

MEETING NOTES

PROJECT	Caltrans Bay Area Bike Highways	ORGANIZER	Mauricio Hernández
SUBJECT	Working Group Meeting #2	DATE	February 5, 2020
VENUE	Via Zoom , Passcode: BayAr3a	TIME	10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Meeting Overview:

This meeting was the second in a series of working group meetings convened by Caltrans Bay Area to solicit input at key intervals of the planning process for the Caltrans Bay Area Bike Highway Study (the project). This meeting provided an update on the project timeline, public engagement materials, and a summary of findings from the review of international Best Practices in the implementation of bike highways. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss design elements for bike highways, and how to optimize bike travel while supporting other modes. Attendees were split into two groups to help facilitate robust discussions. Group A was composed of representatives from various transportation agencies. Group B was composed of various advocacy groups. The following document provides a summary of comments received throughout the meeting. It is complemented by feedback received via ConceptBoard (see links below), which were developed by the Project Team to allow participants to share ideas and feedback on the topics at hand. Notes included in this document have been organized thematically (not chronologically)

Conceptboard Group A: <https://app.conceptboard.com/board/au8u-6u3p-egru-81xf-er7z>

Conceptboard Group B: <https://app.conceptboard.com/board/x6hg-d7ka-kaxt-81z7-e6g2>

GROUP A	GROUP B
Project Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brett Hondorp, Principal, Alta Planning + Design Libby Nachman, Assistant Project Manager. Alta Planning + Design 	Project Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mauricio Hernández, Project Manager. Alta Planning + Design Regina Merrill, Circlepoint
Caltrans Bay Area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sergio Ruiz, Caltrans Bay Area, Complete Streets Coordinator Gregory Currey, Caltrans Bay Area, Active Transportation Branch Chief 	Caltrans Bay Area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elliot Goodrich, Caltrans Bay Area, Project Manager, Associate Transportation Planner Erik Alm, Caltrans Bay Area District Office Chief – Transit & Community Planning
Working Group Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lola Torney, Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Chris Marks, Alameda CTC Mike Pickford, San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) Diana Meehan, Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA) Kara Oberg, Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Nicola Szibbo, (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) MTC Colin Clarke, Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) Mikaela Hiatt, City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) 	Working Group Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emma Shlaes, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition (SVBC) Janice Li, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC) Eris Weaver, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition (SCBC) Lee Huo, Bay Trail Project Ben Kaufman, Rails to Trails Conservancy Laura Cohen, Rails to Trails Conservancy Dave Campbell, Bike East Bay Warren Wells, Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC) Carlotta Sainato, Napa County Bicycle Coalition (NCBC)

Project Updates

Since the last meeting in November, the project team launched the project website (<https://d4bikehighwaystudy.org/>) and a community survey (to remain active through the month of February). The survey asks respondents about their current and pre-COVID bicycle trip frequency and purpose, as well as barriers to bicycling. It also asks specific questions about preferred terminology, user and design preferences, and safety concerns relating to bike highways. The project team asked working group members to share the survey with their constituents and noted that if any additional resources beyond those provided in the communications toolkit were needed, they would be happy to supply them to help facilitate survey dissemination.

Best Practices

The Project Team provided a summary of best practices for implementing bike highways around the world. Although “Bike Highway” is still a working name for the project, it has been updated from “Bicycle Superhighway” since the previous meeting. While the exact definition of a bike highway varies, based on a review of worldwide best practices, it is typically high-quality, uninterrupted paths that allow for higher speed travel, support large volumes of people bicycling, connect regional destinations and provide mobility as opposed to accessibility.

Intended users included bicycle commuters, recreational riders, powered micromobility devices and e-bikes. Bike highways best serve bicycle commuters, as they provide safe and attractive spaces for long-distance biking as an alternative to driving. The increasing presence of e-bikes has generally supported additional bicycle commuting and longer bicycle trips. Well-designed bike highways allow for multiple types of riders to easily coexist together, promoting more uses of the route.

The Project Team provided an overview of the three main categories of design elements that will contribute to creating safe and comfortable user experiences on bike highways: alignment, intersections, and materials and amenities.

Several polls were held throughout the meeting, including questions about members’ available communications channels for survey distribution, who they thought were the key users for a bike highway, their favored bike highway case studies, and which key principles should drive the design of the facility.

Group Discussions

Following the update from the Project Team, each group engaged in two discussions, both facilitated using a ConceptBoard (see links above).

Discussion A centered around the following questions:

- Which principle for bike highway implementation is most important to you and why?
- What are barriers to implementing bike highways in your area?
- What can Caltrans provide to help other agencies implement their own bike highways?

Discussion B Centered around the following questions:

- Draw what you think a bike highway should look like and note which design elements it should include.
- How can we optimize bike travel while supporting other modes in the Bay Area?

Discussion A Highlights

Principles

Members were asked to vote on which principles were the most important to them and discuss why. Generally, from both the poll and discussion, members felt that the most important principles were dedicated, direct, and mobility, although it was noted that many of these principles overlap and support one another, and ultimately, elements of each will be needed to attract more people to a bike highway.

Users

A discussion was held on intended users. In a poll, members mainly identified commuters, people connecting to transit, and recreational/ utilitarian riders as the key users. The concern was raised that if we try to make every project meet every need of every potential user then we end up with facilities that don't meet anybody's needs very well. Several members agreed that the key to capturing new or more cautious riders and changing the way people travel would be to create routes that feel safe and dedicated to bicyclists. It was suggested that one way to do this was by including amenities like bike repair stations and rest stops, although others noted that these are not as important if there are enough offramps. Other members felt it's possible for facilities to accommodate both fast travelers and the average bicyclist as long as there is enough room, and noted there are many examples of this already. It was also discussed that if the facilities are wide enough, e-bikes are a great way to encourage more people of varying abilities to travel by bicycle.

Routing

The Project Team asked if members preferred more circuitous, safer routes, or those that were faster and more direct. The general consensus was that more comfortable, dedicated bikeways were preferred.

Speed

Although there was agreement that dedicated facilities make new users feel more confident, it was suggested that there's space for a highway concept that is higher speed, designed for a more confident cyclist. It was noted there are existing routes for people who travel slowly, but not a long uninterrupted path that could potentially replace a car commute. Supporting this, SVBC representative noted they recently concluded a survey which found that the main factor driving a person's choice of transportation is how long it will take them to get to their destination.

A key discussion point was whether a bike highway should act as a regional backbone or connect all riders to everywhere they need to go. Most members prioritized creating a facility that acted as a regional backbone, but noted that if there are not enough connections, the facility will be underutilized.

Nomenclature

The name "bike highway" continues to be polarizing to some members, which affects their perspective on who the intended users are. The term highway has negative connotations for some community members, but it is a term that everyone is familiar with. Other suggestions included greenway and bikeway.

Barriers

In regards to barriers to bike highway implementation, members discussed finding direct routes along actual corridors, coordination with multiple agencies, political will, well-designed intersections, width, community buy-in, funding, physical barriers like rivers/creeks, serving a key corridor within ROW constraints, and that many areas are already built-out.

Discussion B Highlights

Using ConceptBoard, participants were given approximately five minutes to create a drawing of what they envisioned a bike highway to look like, making sure to include any critical design elements. Participants were to consider alignment (e.g., separation, design speeds, width, slope, vehicles permitted), intersections (e.g., access points, intersection treatments, green wave), and materials/amenities (e.g., surface, branding/wayfinding, lighting, support facilities).

Common themes that emerged included:

- Separated facilities
- Branding/wayfinding
- Emphasis on greenery/foilage
- Physical grade separation for different types of users
- Local access points
- Rest stops and other amenities
- Parallel to adjacent highways
- Wayfinding
- ADA Accessibility

The Project Team mentioned that bike highways work best when they optimize long distance bike travel and noted that many stakeholder respondents have voiced the importance of having a highway that is inclusive of pedestrians and those using other mobility devices. Several members discussed the importance of width to making the facility accessible and accommodate riders going various speeds. In the future, the project team will deliver a set of design best practices, which will include suggestions on width, amenities, placemaking etc., that members will be asked to weigh in on in the future. It was noted by several San Francisco-based representatives that this facility would look different within the context of the City, and thus not all concepts being discussed may apply to possible infrastructure there, given how built-out San Francisco already is.

There was also discussion on the need for green infrastructure and for rethinking green highways so that the new project can set an example of what paving new surfaces can look like. The Ohlone and Richmond Greenways were frequently mentioned as positive examples of bike highways that are used by multiple types of cyclists, incorporate wayfinding, and have community support.

Throughout the meeting, a major theme that emerged was the importance of community involvement at every stage of the project. From creating advertising that reflected the diverse audiences the project is targeting, to involving them in design decisions and eventually creating a facility with a focus on placemaking that is a community resource. Several members provided examples of facilities that included community features, such as those with outdoor seating or dining areas that run along the bikeway, and noted that amenities like these also encourage businesses to more readily support trail maintenance while also increasing trail safety by having more people around looking over it.

Next Steps

To close the meeting, the Project Team thanked all members for attending and presented the next steps, which include:

- Using stakeholder/public feedback to Finalize Route Selection Methodology
- Route Selection
- Concept Development

The next Working Group meeting is anticipated to be scheduled for the spring or summer of 2021.