

UNAPPROVED Birchwood Village Lake Links Trail Task Force
Minutes – 7:10PM May 9, 2024

Attendees: Karen Freeberg, Ellen Maas(had to leave a little early), Bryan McGinnis, Mike Werner, Jane Warnet (Cora Hankins.Resigned from the TF due to other obligations.)

Thanks to Jessica for the detailed analysis of possible trail options that she sent out to us before the meeting

Agenda Items with conclusions and/or notes:

Public Forum: No non-members were present.

Agenda: No changes were offered.

1 and 2 Minutes: Approval of Meeting minutes for March 27 and April 24 with no changes. Passed 6-0

3. Meeting Norms: a. Substitute Cochairs to fill in when Chair Granek is unable to attend are Maas and Freeberg. McGinnis accepted the secretary role.
b. We chose One Hour as target meeting length.

4. Purpose and Goals: The group decided not to vote on a preferred route at this meeting. The summarized main objective is to review and analyze optional Trail routes and make recommendations for any actions to the City Council. Also to assist in implementation as the Council may direct.

Necessary first steps include

- a.Listing Pros and Cons for each possibility (already pretty well stated.)
- b.Learn procedure/process/conditions for applying for and receiving and using \$70K in state funds thought to be available to Birchwood Village. Are matching local funds required? **Ellen will contact Mayor Ford (and/or others) to get this information.**
- c. Set up joint meeting with the Road Safety Task Force.
- d. Plan and hold a public meeting to get residents input

5 Quorum: We counted up eight active Task Force members and selected five as a necessary quorum for conducting official business, e.g. recommending a preferred trail route. **Chair/Convener should pole the members a few days before a scheduled meeting to be sure that we will have a quorum.**

6. Pros and Cons See April Meeting Minutes and submissions by Ben Creagh, Ellen Maas, and Jessica Granek.

The following major items and issues came out at this meeting: (not in order of importance).

a: There is no best-choice trail option that meets all primary requirements while eliminating or minimizing negative factors.

- b: Conflict with parking and traffic on the west part of Wildwood Avenue is the most difficult obstacle for any route using this street
- c Money that may be available does not permit any significant construction project.
- d: Safety of trail (and road) users and Birchwood Village residents is highest concern.
- e: No conversion of any street to One-Way will be proposed.
- f: The best option could turn out to be "Do nothing at all."
- g. " Rules of the road" should be covered in the quarterly newsletter and/or email (A topic for the Roads Task Force??)

7: Road Measurements: Already done in April. See report by Cora and Karen.

8: Grant Money: See 4. b above

9. Joint Meeting: See 4. c above

(Next Meeting is proposed for July 11. At this time no June meeting is scheduled.)

Submitted by Bryan McGinnis

I apologize again for my last minute absence at the last meeting. Life never seems to consult my calendar to check for conflicts. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend this week's meeting as well as I will be in Colorado attending my daughter's college graduation. Below you will find my thoughts and recommendations on the proposed routes.

- In regards to Ben's thoughts that were sent out prior to the last meeting I agree that people (pedestrians, bikers, and drivers) will all make independent decisions as to which route they will take as they navigate through Birchwood regardless of whether or not we have a designated route. The more usable and safer a route is the better chance we have of people following the route.
- Any route that we opt to designate needs to meet the three guiding principles of safety, feasibility, and usability.
 - **Safety** refers to all those involved/impacted. We need to be careful not to use convenience and safety interchangeably when assessing the safety "score" of each route. I encourage everyone to navigate the 3 proposed routes, at various times of the day, as a driver, as a pedestrian, and as a biker in order to get multiple perspectives of each route. Gaining first hand knowledge as each type of user is very important when considering the options and making decisions on behalf of all of the individuals using the roadways.
 - **Usability** refers to how likely it is that people will actually utilize the designated route. Regardless of any safety considerations and/or money spent, if people don't use the route then we are no better off than we are right now.
 - **Feasibility** refers to how much money and resources we have and the best way to allocate them. \$70,000 is not enough to create a raised trail like the one on South Shore. I am in favor of Ben Creagh's suggestions (listed below) as options to consider.
 - Crosswalks and sharrows (the inset ones at ~\$500 each) were also part of the work recommended back in 2022. The striping and sharrows painting is well specified so good quotes should be available. The sharrows would match Mahtomedi on Birchwood Road.
 - Do not repaint yellow center stripe or white fog lines for Hall Ave, Birchwood Road for the summer after resurfacing. See how residents feel after a trial period. The previous time Hall/Cedar was resurfaced, no paint was applied for about a month. It's easier to add striping than remove.
 - Pull back brush and dirt from shoulder, trim vegetation growth to maintain existing shoulder. This cost is hard to quantify.
 - Another traffic calming option for Birchwood is a solar powered radar equipped speed limit sign. The advent of good solar power systems means that there could be little installation cost. They typically display a driver's speed and flash (optionally a message) if a speeder is detected. Pricing about \$3500. I would suggest an installation along the long stretch of Hall, although not certain the solar feature would work during summer's full tree cover.
 - There are many suppliers (google "solar powered speed limit sign": this one is a good example: <https://ustrafficsystems.com/product/safe-pace-100-speed-radar/>)
 - If the data option is collected, then it could be directed to the Washington County Sheriff Department to address particular days and times if need be.

- None of the proposed routes will meet each of the three criteria in full so we need to do our best to choose the option that can be utilized in a safe manner and then decide how best to enhance it with the money we have available.

I took my own advice and have run, biked, and driven all of the routes multiple times since the March meeting. I took mental notes each time and wrote down as many as I could remember when I got home. Below is how I rated each proposed route based our guiding principles and my observations from the road, bike and car:

- Hall Avenue west to right on Cedar to left on Wildwood to East County Line
 - Safety = B
 - Pos. = Connects directly to paved trail on both sides of the city
 - Neutral = driveway length - anyone who lives in Birchwood needs to be vigilant when exiting their driveway - This is not meant to minimize the safety issue or stress on individual homeowners, but when looking at the big picture, the number of pedestrians and bikers are not likely to change even if they are directed to a different route as the people currently traveling on Wildwood will likely continue.
 - Neg. = Parking on Wildwood creates visibility and space issues when pedestrians, bikes, and cars are attempting to share the road
 - Neg. = longer stretch on Hall - more traffic at higher speeds than on Wildwood
 - Usability = B+
 - Shortest route
 - Least amount of hills
 - Route is logical but many people want to stay close to the lake
 - Connection to paved trail either side of the city
 - Length of time on Hall is not ideal
 - Feasibility = A
- Hall west to right on Jay to Lake to west on Wildwood
 - Safety = B+
 - Pos. = runs along lake
 - Pos. = connects directly to paved trail on both sides of the city
 - Pos. = less time on Hall
 - Neutral = parking (parking along Lake Ave. doesn't usually impeded visibility or space, but still have parking issues on Wildwood)
 - Neutral = driveway length
 - Neutral = slightly longer route than Hall/Cedar/Wildwood
 - Neg. = blind curve at Jay/Wildwood
 - Usability B+
 - Slightly longer route but staying along lake is a plus
 - Route is logical
 - Connection to paved trail on either side of the city
 - Less time on Hall
 - Feasibility A-
 - Not sure what can be done on blind curve
- Hall/Cedar west to Birchwood to right north on East Cty Line to join present trail
 - Safety = C
 - Pos. = Birchwood has very little traffic
 - Neutral = driveway length
 - Neg. = longer time on Hall with more traffic

- Neg. = does not connect directly to paved trail on west end of city making for very unsafe situation for pedestrians - requires pedestrians to cross E. Cty Line Rd. from Birchwood to Wildwood and then cross back over to get onto the trail in order to comply with pedestrian rules of the road - shoulder is not in good condition for bikers to ride safely
- Usability = C
 - Longer route on Hall
 - Does not connect to paved trail on west side - exit is onto very busy and dangerous road for pedestrians and bikers
 - Less logical than other routes
- Feasibility = B
 - We do not have the funds to address safety concerns on E. Cty Line Rd. between Birchwood and Wildwood

My overall vote would be for either:

- Hall west to right on Jay to Lake to west on Wildwood
- Hall Avenue west to right on Cedar to left on Wildwood to East County Line

The Hall/Birchwood/E.Cty. Line Rd. route would probably have been my first choice if the exit didn't require the nerve wracking and very dangerous section on E. Cty. Line Rd. to connect to the paved trail. When considering safety this makes this a non-option. Someone had mentioned the possibility of extending the trail when E. Cty. Line Rd is upgraded. This would be great, however we don't have any idea when this might happen or if it is even a possibility so choosing based on hope seems irresponsible at this point.

Looking ahead toward June, my availability is pretty limited as I will be traveling out of the country with my family from June 10-26. If the next meeting happens to be outside of those dates I will be there.

Have a good week,
Jessy Granec