

OCL Study Session, September 1, 2015: How CNY Moves on Two Wheels

Meeting in Room 203 at the Center of Excellence, 727 East Washington St.

Co-chairs: Heidi Holtz and Mary Kate Intaglietta

OCL: Sandra Barrett and Renée K. Gadoua

Attendees: John Allen, Tom Carlin, Mark Cass, Mitchell Clark, Mario Colone, Bob Dougherty, Kathy Downing, Adria Firch, Travis Glazier, Sam Gordon Joe Howard, Don Hughes, Deborah Hundley, Owen Kerney, Peter King, Danielle Krol, Mike Lammey, Stan Linhorst, Sarah McIlvain, David Michel, Laura Miller, John Morgan, Steve Reitor, Peter Sarver, Heather Schroeder, Erica Tauzer, Mary Thompson

Two-minute presentation by Sarah McIlvain: She described challenges for pedestrians trying to get safely to the Regional Market. She saw an elderly woman with a full pull-cart of produce trying to get from the Regional Market to the Regional Transportation Center. It's also difficult for pedestrians to get from the RTC to Destiny. "We have a responsibility to make sure pedestrians can move safely," she said. Mario Colone of Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Agency reported that city of Syracuse has submitted request to study transportation alternatives for Park Street.

Session attendee noted that the increase in bicycling also means an increase in accidents.

Panel: How CNY Moves on Two Wheels

Danielle Krol, Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC): City and County Bike Plans and Studies

Owen Kerney, Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA): Bike Infrastructure Master Plan, Creekwalk and Connective Corridor

Travis Glazier, County Office of the Environment: County bike planning and Loop the Lake update

Sam Gordon, Town of Dewitt planner: Canalway and city-town planning

Melissa Fierke, Bike CNY – biking advocacy and community engagement

A. Danielle Krol provided an overview of SMTC studies involving bikes. Below are excerpts of her PowerPoint, with additional comments from presentation.

SMTC bike/pedestrian planning studies

Nearly every study SMTC completes includes an examination of bicycle/pedestrian facilities and activity

Specific Bicycle/Pedestrian Studies

- Erie Canalway Trail Project
 - Part I completed June 2013
 - Part II nearing completion

- Erie Boulevard Pedestrian Study (underway)
- Onondaga County Sustainable Streets project
 - Phase I – Sidewalks (2014)
- Bicycle Commuter Corridor Study (2013)
- East Genesee Street Sidewalk Study (2011)
- *James Street Road Diet Study (completed 2011)*
- Updated Bicycle Suitability Map (published 2011)
- Almond Street Corridor Pedestrian Study (2010)
- *Downer Street Corridor Study (2009)*
- University Hill Bike Network Project (2008)
- *Seymour-Shonnard Corridor Study (2008)*
- FM Road/Route 257 Pedestrian Accommodation Feasibility Study (2007)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005)
 - 1st Bicycle Suitability Map (component of Bike/Ped Plan, published 2003)

Sustainable Streets Project (requested by city and county)

- Sidewalks (2014)

Study lays the groundwork for future pedestrian planning at the municipal level and within roadway capital projects, including seeking best practices and identifying Priority Zones for investments

Application study: Town of Geddes

- Pedestrian access to Western Lights Shopping Plaza
- ID obstacles to pedestrian access.
- Applied concepts from Phase I Sustainable Streets Project
- ID possible improvements to ped access in study area ranging from crosswalk striping to access control.
- Nearly complete

Erie Canalway Trail (ECT) Syracuse Connector Route project

- Requested by City of Syracuse, SMTC
- Develop plan to complete the ECT through Syracuse
- Short-term, on-road route (Part I, completed 2013)
- Permanent route, off-road to extent possible/desired (Part II)

Aim is to connect Camillus and DeWitt – the central break in statewide trail/
Public meeting this fall.

U Hill Bike Network Project (2008)

- Examine street system
 - Signage
 - Striped bike lanes
 - Traffic calming
- Link to existing destinations

- Encourage alternative modes

Some suggestions were integrated into Connective Corridor.

SMTC has Summary Map of Suggested Bike Commuter Corridors

SMTC planning area includes 4,244 roadway miles and 15.6 miles of on-road bicycle facilities

- On average, 6-7% of TIP money is spent on bike/ped projects:
 - Loop the Lake Trail
 - Creekwalk
 - Connective Corridor
 - South Salina Street Valley Plaza Corridor Improvements
- In some cases, smaller bike/ped projects make more sense to complete via other sources
 - Building bike/pedestrian projects
- SMTC is a planning level agency; it makes recommendations but does not build or implement plans.
- Road ownership usually determines who is responsible for implementing
- Sometimes multiple owners (Erie Blvd ex.)
 - Potential maintenance issues
 - Different views

B. Owen Kerney outlined Bike Infrastructure Master Plan, Creekwalk and Connective Corridor

Trends spurring change and guiding planning: Millennials' preference for urban living and relative dislike of car ownership. At the same time, city's population is leveling off.

Approach projects via comprehensive planning vs. neighborhood level.

Bike Infrastructure Master Plan

- In 2010, Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner established the planning department. Bike planning grew out of that.
- Report, Syracuse Bicycle Planning, is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2Xo82GXTbPdS3RMUXpKRzY1ZVk/view>
- Paul Mercurio, former city transportation planner, began in 2011 to research bike needs. Asked "What is the value of bicycle planning?"
- There was no consensus the community needed it. Plan outlined these benefits: economic, health, safety, social equity and community building.
- Used GIS to collect demographics and foundational data. Then identified design elements: signs, arrows, parking.
- Included neighborhood's recommendations and opportunities
- Bike master plan approved in March 2014.

Creekwalk

- 2.6 mile bicycle/pedestrian pathway connecting Armory Square in Downtown Syracuse to the southern shore of Onondaga Lake.
- Celebrates the creek – a long neglected resource – and establishes north-south corridor for Phase 2 and allows us to make east-west connections.
- Provides foundation to improve bike and pedestrian routes.

Connective Corridor

- Connects two economic powerhouses – university and downtown.
- Almost finished.
- Used new technology, new materials and progressive design.
- Received \$40 million-plus in funding, thanks to innovative ideas: “Playing it safe is not the way to get projects funded anymore.”

What’s next?

- Creekwalk Phase 2: Downtown/Armory Square to Colvin Street. (Construction to begin 2018.)
- Citywide zoning project: Revising city zoning code for the first time in 60 years. Increasing transportation density, which is crucial to new development.
- “Being ambitious, being thoughtful and thinking about how we prepare projects is crucial.”

C. Travis Glazier: County bike planning and Loop the Lake update

- Loop the Lake discussions went on for 30 years with no clear resolution.
- (In 1850, Mayor Harvey Baldwin suggested a similar project.)
- 1960s: Parks commissioner sought to connect the city with suburbs around Onondaga Lake.
- 1980s: City created Onondaga Lake Parkway, Liverpool.
- 1992: FHA/DOT established Loop the Lake as a transportation project, estimated to cost \$6.3 million.
- 1992-2004: Discussions about closing Onondaga Lake Parkway.
- 2004: Army Corps of Engineers’ plan to complete western shore and plan for eastern shore (along Murphy’s Island.) Proposal failed, but completed Western Shore Lake Trail.
- 2014: Bridge over Nine Mile Creek.
- 2015: Construction of amphitheater. Trail will go from Amphitheater Trail to State Fair Parkway.
- Barriers:
 - Route 370/Onondaga Lake Parkway
 - Park Street near Regional Market/overpass and bridge near Destiny
 - Mall parking lot has no shoulder
 - Multiple railroad crossings
 - Honeywell capping of 450 acres of the lake won't be completed until 2016.

D. Sam Gordon (DeWitt town planner since 2014)

Update of Canalway Trail project

- Canalway is 14-mile gap in statewide trail. “It’s not the longest gap in the state, but arguable it’s the most historic.”
- Complex web of ownership: state parks, New York State canal, DeWitt Town board, state DOT, city of Syracuse
- Part of New York State Barge Canal.
- Will host international design competition in October 2015: Elevating Erie: a juried competition with reviews in January 2016. Ideas will be worked into public engagement program to get input.
- When trailway is finished, it will be the longest continuous bike-ped trail in North America. “It’s a really important project.”
- Old Erie Canal Working Group includes stakeholders, including Erie Canal Museum, Heritage Trail, and Madison County.
- City has state funding for portion of trail in city. City and town of DeWitt working together.

Moving DeWitt – DeWitt’s bicycle plan.

- 150 people participated in public forums
- Addressing recreation, safety aesthetics. Much room for improvement on Erie Boulevard East.

E. Melissa Fierke (Moved to Syracuse in 2007; teaches general bio at ESDF)

- Described “riding Euclid Ave. in rain, sleet and snow. ... It’s pretty safe on the way in every/other day.”
- “As someone really passionate about bicycling, I want to make it safer for everyone.”
- UNPA and Bike CNY had failed in efforts to get bike lanes on Euclid Avenue.
- Started Bike Safety Committee at ESF. Supported creation of bike lane at the end of Sims Lane.
- New York one of highest states in nation in bike and pedestrian fatalities. In Onondaga County. 1,689 bike/ped collisions; 1,058 were in city of Syracuse; 22 were fatal. (Study writer will check year and research recent number of accidents.)
- “We’ve got to do something about that. We’ve got to stop people dying when they cross the streets.”
- “We have to listen to people who don’t like bicyclists. It helps if we play by the rules and are a little bit friendlier.”
- “Good science shows bicyclists break rules to stay safe. We’re more likely to follow rules if the infrastructure is there to help us.”

F. Discussion

Q: City and DeWitt are at the table on canalway plan. Where is Camillus? A: Camillus does not have FT planner. There is ongoing discussion with Old Erie Canal Working Group.

Bike share program at ESF – started by two students working on honors thesis project who got funding from Gifford to create a system. For \$20/year, participants can check out a bike – at the library – with a library card.

DeWitt requires all new development to put in bike racks. Redevelopment along Erie Boulevard in DeWitt requires sidewalks. (New DeWitt Town Center has sidewalks along entire frontage.)

Municipalities' may use home rule to make similar requirements.

“Voting with their wheels”: Washington, D.C. and Portland among progressive bike communities that put up cones as a way to test if proposed bike lanes would work at a particular site.

Peter Saver noted Pedaling for Possibilities – program at Brady Faith Center. People get a bike after they ride with group nine times.

Syracuse Councilor Bob Dougherty: “In these discussions we almost never include people who ride bikes out of necessity. Those are the people who ride 12 months a year. They also tend to be people who disregard the rules.”

“Drivers really need to be educated.”

Infrastructure can “train” drivers.

22,000-25,000 cars a day travel Onondaga Lake Parkway. “Our roadway is more capable than we give it credit for.” (Sustains high traffic, snow, ice, plows.)

Maintenance of bike lanes needs to be considered in the design phase. Must include materials that can withstand our salt, snow and plows.”

--Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer