



Bicycle Access Council News & Digest

www.BicycleAccess-PA.org

November—December 2010

Hello Members and Supporters of the Bicycle Access Council.

It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania!

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS ARE OVER, BUT...

The impact for bicycling in Pennsylvania and the rest of the country is still unknown. This Commonwealth saw a reversal within the 19 House districts from 12 Democrats and 7 Republicans to exactly the opposite--12 Republicans and 7 Democrats. The most notable and powerful friend of bicyclists, James Oberstar, from Minnesota lost his seat in a surprise upset. As the Democratic chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I), Representative Oberstar was the "godfather" of Transportation Enhancements and the reason there is a Safe-Routes-to-School program. It's unknown how funding for bicycling will fare in a fiscally strapped new Congress.

Attending the National Bike Summit in DC next year will be essential to finding out. BAC will be there.

The new shift to the Republican majority will bring a significant reduction to "earmarks"—those special interest bankrolled projects. For bicyclists, that may have little effect. What is looming to threaten support for bicycling is the Highway Bill that is long overdue for reauthorization. It expires (again) at the end of this year and will certainly require another extension. To put this in perspective, the Highway Bill is a six year cycle of funding authorization for roads and all infrastructure. The first bill of its kind appeared in 1991 and should have followed the renewal dates of 1997, 2003 and 2009. 2003 was very late (2005) getting reauthorized and 2009...well, maybe mid 2011. But, the whole bill is most likely to be completely rewritten with no action expected until after the 2012 elections. The new T&I majority chairman, Representative John Mica (R-FL) has already announced some sweeping goals that focus on traditional road projects, like the interstate system, with much less support for transit.

Bicycle and Pedestrian funding --What funding?

The most immediate concern for bicyclists is the threat of "funding rescission" for Transportation Enhancements — dropping the commitment for funding bicycle projects that have not yet begun construction. PennDOT has made no announcements regarding this yet.

Changes in the Pennsylvania General Assembly have not been completely sorted out yet to see how support for bicycling might change for better or worse. Will Representative Ron Miller (R-York) be able to deliver on his promise to pass the languishing bicycle safety legislation created by the Bicycle Access Council (currently House Bill 1110) in January? Committee chairmanship changes are always an unknown factor on how legislation moves.

Pennsylvania's bicycle champion, Representative Rick Geist (R-Altoona), will be returned as the House Transportation Committee chair. It is not known at this time who will shift to the minority chairmanship.

The Bicycle Access Council will continue to monitor the legislative changes and prepare for a renewed working relationship in the legislative session for 2011-2012.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STRIP AND A STRIPE...

When it comes to those milled cuts on the roadway to prevent "roadway departure" depends on where the paint is applied. A Rumble Strip has a white line next to it marking the edge of the roadway width. A Rumble Stripe has the paint applied directly on top of the cuts marking the edge of the roadway. This is how the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) uses the terms to be precise. Now you know!

More important though to whether it's called a strip or stripe is where they are installed and how they affect bicyclists. Both FHWA and PennDOT guidelines require a minimum of a four-foot shoulder and regular intervals so that bicyclists can return to the roadway as needed. Bicyclists should report non-conforming rumbles to the appropriate PennDOT District Bike/Ped Coordinators. If no satisfactory response is received, contact BAC.

A BAC MEMBER ASKED...

What is the BAC position on Bike Lanes? Easy question—Not so easy answer. Well, Mike B, here it is: See Pages 3 and 4.

Also read the following recent articles from the New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

<http://tinyurl.com/2deqlxh> and <http://tinyurl.com/29gagzc>

YEAR END DONATIONS ...

Are appreciated and tax deductible as allowed by law. BAC is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)3 charitable organization. A letter verifying donations is sent for amounts of \$250 or greater and for any amount upon request.

IF YOU RIDE THROUGH THE WINTER...

Check out IceBike.org. "Home of the Winter Cyclist and other crazy people."

Dates to Remember

Dec 16 **PPAC**, Harrisburg. Open to the public. Contact BAC for details.

Mission Statement...

The Bicycle Access Council is a non-profit advocacy organization that serves as a forum for Pennsylvania bicyclists and as an ombudsman for bicycling issues.

It is the objective of the Bicycle Access Council to make bicycling on roads throughout the Commonwealth safe, respectable and a transportation choice by educating its members and the motoring public.

All funding for the Bicycle Access Council comes from memberships and donations. Annual membership is \$20 per year. BAC does not share membership information.

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🚲 Happy Holidays! 🚲

"SO, WHAT IS THE BAC POSITION ABOUT BIKE LANES?"

Asking about Bike Lanes is a leading question — not easily answered. Even when answered, the response depends on who is asking, and why. And, more important, what are the alternatives to Bike Lanes?

Please note, no part of the following is intended to address segregated Bike Lanes (physically separated by a barrier), Cycle Tracks (a new segregated facility concept), or Shared Use Paths (SUPs) that mix bicycles and pedestrians.

The least understood concept for Bike Lanes is what they intend to accomplish for bicyclists as an integral part of the transportation mix. Is it Safety? Efficiency? Convenience? Special Privileges? Here's how it may be viewed.

Designating space on a roadway for exclusive use by bicyclists assumes certain factors in order to justify the engineering, installation and operation by the intended users. So, if designed and maintained properly and used by bicyclists who universally understand the dynamics of Bike Lanes, then Bike Lanes may benefit bicyclists in dense urban areas. To achieve this, there are engineering standards that must be considered as a minimum accommodation for bicyclists. Too often, these standards are ignored or misinterpreted resulting in sub-standard Bike Lanes. It's also assumed that roadway maintenance is ongoing to keep the space clear and the Bike Lane striping is reasonably visible after time and usage.

When a Bike Lane is sub-standard, it cannot officially be marked as a Bike Lane — reducing the limited legal protection of a Bike Lane. Bike Lanes are not to be confused with the shoulder of a highway where the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code allows optional travel by bicycle, but not motor vehicles. Of course, once on a shoulder, a bicyclist has given up the legal right to the roadway and must yield to re-enter.

The assumptions used to promote Bike Lanes include, but are not limited to, adequate width to ride within, absence of hazards (sewer grates, utility caps, etc), minimum cross-slope (otherwise needed for proper roadway drainage), and placement away from the "door zone" when on-street parking is permitted. Additionally, it is assumed that no motor vehicles will park or drive in the Bike Lane and that pedestrians will stay out — even momentarily. Then there's the consideration of debris collecting in the Bike Lane area not "swept" by the action of other vehicles moving along.

Also to be considered is where the space for a Bike Lane on a highway will come from. If a travel lane is wide enough to include a Bike Lane, then it is wide enough to share the road without one. Otherwise, some other use of a highway must be reduced, like on-street parking, another travel lane, shoulder width, etc.

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Bike Lanes con't...

Bicycling anywhere requires a level of skill to operate competently. It actually takes more skill and physical demands to navigate within the confines of striped Bike Lanes and certainly more skill and awareness to navigate intersections with traffic to continue through on an intended route. Left turns from a right-hand Bike Lane cannot be done safely (or legally) and the likelihood of a "right-hook" is greatest at intersections when bicyclists don't control the lane. Bicyclists in a Bike Lane are less visible to oncoming motor vehicles turning left, too. Most bicyclists fail to understand that there is an increase of conflict points when demanding Bike Lanes. As a reference, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) instructs students in its basic training of road skills to treat Bike Lanes as if they are not there by stressing the importance of lane position under various conditions.

Two more related Bike Lane concepts need to be explored. Will the presence of Bike Lanes encourage more bicycling, and what about crash rates on Bike Lane facilities? Good data is not available to prove or disprove definitively the chicken-and-egg theory of more bike lanes equating to more ridership and lower crash rates. Cities like Portland, Oregon do claim it to be true—but even if true, can that west coast, eco-friendly approach work in Pennsylvania? Realistically, no.

To be practical when advocating for bicyclists rights to the roadway in this Commonwealth, it seems appropriate to ensure the Vehicle Code reflects the legitimacy of bicyclists as part of the transportation mix and demand that the conditions of all roadways make it suitable for bicycling without inherent hazards. Neither PennDOT nor municipalities adhere to a higher roadway standard for bicyclists where bicyclists are expected to travel.

What alternatives are appropriate instead of Bike Lanes? Shared Lane Markings are a proven alternative where lane widths won't allow a travel lane and striped Bike Lane. These are bike symbols with two chevrons oriented as an arrow to alert motor vehicle drivers where to expect bicyclists, as well as guide bicyclists where to ride in the lane. Informally, these are called "sharrows."

One other recently approved traffic control device is a sign not yet in use in Pennsylvania — Bikes May Use Full Lane (BMUFL). This is an improvement from the Share-the-Road (STR) signs most commonly used. Too often, motor vehicle drivers were unsure who was to do the "sharing" and conflicts still exist.

Following the November 2010 election upheavals as it affected the Congressional Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, funding may be drastically reduced for bicycling projects as a matter of priorities. Bicyclists should prepare to acquire the skills to ride with confidence and look for support through non-fiscal dependent legislation to recognize and enhance the rights of bicyclists on all Pennsylvania roadways.