

**TOWN OF BETHLEHEM**  
**PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee**  
445 DELAWARE AVENUE  
DELMAR, NEW YORK 12054



**To:** Supervisor Messina and Town Board Members  
**From:** PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee  
**Subject:** Committee Accomplishments, Recommendations, and Next Steps  
**Date:** August 16, 2010  
**Cc:** M. Morelli, N. Lanahan, G. Saggendorph, P. Penman, N. Moquin, T. Beebe  
**Enclosed:** Town of Bethlehem Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network Map, Town of Bethlehem Evaluation Process for New Pathway Investment Guide, Complete Streets Resolution

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As you are aware, the PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee was established in March of 2009, as a result of a recommendation of the 2009 CACC Report on Open Space, with a primary focus on addressing bicycle and pedestrian mobility in the Town. The Committee's work also addresses the Town's Comprehensive Plan recommendations to maintain and enhance pedestrian connections within and between neighborhoods, recreation facilities, and hamlet centers, as well as provide adequate bicycle facilities.

At this juncture, the Committee would like to provide the Town Board an update regarding accomplishments from the past year and a half and present recommendations and next steps.

**Accomplishments**

1. Drafted Complete Streets Resolution, Town Board adoption – August of 2009 (see attachment)  
This resolution recognizes bicyclists and pedestrians as equally important as motorists in the planning and design of all new street construction and street reconstruction undertaken by the Town. The fundamental understanding being that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be considered, whenever possible, by the Town Highway Superintendent in all new street construction and street reconstruction undertaken by the Town of Bethlehem. According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, Bethlehem is one (1) of only four (4) communities in New York State to adopt a Complete Streets Resolution.
2. Supported Town Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Applications
  - a. CDTC 2010-2015 TIP application - Feura Bush Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
  - b. CDTC/CDTA 2010 Bike Rack Program – Bike racks awarded to the Town at:
    - i. Kenwood Avenue Parking Lot
    - ii. Veterans Memorial Park
    - iii. Firefighters Memorial Park
    - iv. Henry Hudson Park
3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Education Awareness
  - a. Reviewed National, State, Local bicycle and pedestrian characteristics and trends
  - b. Received presentation by Clifton Park representative regarding Clifton Park's Trails Subcommittee
  - c. Received Safe Routes to School presentation from Bethlehem High School student
  - d. Received bicycle safety training to conduct Bicycle Skills Exercises at Town's Bike Expo event
4. Created Town of Bethlehem Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network-Draft (see attachment)  
Early Committee meetings focused on information regarding bicycle and pedestrian trends and characteristics, and existing bicycle and pedestrian accommodations within the Town. For example, the

average (or comfortable) walking distance (one-way) for a pedestrian was determined to be ½ mile (based on national standards). Also, the Committee discussed the varying abilities of bicyclists, which range from Class A (Avid cyclist) to Class B (Basic cyclist) to Class C (Child cyclists). Class A represents a typical commuter riding to work or cycling club member riding for recreation, while Class C represents young children traveling around their local neighborhood. The Committee also identified destinations in the Town, such as schools, parks, commercial areas, conservations areas that attract bicycle and pedestrian activity. A January 2010 Committee meeting focused on a discussion with the President of the Mohawk Hudson Cycling Club with regards to bicycle mobility in the Town.

As a result of this information, the Committee developed a ±95-mile Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network that the Town should make more accommodating for safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian travel. It is envisioned that this network could become a continuous system of usable accommodations. These roadways were identified since they are parts of major travel routes throughout the Town. They connect major destinations (schools, shopping areas, recreation facilities, community facilities) with each other and residential neighborhoods.

It is recommended the Priority Network should be used in the following applications:

a. Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations Grant Applications

A benefit to the Town for developing and maintaining the Priority Network is that the network will be referenced when applying for Federal and/or State (or other) grant opportunities, informing the grantor that the Town has its priorities set for an overall bicycle and pedestrian travel network. Additionally, the Priority Network Map can assist NYSDOT or Albany County at the time they design improvements for State and County roadways. In these instances, the Town would advocate to the NYSDOT or Albany County that pedestrian and bicycle accommodations be included in a project design based on the Town's adoption of the Priority Network.

b. Land Use Review and Approval (Site Plan/Subdivision applications)

The Planning Board is empowered to review and approve site plan and subdivision applications in the Town. Review and approval of these applications typically entails discussion of pedestrian and/or bicycle accommodations, since the Board has the authority to require bicycle and pedestrian accommodations within the public right-of-way. The Board also reviews pedestrian accommodations with private developments (i.e. commercial uses). As such, the Planning Board should utilize the Priority Network Map to determine the need for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations if a project is located on a roadway located on the Priority Network.

c. Evaluation Process for New Pathway Investment Guide

The purpose of this guide is to document the process the Town should follow when conducting an evaluation for a new pathway investment project. The manual includes steps the user (evaluator) should take to complete the evaluation and also provides background information on how the process was developed. In an effort to maximize benefits of stretched Town funds, only those projects that are located on the Priority Network should be considered for funding. The evaluation process is described in the draft *Town of Bethlehem Evaluation Process for New Pathway Investment Guide* (see attached) and summarized in Item 5 below.

5. Developed Town of Bethlehem Evaluation Process for New Pathway Investment (see attachment)

The purpose of the evaluation process for new pathway investment is to provide Town decision makers and professional staff with a tool to assist in prioritizing pathway investment projects. The tool is intended to be used as a foundation and a first step for evaluating proposed pathway investment projects, and not used as the ultimate decision maker. The process evaluates the merits, including costs

and benefits, of a new pathway investment project, and the guide identifies various funding sources. As a result of the evaluation process, the Town could develop a tiered list of projects (Tier I, II, III) based on high, medium, and low evaluation scores. This process provides flexibility for the Town to choose among several projects within a Tier I list in response to a grant solicitation. While the Town's current practice is for professional staff (Engineering, Planning, and Highway Departments) to identify projects to address grant solicitations, up until this point there has been no formal process in evaluating the merits of a proposed project. The evaluation process is intended to be used on new pathway investment projects located within existing public right-of-way (State, County, Town roads).

The 5 step evaluation process is as follows:

- Step 1) Screen projects based on Priority Network, and/or Recommendation of Town Plan/Study
- Step 2) Estimate Cost of the Project
- Step 3) Evaluate Project Benefits based on Benefits Evaluation Table
- Step 4) Calculate Project Score based on Pathway Scoring Matrix
- Step 5) Leverage Opportunities (Recalculate score based on assistance from non-town funding source)

### **Recommendations**

The Committee provides the following recommendations to address bicycle and pedestrian mobility in the Town:

#### **Short Term (0- 6 months)**

1. Schedule Public Meeting for Fall 2010 - The Committee would schedule a public meeting in the Fall 2010 to present the new pathway investment evaluation process, and Priority Network Map to the public in an effort to receive public comment. The Committee would then incorporate the public comments in the evaluation process, and resubmit to the Town Board for approval.
2. Establish PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee as a standing committee – When established in March 2009, the PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee was not specifically defined as a standing committee nor assigned appointment terms. It is recommended that the PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee be adopted as a standing committee by resolution and assign committee terms. Typically, other standing committees in Town have a defined term of service staggered in length among the various members. The Committee can prepare a resolution for the Town Board that identifies the importance/purpose of the PaTHs Committee, outlines role, goals, and tasks, and encourages bicycle and pedestrian mobility.

#### **Long Term (following completion of short term items)**

1. Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Program addressing the 3 E's, Engineering, Education, and Enforcement, for bicycle and pedestrian mobility – The Committee could work towards the development of this broader program to address bicycle and pedestrian mobility in the Town. (The 3 E's approach to bicycle and pedestrian mobility are recommended in the NYSDOT 2010 Strategic Highway Safety Plan, and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee 2010 Highway Safety Strategic Plan.)

Engineering –

- Develop a tiered (Tier I, II, III) bicycle and pedestrian project list  
Utilize Committee's and public's knowledge of existing pedestrian and bicycle accommodations and develop a potential tiered projects list. Apply the evaluation process for new pathway investment to the projects list, which will establish a tiered ranking of projects. Benefits to this exercise include: a) Provide Town Staff with immediate project choices should funding becoming available; b) Demonstrate the Town is responsive to residents' concerns and

- comments; c) Establish and maintain an awareness of need for pedestrian and bicycle improvements in the Town.
- Explore the establishment of a process for investment in the maintenance of existing pathways. The establishment of an evaluation process for new pathway investment identified the need for a process to fairly review and prioritize maintenance investment of existing pathways. The exploration of this process should be in conjunction with the Highway Department and their current approach of periodically evaluating, maintaining, and rehabilitating the existing Town highway system. It would also be consistent with the Town's Complete Streets Resolution.
  - Research pathway funding practices/programs of other New York State and national municipalities  
Examine how other municipalities in New York State and across the country (as legally applicable) fund pedestrian and bicycle programs, such as through Town funds, grant opportunities, land use review process (i.e. mitigation fund), etc.

#### Education-

- Conduct/Promote education activities regarding bicycle and pedestrian mobility  
This element could involve the dissemination of information and announcement of activities to help educate pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists about roadway safety. The Committee would help spearhead some of these programs, and provide assistance to those which already exist such as the Parks and Recreation Bike Expo Event. New activities that the Committee may provide assistance include Ride Your Bike to Work Day, and a Walking School Bus Program (leadership by School Districts). There would be more of a concentration within the Committee to focus on public relations and social networking in order to promote and conduct these educational programs and activities.

#### Enforcement-

- Assign a Liaison from the Police Department to the Committee  
Additional attention and insight is needed regarding enforcement. Ideally, assigning a Liaison from the Police Department to the Committee would further understanding of the Department's role regarding bicycle and pedestrian mobility (i.e. enforcement of the rules of the road for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists). It is envisioned that current Town Staff assigned to the Committee would correspond and/or serve as the channel between the Police Department Liaison and Committee should enforcement discussions arise.
- Review Town Bicycle Ordinance – Town Code Chapter 46  
Review Town Bicycle Ordinance – Chapter 46 for consistency with current New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, and Town practices.

#### Ongoing

- Revisit the Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network Map on a yearly basis - The Committee recognizes that as the Town develops, pedestrian and bicycle needs and destinations may change. As such, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network Map should be reviewed at minimum on an annual basis to determine the addition of roadways. This would also entail development of a tracking system (or log) of bicycle and pedestrian accommodation project requests identified by local residents during Committee or other public meetings.
- Engage various Town constituencies regarding bicycle and pedestrian mobility  
Engage Town constituencies such as the business community, not-for-profits, open space organizations, civic groups, etc., to better understand bicycle and pedestrian mobility needs in the Town. Participation by these groups in either educational events or assistance to help

accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians (i.e. bike racks, path connections, etc.) could further encourage these modes of transportation.

### **Next Steps**

When employed together, a program that considers **E**ngineering and desires to **E**ducate and **E**nforce the rules of the road, would further help the Town of Bethlehem distinguish itself as a welcoming community for safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle travel. Such a program would also implement the pedestrian and bicycle mobility recommendations of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

The Committee recommends the following actions by the Town Board and next steps for the Committee:

- August 25, 2010: Committee provides presentation of Accomplishments, Recommendations, and Next Steps to the Town Board
- August 25, 2010: Town Board directs the Committee to implement the Short Term Recommendations (listed above)
- September/October 2010: Committee holds public meeting to present Evaluation Process and Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network
- October/November 2010: Committee revises Evaluation Process, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network (as necessary) based on public meeting comments. Committee prepares PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee Resolution to establish the Committee as standing committee. All three items are forwarded to the Town Board for review/approval at November/December 2010 Town Board meeting.
- November/December 2010: Town Board considers action on Evaluation Process, Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Network, PaTHs 4 Bethlehem Committee Resolution, and directs Committee to implement Long Term Recommendations (listed above)
- January 2011: Committee begins work on Long Term Recommendations