There is interest in applying for the “Lines and Signs” program ([webinar](#) about program on Aug. 18, 2PM) for Bowles Elementary in East Springfield. Lucy will help Deb get the school contact.

II. DPW Engineering Update

Projects: DPW is currently repaving Chestnut St. and Fort Pleasant. WBS has provided comments on the striping, including recommending a road diet on Ft. Pleasant. Hopefully the later will be implemented and can set a new precedent for using striping to better accommodate cyclists and encourage vehicle speed reduction.

The [Central St. redirection to Hickory St.](#) is nearly completed. There is concern about pedestrian accommodation along Rifle St.

Complete Streets – Springfield received \$192,500 for the installation of bicycle facilities along a critical gap in the Tapley Street Corridor as well as the construction of new sidewalks on Bay Street to better serve pedestrians near Central High School. The project will also implement improvements along Trafton Road including sidewalk, sharrows, and bike signage (text from July 20, 2021 MassDOT press release about the award.)

Shared Streets – Springfield received \$167,000.00 to repurpose sidewalks, curbs, bus stops, and parking areas to include and install expanded outdoor dining space, curb extensions, line striping, bicycle accommodation, and a pedestrian safety beacon in downtown Indian Orchard (text from July 21, 2021 MassDOT press release about the award.)

Other – Public presentation of “X” project is expected in the fall.

III. Report on recent Old Hill and Walnut St. Walk Audits

Way Finders with the help of WalkBoston recently completed a walk audit along Wilbraham Road in the Old Hill neighborhood. The [report](#) was recently finalized. A number of the folks involved with that audit also helped with the WBS walk audit of Walnut Street completed on July 22. The report is still being finalized, but the major issues were the 1) lack of crosswalks across Walnut St. 2) the need for ADA tactile pads and enhancement of existing crosswalks at the side streets 3) the unpleasantness of the walk due to high fences. We discussed needing to find out if there are current City restrictions regarding the height of fences in front of homes.

We will advocate to have these audits inform DPW of needed improvements. WBS should identify other areas to conduct similar walk audits.

IV. Updates

ValleyBikes Return & [Bike Month](#) (September 2021). Suggested that WBS host an event promoting the ValleyBikes as a Bike Month event.

McKnight Trail & Eastern end of Highland Rail. The McKnight Neighborhood Council will be hosting a community meeting about the hiking biking trail in McKnight and East Forest Park at the *Jordan Auditorium on Springfield College campus on Monday, September 13.*

July 21, 2021 MassTrails Awards [press release](#): This project funds \$300,00 for the design, permitting, and engineering of the 2-mile Highland Division Trail in Springfield. The alignment follows an abandoned rail corridor that begins at the rail trestle at Watershops Pond, passes through the East Forest park neighborhood, and ends at the East Longmeadow city line. The proposed path runs through several residential neighborhoods mixed in with pockets of commercial activity.

We discussed the need for the trail development to spur a total redo of the Sumner/Allen St. and Allen/Island Pond intersections.

Wheel Park – [Pillar Design Studio](#) & GZA selected as contractor & sub-contractor. Funded through Community Preservation program, a contract was just finalized with this firm. During the selection interview, the contractor committed to involving users as part of the design process. The Parks Department wants to focus initially on the feasibility of the Boys & Girls Club site on Carew Street.

[AIC pedestrian death](#) – WBS reached out to AIC and Chris Cignoli about meeting to discuss how ideas for improving the safety of crossing Wilbraham Rd. in the AIC area. Cignoli's reply: The City met with AIC last week and will be working with them to develop some alternatives for safety improvements along Wilbraham Road. At this time the discussion between the City and AIC will be private and will be made public at a later time when both parties agree on a direction.

V. Other

WalkMassachusetts Network Forum on Speeding (week of Oct. 4) ([Complete the Survey](#))

We discussed the desire to meet with pedestrian and bicycle advocates from Springfield's surrounding communities. West Springfield is using flex posts to experiment with the effect of reducing a section of route 5 to one lane in order to slow traffic. Help promote the new Chicopee Riverwalk to counter push-back. Email from Sheila: Check it out if you haven't already although it isn't quite finished and paving work continues on the riverside bike path. (If you stay on the footpath on top of the dike, you'll be out of the way of construction activity.)

To get there, take 391 or Rte 116 to Willimansett and follow 116 (Chicopee St) to Ferry Street which will be on your left— a fire station and a pizza shop are on the corner. (One can also bike from Springfield using Main St which becomes 116 near the Chicopee border.) Ferry St dead ends at Nash Field, a city park; leave your car in the parking lot. The trail head will be on your left, across from the park.

Betsy has a WalkBoston conflict on Thursday, September 9, so the **next WalkBike Springfield meeting will be on Tuesday, September 7**. We will try to identify a protected outdoor location so we can meet in person.