



Bruce Andersen, Chairman
Harold Bankirer
Addison Causey
Barry Hester
Jeff Neely
Joe Sailers

Sam Mount, Vice Chairman
Todd Bowland
Leonard Cook
JoAnne Miller
Randy Poindexter

Minutes of the Planning Board

The Regular Meeting of the Planning Board was held at the Huntersville Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. on January 26, 2010.

Call to Order

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Board Member Attendance

Bruce Andersen, Harold Bankirer, Todd Bowland, Addison Causey, Leonard Cook, Barry Hester, JoAnne Miller, Jeff Neely, Randy Poindexter, and Joe Sailers. Sam Mount was absent.

Staff Attendance

David Peete, Principal Planner and Michelle Haines, Secretary.

Consent Agenda

Jeff Neely made a **Motion to Approve** the Minutes of the December 15, 2009 Regular Planning Board Meeting. Barry Hester seconded the **Motion**. Addison Causey abstained from the vote, which was considered an affirmative vote. The vote was unanimous.

Public Comments

There were no individuals signed up to address the Planning Board for public comments.

Action Agenda

1. Bjorn Hansen, AICP, Transportation Program Coordinator, with Centralina Council of Governments appeared before the Board and presented the Lake Norman Regional Bicycle Plan (hereinafter "the Plan"). The Plan was initiated in 2008 by the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation. The NCDOT chose Lake Norman to be the location for the first regional bicycle route in North Carolina because of previous planning efforts, history of coordination, and the attractive natural and built environment surrounding the lake. Centralina began work on this project approximately one (1) year ago, and worked closely with planning staffs to identify existing bicycle and recreation plans for the area in order to build upon prior work.

The NCDOT Board of Transportation will review the Plan in March 2010, and will consider approving it in April 2010. The NCDOT has asked that all participating municipalities, counties, and transportation planning organizations review the Plan and consider endorsing it, but not approve it, since the Plan is technically created for NCDOT. NCDOT understands that

the Plan cannot be implemented without the support and assistance of the affected local governments and transportation planning organizations.

Bjorn Hansen further described that the route was designed for several bicyclists' types and levels. In selecting the route they used several factors that would be useful for the general public, and incorporated existing plans. The initial route is 89 miles long. The "ultimate" route will be 117 miles long with 16 miles of non-road routing in Lincoln County. Iredell County and Mecklenburg County scored very well in prioritization and therefore are considered high priority projects. Mecklenburg County will have approximately 13 miles including the greenway sections in Huntersville and Cornelius. Bruce Andersen requested a more detailed map for his review, to which Bjorn Hansen would electronically send to him. Bjorn Hansen added that in Huntersville not a lot of improvements were needed because the route will be using the greenway near Birkdale.

He further noted that implication of endorsing the Plan is that the resolution makes reference to a "Task Force" that will be created after the Plan is approved by the NCDOT. The Task Force will be made up of staff from all participating municipalities, counties, and transportation planning organizations. It will function as a review board for any future updates to the route, coordination of grant applications for implementing segments, and serve as the sanctioning body for use of the approved logo for organized bicycle events along the route. This Task Force will be staffed by the Centralina Council of Governments. There will not be an annual fee to participate in the Task Force.

The second impact of approving the Plan is the installation of route signage. Upon approval, the NCDOT intends to install Bicycle Route signage along the Initial Route. The NCDOT will provide signage and materials, and would ask the municipalities to install the signage on the affected municipally-maintained roads and/or greenways.

Jeff Neely questioned the identification and safety of high volume roads in the brochure. Bjorn Hansen gave an example of a road in Lincoln County they recommended to not be included on the route until improvements to the road were made. There will be a note added in the brochure for NC73 that it is only recommended to bike with a group (safety in numbers), and there will be caution symbols marked on the brochure route. They considered safety, less traveled roads and greenways as much as possible.

Harold Bankirer asked if there were specific criteria for the bike lanes. Bjorn Hansen stated that the lanes would be for high volume sections (i.e. NC 16, 115, and 73). The rural areas would have a 2' paved area. The route using the bridge on NC73 into Lincoln County is for the more experienced rider. Mr. Bankirer asked if there was a projection of time (30 years) that was used for the study. Bjorn Hansen responded that it used today's volumes, but could be revisited in 10 years.

Addison Causey inquired if the Plan would include parking areas for the bikers. Bjorn Hansen stated that the brochure will identify locations such as public libraries, public parking, the State Park; Langetree Park and Ride, and downtown Davidson and Cornelius public parking areas. Addison Causey asked about public facilities, and it was stated they would be shown on

the brochure, but there were not many public facilities. The brochure would note campgrounds, motels, and hotels. The nearby retail stores could benefit from the route. The brochure was not yet published, and would also have descriptions of area attractions.

JoAnne Miller questioned that when the brochure is published if the routes would be ready to use, and be without signs. Bjorn Hansen stated that the signs would be installed by next summer and the brochure will be coordinated together. The Initial Route will take advantage of the best facilities and route, and it will include the “caution” on the NC73 route due to high volume traffic. Jeff Neely questioned the “caution” identification in the brochure, and Bjorn Hansen stated it would be the typical yellow diamond symbol. He added that the signage will be up in six (6) months and then the brochure will be published.

Jeff Neely asked about the Task Force and how often they will meet, to which the reply was they would meet when there was an issue, and a decision needed to be made. Jeff Neely further questioned if the Police Departments were involved in mapping the routes. Bjorn Hansen stated that Cornelius Police Department was involved since a section of the route went through neighborhood roads in their jurisdiction and there was a question about how Cornelius would handle special events. It was recommended that Catawba Avenue not be used due to a new 4-way intersection at 115 for the Antiquity development. The Police Department would have plans and procedures in place for special events. He further noted that Huntersville Police Department has not been involved; only the Planning, Transportation and Parks & Recreational Departments.

Bruce Andersen questioned if a public hearing was required since this impacted the public and neighborhood streets. David Peete, Principal Planner commented that it was not required.

Bruce Andersen commented on the Western Shore Wiggle section in Lincoln County. Bjorn Hansen said the Lincoln County Planning Commission recommended as part of the improvements that traffic calming be installed on that road (Lakeshore Drive). Bjorn Hansen stated that in terms of what Huntersville needs to do, it is sufficient to have an endorsement of the Plan and have a public hearing. Bruce Andersen inquired about opportunities to modify the Plan, and Bjorn Hansen responded that would be handled through the Task Force.

Bruce Andersen informed the members of his research of bike accident statistics and reported the data he had found from his online research. His concern was of safety for both users of the road. He brought up the use of Jersey barriers on the NC73 Bridge. Bjorn Hansen responded that the Jersey barriers are 3’ high concrete barriers, and if the NC73 Bridge were to be widened and replaced the temporary barrier would not be used. The concept is to have a permanent dividing wall between the bicyclist and pedestrians and the cars. There will be a 2’ paved shoulder outside the paved line on the bridge. In terms of statistics generally speaking the statistics stated by Mr. Andersen were on track. There is a chapter in the Plan for Safety and Crash Statistics. NCDOT keeps records on all accidents in the State. Fifty percent (50%) of all bike crashes are not reported. Records were used from the past six (6) years, and there were 90 incidents reported. The study used the statewide figures to base their recommendations. Bjorn Hansen further stated that they were aware of the statistics and safety, and the Plan uses the recommended improvements, and the signature route concept uses the best roads now or ones

that require limited improvements. He added that bicyclists are currently and lawfully able to ride on every mile of the roads that are shown on this route, and the Plan establishes the best way to get around the lake, and use shorter segments of road. The Task Force would give guidance to the communities and NCDOT as they move forward with projects, plans, and future developments.

Bruce Andersen stated that he likes the Plan, but was concerned about advertising and moving forward prior to implementing it before it was completely safe. David Peete added that just as ski slopes are not made for all skill levels, neither is the Plan. As long as the information in the brochure provides for categories, it will let the cyclists know the different levels on the routes. Also, anytime there is development in the area, staff references and looks for guidance from any adopted plans, and this Plan will also be referenced and identified with new developments.

JoAnne Miller questioned when the NC73 Bridge would be improved, and Bjorn stated that they put that project in at 2030. At that time, the bridge would be 70 years old, and at the end of its life. Mrs. Miller commented that the road she lives on is a bicycle route that is published in the Charlotte Observer each year. It is a narrow and curvy road that is not improved for bikes. She feels it is dangerous, and is concerned about another route that may not be safe if it is without proper signage and lanes.

Todd Bowland commented that he was a cyclist and rides approximately 150 miles per week. From his perspective the more organized the route the safer it is for the cyclist. The Plan has strategic routes where the cars will be used to seeing bikes, and this sets the expectation that this will be safer for the cyclist. The route gives them (the cyclist) a place to go instead of just riding around on various streets, and there is power in numbers for safety. He felt the community is better off with a trail.

Addison Causey added his concerns with the bicyclists that are in The Park, and discussed the traffic and safety problems that were created prior to the bike lanes be added. If the lanes are used by the cyclists, the safety concerns with both means of travel on the 60' wide roads are a much better and stronger solution. He added that the bike lane/walk path is 6' wide and can accommodate several bikes side by side. Without the bike lanes the car traffic was not sure what to do, and now with them the cyclists have their own area in which to ride and be safer. JoAnne Miller commented that she was all for marked routes, but is concerned about safety in the unmarked areas on the route.

Jeff Neely felt it is a good plan. A critical key is the participation of the Task Force. When given an area, the cyclists will use the lanes and adhere to the rules. He recommended the Plan.

Bruce Andersen questioned the law concerning riding in a designated lane or a lane of traffic. Addison Causey responded with his understanding from the Huntersville Police Department that if a bike lane is designated the cyclist must stay within the marked lane. Bjorn Hansen added that if there is a marked lane he would stay in the lane, but it is a law enforcement issue.

Jeff Neely made a **Motion to Recommend** that the Town Board give its endorsement of the Plan. Joe Sailers seconded the Motion.

The Chairman asked for further discussion. Harold Bankirer stated that he would not support a transportation plan without sufficient bike lanes. Bruce Andersen further stated that he was not ready to endorse the Plan. Bjorn Hansen stated that it will not impede the Task Force if they are to come back before the Board to address further comments. He is delivering copies of the draft Plan to Raleigh on Thursday and Friday (January 28th and 29th) for comments by the Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation who is the department of the DOT that asked for this plan. They will review and make comments and recommendations. The Town of Huntersville can also make comments.

David Peete added that when NCDOT considers improving the bridge on NC73, they will have to consider the Plan (if approved). Bruce Andersen stated that he did not have a problem with that, but there are a few points that need to be made with the Plan, and public comment was one. Addison Causey stated that a public hearing or public workshop was not a bad idea. Bjorn Hansen stated that next month they will still be in the local process and endorsement, so it was not a problem.

Jeff Neely **Amended** his **Motion to Recommend** to include a suggestion that the Town Board hold a Public Hearing and/or workshop before they consider endorsement, and that this matter not come back to Planning Board if a hearing/workshop be held. Joe Sailers seconded the **Amended Recommendation**.

Bjorn Hansen requested guidance and asked if the Board wanted the current version to go to public hearing or if there were any recommended amendments. Bruce Andersen stated the public should comment on what is being currently proposed.

A vote was taken on the **Amended Motion**, which was unanimous.

Adjournment

Addison Causey made the Motion to adjourn and Jeff Neely seconded the Motion. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Approved this _____ day of February 2010.

Bruce Andersen, *Chairman*

Michelle V. Haines, *Secretary*

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