



2014 Bryan District Bicycle Hearing Summary Report

May 5, 2014

College Station Green Room

Maury Jacob, Bryan Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

Notices

Notices were posted in three newspapers the week of May 6, The Eagle, the TAMU Battalion, and the SHSU Houstonian. A News release ran in the Eagle on May 3rd.

Attendance

Seventeen attendees are listed on the sign-in sheet. Four filled out speaker sign-up cards and three written statements were filled out.

Hearing

The hearing was conducted and formal presentation made by Maurice Jacob, RLA Bryan District Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

Exhibits

Hearing exhibits included a map of Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities provided by the Bryan College Station MPO, and a PowerPoint Slide Presentation composed of nine slides that ran silently in the background. The slide show was paused once and one slide referred to during the discussion.

Presentation

1. Introduction

It is 6:12 PM, Monday, May 5, 2014. Welcome to the Bryan District annual public hearing to discuss bicycle facilities, here at the College Station Green Room. I am Maury Jacob, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for the Bryan District.

Out of courtesy to all in attendance, please take this moment to silence your personal electronic devices.

We have several people here tonight I need to introduce. Starting with our elected officials, we have College Station Councilwoman Blanche Brick

Local government staff include: Brad McCaleb, the Director of the BCS MPO and chair of the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee

My fellow TxDOT staff include: Chad Bohne, Director of Transportation Planning & Design, Doug Marino, Dusti Mooney and Bob Colwell.

As you walked in you may have noticed a sign-in sheet. If you have not yet done so, please take the opportunity to sign the sheet before you leave. An accurate record of attendance is one requirement of an official public hearing.

We advertised tonight's hearing in local newspapers including university newspapers at TAMU and Sam Houston.

At our last public hearing in 2012 we made a presentation on bicycle user types, categorizing bicyclists by skill level, age, as utilitarian or non-discretionary commuters, and as recreational riders.

At tonight's hearing we will begin by discussing the need and purpose for bicycle facilities on state routes. We will define the characteristics of good bicycle facilities, and consider a variety of bike facility alternatives.

Following this brief presentation we will open the floor to questions and comments, and ideas for bicycle facility alternatives. Public comments become a part of our formal records. Facility designers will refer to them while making decisions throughout the coming year. This hearing is being recorded.

In addition to public comments, you are welcome to make written statements. We have provided paper and pens. Either method will be effective. To be included in the hearing summary, written statements must be received within 10 days following this hearing.

My staff and I will also be glad to discuss the subject of bicycle facilities more fully later tonight, or in our offices any workday.

2. About the State Highway System

The Bryan District is 10 counties between Freestone County to our North, and Grimes to our South, from Walker to our East, and Washington County to our West.

In fiscal year 2013 over 198 million dollars in highway construction was under way in the Bryan District. There are approximately 311 million dollars and counting, in some stage of planning and development, for construction in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 budget years.

None of those projects go straight from some engineer's head onto the drawing board and into construction. We follow a prescribed environmental process that includes required community input like this hearing.

3. Need and Purpose

Bicycling is an important transportation mode. Policy statements by both the US Department of Transportation and the Texas DOT, emphasize the need and requirements for integrating bicycling into transportation systems. The public has recognized the convenience, energy efficiency, cost effectiveness, health benefits and environmental advantages of bicycling. Public attention has sparked increased research around the world, and at all levels of government. Cities have recognized bicycling as a viable transportation option, with economic development potential.

As bicycle facilities are added and use increases, our understanding of how bicycles fit into a stronger, more economical multimodal transportation system is deepening. Transportation officials now recognize, that to function effectively together, bicycles, pedestrians, transit, in fact all modes of transportation, must be integrated into plans and projects at an early stage. Developing good bicycle facilities is becoming standard practice in Texas and throughout the nation.

4. Defining a Good Facility and a Bike Friendly Community

As children we knew intuitively that bicycling is fun. As adults we can acknowledge that well designed facilities make a community bicycle friendly. To develop useful facility designs, and keep them fun, a number of factors must be present: **Safety, connectivity, security and comfort.**

Highway designers base design decisions on a foundation of safety. An unsafe activity does not stay fun for long, so think of safety as “fun maintenance”. All new and upgraded facilities on state ROW are designed to AASHTO standards.

In planning, we enhance facility safety, by selecting routes with lighter vehicular traffic volumes, and lower speeds. Routes with infrequent large trucks, along with a low density of potential conflicts, such as intersections, driveways and adjacent parallel parking, are also important considerations. An expectation of moderate bicycle user density can also improve safety, while barriers such as closed facilities detract from safety. There is a safety need to keep signage and pavement markings well-maintained.

Connectivity is the second essential ingredient. To utilitarian commuters connectivity means direct routes to work or school, work-related trips, shopping, errands, and taking children to school and activities. For recreational users it may mean access to parks, lakes, shopping, movies, or just plain riding in the country. **Connectivity** means planning an inter-connected facility web, one that touches as many places people want to be as possible.

Security is the third ingredient. Bicycle facility security requires good visibility, good police access, and adequate patrol frequency. The facility must be well maintained and have few conflicting adjacent land uses. Security may require additional pedestrian-scale lighting.

Security is increased with adequate user density. The more like-minded users, the more secure each user feels.

Finally, **comfort** derives from the planning and design of the physical facility, and how it fits into the manmade, natural and cultural environments. Gentle topography, smooth roads and low conflict-density are the basic design elements. Comfort is enhanced by an attractive, well-maintained facility and surroundings. Appropriate amenities such as water fountains, trash cans, bike racks and, in Texas shade enhance user comfort.

Every facility should be designed as safe, connected, secure, and comfortable. But designers must consider yet another factor: **feasibility**.

Right of way width and available funding limitations, make choices between conflicting uses difficult at best. This is the framework of real world limitations designers must work within.

And this is where you come in. We are looking for input to help us identify what is most important to each community so we can best meet our goals of safety, connectivity, security and comfort with alternatives the public most desire.

5. Bicycle Transportation Planning

TxDOT's Statewide Transportation Plan, the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and the comprehensive plans of cities like Huntsville, Bryan, and College Station all have a bicycling component.

TxDOT's Statewide Transportation Plan includes recommended policies and design guidelines for incorporating the bicycle mode into state facilities. TxDOT adopted AASHTO's [Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#) as our official design criteria.

A couple of excerpts:

"All roads, streets, and highways, except those where bicycles are legally prohibited, should be designed under the assumption that they will be used by bicyclists."

- Design all roadways except those where bicycles are legally prohibited (limited access highways) to meet the needs of bicyclists.
- Whenever existing roads are reconstructed or new roads constructed, include adequate bicycle facilities to accommodate bicyclist's needs.

Going back to feasibility, technical, political, and financial realities prevent all state roads from being immediately retrofitted.

In addition, state roads, especially in urban areas, may not provide the best possible travel route. In many cases, a more appropriate parallel local facility, adjacent to the state route may work better. To identify the best bicycle facilities, TxDOT participates with local agencies to promote a coordinated multimodal transportation system, both on and off state routes. With local participation, TxDOT selects which state route improvements are the highest priority, and the type and level of accommodations that are appropriate.

Bikeway design options along state routes are generally:

- Shared lanes
- Marked shared lanes
- Paved shoulders
- Bike lanes
- Bicycle boulevards
- Shared use paths.

Recent Work

To promote bicycling, TxDOT adds shoulder width whenever possible, to rural two-lane roads during pavement rehabilitation. For example with local public input, three foot shoulders were recently added to FM 1179 east of Bryan.

We included wide outside lanes and sidewalks along widened major arterials such as Texas Avenue, FM 158 (Boonville Road), FM 2154 (Wellborn Road).

We connected bicycle facilities along College Main onto TAMU campus with a Bicycle Pedestrian Crosswalk, and new facility alignments on College Main and Houston Street.

Nearing completion now are wide outside lanes and sidewalks on FM 60, East of Earl Rudder Freeway.

These are just a few examples of improved bicycle accommodations on local state roads, either complete or currently under construction.

Future Bicycle Facility Improvements

TxDOT is also planning for future bike facility improvements. A new section of University Drive is being developed by the City of College Station. Wellborn - Bush Interchange improvements are being developed and South College Avenue improvements are being discussed.

What Comes Next?

Designers recognize current interchange and frontage road layouts present challenges for bicyclists. We would like to hear from the community where the worst instances are, as well as ideas on how to address perceived deficiencies.

At last year's meeting a desire was expressed to redefine current wide outside lanes on state arterials as Sharos or striped bike lanes.

Commenters suggested improving urban intersections with bike boxes or green lanes to better define the bike facility where it crosses dedicated right turn lanes at intersections.

We now consider adding striped bike lanes when new facilities are designed and look for where existing facilities can be retrofit with solutions such as Bike Lanes and Sharos as part of our regular maintenance and restriping program.

6. Final Thought

Before I open the floor for comments and questions, I would like to mention a phenomenon that has become increasingly concerning, even since it was mentioned at the last meeting: **Distracted driving**. The widespread use of smartphones and automotive electronic technology while driving has become all too common, and unprotected bicyclists and pedestrians are particularly vulnerable. Ideas for reducing distracted driving are of particular interest.

7. Comments

We would now like to call on those registered to comment first, followed by those who register to speak since signing in. To speak, please add your name to

the speaker sign-in sheet at the back of the room. I will call on speakers in that order.

We are audio recording this hearing for the public record. When called on, please state your name so that we can reference it to our sign in sheet. Speak clearly for the benefit of your fellow participants and the recording.

8. Public Comments

(a) PUBLIC HEARING COMMENT AND RESPONSE REPORT

The comment types are listed in **Table 1**. These are individually summarized along with the corresponding responses in the following section.

Table 1: Comments

Comment #	Statement	Name	Representing
1	Spoken and Written	Jean Marie Linhart	Self / BVC
2	Written	Willie Allen	Self / BVC
3	Spoken and Written	Johnathan Coopersmith	Self
4	Spoken and Written	Rebecca Clark	Self
5	Spoken	Travis Ward	Self
6	Spoken	Robert Rose	Self
7	Spoken	Paul Kaspar	City of Bryan
8	Spoken	James Robertson	City of College Station
9	Spoken	Brad McCaleb	BCS MPO

Jean Marie Linhart: State routes outside of metro areas do not have alternate parallel route options. Recent increases in speed limits have made road use more dangerous for all users especially bicyclists. Highway 21, FM 1179, FM 60, FM 158, SH 30 have all increased speed limits in recent years. Why? Can speed limits be set with consideration for bicyclists? We need more safe crossings for SH 6 in Bryan and College Station. The only currently acceptable crossing is at Barron Rd. All cell phone use while driving should be illegal. Rumble Strips have pros and cons. They can be dangerous to ride over and even damage bikes. They limit natural debris removal on shoulders caused by

motor vehicle passage. Regular shoulder maintenance (sweeping) is required. Turtles are a better option for bikes. Modern deep saw cut rumble strips are worse than the older strips pressed into asphalt surfaces. Bridge crossings need bicycle facilities. South College Avenue (SH 308) needs bicycle facilities.

Willie Allan: Rumble Strips are OK on yellow center stripe but bad along fog line. Need better bicycle protection at major intersections, specifically intersections along SH 6 with FM 60 mentioned as being particularly dangerous. (Refer to James Robertson's comments, below.) SH 6 frontage roads are not bike friendly. They do not have a wide outside lane and merge into single lanes at the ramps forcing bicyclists to take the single lane and cause consternation to vehicular traffic or leave the pavement to avoid rear end hazards from high speed vehicular traffic. What happened to the bike culvert idea at Bee Creek trail? Need to communicate design solutions better with the bicycle community.

Jonathan Coopersmith: Can we ask for a study analyzing various rumble strip types and specifications vs "turtles" (raised pavement markers or "white buttons") that establishes their actual effectiveness at alerting drivers, trapping debris, minimizing damage and danger to bicyclists? Build better roads now, trade off higher cost for lower maintenance and more visibility for public decision makers.

Rebecca Clark: Brazos County overall is a fairly good area for bicycling with good overall connectivity. We need better bicycle facilities on: Wellborn south to Millican, and SH 30 on narrow bridges. Sandy Point Road to Lake Bryan needs shoulders and lower speed limit or separate bike paths. Crossing SH 6, especially around University and Harvey Rd. is particularly dangerous. *(There seems to be particularly high conflict with left turning traffic. -MJ)* Consider a Shared Use Pedestrian Overpass midway between and connect to adjacent bike routes. Add bike facilities to cross Brazos River closer to Bryan College Station somewhere between SH 21 and FM 60. More regular maintenance (shoulder sweeping) of high use areas (FM 60 and SH 47) Currently shoulder sweeping is only done when requested. Add more sidewalks along Texas Avenue. Suggest moving textured pavement to edge of pavement instead of splitting shoulder like some (early) applications. College Main crossing at University and surrounding Bike-Pedestrian facilities are fantastic.

Travis Ward: Is there a TxDOT bikeway master plan? Are B/CS bike-pedestrian master plans consulted when planning roadways?

Robert Rose: It is rumored that the Lake Bryan mountain bike trails are going away.

Unattributed comments: Do we perform bike traffic counts like we do for vehicles? Can we put gaps in pavement texturing?

Maury Jacob: Three new bridges on SH 105 crossing the Navasota River, Brazos River and adjacent stream will let soon. Bee Creek was not a viable underpass culvert because of the creek. TxDOT coordinates with BCS MPO, both cities and TAMU when developing all roadway improvements including bicycle and pedestrian facilities. We sometimes perform bike-pedestrian traffic studies (*like the study at Northgate*). These will become much more common and coordinated as recent research puts new counting methodology specifically designed for bicycle and pedestrians into more common practice.

Chad Bohne: Responded to comments about speed limits, noting legislative increases to the statewide maximum speed limit and describing how speed studies and 85th percentile calculations are used to set limits on facilities within those maximum legislative limits. Chad detailed shoulder texturing (rumble strip) design variations over time and explained pavement surface types- press-in vs cut or ground-in texturing. Chad also explained high maintenance cost associated with raised pavement markers.

In response to SH 6 frontage road concerns, Chad explained the new X-ramp configuration being installed along SH 6 with new weave lanes. With the X-ramps, and the added weave lane, two lane frontage roads will no longer neck down to a single lane. This should minimize pressure on bicyclists at the ramp locations.

A new at-grade signalized intersection was added to facilitate a bicycle and pedestrians link across Texas Avenue (BS6-R) between Bee Creek Park trail and Krenek Tap Road instead of routing shared use trail through a wet, dark, dangerous and difficult to maintain box culvert.

Paul Kaspar: (To Doug Marino) Add gaps in shoulder texturing to provide bicycle access across.

James Robertson: Responded to comments about FM 60 and intersection design. COCS is working on installing bicycle detection for signals at major intersections.

Brad McCaleb: Responded to comments about coordination mentioning the MPO Bicycle Pedestrian Subcommittee and how the City of College Station, Bryan, Brazos County, TxDOT and TAMU work together to mitigate conflicts at boundaries and right of ways.

One comment form was emailed in from Douglas Shaw: Prof. Shaw has bicycle expertise and is available to help. Comments are on commuting and longer fun rides. "BCS could be one of the truly great biking areas around." Commuters: It is difficult to get to A&M campus without using BSR 6, FM 60 or FM 2347 which are quite dangerous or impossible. Found no safe way shown on the map to bike to the hearing. Rural rides: Hard to get out of the city, then Welborn is dangerous South of town, SH 30 is dangerous East of town. Each year rural

riding gets worse with increased development and traffic and no shoulders. However with promotion, Professor Shaw sees a potential for bike tourism in the area

One comment form was received by US Mail from Ralph Cruzan: SH 40 crossing under SH 6 is difficult. FM 1179 is difficult for bikes, also sidewalks are poor or nonexistent. South College from Villa Maria (beyond SH 308) to Wellborn needs sidewalk and bike lanes.

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9. Conclusion

Thank you for participating. All information pertaining to this hearing will be available for public inspection and use during office hours at the district office in Bryan. The addresses for submitting written comments are on the final slide and printed on the comment forms.

It is 7:47 PM. This hearing is now adjourned. Thank You.

PowerPoint Slides

Auto-repeat as background throughout entire hearing.