

**CITY OF NORWALK
BIKE/WALK COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 2, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Tanner Thompson, Chair; Emily Burnaman; Nicholas Pappas; Christine Bisceglie; Jud Aley; Manuel Salgado

STAFF: Greg Pacelli, Transportation Planner

OTHERS: Ben Hanpeter; Brian Boland; Paul Chenard; Peter Franz; Shari Brennan; Ken Livingston, Emily Valentino; Krishalyn Machrohon; Gary Sorge; Kevin Burnham; Patel Naresh, Reed Shankweiler; Wendy Bjerke; Jim Carter

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

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:03PM.

FHI STUDIOS- KEN LIVINGSTON

✓ Route 7-Route 15 Interchange Project

Mr. Pacelli said that FHI Studios is the project team for the route 7/15 interchange project and are here tonight to answer questions.

Mr. Shankweiler introduced the team and provided an update the route 7/15 interchange project and said there was a public hearing held in August and the official documents and reports were submitted to the public and are now in the comment period. He said they have received several comments from the public and are in the process of reviewing them with the state and they will prepare official responses. He said advancing to preliminary design will be the next step which will lead into final design and construction down the line. He pointed out that just because they are submitting for formal approval of the environmental document it does not mean that the outreach and coordination stops and there will be continuous opportunities for the outreach throughout the preliminary and final design stage.

Mr. Shankweiler provided an overview of the project and said the purpose of the project is to improve roadway system linkage between Route 7 and Route 15 at interchange 39, improve mobility for vehicles at both the Route 15 and Route 7 and at Main Avenue, improve

mobility for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists along the immediate adjacent local roadway network (Main Avenue, Glover Avenue, and Creeping Hemlock Drive, and improve safety in the vicinity of these interchanges.

Ms. Valentino said they had looked at crashes from 2015 to 2018 and did a study of the whole Merritt Parkway corridor and found there were over 300 crashes at interchange 40 which is the highest number of crashes along the entire corridor, so it warrants safety improvements, and interchange 39 has 62 crashes.

Mr. Shankweiler said that they are proposing two signalized intersections on Route 7 to provide the connections from the Merritt Parkway to Route 7 in both directions. Mr. Livingston discussed the pedestrian and bicycle focus and said they have had multiple meetings over the last 6 years with the NRVt as well as the Bike/Walk Commission to discuss the issues and concerns. He said the opportunities for improvements include bicycle amenities, pedestrian amenities, signal improvements, and bus stop amenities to create a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mr. Shankweiler said as part of the project they are proposing to replace the bridge at Main Avenue to widen the road underneath and provide better facilities and to provide better connections throughout the corridor.

Ms. Bisceglie asked when the completion date is. Mr. Shankweiler said they are anticipating wrapping up the design process in 2025 and will then go to advertisement and then will begin construction. Mr. Naresh said the project is scheduled for construction in 2026 pending all receivable permitting and funding but currently the funding is programmed for this project.

Mr. Thompson asked if the scope of the project can be changed to include the NRVt on the west side. Mr. Shankweiler said they received a lot of comments about that during the public comment period and the coordination with the NRVt is still ongoing and noted that no matter which alternative it does not preclude for any future improvement for the trail and for the NRVt, and the state has requested the NRVt's feasibility study and want to take those findings into account and continue the ongoing coordination. Mr. Carter said the dialogue is ongoing between the NRVt and the project team and they did submit a formal notice concern and the CTDOT has requested the feasibility study, and they are putting the feasibility study together with their consultants and will respond back and look forward to a positive dialogue.

Mr. Thompson said he is very glad that bicyclists and pedestrians are being included in this project and would like to meet outside of this meeting on the design to include putting the bike lanes level with the sidewalk. Mr. Shankweiler said that is an option that they are looking at, but the concerns are the transitions back down to the intersection but is something they are looking into.

Mr. Thompson said at the intersection of Route 7 with the Merritt Parkway on and off ramps are currently slated for signalized intersections but a few people had mentioned the idea of roundabouts and asked for comments on that. Mr. Shankweiler said they looked at about 30 alternatives and one did include roundabouts. Ms. Valentino discussed the analysis and said the number of vehicles that will pass through the roundabout is much higher than a roundabout can accommodate and is above the threshold that is recommended by the CT DOT highway design manual.

Mr. Hanpeter said it appears that the preliminary plans include a lot of extra lanes being added under the bridge and around the intersections and questioned the need for all of the additional lanes given the scope of the project is to get traffic off of Main Avenue and it seems to work out okay with two lanes today. Mr. Shankweiler said as the signal design progresses further, they will continue to look at ways to optimize that.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Salgado introduced himself and said he is the newest addition to the Bike/Walk Commission, and he lives in East Norwalk and is excited to be part of the group and to participate. Mr. Thompson said he asked that Mr. Salgado assist in bike education and the relationship with the schools, and he brings experience living in places as diverse as the Los Angeles metro area and south Texas.

BIKE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES SURVEY

Mr. Thompson said as of a few days ago 43 responses to the survey have been received and Councilmember Burnett had mentioned the milestone that the commission has hit at the Common Council meeting and invited the public to fill out the survey. He also said on the link tree at either bikenorwalk.org or walknorwalk.org there is a link to the survey. Ms. Bisceglie said that she hopes that everyone that is on the meeting tonight will complete the survey by the deadline on October 10th.

EAST AVENUE

Mr. Pacelli reported and said on the northerly section from exit 16 from Hendricks Avenue to Route 1 and said that as part of the capital budget request last year for a corridor study they had received a portion of the requested funds for the study and will be used for the preliminary work and to establish a base map to know what the limits of the project can be. He said they are now in the process of finalizing the contract for an on-call surveyor and are in the process of reviewing that and once that is established and the selection has been made, they can begin the process of collecting the survey and expanding the limits outward from the project area. He said that staff is still working on other projects, so he does not yet have a timeline for the East Avenue corridor. Mr. Thompson asked once the contract for an on-call surveyor has been completed if there is

there is a backlog of surveying projects that will need to be done. Mr. Pacelli said “yes” and the East Avenue corridor is a large corridor and there is a lot that is going to need to be done but have not yet prioritized any projects and are just working to get the bid analysis done for the survey.

COMPLETE STREETS

Mr. Pacelli reported and said a public workshop was conducted last week as part of the complete streets implementation process and for those that were not able to attend there is an online survey on the TMP website to find a similar workshop, and the presentation is also available online and will be live through October and will close on November 1, 2023. Ms. Bisceglie suggested that the deadline be included on the website. Mr. Thompson asked if there is an estimated timeline for when the draft of the design guide will be ready. Mr. Pacelli said it will be worked on through the fall and winter and should have a draft by March and he will keep the commission updated.

BIKE RACK PURCHASING

Mr. Thompson said the commission and TMP have been working together on bike racks and after the initial bike share project fell apart in 2019 some of the locations were salvaged and one was at the Main Street lot but that has not been installed to date. Mr. Pacelli said that has been outstanding for some time and will be putting a package together to get some more bike racks and they will be sure the bike rack at the Main Street lot is installed. Mr. Thompson requested at the next meeting that TMP staff present the short list of sites that will be included on the next round of bike rack purchases. Ms. Bisceglie said as a reminder the bike rack at City Hall still needs to be replaced. Mr. Thompson said that he had requested that someone move the old rack that is in the South Norwalk Garage to Yankee Doodle Garage and asked if that is on the radar. Mr. Aley said there is now a new Asst. Director of Parking, and he will have a discussion with him.

Mr. Pappas provided an update and said that he has obtained two quotes and should now be able to proceed with a purchase requisition.

COMMISSION’S BUDGET

✓ Bathroom along NRVt at Riverside parking lot

Mr. Pacelli provided an update and said the Riverside parking lot is on state property but there is an agreement with the state so it is fine to put it there and if the commission would like to move forward the monthly maintenance cost has to be paid by the commission, and if so three quotes will be needed. Mr. Carter said installing a port-a-potty is not a priority for the NRVt. Mr. Thompson said if Ms. Bisceglie would like to keep working on this the next step will be confirm within the city what the contract looks

like and what the marginal cost of added one more port-a potty will be and to investigate how much risk the provider would take on for vandalism.

Mr. Pacelli provided an update on the NRVt trail and said that last week some metal rail work was being installed and bridge work on that end of the trail and expanding further in the northern area. Mr. Carter said the steel work is now all been installed, and the boardwalk surface is on site.

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 7, 2023 MEETING

- ** MS. BISCEGLIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**
- ** MR. PAPPAS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2023 MEETING

- ** MS. BISCEGLIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**
- ** MR. PAPPAS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. BISCEGLIE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. PAPPAS SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:36PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd