



# Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Summary  
September 25, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

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NAME	REPRESENTATION
James Allen (JA)	Orange County
Rebecca Brouwer (RB)	City
Matt Cummings (MC)	City
Katy Jones (KJ)	Chair, At-Large
Jason Smith (JS)	Alamance County ETJ
Rachel Gaffney (RG)	City Planner
Ashley Ownbey (AO)	Development Director
Aaron Davis (AD)	Recreation and Parks Director
Andrew Meeker (AM)	North Carolina Manger, East Coast Greenway Alliance

*Allison Tate had an excused absence.*

## **APPROVAL OF AUGUST 28, 2023 MEETING SUMMARY**

KJ asked if there were any changes to the meeting summary and none responded. JS moved to approve the meeting summary from the August meeting and JA seconded the motion.

A unanimous vote (4-0) supported approval of the meeting summary. RB abstained as she was not present at the last meeting.

## **GUEST SPEAKER: ANDREW MEEKER OF EAST COAST GREENWAY ALLIANCE**

Andrew Meeker joined the meeting virtually through Zoom and introduced himself as the North Carolina Manager for the East Coast Greenway Alliance. The East Coast Greenway is a multi-use trail that extends from the border with Canada in Maine to the Florida Keys. It is planned to be approximately 3,000 miles long and goes through 15 states plus the District of Columbia. It is currently about 36% complete at this time. AM works with communities in North Carolina to develop new segments of trail along the planned route. Although the East Coast Greenway does not go as far west as Mebane, he was invited by the BPAC members to advise them of best practices and policies related to greenway planning and operation.

AM provided a brief overview of the history and accomplishments of the East Coast Greenway Alliance. He also described the features of the Greenway in North Carolina. The Greenway splits into two routes in Richmond, Virginia. The spine route goes more inland in North Carolina and travels through Durham, NC. There is also a historic coastal route that travels close to the shoreline. The two routes meet in Wilmington, NC and combine back into one trail. 30% of North Carolina residents live within 10 miles of the Greenway.



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The BPAC had provided AM with a number of questions related to land acquisition, public engagement, safety, and best practices for greenways so he discussed each of those topics in greater depth. At the end of the presentation, he asked if the BPAC members had any questions.

RB asked if establishing a Friends of the Greenway group would help increase public engagement and support. She suggested naming it MARG – Mebane Area Recreational Greenway. She asked AM to weigh in on whether the benefits of such a group would balance out the time and effort it would take to organize something like that. He answered that generally those kinds of projects are worthwhile and that anything that can promote the idea that greenways should be celebrated and are a benefit to the community will be helpful in the long run. He explained that for East Coast Greenway, when a new section of trail opens, they will have custom ribbons made with the town and trail name and hold a ribbon cutting or groundbreaking event. RB added that there is already an existing group in Mebane, the Trail Rangers, that advocates for existing trails so they would probably be interested in helping with greenways as well. KJ added the BPAC members should also consider their role in advocating for greenways to the general public. They should be prepared to receive mixed feedback on the greenway during construction and should especially consider how best to engage residents that live adjacent to the proposed route. Something like a walking tour with the Mayor or something similar might help some view the greenway more positively. KJ also questioned how much has changed since the initial public engagement for the project was done. JS and RB suggested planning some kind of re-engagement event for next spring.

AD asked if there was any equipment that the City might not yet have that AM would recommend for trail maintenance. He answered that what comes to mind is not really about equipment, but a design issue. Several trails have recently had issues with root uplift. If root barriers are installed at the time that a trail is constructed, they can prevent that problem from developing in the future. He added that some communities in Connecticut had worked together to purchase some equipment that could be shared amongst them, but that was mostly related to snow removal. JA asked if, once a section of a trail is constructed, if there tends to be more community buy in for subsequent projects that will connect to that trail and expand the network. AM answered yes, for bicycle and pedestrian networks the sum is greater than the parts and having connectivity makes any individual project more usable and relevant to the community. He added that NCDOT has developed a Great Trails State Plan that is intended to connect all 100 counties with paved trails. However he checked the proposed route and it does not look like the trail is planned to go through Mebane. AO mentioned that the City is updating their bicycle and pedestrian plan and one of the recommended projects does connect to the Great Trails State route where it crosses the Efland area in Orange County. JA added that the Mountains-to-Sea Trail also crosses through the middle of Mebane. JS asked how likely it is for smaller municipalities to be able to access federal funding for these types of trail projects. AM explained that a city like Mebane would certainly be eligible for federal grants and other funding program, however he has heard that the reporting and project management requirements for those types of programs can be very cumbersome. Smaller communities often don't have staff with experience managing those types of grants and programs.



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Working through an MPO might help with that issue. He add that NCDOT is trying to come up with ways for their staff to take on some of the project management requirements on behalf of smaller communities in order to reduce that barrier.

JA asked why the American Tobacco Trail was an official part of the East Coast Greenway rather than the Neuse River Trail. AM responded that a portion of the Neuse River Trail was also included in the East Coast Greenway route. He explained that the East Coast Greenway follows a portion of both the American Tobacco Trail and the Neuse River Trail but it doesn't incorporate the full length of either of them. He added that the original route for the East Coast Greenway was plotted over two decades ago, but it has shifted in certain places to reflect the trails that have actually been constructed. AM asked if the BPAC could describe the initial section of greenway that the City is planning to construct. AO responded that it is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and will go from Corregidor Street to Roosevelt Street. It connects the western part of the City (part of which is outside of City limits and has historically been marginalized) to the Mebane Arts and Community Center and to South Mebane Elementary. The plan is for the trail to eventually cross Third Street and extend into a Duke Energy easement. The easement extends a very long distance east so the hope is that this will be the first step of what will eventually be a miles long greenway. AM added that, since the Mountains-to-Sea Trail goes through Mebane, they should look out for "complete the trail" funding through the state. There are plans for funding to create trail spurs that will connect the state trails to downtowns and other important locations near the main trail route. He suggested that the BPAC could work with the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea trail to apply for some of that funding. AD asked if there was already an offshoot from the trail but it is not yet complete if that would be eligible for funding? The Mountains-to-Sea Trail goes along Lebanon Road past Lake Michael Park, which contains a number of trails. The City has been working for over five years to extend the trails all the way around the lake. AD asked if something like that would be eligible if it connects to the Mountains-to-Sea Trail. AM responded that it sounded like it could be eligible, but it's hard to know as the project has not been officially announced yet. JA asked if AD thought that something like that could be used to fund a pedestrian crossing over the railroad tracks. AD responded that he didn't think it was likely to get funded but the Mountains-to-Sea Trail does cross the tracks. AD suggested some possible connections between the Mountains-to-Sea Trail and proposed greenways in Mebane and added that the City has a contact with the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail that could provide more information on the upcoming grant program. The BPAC thanked AM for his time and said that they appreciated his insights and suggestions. AM thanked the BPAC for the opportunity to speak with them.

## **CAPITAL PROJECTS DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

RG explained that the BPAC needs to make a recommendation on capital projects. The BPAC reviewed the proposed Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) projects. KJ asked if FY 23-24 had already started and RG confirmed it had. The BPAC would be making recommendations for FY 24-25. RB asked if any of the projects from FY 23-24 would be carrying forward to the next year. AO said that since the fiscal year has just started, it is difficult to know for sure. For the proposed sidewalk on



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Crawford Street from N First Street to N Second Street, the easement for the sidewalk was recently recorded. There is a good chance that project will be completed within this fiscal year. The proposed sidewalk on S Third Street Extension and the proposed Third Street to Fifth Street Connector are both in the design phase. The Lake Michael Connector will begin construction soon. AD added that repaving the Old Rec parking lot was put down for FY 24-25 but there is a good chance that it will actually be completed during this fiscal year.

RG reviewed the projects that were discussed at the previous meeting. She explained that they had discussed the possibility that the Eighth Street bike boulevard could potentially be completed with discretionary funds, since it is primarily signage and painting. AO said that she spoke with the Mebane Public Works Director and that because part of the road is maintained by NCDOT, he suggested speaking with them first, in case they have certain design criteria that would be helpful to continue onto the City maintained part. An encroachment process would also be needed, which means that it is unlikely that the project would be able to move forward this year, unless NCDOT processes it unusually quickly. RG explained that they had also discussed the need for some sort of pedestrian or bicycle facilities south of the interstate but it may be difficult to move forward with that until there is more development in the area to provide connections. RG said that they had also discussed a potential walking path in the easement between Collington Farms and Forest Oaks. AO said that project has been submitted to the state. JA asked if the City has a list or map of all of the gaps in sidewalk between different developments or areas of the City. He explained that he had been on Mebane Rogers Road recently and there is a sidewalk that dead ends, but there is another existing sidewalk at the bottom of the hill and it would be really helpful if the City could help connect them. AO said that something like that would be a capital project because of the cost of extending the sidewalk but it could be a good project for the BPAC to recommend. She explained that the City has a GIS consultant to help with its online maps and the Planning department has asked her to update the sidewalk layer. She and RG are planning to go through the layer and identify additional gaps and the BPAC are welcome to participate in that as well. JA explained that AM's map of the East Coast Greenway made him think of it, as it very clearly showed the parts of the trail that had been constructed and the parts of the trail that were planned but not yet completed. RB said that she knows of a sidewalk gap on S Third Street but she isn't sure if that will be addressed with the Kingsdown project. There are two blocks, from Washington Street to Jackson Street, where there is sidewalk on only one side of the street and pedestrians are always darting across Third Street because of the lack of connectivity. Since the Kingsdown project will cause there to be a significant increase in pedestrians on that part of Third Street, it will be important to have sidewalk on both sides of the street. AO said that NCDOT has identified the intersection of Holt Street and Third Street as an intersection that needs to be reviewed and they will also be looking at the sidewalk along that block. There may still only be sidewalk on one side between Jackson and Holt but there should be proper crossings and stop conditions to make it safer.



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RB added that she knows this is not a capital project, but the pedestrian crossing signals at Third and Fourth Street and Washington Street are not working and it is causing a lot of serious safety issues. AO said that there have been problems with those signals in the past and they would need to contact NCDOT to look into it.

JA said that AO had mentioned high visibility crossings and he wondered what the cost difference is between those and regular crosswalks. AO said that high visibility crossings are typically about three times the cost of regular crosswalks. It may be even more now if the costs of materials have increased. RB and JS said that a previous project had been quoted at \$40,000-\$50,000. AO added that it depends on how long the crossing is, but typically it is expensive. There was some discussion of the Third to Fifth Street Connector and how much of the project is currently funded. KJ mentioned that there needs to be a safer crossing across Fifth Street at Jackson Street as motorists have not been stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalk, despite the flashing light. AD asked AO about Duke Energy's requirements for trails in the easements. AO said that she believes that the trail will need to be at least 25 feet from the transmission towers/poles. KJ asked about a connection between Eighth Street and Oakwood Street and asked if there was development going in there. AO answered that Townes at Oakwood Square will have a multi-use path along their frontage and Oakwood Street Subdivision, which has approved construction drawings, is also responsible for a multi-use path. There is a triangular piece between Eleventh and Tenth Street that will have a sidewalk because it is not wide enough for a multi-use path. KJ said that she is trying to think of more projects outside of downtown. JA agreed that Mattress Factory Road is a major artery and they need more projects in that area. AO said that there is a lot of development expected in this area and that addressing sidewalk gaps between Oakwood Street and Eleventh Street is something the BPAC could recommend. RB agreed that was a good idea. There was some discussion of how the sidewalk could be extended to connect the Woodlawn Estates neighborhood to the Food Lion on N First Street and whether any of the land there is connected to Cates Farm.

RB asked what would be the next step for projects that they recommend that are not already part of an adopted plan. AO said that they would be taken to city staff to see if they are feasible. JA suggested that the City look into a private-public partnership for some sort of pedestrian bridge over the interstate. Perhaps one of the distribution centers south of the highway, like Walmart or Toyota, would be interested in sponsoring something like that.

AO summarized the projects that the BPAC had chosen for recommendation for this year's CIP:

- Segments of the greenway
- Sidewalk gaps on Oakwood Street and Eleventh Street
- Sidewalk gaps on East Stagecoach Road and Mebane Roger Roads to connect to Forest Lake and also the Food Lion



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- Projects already suggested by staff for FY 2024-2025

RB asked about the Eighth Street Bike Boulevard project. AO said that they could probably start the conversation with discretionary funds and added that project was selected as a top ten project for cutsheets in the bike and pedestrian transportation plan update. JA asked if AO had found out about the cost of the paint. AO said that Chuck (Public Works Director) off hand, but what she has learned is that it costs more to mobilize a project than it does to paint. Therefore it is most cost efficient to group together several projects in the same area at once rather than trying to tackle them one at a time. JA asked about the timeline for the resurfacing of Clay Street. AO said that they are waiting on finishing Clay Street until they know if more utility work will be needed.

RB made a motion to recommend the three projects listed by AO for this year's CIP, in addition to what staff had already proposed. JA seconded the motion. A unanimous vote (5-0) supported approval of the motion.

## **FAMILY BIKE ROUTES MAPPING PROJECT**

KJ asked how the bike routes map is coming along. RG explained that she had sent the current draft to all of the BPAC members and asked for their feedback. RG explained the layout of the maps and explained that bike rack locations are identified with yellow stars. JS asked if the QR code on the map took users to the ride with GPS map. RG answered that right now it takes users to the BPAC's web page and she is planning to have a link to the GPS map from there. JS said that as long as there is a link to the GPS or some sort of cue sheets that should be fine. Even though many of the streets are labeled on the map it is difficult to identify some parts of the routes or where the turns are so having a GPS option is helpful. KJ asked if Ride with GPS has a free version and JS confirmed that it does. KJ asked about the rules for riding bicycles on the sidewalk and how the downtown area is marked. RG explained that the information section on the front notes that riding on sidewalks is permitted outside of downtown. RB asked if they could change it to "except for downtown" and there was general agreement that would be better phrasing. JS noted that the hatched marks showing the downtown area did not seem to correctly show the area that bicyclists could not ride on the sidewalks. RG agreed that she had just realized that she needed to change that. She had used the GIS layer that is usually used to identify the wider downtown area, but the area where bicyclists cannot ride on the sidewalk is much smaller. AO suggested just saying that bicycling is not allowed on Clay Street sidewalks, but RG added that they also do not want cyclists on the sidewalks on Center Street, at least not between Third and Fifth Street. She explained that it would probably be best to just use a different downtown boundary, maybe the B-1 Zone District area. JS asked if RG could maybe mark it with a shaded area instead of hatched lines so that the map didn't look too busy. KJ thanked staff for their work and said that she was very happy that this project almost complete and will be ready for Autumnfest.



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## **NEW AND ONGOING BUSINESS**

### **AUTUMNFEST**

KJ said that they have volunteers for all the timeslots on the schedule. She said that she would be setting up and she would email AD and RG to coordinate picking up the tent, banner, and other materials. AD asked her to plan to pick up everything Thursday instead of Friday. KJ asked RG about presenting large maps. RG said that she will have them ready, but she needs to look into getting a stand or a sandwich board to display them. RB suggested getting an easel as the BPAC has frequently needed that kind of stand and it would be a good investment for future events. JA asked if one of the maps could be the family bike route map. RG said that wouldn't be a problem. She said that they would also be contacting Clay Street Printing to get maps to hand out. KJ asked if they would have the walking trail map too. RG said yes, they were planning to print 50 copies of each map. KJ said that she thought that would be enough. RB said they should make sure they have weights as it always seems to be windy at these types of events. JA added that many people will probably just want to look at the poster sized map and maybe take a picture so that they can look up the information later. RG asked the BPAC members to confirm that they wanted one blank map for suggestions and one large print of the bike route map. They said that was correct. KJ asked if they would be giving away helmets. JA and JS said that they still have a supply of helmets so they should plan to give them out. JA said that the ones that are left are mostly weird sizes and KJ confirmed that many of them are very small sizes. KJ asked when they would get their place assignment. RG responded that she wasn't sure. She had gotten the initial acceptance email with preliminary set up information but she hasn't received a follow-up yet.

### **DOWNTOWN BIKE RACK**

RG said that she doesn't have much of an update on this project. They are still trying to determine the best way to track use of the bike rack as getting a mechanical counter does not seem to be possible. She explained that they are thinking about just having a QR code on the bike rack where people can check in and asked if the BPAC members have any thoughts on the best way to set that up. RB asked if it would just be a sign saying "Let us know you're here" and RG confirmed that was the general idea. AO added that when people submit the form, it would record the time and date. JA said that as long as it is very noticeable, day glo colors then that could work. KJ said that if all they are looking for is the number of QR code scans then most QR code generators can provide that. KJ said that they use a QR code service where they can see scanning numbers and other information. RG said that she usually uses free QR code generators so she will need to look into that more. AO explained that Office Forms has a QR code associated with it, so the code could just link to a form where people check "yes I'm here" and the date and time of the responses would be recorded. It wouldn't require much effort from the user. KJ agreed that they don't want them to have to fill out a long form because they'll get fewer responses. JS said that they should make sure the messaging is something like: "Love this bike rack? Scan this code to let us know you were here!" That will build up an incentive where if users really want the bike rack to stay in that



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location, they will be more likely to fill out the form. JA asked if they could have some sort of nearfield mechanism where they don't need to scan it they could just bring their phone near it. JS responded that they would need a specific device for that. He added that a QR code will probably work well enough. Most people learned how to use them during the Covid 19 pandemic. RB suggested that they could supplement that tool by having BPAC members do an occasional audit. They could hang out near the bike rack for a couple of hours and count users.

## **BICYCLE AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE**

RG said that they are almost out of time, but they will discuss the plan update in detail at the next meeting. Projects for cutsheets have been chosen and a draft plan will be available by next month's meeting. AO reminded the BPAC members that they will be meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup> rather than their usual date and it will be a combined meeting with the RPAC at the Mebane Arts and Community Center. KJ noted that she will most likely have to miss the November meeting.

## **SIDEWALK ORDINANCE**

RG said that she had left this item mostly as a placeholder just to let BPAC know that staff is still working on this. AO explained that she had brought the issue to City administration and the City Attorney will be handling getting it fixed. A revision to the ordinances may be on the City Council agenda soon.

KJ noted that the Activity Challenge has ended and they received a good number of responses. RB agreed that it was more than previous years and thanked KJ for responding to everyone who submitted. RB asked how many total participants there were and KJ said that she still needed to go through all the submissions and add them up. RG said that they had received 8 or 9 submissions and most of them were for couples or families, not individuals. KJ noted that a lot of the participants were couples of retirement age doing the challenge together and she loved that the BPAC had encouraged them to explore Mebane together. She said that they will plan to hold it every year and hopefully it will continue to grow. She asked RG if the water bottles had come in and RG confirmed that she had received all fifty. KJ said that she will finish putting together the participant spreadsheet and will send it out to everyone. She asked if the other BPAC members could double check it to make sure she included everyone. She said that she will then email all of the entries and let them know that they can pick up their prizes at Autumnfest. If anyone can't do that then KJ can mail them the prizes. RG said they will just need to coordinate putting the prizes together. She has the water bottles, KJ has athletic towels and sunglasses, and AD was going to provide stickers. RB added that they could printout a little sign saying "Pick Up for Mebane Activity Challenge" and maybe people will ask what that is.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

*Meeting summary prepared by Rachel Gaffney, City Planner.*