BMTS Article Digest
August - September 2014

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of www.bmtsonline.com.

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Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, CenterLines. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.


CenterLines is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. CenterLines is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.

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Go to www.BCWalks.com!

Check out this website for Bike & Pedestrian Information!

www.coexistnys.org

In particular, view the interactive educational video clips.
Elevator to connect Hudson walkway to waterfront

ALBANY — State officials say the new 21-story elevator connecting the Poughkeepsie waterfront to the pedestrian bridge over the Hudson River is scheduled to open to the public on Thursday.

A former railroad bridge finished in 1889, Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park opened in 2009. It connects Poughkeepsie to Highland.

Park officials say it's visited by more than 700,000 people a year. It's 212 feet high and spans nearly 1.3 miles.

The elevator connects the bridge to waterfront park.

It was funded with a $2.4 million federal grant.

Obama signs $10.8B highway bill

By Justin Sink

President Obama on Friday signed a $10.8 billion measure that will fund highway and bridge repairs for the next ten months.

The short-term measure, approved by lawmakers last month, is paid for using a budgeting maneuver called pension smoothing, which allows corporations to reduce their contributions to employee retirement plans. By allowing companies to do so, the government can boost tax revenues since companies are no longer eligible for tax deductions.

The Highway Trust Fund risked running out of money this month had lawmakers not approved additional funding, endangering thousands of construction projects and jobs.

While the president supported the measure, he also told Congress it "shouldn't pat itself on the back for averting disaster for a few months, kicking the can down the road for a few months, careening from crisis to crisis when it comes to something as basic as our infrastructure" during a speech last month.

During a speech earlier this week, Vice President Biden bemoaned that lawmakers had not passed a long-term solution.

“Hell, Congress can’t even decide on a gas tax to keep the highway system going,” Biden said.

Obama did not hold a bill signing ceremony for the measure.

In a statement earlier this week, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said that he was "pleased" Congress had avoided immediate insolvency for the transportation fund, but said he was "disappointed" there was not a long-term fix.
"This latest band-aid expires right as the next construction season begins, setting up another crisis next spring," Foxx said. "So in the coming months, the Department will again be required to prepare cash management procedures in anticipation of repeating the same Highway Trust Fund insolvency crisis. Americans deserve a multi-year transportation bill that provides the certainty that businesses and communities deserve, creates jobs, and makes necessary policy updates to lay the foundation for lasting economic growth."


**METRO**  
**INDUSTRY NEWS**  
August 5, 2014

**London piloting pedestrian, cyclist detection software on buses**  
Photo courtesy TfL

Transport for London (TfL) confirmed trials of detection software to enhance bus driver awareness of pedestrians and cyclists will start later this month as part of a continued drive to improve road safety in the capital.

The technology directly alerts bus drivers when pedestrians and cyclists are moving close to their vehicles, helping to reduce collisions.

TfL is trialing two systems “CycleEye” from Fusion Processing Ltd. and “Cycle Safety Shield” from Safety Shield Systems Ltd.

CycleEye is advanced cyclist detection technology which uses both radar and optical technology to detect cyclists in close proximity to vehicles and the system audibly alerts the bus driver to their presence.

Cycle Safety Shield is able to detect pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists in close proximity to vehicles, giving a visual warning and then an audible alert to the driver.

The bus routes, which run between Oxford Street and Ilford via Mile End (route 25) and Victoria to Stoke Newington via Oxford Circus and Kings Cross (Route 73), have been specifically chosen for the trial because of the high number of pedestrians and cyclists that use these bus routes.

A report detailing the findings of the trial and suggested next steps will be available later this year.

**Meet the mobile grocery store that’s out to revolutionize urban eating**

By Leif Pettersen on June 20, 2014 (www.urbanful.org)

**The Nickel Tour**: Meet the woman who wants to put an end to food deserts – and how she’s making that happen with an old bus, an Indiegogo campaign, and a lot of community support.

Leah Driscoll and her husband Mike are the co-founders of Twin Cities Mobile Market (TCMM): literally a grocery store on wheels that will bring fresh produce, meat, dairy and more to urban food deserts, so called because of the lack of healthy food within a reasonable distance.

The project, which began in January 2013, is coming closer to its hopeful launch in August. The extensive retrofitting of an old Metro Transit bus to house the TCMM, is still in progress. It’s a tricky and much delayed procedure that Leah cheerfully likens to the copious snags faced during an epic home improvement project. Though other cities such as Portland, Chicago, and Boston have similar mobile market concepts, TCMM will be the first to offer fresh meat and dairy, meaning generators and refrigeration compounding the already complex retrofit. Once that’s completed, all that remains is filling the TCMM with food using funds from their Indiegogo fundraising campaign that runs through June 27, 2014.
Soon, this bus will transform into a grocery store on wheels

Speaking to Leah, it’s clear this project hits close to home for her and Mike, who both grew up experiencing periods of food insecurity. With a passion for social justice and the tireless drive required for such labor, Leah has worked in non-profit roles her entire career. She was a Program Developer with the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation for four years before the TCMM was conceived. Before that she worked as a Grants Coordinator with Ecumen, which included work on “The Awakenings Project,” a campaign to eliminate the use of “chemical restraints” in nursing homes.

Leah’s interest in food deserts began during grad school at Hamlin. She studied the phenomenon in low-income communities and the resulting health inequities including high rates of obesity, diabetes and shorter life spans. Stirred by these figures, she eventually wrote her thesis on the subject – which included interviewing coordinators of other mobile markets around the country – and found her inspiration for a Twin Cities Mobile Market.

Though the TCMM was started as a side project, unrelated to her position at The Wilder Foundation, a partnership was eventually forged. Twin Cities Mobile Market now operates under the Wilder Foundation umbrella with Leah and Mike as the Co-Founders running the show.

In addition to providing access to fresh food, the TCMM will sell it’s groceries at below market prices, marked up only enough to cover operating costs. The TCMM plans to start operating in St. Paul, including the Dayton’s Bluff area where only about a fifth of residents currently buy groceries in the neighborhood.

The TCMM took a big step toward becoming a reality when their Indiegogo campaign surpassed it’s fundraising goal on June 27th. Follow the progress and launch of the Twin Cities Mobile Market on its Twitter feed and Facebook page.

**Q&A with Leah Driscoll**

**Why did you choose a bus to host Mobile Market rather than, say, a giant converted moving van?**

We explored several options for our vehicle, and we decided on a bus because it allows people to get inside and out of the elements, which is really important during our Minnesota winters. We’ll operate year-round because healthy food access is a year-round need, and a trailer or refrigerated truck just wasn’t a feasible option for effectively serving customers. Also, while buying healthy food on a bus may be a unique experience, boarding a bus isn’t unfamiliar for many people, and we wanted a vehicle that would be friendly and welcoming.

**How did the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation come to be involved?**

When my husband Mike and I started Twin Cities Mobile Market in early 2013, we didn’t necessarily want to create another nonprofit organization. We began shopping it around to find a nonprofit home, and found a great
home at the Wilder Foundation. One of the Wilder Foundation’s priorities is to improve community health and well-being in low income neighborhoods.

National research suggests that a person’s health is strongly influenced by social determinants including income, education, and neighborhood conditions. One such neighborhood condition is access to affordable, healthy food. So, there was a great fit between our values and the Wilder Foundation’s value of innovating to improve community health.

Describe what a typical day will be for Mobile Market.

We’re still putting together the giant puzzle that will be our route and schedule. We’ve been doing a lot of community engagement at our potential stop sites to learn from residents what days and times work best for them, and we’re now compiling all of this data to create our schedule. Ideally, we’ll operate Tuesday through Saturday, with at least three stops per day ranging from one to three hours per stop, depending on the traffic at each location. We plan to operate at each stop at the same time each week so residents can plan their weekly shopping around the market.

How do you plan to promote Mobile Market once it’s making its rounds so the neighborhood knows you’re there?

We’re working closely with our host sites to promote the Mobile Market to their customers and stakeholders using their existing communication channels. We’ll also do some grassroots methods, like flyering our targeted neighborhoods. Blue sky dreaming, what are your long term goals for Mobile Market? We’d love to see a fleet of Mobile Market serving the Twin Cities, and we’d love the Mobile Market to become a gathering place where neighbors can come together and discuss—and even—start developing what they need to make their neighborhoods healthy. We hope the Mobile Market will become a catalyst for an even bigger food access movement across Twin Cities’ neighborhoods.

What will it take to see suitable brick-and-mortar grocery stores return to food desert neighborhoods?

Some say there isn’t enough demand for healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods and that’s why there aren’t brick-and-mortar grocery stores. However, through our community outreach, we’ve found that community members really want affordable, healthy foods, especially produce and meat. With the Mobile Market, we can prove there’s demand in neighborhoods for healthy, affordable food and hopefully attract brick-and-mortar stores.

Locally...

CHOW Community Food Bus

The new CHOW Community Food Bus has been visiting Whitney Point each Thursday for the past month, providing fresh fruits, vegetables and other items for sale at a low cost. The bus accepts EBT, cash and credit. You can also find the bus and purchase fruits and vegetables in Deposit, Windsor, and Binghamton. Contact chowbus@broomecouncil.net for a schedule and to ask questions.
Sense of place’ is key to regional talent strategy

Led by the Walton Family Foundation, Northwest Arkansas officials look to walkable urban solutions for future economic growth.

Robert Steuteville, Better! Cities & Towns

Images for Fayetteville’s downtown plan show a transformation that boosts ‘sense of place’ that will appeal to prospective professional talent in the region. Images courtesy of Dover, Kohl & Partners, by Steve Price, Urban Advantage.

The foundation funded by the Walton family — of Walmart fame — sponsored about 25 people to come to the Congress for the New Urbanism in Buffalo in early June. It was a remarkable group, including mayors, city council members, chamber of commerce officials, and representatives of regional planning commissions, economic development and transportation agencies, and others from four primary cities in Northwest Arkansas.

The foundation’s purpose is to steer rapidly growing Northwest Arkansas toward becoming a walkable transit-oriented place that is attractive to educated young professionals.

The Walton Family Foundation initiative may seem ironic given that Walmart stores symbolize the single-use, big box format with large parking lots. Yet the foundation, which is led by a board of Walton family members, is concerned with the economic future of Northwest Arkansas, the fastest growing region in the US.

Three of the nation’s Fortune 500 companies — Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, and Walmart — are based in the in the region, which currently has 482,000 people. Because of Walmart, the largest retailer in the world, more than 1,300 vendors including Coca-Cola, Procter and Gamble, Unilever, Motorola, Nestlé, Dell, General Mills, Kellogg Company, and PepsiCo have set up corporate offices there. “People from all over the world are coming to work for these companies. We are in a race for talent,” says Rob Brothers, director of the regional Focus Area for the foundation.
The “talent” consists mainly of people with a college degree — who tend to favor mixed-use, walkable communities with a sense of place. Northwest Arkansas is historically rural. It’s four leading municipalities — Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, and Bentonville — range from about 40,000 to 80,000 people each. The growth pattern is dispersed and single-use, because it has mostly taken place in the last 40 or 50 years.

Retaining the young and educated

The concern is that the young and educated will choose to locate elsewhere if the amenities they are looking for — particularly the diverse neighborhoods served by transit — are lacking. “The goal is to attract and retain the kind of quality people at all levels that we need,” Brothers says.

Tyson Foods has already taken tangible action — it is moving its headquarters back to downtown Springdale. “They have 5 acres, which was the site of their original building, which has been derelict and abandoned for some time,” says Matthew Petty, city council member of Fayetteville who works at the University of Arkansas Community Design Center, and a CNU attendee.

After the meeting at CNU, the group discussed potential strategies to improve the sense of place, Petty says. The first is a regional form-based code (FBC). The City of Fayetteville has a citywide, optional, form-based code, which developers are choosing to use because by right they receive administrative approval of projects. The success of that code and the CNU experience — where many sessions covered FBCs — is helping Northwest Arkansas officials to feel comfortable with the concept, Petty says.

The second idea is to set up an training program in walkable urbanism, perhaps tied to CNU accreditation — as other places like El Paso, Texas, and Beaufort, South Carolina, have done.

Overall strategy

The strategy for improving talent has four components, according to Brothers.

• Improve local primary education
• Create international-caliber culture
• Foster economic development
• Create a “sense of place.”

The last component, sense of place, is correlated with economic development.

There are six components to “sense of place,” according to Brothers.

• Increase nature trails and use of natural amenities
• Boost public green space
• Downtown revitalization
• Coordinate infrastructure and transportation networks
• Improve water quality
• Increase the knowledge base of local leaders in urban planning techniques and quality of life issues

Northwest Arkansas has a head start on this knowledge base from Fayetteville’s downtown plan and form-based code written by urbanists Dover, Kohl & Partners 10 years ago, followed by the citywide code written by city planners.

As for transportation, the region is fortunate in that all four cities are located on a single line. Despite the sprawl of recent decades, this geographic layout sets up the region for future public transit improvements. “The whole region originally grew
with support by rail,” Petty says. “All of the downtowns are on a historic rail line – which still runs right next to the
downtowns.”

But the most important factor could be that, with the foundation help, key officials in the four cities seem to be pulling
together.

“When this is developer-driven, it takes 10 years at least to make a difference,” says Greg Hines, mayor of the City of Rogers.
“When the city recognizes a need for it, you can see it happening in a meaningful way in a few years.”

Key to this cooperation is the growing recognition, Petty says, that “The labor force chooses where they are going to live first,
and then they look for a job. Times have changed and have to focus on different strategies.’

The initiative doesn’t yet have a name but these ideas have been brewing for some time, Petty explains. Two years ago, the
foundation began to require that cities receiving grant funds for nature trails have a downtown master plan. “That was the first
signal that they were zeroing on urban amenities as a solution to their talent challenges,” he says.

Robert Steuteville is editor and executive director of Better Cities & Towns. This article appears in the July-August print issue.

City's transit costs most affordable in the nation: Study

By IVAN PEREIRA August 12, 2014

New York’s relatively cheap transportation options help to make living in the Big Apple easier on the
wallet compared to other cities, a report released Tuesday said.

The Citizens Budget Commission’s study found New York is seventh costliest area in the U.S. when it
comes to housing with average annual rent at $14,700, but it ranked last when it came to costliest
area for commuting.

New York has the lowest annual transportation costs in the nation at about $5,752, and 56% of
residents don't own a car, making it the only city where a majority of its population doesn't drive.

"It's the MTA that makes New York City more affordable, and New Yorkers should recognize the
importance of adequately maintaining and funding our public transit system," Charles Brecher, the
CBC's consulting research director said in a statement.

The nonprofit, which analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,
said New York comes in third in "location affordability," which measures combined housing and
transportation costs. Washington, D.C. and San Francisco ranked first and second, respectively.

San Jose had the highest annual transportation costs with close to $11,000 a year.

Brecher and the group pushed for more focus on the city and state’s various transit agencies and an
increase on density in transit corridors to improve affordability in the city.

"Transportation to and from home is a key related factor -- and that relatively low cost works heavily in
New York City's favor," he said.
23 million bikeshare rides and no deaths

Robert Steuteville, Better! Cities & Towns

A Reuters article reported this astonishing statistic: 23 million rides have been taken in US bikeshare systems since 2007 with no reported fatalities.

The author first looked at New York City’s Citibike program, and found no deaths in more than 10 million rides. The accident rate is equally impressive — less than 10 per million rides, with or without injuries. The author then investigated smaller bikeshare programs in 26 cities and found a similar story: few accidents and no deaths.

With the exception of New York City, these numbers are not confirmed and it is possible that the experts missed something. Even so, this is an amazing safety record considering that bikeshare programs do not provide helmets and attract novice riders including many tourists who are unfamiliar with the geography.

The article attributed the safety record to well-built, heavy bikes with good brakes that work in all weather and are geared to limit speed. Those are good, but insufficient, speculations. Motorcycles, the most dangerous form of transportation, are far heavier and have drum brakes as well. A good part of the safety is likely due to where these bikeshare programs are located within cities.

Bikeshare, like carshare, is only available in downtowns and other neighborhoods with high Place Mobility, as I call it. These neighborhoods generally have a very high Walk Score and offer multiple options for reaching destinations that are close by. The street networks are well-connected, the streets are older and narrower, and the automobile traffic is slower. That provides safer biking conditions than on wider urban or suburban arterial roads or rural roads.

Safety in numbers also comes into play. When bike share programs are instituted, it is safe to assume that the number of bicyclists on streets in specific parts of cities rises, which makes drivers more cautious. A recent study published in the American Journal of Public Health showed that the proportion of head injuries rose in cities with bike share programs — but that was only because overall bike injuries fell. “The number of total injuries, including head injuries, in the bike-share cities actually fell after programs were implemented,” as Next City reported.

Robert Steuteville is editor and executive director of Better Cities & Towns.
Taking public transit to work may keep you fitter: study

London researchers found that men taking public transportation were about seven pounds lighter than those who drove to work. Women were about six pounds lighter. They also had reductions in body fat percentage.

A team of researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and University College London collected and assessed 7,534 BMI (body mass index) measurements and 7,424 body fat percentage measurements from participants in "Understanding Society, the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study,"
a cross-sectional dataset representative of the British population.

Ten percent of men and 11 percent of women reported using public transport. Both their body fat percentage and their BMI scores, like those of others who walked or cycled, were lower than those who commuted by means of a personally owned car.

Men who used public or active (either walking or cycling) transport modes had an average BMI score of one percent lower than those who commuted via car, which indicates roughly a difference of about 6.5 pounds in overall body weight.

For women, BMI scores were an average of 0.7 points lower than their car commuting counterparts, equating to an average reduction in overall body weight of 5.5 pounds.

As far as body fat percentage was concerned, the reduction was similar in size and significance, even after researchers controlled for age-related differences, socio-economic discrepancy, diet and level of physical activity in the workplace.

While the large-scale study did not zero in on public transport users, and they represented a small group, results indicate nonetheless that the stresses and unpleasantness associated with trains and buses could be outweighed by the health benefits.

Of the thousands of participants screened, 76 percent of men and 72 percent of women commuted by means of private motorized vehicles, while 14 percent of men and 17 percent of women walked or cycled to the office.

Average BMI scores came in at 28 for men and 27 for women, indicating that most participants were overweight, teetering on the lines of obesity, which is marked by a BMI score of 30. The ideal BMI score is between 18.5 and 24.9.

The study was published online in the British Medical Journal.