

Response to Summary of Bike - Ped Plan Meetings Presented to Common Council PEDLU Committee (July 8, 2020)

I [Ed Brennan] attended all six of the neighborhood Albany Bike & Pedestrian Master Plan Meetings and I watched the July 8th summary of those meetings provided to the Planning, Economic Development and Land Use Committee. During that meeting, Zach Powell, Senior Planner, did a pretty good job of summarizing many major points that were brought up at the meetings. However, as Mr. Hoey correctly pointed out the summary failed to mention that a large number of citizens pointed out the dangers for pedestrians due to the lack of sidewalks in the Eagle Point area, particularly along Randall Road. I took the time to listen again to all the neighborhood meetings online and wish to point out several other matters that were brought up again and again by citizens during those meetings that were left out of the summary provided to the Committee.

- New Scotland Avenue was perhaps the most discussed with participants voicing support for bike lanes. The moderator picked up on the enthusiasm for bike lanes on New Scotland, especially upper New Scotland between Manning and Whitehall and asked what participants thought about doing a bike lane demonstration project. Many thought this a great idea
- Delaware Avenue was brought up by many with a particular interest in finding ways to slow traffic and improve driver awareness to accommodate cyclists and to connect it with the Albany County Rail Trail and the Bethlehem Delaware Ave bike lane and traffic calming effort that is proposed to run from the Thruway Bridge to Elsmere.
- Brevator Road was singled out by several people as a wide road that was ideal for bike lanes to connect Washington and Western and in sore need of traffic calming for bike/ped safety.
- With respect to Washington and Lincoln Parks, there were several citizens that support making the Parks car free for at least part of Sundays and many more expressed the need to reduce park speeds further below the present and frequently ignored 20 mph.
- Many supported reducing the City speed limit to 25mph except where otherwise designated.
- The use of painted bike "sharrow" (shared lane) markings on selective roadways were widely deplored as useless at best and probably a confusing signal to drivers that bikes don't belong on streets that don't have sharrow markings or have had their markings worn away.
- Several citizens pointed out the need to continue bike lanes on Western Avenue from where the Madison Ave lanes end at Madison/Allen to where lanes begin in Guilderland on Western by the University Albany at the Albany City line.

Our Mayor prides herself on being a member of the "Climate Mayors" initiative. What is more climate friendly that replacing CO2 emitting travel with bicycle and pedestrian travel? I do thank the City for

providing citizens a forum to present bike and pedestrian issues to the city. I sincerely hope that the citizen concerns will be a driving factor in devising the new Bike & Pedestrian Master Plan. Unfortunately the recent track record for the City is not good. I was also present at the three packed house Upper New Scotland Avenue Traffic Study Meetings. Citizens expressed a strong interest in making New Scotland Avenue safer with very many citizens favoring bike lanes to be part of the traffic calming solution. Judging by bar graphs presented at the meetings there was no significant interest in preserving parking on New Scotland between Manning and Whitehall. The summary bar graph representing of interest in parking was so miniscule they couldn't fit a number inside of it. The City blew off the citizenry and decided it would be wiser to spend city dollars paving areas for parking where nobody now parks or needs parking. This will actually make the area less safe for cyclists who will now have to weave back and forth between parked cars and the driving lane.

I also found one comment by Zach Powell troubling. Instead of pointing out citizen interest in improving cycling on New Scotland and Delaware he emphasized the call to finding alternate parallel routes for cyclists. First, there are no alternative routes that run anywhere near the length of these roadways. The Albany Bicycle Coalition supports finding low stress routes for those not comfortable with cycling in traffic and has created <https://bikealbanymap.com> for this very purpose. However, there are some roads that are pretty much unavoidable to get from A to B in Albany. New Scotland Avenue and Delaware Avenue are such routes. It is not in any way reasonable to ask cyclists to go way out of their way so that some roads can be dedicated to motor vehicles. Cyclists need to get where they are going too. In fact, it is much faster and easier for a car to take a detour than a bicycle. It is certainly not legal to ban cyclists from roads that are not Interstates or Expressways. Secondly, cycling is not just a recreational activity. Cyclists are trying to get to places - like their places or work and business on these core Albany streets.

There is an international initiative called "Go By Bike" that seeks to replace travel that spews climate devastating carbon into our atmosphere with bike travel. A City with a Climate Mayor should support Going By Bike. A "Go Out of Your Way By Bike" policy is not helpful. We need to make Albany's core routes like New Scotland Avenue, Delaware Avenue, Washington Avenue and Western Avenue bike friendly.

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