

JULY 2000

SCOPE

for

City of Schenectady's Bike Path Master Plan

Introduction

The Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) carrying out federal requirements for cooperative transportation planning and programming within the metropolitan area surrounding the Albany-Schenectady-Troy urbanized area. The Urban Bike Route Master Plan was proposed by the City of Schenectady and funded through CDTC's Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program. The study was included in the 2000-2001 Unified Planning Work Program as a planning activity. CDTC, on behalf of the City of Schenectady, will administer the study and act as project manager. CDTC seeks proposals from qualified firms or individuals to provide a bicycle route master plan recommendation for the City of Schenectady, New York.

Background on the Project and Study Purpose

The recently completed Downtown Master Plan has designated the former site of the American Locomotive Company (ALCO) Plant on North Jay Street as a prime development site for an ice hockey arena and sportsplex to serve Union College and the general public. Market studies conducted by Hunter Interests, Inc. support the development of such a facility.

Access to the site from Union College and their redeveloped Seward Neighborhood is blocked by the present bike path. New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has indicated a willingness to relocate the present bike path provided a bike path master plan is developed to support the relocation.

The long-term interest of the City is to have the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail continue along the river and under Freeman's bridge, which would provide better and more direct access to the river and the Stockade. To provide for bicycling in the city, the best routes need to be determined for a city bicycling network. In urban areas bike paths need to be more integrated with pedestrian traffic, oriented to the numerous points of interest and within the scale of the urban setting. On-street routes into the city center would provide for connections to destination points located in the city. This study would provide a recommendation for a citywide bicycle network that includes the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and urban bike path guidelines that examine the role of bike paths within a downtown and develop design guidelines to be applied to any future work.

Scope

This study will be the combination of two linkage studies: the Schenectady Bike Path Master Plan and the Regional Urban Bike Path Design Guidelines. A consultant will be retained to study the best short-range and long-range plan for the City of Schenectady's bicycle network (including the routing of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike Hike Trail). Research into urban bike path design guidelines and determining which are applicable to the Capital District will aid in the designation of this network.

The study will be guided by a steering committee made up of City of Schenectady staff, OPRHP, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Region 1 Bike Coordinator, Schenectady County, New York State Department of Health (fitness programs), local bicyclists, interested parties from the

CDTC Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force and CDTC staff. This steering committee will meet at least three times to discuss the evaluation criteria, the route options and the optimal network.

The study should result in a city-wide bicycle network, a report detailing methods, data collection, guidelines for urban bike trails (as an appendix to the report) and both a short-range and long-range plan for implementation of the network.

The steps of the study will include:

1. Gather data on the present situation of the study area. Data collection should include information needed for CDTC staff to calculate the bicycle level of service for on-street routes. This data would include the average daily traffic on streets, the pavement width, speed of vehicles and other details.
2. Identify other important factors for determining bike routing. CDTC staff will provide the consultant with the CDTC Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network. The consultant should identify the surrounding land-uses, major activity centers (shopping colleges, regional bike-hike trail) and bicycle provisions including any bike racks, bike lockers, etc.
3. Identify major conflict points for bicyclists including heavy truck traffic, railroad crossings, narrow streets, short sight distances, etc.
4. Calculate the bicycle level of service with the information provided (CDTC staff).
5. Devise determining factors to identify the best routes for bike network.
6. Research other states, and Canada re: urban bike trail design guidelines.
7. Determine applicability of research to Capital District to create guidelines.
8. Utilize the City's Master Plan and Easement study to aid in the determination of the best route selection.
9. Propose elements and involve bordering municipalities and NYSDOT to ensure bicycle network links up to a regional system including the statewide bike routes.
10. Consider Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) bus network along with the new Bike Rack Demonstration project to ensure links to buses are included.
11. Identify possible routes based on level of service, conflicts, guidelines and other information. Cost will be another factor. Bike treatments (signs, paint, potholes, acquisitions, etc.) should be determined for routes selected.
12. Determine the best options both short range and long range for a city network from all of the above information.
13. Hold two to three public meetings to get public input on the options. Consultant will also be responsible for other methods of public outreach to ensure optimal results.
14. Choose optimum short range and long-range plan.