

Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Delaware County Cycling Committee
November 14, 2007 Meeting Minutes

It was Wednesday, November 14th, 2007, but even a cold, wintry night could not deter a gathering of the members of the Delaware County Cycling Committee ("DCCC"). Enticed by the promise of a warm meeting place and a delicious pizza dinner, Tim Bell, David Bennett, John Boyle, Michael Broennle, Justin Dula, Larry Green, Fred Rothman, Parker Snowe, and Dominick Zuppo met at David's home to discuss current and future projects.

As the meeting was called to order at 7:25 p.m., and true to their parliamentary ways, Larry moved to accept Dominick's minutes from the April 27th meeting, and Justin seconded the motion.

David produced a copy of the Pennsylvania Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan, courtesy of Dave Bachman. Governmental organizations have been asked to develop or update their strategies to increase the use of bicycles as a method of both transportation and recreation. The State plans to adopt certain goals that do not mandate any special funding. Delaware County's bicycle plan, while almost complete, will need county council approval. While the county completes its work, the Committee realizes that major employers, like hospitals, should be made aware of the plan. Through policies like Complete Streets, efforts will be made to educate, encourage, and enforce the development and use of an on-road bicycle network.

It is remarkable to observe how the influence of advocacy has increased along with the price of oil. David provided some examples, such as the projects in Upper Providence and Ridley Township, to illustrate his idea. The former has held planning meetings, some with over 100 residents and supporters in attendance, to gather input about long-term plans to develop not only walking trails but major improvements to sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities. And the latter appealed to Larry, Justin, and David to help lay out the groundwork for their comprehensive bicycling plan. Ridley's environmental committee even formed a bicycling/pedestrian subcommittee to review the feasibility of designing a bicycling facility for long-distance commuters that parallels MacDade Boulevard. John suggested that the facility should have lane markings and a navigational component.

The DCCC tries to keep tabs on a number of community projects and issues. Whether big or small, all are important to both their constituents and those who share their use.

The Philadelphia International Airport is massive, both in its scope and its impact on our region. It should be accessible to all modes of transportation, so John drafted a letter to the facility's environmental contact and asked that, at least in the short term, they change their policy regarding bicycle parking. Recommendations included an end to the confiscation of bicycles, the installation of bike racks, and better facilities in the future. He suggested the Committee send a similar message.

Nearby, the Rails to Trails Conservancy declared its support for the development of a trail from Governor Prince Park to Fort Mifflin as an adjunct to the East Coast Greenway. Down at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, proposed improvements include the conversion of an old trolley bed into a trail from the refuge to the airport, the development of the former Eastwick railroad stop so that visitors could take the SEPTA R1 Airport Line to visit the area, and a crossing that connects the sections of the refuge bisected by Route 420. And efforts continue to extend the Cobbs Creek Trail to the refuge as a way to connect Colwyn to Upper Darby.

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In Aston Township, Justin explained that the Chester Creek Branch Rail Trail engineering study has begun. It will take Wilson Engineering a minimum of 6 months to review the proposed section of trail that runs from Lenni Road to Creek Road. Meetings are also planned with landowners who have issues with the trail and with SEPTA regarding an extension of the trail to the commuter railroad station at Wawa.

Near the border with Delaware, John noted that there has been no progress on the development of a bike route that would parallel the Conchester Highway (Rt. 322). On the plus side, there is a plan in Boothwyn to add 4 foot shoulders to Naamans Creek Road during a repaving project.

While just north of the county border, an area frequented by our enthusiasts has also seen action. In Lower Merion, Montgomery County, David Broida and the township's bike committee are trying to develop a bicycle/pedestrian trail. Similar to the great Schuylkill trail, the proposed facility would be developed on the west side of the river.

While physical improvements are important, none would occur without the political will needed to make things happen. To garnish support at the Federal level, David, Hans, and John met in Media with the staff of Congressman Joe Sestak. During their meeting they discussed the House's passage of the Energy Bill, which includes an addition to the Internal Revenue Code of a tax deduction for bicycle commuters. The League of American Bicyclists has a sample letter we can use to voice our support for this bill. And our advocates extended an invitation to the Congressman and his staff to join local enthusiasts for a bicycle tour of his district.

Everyone likes a party, so the Committee is trying to develop better ways to promote and celebrate this year's Bike to Work Day. In coordination with the Delaware County Transportation Management Association and SEPTA, we will consider another on-line raffle, a challenge similar to that held by Portland, Oregon, and even Bike to Shop events like those held in Chicago so that the May 16th event will encourage our neighbors to dust off their bikes and ride to work.

Their work for the evening completed, Dominick motioned for the meeting's adjournment, which Larry seconded, and our Delaware County advocates thanked their leader and headed off to hearth and home.