

Urban Trails Committee Minutes

January 13, 2021 (virtual meeting)

Present: Shana Wade (Chair), Andrew Gingerich (Committee Member), David Lehmann (Committee Member), Ross Mittelman (Committee Member), Diana Rooney (Vice Chair), Orin Zyvan (Committee Member), Lance Gloss (Senior Planner), Trent Prall (Public Works Director), Greg Caton (City Manager), Doug Shoemaker (Chief of Police), John Shaver (City Attorney), Ed Chamberlin (citizen), Tamra Allen (Community Development Director)

Absent Committee Members: Alisha Wenger

CALL TO ORDER

Shana called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approve of Minutes of December 9, 2020 Special Meeting

Shana requested a change concerning the reason for the City Forester not presenting at the previous meeting.

Orin requested that Shana's title be corrected.

Orin moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Diana seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

ACTION ITEMS

No action items on agenda.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Idaho Stop

Greg Caton gave an introduction to the topic of the Idaho Stop, and noted that it had been a topic of discussion for UTC during 2018-2019. He agreed with Shana that the aim of the discussion was fact-finding and commentary.

Trent Prall gave a brief introduction to the concept of an Idaho Stop, or Safety Stop or Stop-as-Yield, noting that the Colorado State Legislature had recently enabled jurisdictions to permit the Idaho Stop by Ordinance. This allows for cities to allow rolling stops by bicycles, with limits on speed, at stop signs. It can additionally include allowing cyclists to run red lights, though Trent noted that this would not be contemplated in Grand Junction at this time. He also noted the challenges of CDOT roadways in the community, to which local rules would not apply.

Steve recalled that earlier discussions on the topic included the challenge of implementing in the Valley's multijurisdictional environment. He also pointed out that Portland OR had recently adopted

this. He noted that the best data came out of Idaho, especially Boise, and that it appeared that the Idaho Stop had no harm and likely a benefit.

Ed Chamberlin identified himself as a cyclist and a leader of the Velo Grand Junction bicycle club. He explained that he had brought this to the City Manager's attention in tandem with Councilmember Rick Taggart. He pointed out that conversations with City staff indicated that the Grand Junction Police Department does not enforce the requirement for bicycles to stop at this time. He also noted that he had had personal conflicts with motorists as a cyclist, and that education and culture were important considerations for the Idaho Stop.

Doug Shoemaker identified that the PD's concern is the danger and risk of existing traffic patterns, laws, and violations in the community, and suggested that Grand Junction was not ready to move beyond basic enforcement of existing laws. He also pointed out the importance of education, and agreed with the multijurisdictional challenges. He affirmed that the enforcement of the requirement for cyclists to stop was currently nonexistent, but that the PD has the discretion to enforce the law but choose not to do so. He also noted that cyclist-motorist crashes in the City were often fatal for cyclists.

Diana asked Doug Shoemaker if they had any police on bicycles. Doug Shoemaker indicated that he had a limited number of parking enforcement officers on bikes, and that this was otherwise very limited. Diana asked if the cycling police had provided feedback, and Shoemaker indicated that their feedback had been funneled up through the command system. Shoemaker went on to explain that City and County facilities differ substantially. He suggested that cyclists that blow stop signs do so on long recreational rides.

Diana disagreed with Chief Shoemaker and pointed out that yielding at stop signs seemed more likely to happen downtown.

Orin agreed with Diana, and pointed out that stop signs often drive route choices by cyclists. Orin asked for data on safety and driver attitudes.

David pointed out that data is limited, but concurred with Steve that the existing data suggest either no harm or a positive impact. David stated that the best situation would be for the State to move forward with the law. He pointed out that this might not be the best use of the cycling public's political capital, but that he does support the Safety Stop rule.

Diana reflected that Chief Shoemaker had expressed that the PD already does not enforce the requirement for cyclists to stop, and asked what the reason for retaining the regulation was.

Not entirely in response to Diana's question, Ed Chamberlin justified the need for having the Idaho Stop as being related to convenience and safety of cyclists. He also suggested using signage to trial this in limited areas.

Steve and Trent exchanged several comments about targeted areas for testing this using signage, especially to establish an alternative East-West thoroughfare to the riverfront trail.

Greg said the notion of a pilot was a good takeaway idea from the discussion, and suggested that staff revisit the idea of conducting a pilot.

Shana noted that Steamboat had recently adopted this rule as a means of improving cyclist safety.

Andy pointed out that it is not comfortable for him, as a cyclist, to have the police not enforcing a law and tacitly accepting behavior, but retaining the right to punish a cyclist for rolling through a stop at any time. He said that this discomfort would be resolved by creating clarity by adopting the law. Andy also pointed out that special signage is not a preferential method to accommodate the Idaho stop, and he would prefer a comprehensive approach.

Diana pointed out that this may be an opportunity for being a leader in the state for cyclist advocacy, and endorsed the idea of a pilot area.

Orin shared that Yuelin Willett may be a local resource.

Chief Shoemaker said that he had been a traffic sergeant in a previous role, and that he had done a lot of educating, and that that took a long time and that it was really complicated and challenging. He underscored that he was more concerned about existing challenges and would not support this unless it was done slowly and done right. He said being methodical is the best way to keep cyclists and motorists safe.

Ed pointed out that visibility is substantially better for a cyclist than for a motorist.

Andy said that if the issue is resources, then it would be good to identify specifically what those resources are.

Shana thanked the guests for joining the meeting, and reviewed the next steps, including research and further discussion, especially regarding the idea of a pilot program.

Discuss Policy Recommendations with City Manager

The City Manager noted that the Comprehensive Plan adoption and the accompanying forthcoming implementation matrix present a great opportunity for the UTC to influence policy. He gave some background about the function of the implementation matrix and its relationship to the biannual strategic planning process.

Lance asked about the recent letter from the UTC to the City Council and how that could specifically tie into these processes.

Greg clarified whether it was a draft letter, and Lance clarified that it was not a draft letter, and Greg confirmed that it didn't get passed on to City Council.

Shana followed up and asked how best the UTC can advise Council and staff.

Greg summarized past staffing, including Kathy Portner and Paul Jagim, and noted that the City provides a Senior Planner to staff the committee. Greg pointed out that UTC needs relationships with Community Development, Parks and Rec, and Public Works. He pointed out the ongoing opportunity to refine these communications and roadmaps. He also pointed out that the most straightforward way for UTC to reach Council is through staff, through annual reports, and (in the future) joint UTC – Council meetings, potentially annually. He also suggested that a Council liaison to UTC could be set up.

Orin thanked Greg and Tamra for joining and pointed out his satisfaction with the substantial overlap between the Implementation Matrix and the Letter to Council. He described the origins of the Letter as

being a way to create a clear and concise communication of recommendations to Council, and to keep such a document alive and updated over time.

Orin also pointed out that the bylaws describe the UTC as an advisory body to City Council, and that this had been the reason for the drafting, signing, and submitting of the letter with the intent for it to reach Council.

Greg pointed out that “advisory” roles take many shapes, including responding to request for input (such as the Idaho Stop), Annual Reporting, and similar. He also pointed out challenges related to the scope of recommendations.

Andy noted that he abstained from voting on the letter, and spoke to the intention of the letter and policy priorities list, and characterized it as a compliment to the infrastructure priorities list that the UTC produces annually.

Diana asked Greg in what ways the UTC might be most supportive.

Greg asked that the UTC provide input on the Implementation Matrix, which will soon be considered by Council, and participate in that review.

Tamra concurred with Greg and also suggested that the UTC might incorporate the work on the letter and list into the Annual Report.

Redlands 360

Shana noted that the UTC had toured the Redlands 360 property a week before this meeting.

Lance pointed out that there would be a long period of review for this, and solicited the UTC to pass along their comments to him.

Orin asked Lance to provide information about what the City is looking for in terms of review from the UTC on this project.

Diana pointed out that it’s a uniquely large project.

Tamra pointed out that the City anticipates recrafting the Zoning and Development Code, and that that would be an opportunity for the UTC to help structure

Steve said he was impressed by the amount of open space and public amenities proposed and asked for Tamra’s perspective.

Tamra noted that there was an apparently larger-than-required amount of proposed open space.

Lance reiterated that the discussion would continue and that UTC could pass on any feedback or questions to him by email to start.

UPDATES

Wayfinding

Diana and Steve complimented Trent on the wayfinding success, but Trent's response was broken by a bad connection.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment voiced.

ADJOURNMENT

Steve made a motion to adjourn. Orin seconded the motion. Shana adjourned the meeting at 7:07 pm.