



# Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Meeting Summary  
November 23, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

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NAME	REPRESENTATION
Rebecca Brouwer (RB)	City
Sarah Elder (SE)	City
Matt Engwall (ME)	City
Andy Lynch (AL)	Alamance County ETJ
Chelsey Morrison (CM)	Orange County
Sylvia Sichi (SS)	City
Cy Stober (CS)	Development Director
Aaron Davis	Recreation & Parks Director
Audrey Vogel (AV)	City Planner

*Public Participation: Patty Phillips, Jason Smith, and James Allen joined the Zoom call.*

## **APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 26, 2020, MEETING SUMMARY**

ME moved to approve the minutes.

CM seconded the motion.

A unanimous vote supported the motion.

## **BETTER BLOCK TRAILER**

AO provided an overview of the Better Block Trailer and how it could be used to support demonstration projects discussed during the October meeting.

RB advised the BPAC visit the trailer, review an inventory of materials, and then consider projects. She asked ME for his thoughts, given his previous comments.

ME expressed his interest and asked what is needed from the BPAC to coordinate with others about specific streets.

CS advised for the BPAC to make a recommendation that is presented to the City Manager and coordinated with the Police Department. He commented a formal recognition by City Council seems necessary. CS suggested the first step is to make a recommendation that includes the streets and type of tactical urbanism the BPAC wishes to explore. Planning staff will then coordinate with the Manager's Office for next steps.



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RB asked if ME desired to experiment on both Clay and Ruffin, remarking Ruffin may be easier to sell.

ME responded to target Clay first, commenting on the need to experiment on Clay and consider other factors that may draw more people.

SS agreed with ME.

ME suggested if everyone hates the demonstration project on Clay, then try Ruffin.

CM asked if the project would be to consider Clay as a one-way street.

ME suggested trying parking on one side of the street and added the need to discuss any proposals with the Police Department.

CM commented on the need to consider the businesses.

ME asked for input from CS.

CS reviewed the recommendations for Clay and Ruffin, which do not have active capital projects. Ruffin is proposed for widening and provision of a sidewalk. A bicycle boulevard is proposed for Ruffin. In the Downtown Vision Plan, Clay is proposed for a dedicated bike lane, elimination of on-street parking on one side of the street, and widening of sidewalks to better accommodate outdoor dining and walking.

ME replied that Ruffin may be easier but Clay appears more beneficial to consider in the long-term.

CS agreed, referencing existing plans.

RB asked CS if it had been determined from which side of the street parking would be eliminated.

CS replied that had not been determined. He stated a commitment was made that on-street parking would not be eliminated until nearby public parking could be dedicated. He suggested the dedication of temporary loading zones also needs to be discussed.



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ME commented that by keeping parking on both sides of the street, an interior bike lane could be provided between the curb and the on-street parking. This would necessitate a one-way street for the trial, remarking on the lack of space on Clay.

SE and RB suggested eliminating parking for the Better Block trial, adding that would be easier than a one-way street.

RB commented on the importance of outreach and asked CS about coupling the demo with the Downtown Vision Plan.

CS replied with his support, especially post-holidays during COVID.

RB referenced the timeline needed to move forward, inquiring about the level of detail required of plans before they go before City Council. She noted if demonstration projects are planned for February, outreach and information-sharing would be needed during January.

ME suggested using mailers and visiting Clay Street businesses.

SS asked about the issues for having Clay be one-way with parking on both sides for a few blocks.

ME commented on resistance to change.

RB added a one-way street does not align with the Downtown Vision Plan and it may have less likelihood of happening. She suggested the BPAC may not want to experiment with an idea already explored

SS asked if a one-way street was already explored and vetoed.

CS responded yes.

SS asked for the reason.

CS mentioned discussion of different options during the public input process for the Downtown Vision Plan. He stated dedicating Clay as one-way would require Ruffin to be the opposing direction and Ruffin cannot



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accommodate. Emergency service access was also a concern on a one-way street network.

ME asked if Clay is a bad idea to explore, given the parking and one-way issues.

CM expressed concern about the effect to the businesses if parking is lost and also questioned how many walkers and bikers would be out in the colder months. She asked if extra parking is immediately available somewhere else.

CS referenced the dedicated public lot between Dollar General and Plant Pure.

SE commented the lot is never full. She mentioned James Allen had a comment.

James Allen commented the discussion sounded like a “if you build it, they will come” scenario, noting issues with constructing a bike lane on a street without much existing bike traffic. He added that optics are important and if the bike lane is not used, business owners and visitors may see a loss of parking for no real benefit.

ME agreed, commenting there may not be much bike traffic during the winter months. He summarized previous discussion of traveling from Fifth Street to Mebane Community Park by bike and how cyclists become sandwiched between parked and moving cars while traveling Clay St.

James Allen commented on the appeal of sharrows and his preference for sharrows over “share-the-road” signs.

CM asked ME if the issue was car doors opening.

ME responded that was one issue. He added a cyclist is placed in a dangerous position when cars are on either side because of nowhere to go, increasing the likelihood of injury to the cyclist.



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James Allen referenced the lower speed a cyclist would travel on Downtown Mebane streets.

ME added the push is for commuters who will choose to travel by bike instead of a car.

AL commented the idea to explore Clay St is strong. He added the BPAC is still unknown to many people and this type of demonstration project could bring awareness. AL recommended pursuing a lower risk project first, given the strong opinions people will have for anything done on Clay. He commented on the need to get people to the Mebane Community Park and suggested the BPAC consider exploring a route from Ruffin that includes turns onto Charles and Clay with bike racks between Ruffin and Clay. AL added his belief that “build it and they will come” would work on Ruffin. He suggested a lower risk project could be used to train people to expect more demonstration projects around Mebane. AL commented on the possibility to test movable outposts where people can lock their bikes. He added the need for the BPAC to garner goodwill among the community before testing ideas on Clay and that Ruffin appears to be a safer bet.

CM agreed and added that signage could be paired with bike racks to promote Downtown businesses.

RB agreed Ruffin would be a lower risk project and may be better to pursue. She suggested the BPAC request the Better Block Trailer again and asked if there were any limits on how often the trailer could be requested.

AD commented more opportunities will exist for future requests to use the Better Block Trailer. He recognized the priorities for demonstration projects on Clay and Ruffin and added the potential to explore connections near Lake Michael. AD added that new subdivisions in the area will help realize greenway and trail connections at Lake Michael.

CS confirmed committed greenways and multi-use paths associated with two new subdivisions.



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Jason Smith asked the BPAC what success would look like for the options that have been discussed and how to receive feedback from the community about success criteria.

CM asked who would monitor public feedback and use of the improvements.

AO responded the BPAC could review evaluation reports completed by the City of Charlotte for demonstration projects.

RB suggested using the current opportunity with the Better Block Trailer as an inspiration to review materials and make plans for demonstration projects in the future.

ME added with the winter months, it is unlikely that many people will use the bike lanes

CM asked if there were opportunities to explore pedestrian improvements.

PDP replied she has seen projects that extend the space available for outdoor dining, which benefits pedestrian access and would help businesses during the pandemic. She suggested the BPAC consider a demonstration project on a smaller scale, such as a bike lane down Corregidor connecting to the MACC.

AO added the BPAC could consider more of an event that is planned for a single day or a weekend and includes outreach and engagement.

ME supported the idea of extending a patio for restaurants because it would signify good change and a more approachable street.

AD agreed that extending outdoor seating is a good idea and supported PDP's idea of a bike lane along Corregidor. He mentioned bike racks at the MACC that could be moved to wherever demonstration projects are pursued.



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RB asked about the BPAC meeting outside of the normal meeting time to visit the trailer and explore ideas. She asked what could be considered by the BPAC outside of a meeting.

CS replied the BPAC could meet in pairs to discuss and could also tour the trailer outside of a meeting. He advised that any recommendations to the City Council would need to happen at an open public meeting. CS added a work session as another possibility, which would not need to be broadcast over Zoom but would require a written record by staff.

RB asked for the BPAC's input.

CM asked if the BPAC should consult with the public about where improvements are needed.

RB and AL agreed.

CS responded the Bike/Ped Plan provides the BPAC with guidance and some priorities but does not advise on tactical urbanism. He addressed the issue of timing, noting demonstration projects have never been pursued before. He suggested the BPAC consider a two-month process, with the first month including a recommendation to the Manager's Office and coordination with the Police Department. The second month would include a recommendation to Council with staff support.

CM asked if the Police Department would have suggestions.

CS replied he could ask.

AL suggested to use the winter months to have conversations with City staff and possibly Downtown business owners to be able to have a successful project in a warmer month.

RB agreed the BPAC should be in the exploration phase. She asked about coordinating with City staff to find a time for the BPAC to review the trailer. RB asked AO to let the BPAC know of available times to visit the Better Block Trailer.

AO suggested the week of December 7.



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RB confirmed and the BPAC agreed with the plan.

## **DISCUSS FY21 FUNDING**

AO reviewed the agenda item, remarking on discussion at the October meeting. She presented the project evaluation slides, reviewing recommendations for crosswalks, curb ramp improvements, and the addition of outdoor benches and bicycle racks.

### **Crosswalks**

- The BPAC confirmed discussion from the October meeting to pursue the crosswalk improvements.
- CS recommended removing the crosswalk across N First due to the complexity of the improvement, which includes new sidewalk paid for with the pocket park budget. The timeline for the pocket park is dependent upon the encroachment request to NCDOT for the sidewalk.
- A unanimous vote from the BPAC supported pursuing the crosswalks with FY21 funds, with the comment that an encroachment agreement is needed for the crosswalk at E Brown and N Ninth.

### **Curb Ramp Improvements on Jackson Street**

- AO recognized the intersection included on the slide (Jackson and First) may not need curb ramp improvements.
- SE asked if cost estimates were available.  
AO replied she would need to consult with Public Works but the improvements should be within BPAC's budget.

CS responded the cost depends on the intersection and the slope of the ramps, which may require sidewalk retrofit.

- AO recommended a broader motion from the BPAC for curb ramp improvements, remarking that Public Works has more expertise in providing recommendations.  
RB asked if Public Works has a list of where curb ramp improvements are needed.  
CS asked if this is a request that is citywide or for specific areas.  
RB questioned if a sidewalk evaluation existed with prioritization of curb ramp improvements.  
CS replied he was not sure that type of evaluation existed but staff could ask.





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AO suggested a list may emerge after conversations with Public Works, which could be brought back to the BPAC.

SE asked if the BPAC would be seeking validation from Public Works about the curb ramp improvement at Jackson and First.

AO clarified that Jackson Street was selected because of a funded sidewalk and bicycle improvement project. If the BPAC wishes to prioritize curb ramp improvements in FY21, a broader recommendation seeking input from Public Works may be better and inclusive of curb ramp improvements elsewhere in the City.

RB suggested along with cost estimates, staff returns with a priority list from Public Works regarding curb ramp improvements.

- A unanimous vote from the BPAC supported pursuing a curb ramp improvement at Jackson and First with FY21 funding.

## **Outdoor Benches and/or Bicycle Racks**

- SS noted the complexity of deciding where to locate outdoor benches.
- ME suggested bike racks are needed in the area of the Lowes Food shopping center.

CS and RB commented on the shopping center as private property, with CS remarking the City or the BPAC could ask about the installation of a bike rack in the parking area.

- SE stated her preference for bike racks over benches, though the BPAC would need to evaluate the best locations of either.
- AL suggested the BPAC consider commissioning a branded bike rack that include Mebane's logo, possibly forming the "M."

ME replied with the downside that ornamental bike racks accommodate fewer bikes.

RB added that Mebane on the Move wrote a grant with the City a few years ago and received decorative bike racks.

AD reviewed current locations of the bike racks and agreed with the comment from ME, noting the current decorative bike racks likely accommodate a single bike.



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- ME suggested removing a bike rack from the MACC and placing it at the Lowes Food shopping center.

AD supported the proposal.

James Allen commented on the need to consider the effects of the pandemic on events and travel to the MACC.

ME responded two racks are likely to capture all of the bike traffic, given his observations in the past.

James Allen added his experience with bike racks in downtown areas, where business owners may not want to give up sidewalk space and bicyclists want to see where their bike is parked.

SE voiced support for relocating a bike rack from the MACC to the shopping center.

RB agreed, noting the low investment.

SE asked about unused money.

CS responded he was not sure and that would be at the Council's discretion.

AL responded he felt the BPAC was overthinking and should spend the money. He feared a signal was being sent to Council that the BPAC does not know how to improve the City. He made a motion in support of the crosswalk and signage at E Brown and N Ninth and expressed his support for purchasing outdoor benches.

SS asked about public restrooms.

CS remarked that would be the entire budget, possibly more.

RB asked where.



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SS suggested near Walgreens or  
Downtown.

PDP commented public restrooms have  
been discussed in other contexts,  
including the Downtown Vision Plan.

- A unanimous vote from the BPAC supported relocating a bike rack to the Lowes Food shopping center.
- The BPAC considered locations for outdoor benches and settled on the following:
  - Near the dog park at the Mebane Community Park
  - Cates Farm Trails
  - Center Street between Fourth and Fifth
  - Fourth Street between Center and Clay
- The BPAC considered the type and style of benches:
  - CM suggested picnic tables.
  - AD recommended selecting a more rustic style for benches placed on the Cates Farm trail network.
  - SS advised to make sure the benches have back and arms.
  - James Allen described a style of bench that has a shelf or ledge.
  - AL recommended buying fewer benches and doing more in terms of aesthetics.
  - AD described a bench he found online that has a back-rest convertible to a table, forming half of a picnic table.
    - RB suggested staff consider picnic tables or benches with ledges.
    - CM advised trashcans be included if picnic tables are pursued.
- A unanimous vote supported funding outdoor benches at the above locations, with further exploration by staff and the BPAC.



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## **REVIEW PROJECT EVALUATION FORMAT**

AO reviewed staff's use of the new project evaluation format.

The BPAC agreed the project evaluation format and the agenda item summaries were helpful.

RB reminded the BPAC that AO would send a Doodle Poll to determine a date and time for review of the Better Block Trailer.

## **NEW & ONGOING BUSINESS**

CS stated Planning staff would be pursuing planning (PL) funds from the Burlington-Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization (BGMPO) to update the Bike/Ped Plan. Previously, staff discussed pursuing grants from the NCDOT but does not have full confidence the NCDOT will have the funds. CS commented if NCDOT funds are available, Planning staff will likely withdraw the request for BGMPO funds. The application for PL funds from the BGMPO is due in December and is simple. CS commented the estimated cost for updating the plan is \$35,000. As contracting takes a while, it will take a year before the plan update will begin.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

*Meeting summary by Ashley Ownbey, City of Mebane Planner*