

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
November 4th, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Emily Burnaman, Chair; Tanner Thompson, Christine Bisceglie; Nicholas Pappas

OTHERS: Greg Pacelli; Transportation Planner; TMP; Jahliah Green, Heath Department

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at <http://www.norwalkct.org/meetings>.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bisceglie called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

At roll call, there were four (4) committee members in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Mushak- 50 Elmwood Avenue

Mr. Mushak expressed his deep concern regarding the Route 1 corridor plan. He said he had attended the meeting, and a West Cog representative was in attendance, and she had said something that disturbed him. He said he was saying how there are no on-street bike lanes on Route 1 and Route 7 and how much of a game changer it would be to connect all the communities through Fairfield County, and that Connecticut is 20 years behind the surrounding states, and the person from West Cog said Connecticut is an old state and just doesn't have the room. He asked why Connecticut is stuck in 1970's road design and wanted to voice his deep concern that they will be proposing a plan for Route 1 that will not include on-street bike lanes and that is unacceptable in 2024.

Mr. Mushak spoke on the West Cog Metropolitan Transportation Plan and said the only bike route on state roads is on Route 136 and they are relying on the NRVt to be the main bike route up through northern Norwalk to Wilton, and although on-street bike lanes are not ideal, especially on a four-lane road they could fit and would be an immediate relief for cyclists in that area where we want to encourage cyclists. He said he sees a bureaucracy that is not working for the state of Connecticut, especially for the people who ride bicycles, and it is not enough to just put sidewalks in and that West Cog and the CTDOT are doing us a disservice by not including cyclists on all these roads.

Ellie Withers

Ms. Withers introduced herself and said she is a seminarian at St. Paul's Church and is also an avid biker and she is grateful for all the initiatives on this commission. She requested that a bike rack be installed at St. Paul's church, and they would provide the land if the commission can provide the rack and would be happy to install it as early as next month. She said the bike rack would be a symbol of creation care, radical welcome, and community connection.

Mr. Pacelli said that bike racks have been ordered and they do have them to be installed in the city right of way, and that the commission can purchase a rack for the church if they would like to. Mr. Thompson said this topic came up a few years ago and that there was a broad agreement to install a bike rack on the green as it would be useful and was working towards an agreement with TMP where they would fund the rack and install it, and the First Taxing District would allow for it to be placed on their property, and he is hoping that TMP can make good on that plan, but install the rack on the property of the church rather than the green as there is now a willing host, or if space in the public right of way can be determined that would be a fine solution and the goal is to get some sort of bike parking along the green. Mr. Pacelli said that he will have a conversation with TMP offline as this is the first he is hearing about this agreement and that if bike racks are going to be installed on private property there will need to be a process established. Ms. Burnaman said she would connect with TMP and get an update on the process.

Rebecca Stoll- 26 Emerson Street

Ms. Stoll reported on a press conference that she, Ms. Burnaman, and Ms. Murray had attended this morning at the South Norwalk Train Station announcing the 14 million dollar raised grant to make MLK less of a superhighway and more of a complete street which will include Norwalk's first protected bike lanes.

ADDRESS PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & ACCESS TO BUS STOP (527 MAIN AVE. / SUNOCO / DMV)

Ms. Burnaman said she would like to address pedestrian safety and access to a bus stop located at 527 Main Avenue which has been discussed in the past. She said there are no crosswalks or access to this bus stop and recently they were doing a litter pick-up event and noticed people were bringing shopping carts over to the bus stop for seating and she would like to connect with the Transit District on the opportunity to at least improve the pedestrian safety around this bus stop. Mr. Pacelli said it lacks the minimal infrastructure for a bus stop so there is a need for something, and he can't speak for the Transit District, but TMP is working to see if the state can incorporate some improvements as a whole as part of the Route 7/Grist Mill improvements. Ms. Burnaman asked if there is a timeline as to when the state would be able to begin making improvements. Mr. Pacelli said "no" Unfortunately he can't speak to that but they unveiled the concept design in September so there is a lot of design work that will still need to be done. He said the Transit District may be doing something in the short term, but he is unaware of it.

Mr. Thompson said that the plan that CT DOT had presented to the public although subject to change involves crosswalks across all four lanes as well as new sidewalk connections that overlap with the bus stop, but they did not specifically mention the bus stop probably because in their view the Transit District is responsible for that. He suggested inviting members of the CT DOT to a future meeting to discuss and he will share the contact information with Ms. Burnaman.

NORWALK ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN STUDY FOR CONNECTICUT AVENUE & VAN BUREN AVENUE (EMILY/TMP)

- o Walk Audit Debrief (10/8)
- o More Details: <https://westcog.org/transportation/norwalk-route-1-corridor-master-plan-study/>

Mr. Pacelli said as of now he does not have any updates but that the public meeting was held and there was a walkthrough, and they met with all the businesses and handed out flyers to provide recommendations from their employees and customers. He said that West Cog is taking on the bulk of it, but TMP is heavily involved and is doing a lot of condition reports and volumes of traffic and as they continue to develop, they will update the public based on the findings as they want as much public input as possible.

Ms. Bisceglie asked what the likelihood of receptivity for on-street bike lanes will be and asked how the commission can be sure “that is on the front burner” Mr. Pacelli said he was at that public meeting and TMP is working very closely with West Cog and are installing as many bike facilities as they can and with an important coordinator such as this is about moving the most amount of people as possible. He said from the commission's perspective it is about getting the word out to as many people as possible for whenever there is a public meeting and garnering as much support as possible. Ms. Bisceglie suggested bike boxes be installed for safety and based on the traffic she has noticed at night it is a shortcut for trucks to avoid detours on I-95 and asked if there is anything the city can do to prevent it as a truck route. Mr. Pacelli said it is difficult to keep trucks off Route 1 as it is the only other viable option for I-95. Ms. Bisceglie asked if the city could do a petition because when that was installed Norwalk was a much smaller city with fewer pedestrians. Mr. Pacelli said the decision is ultimately up to the State Traffic Authority but ultimately the trucks will need to be on Route 1 to make deliveries so it would be difficult to stop them. Ms. Bisceglie said she would research if any other municipalities were able to do anything to prevent trucks on Route 1.

Ms. Burnaman said the walk audit was held on October 8th and there is a public meeting scheduled to happen in January 2025. Mr. Thompson suggested the way the commission can have an impact is to encourage people to attend public input opportunities that exist and if there is ever an opportunity for written comment suggested the commission write a joint letter and send it to them. Ms. Burnaman requested that Mr. Thompson and Ms. Bisceglie work on writing the letter with her.

WALL STREET CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

- o Groundbreaking (10/29)
- o <https://www.norwalkct.gov/3206/Wall-Street-Corridor-Improvements-project-> Update webpage? “e-mail us your questions and ideas to www.wallstreetimprovements.com

Mr. Pacelli provided an update and said the groundbreaking was held last week for the East Wall Street portion and the contractor will be mobilizing shortly and will demo the existing sidewalk and curbing and installing the new drainage and will get as much done as they can before winter and will continue into next year and will take about a year to complete to complete Landmark Square. He said that TMP is working alongside Fuss and O’Neil on the 30% design plans based on the comments that were received from the last

public meeting for the rest of Wall Street and will be scheduling another public meeting before the plans get advanced to 60%.

Ms. Burnaman said the link that is on the community outreach and engagement page that is on the website for this project does not seem to be working so asked if the public would like to give feedback what is the best way to do that. Mr. Pacelli said he would check with the design consultant that the email is correct and to see if there is a better way for the comments to be received and once, he confirms he will share that with the commission.

CT DOT ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION MICROGRANT

- Due Friday, December 13th/ Assign to Commissioner

Mr. Pacelli said that the grant was applied for in September and the grant is solicited once a year and can be applied for up to twice a year and can apply again in December and the process would be the same. He said they have not yet heard if the grant application that was submitted in September has been granted but is hoping to hear soon. Mr. Pappas said he would again do the application but would like clarity on which items/events he would be requesting the grant for. Ms. Burnaman said that she would work with Mr. Pappas on the grant application and have it submitted to Mr. Pacelli by December 13, 2024. Ms. Bisceglie and Ms. Green also volunteered to help with the application.

DEEP TRAIL GRANT

- Update on progress

Mr. Thompson provided an update and said for the past year and a half the commission has been working on a vision for a walk/biking path that will run all along the coast through this part of Connecticut. There is a coalition of advocates and city representatives that have assembled from Greenwich up to Bridgeport and the Greenwich and Stamford folks have succeeded in winning two grants. He said the commission has been getting involved more recently and put an application together for the same grant program that would fund a feasibility study on where a trail can go through Darien and Norwalk and will need a concrete scope of work and receive estimates.

Ms. Burnaman said they have been in contact with Bruce Donald, and she is trying to schedule a meeting with him and his friends from SLR and VHB and asked if that is the right action they should be taking. Mr. Pacelli said “yes” and to engage a consultant and develop a scope to get a price of what the work would be and bring it to the Common Council for approval.

Mr. Thompson said time is of the essence as the city’s budget process is well underway and started out with the public hearing and he thanked everyone who showed up and talked about transportation and was good momentum, but he thinks they need to follow up with more concrete asks specifically for the local match of this grant.

WEST COG METROPOLITAN PLAN

- Bike plan map NRVt and East Coast Greenway intersect (Appendix C)
- More Details: 2023-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Mr. Thompson said that Ms. Burnaman requested that he read the plan, he shared the regional bicycle plan and provided an overview and said most of the documents talk about multi-use trails and the things that the commission can use the most are the recommended strategies for cities and towns in Western Connecticut, and they suggested a bicycle request form in which he agrees with and also to create a bike rack request form.

Ms. Bisceglie asked about bus shelters. Mr. Thompson said that is out of the scope of the bicycle plan but the state has set up some funding for bus stop improvements and is his understanding the request needs to come through a Transit District and tried to get them to get access to the money so they can put it into bus stops in Norwalk but has not gone anywhere yet. Ms. Bisceglie requested that be included on the next commission meeting agenda and invite the Transit District as she finds it shocking that there are no bus shelters.

Ms. Bisceglie said the bike-friendly community application was done and requested that the Bike Friendly Businesses application be included on the next commission meeting agenda which will get business buy-in to help to facilitate some of the ideas the commission has.

Ms. Burnaman said she would also like to invite representatives of West Cog to the next meeting.

BIKE WALK ROLL TO SCHOOL EVENTS DEBRIEFING

- Wolfpit, Kendall, Fox Run (notes/feedback)
- <http://www.conneticut.news12.com/norwalk-schls-hold-walk-bike-roll-to-school>
- <https://www.thehour.com/news/article/norwalk-rox-run-elementary-school-walk-bike-19854561.php>

Ms. Burnaman thanked Ms. Zanzvettor and Ms. Kress From the Norwalk Public Schools for a great walk, bike, roll to school event and bus safety week, which was done at Wolfpit, Kendall, and Fox Run Elementary schools and the commission hosted tables, and she hopes it is done again next year. Ms. Green agreed and said it was a great event, and she hopes that next year they can expand and cover more schools.

Ms. Bisceglie said that Nancy Chapman from Nancy on Norwalk passed away and she was very supportive of the commission as well as many other city organizations.

BIKE WALK CONNECTICUT ANNUAL DINNER

- Networking Event & Norwalk highlights (10/24)

Ms. Bisceglie thanked Mr. Pacelli and the team at TMP for helping the commission get situated with the event and said it was a great networking opportunity and were able to share some Norwalk successes.

EDUCATIONAL SUB-COMMITTEE

- Updates on educational events, materials & videos
- Jahliah Green (Heath Department)
- Brianna Iofino (Nuvance Health)

Ms. Burnaman said the subcommittee is working on having more educational events, materials, and videos and Mr. Pappas is working on the current video which is what is the Bike/Walk Commission and how we have changed and will hopefully have more updates at the next meeting.

BIKE-LEAGUE-LCI

- New Haven weekend of April 4, 2025
- Sponsor interested commissioners/volunteers for certification

Ms. Burnaman said that Ms. Bisceglie is a certified League Instructor, and that New Haven is having their League Certified Instructor course the weekend of April 4, 2025. Ms. Bisceglie suggested this item be discussed at the next meeting. Ms. Burnaman said she would include it on the agenda and in the Strategic Plan it states that she and Ms. Bisceglie were tasked to find another League Certified Instructor to be part of the commission. Ms. Bisceglie suggested that the cost of the class be included in the budget and if someone would like to commit, she will train them in a basic class.

DISCUSS COMMISSION PRESENTATION TO THE COMMON COUNCIL

Ms. Bisceglie suggested this is something that should get on the calendar as it is long overdue and is part of the ordinance. Ms. Bisceglie said she reached out to Ms. Johnson to schedule a meeting with Mayor Rilling to go over the Strategic Plan and a summary of the work that was done this year and to be sure the commission is in line with his goals and mission. She said if any of the commissioners would like to join her to let her know. Mr. Thompson said that Mr. Goldstein had requested that a written report be created so that he could be sure with the members of the Economic Development.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Complete Streets Improvements in South Norwalk (11/4)

Ms. Burnaman said the complete street improvements project in South Norwalk was held today and will be discussed further at the next meeting.

- NRV Board meeting 11/13)

Ms. Burnaman said the NRV has a board meeting scheduled for next Wednesday, November 13th and will only be held in person in Wilton and will have a public comment period so if any Norwalk residents are interested in joining.

- NCAT Bike Walk Transit Coalition Networking Dinner (11/19)

Ms. Burnaman said the New Haven Bike/Walk Transit Coalition networking dinner will be held on November 19, 2024, and they are open to having other coalitions and groups and she signed up and invited the committee members and/or the public who are interested in attending to learn from other advocates in that area.

APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 7, 2024, MEETING

**** MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** MS. BISCEGLIE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. THOMPSON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. BISCEGLIE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd