



Shared Use Pathway Task Force
Minutes of Virtual Meeting
September 1, 2021

[Link to Shared Google Drive](#)

[Link to Meeting Announcement](#)

Task Force Members Present:

- Mary Blake
- Kriss Grisham, Co-Chair
- Gretchen Horlacher
- Andrew Hotaling
- Jeff McCrehan
- Eva Patrone
- Oscar Ramos
- Nick Suzich
- Gary Temple, Co-Chair

Gary welcomed about two dozen attendees, reviewing the agenda and procedural rules for gathering comments and questions from Town residents.

Kriss started a slide presentation providing background and progress to date. He stated the goal of the Task Force is to provide the Town Council with a fact-based evaluation of potential connection options by Monday, November 8 to prepare for a Special Town Meeting.

Eva reviewed the evaluation criteria and definitions.

Gary shared a map of potential connection options and described each one. He reported the Montgomery County Planning Board voted on April 29, 2021 (5-0), designating Brown Street as their preferred connection option. Gary also reported planner Kyle Lukacs indicated the Salt Barn option would be more difficult and costly to build.

Comments and Questions from Town Residents

Jay Everhart – Addressing overall safety and risk of injury on lower Brown Street, Jay asked if mitigation measures should be considered prior to or post completion of a pathway connection. Risks could include parked vehicles, fast bicyclists and commercial vehicles navigating the tight intersection of Brown and Ridge. Regarding environmental impact, how would the connection be configured at the end of Brown? Could landscaping or additional trees mitigate potential tree loss? Nick said the current design indicates a 90° turn onto the path at the end of Brown Street. Eva referred to the Bicycle Facility Design Tool Kit, a resource developed for those planning a shared use path to include bicycles. Eva reported the grade of lower Brown Street is 2.3%.

David Stopak – Speaking as a member of the Town’s Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), David amplified the HPC’s opposition to any path connection negatively impacting the hedgerow in the Conservation Meadow. The HPC considers this hedgerow an environmentally sensitive area, and also a possible archeological site to be protected. The HPC considers the Salt Barn option to have the least negative environmental impact.

Joli McCathran – Joli stated none of the bike path should be in Washington Grove because it would give Montgomery County power over Town roads and would lower property values of the homes along its route. She stated the bike path would negatively impact the Town’s historic character that she and other Mayors have worked so hard to preserve. Gary responded saying his research indicates Washington Grove would retain total authority over its roads. Mary Blake clarified no pathway construction would occur on property belonging to the Town without Town approval.

Paula Puglisi – As a member of the Racial and Social Equity Committee, Paula referred interested parties to the Shared Google Drive for comments already submitted by the Committee. Gretchen and Mary have been tasked with examining equity issues regarding access to transportation, grocery stores etc. and the implications of a shared use pathway on social equity both for Town residents and neighbors.

Joan Mahaffey – Joan prepared a power point presentation which may be viewed on the Shared Google Drive. She suggests optimizing routes for improved safety and environmental impact. She stated the Salt Barn route, which received the most favorable votes at a pre-pandemic Town meeting about the shared use pathway, is safer and does not negatively affect the environment. Eva reported County planner Kyle Lukacs has said there are safety issues around the Ridge/Railroad Street intersection, as well as challenging design issues with the Salt Barn option.

Joan asked about the Washington Grove Lane sidewalk which she stated is now the responsibility of the Town to keep free from snow and in good repair. Wouldn’t Town roads connecting to the shared use path be an additional responsibility with increased liability for the Town? Andrew responded the Town has a duty of care to maintain all Town roads and walkways in good condition. He stated the Town carries liability insurance protecting the Town against claims of negligence. Mary Challstrom added the Town’s underwriter at the Local Government Insurance Trust has responded to this question and her reply may be found on the Shared Google Drive.

Joan asked about use of the word “trailhead” when referring to the pathway connection to Washington Grove because “trailhead” usually implies additional vehicular parking. Eva clarified in this case there are no plans for parking.

David Stopak – David suggested using an independent source for environmental advice rather than County planners who may have different priorities. He suggested some connection options may require a more environment-friendly pathway surface rather than asphalt and that a narrower path may be appropriate. David also said the Amity Road connection (when and if it is built) would destroy the existing shared use pathway. Eva replied there is no evidence to suggest a shared use pathway would be destroyed with an eventual connection, and this connection would be done in concert with the existing pathway.

Jay Everhart – Jay stated the study for the shared use path was contracted outside of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. Gary said environmental impacts were considered in evaluating options and not just cost savings. Mary Blake suggested requesting all the supporting documents and background information the County used in evaluating options.

Gary noted comments submitted by the following group and individuals are available for review on the Shared Google Drive:

- Lower Brown Street Residents Group
- Audrey Maskery
- Dennis Kirschbaum
- Liz Everhart

Survey of Town Residents

Mary Blake announced a survey of Town residents will be conducted, first by electronic means using SurveyMonkey, and then a follow up using paper versions for areas of Town with a low response rate. Residents will be asked how they would use a shared use path using the evaluation criteria. The Mayor will use a Grove Alert to announce the survey.

Gary thanked meeting participants.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Mary M. Challstrom