

BMTS Article Digest March - April 2010

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.

Scott

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

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletterarchives.php>

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.

Pedal pushers

Parents in bicycle-friendly Arlington are divided over an effort to get children to ride their bikes to school

By Kathleen Burge, Globe Staff | March 21, 2010

If one were to name some particularly bike-friendly suburbs of Boston, Arlington might be first on the list.

No corner of the town is more than a few miles from the Minuteman Bikeway, the most popular bike path in the country. The town is home to two bicycle stores and a bike club whose members set off on long rides every Saturday and Sunday morning. A bicycling committee advises town leaders on bike issues.

And yet, until recently, school officials informally banned children from biking to school.

So far, none of the schools have bike racks. Last year, a pilot project to encourage children to ride their bikes to the Hardy School, the elementary school in East Arlington, was controversial.

“My view was, if you can’t ride to school in Arlington, then there’s no place you can ride to school in Massachusetts,” said David Watson, an Arlington resident and executive director of MassBike, a Boston-based bike advocacy group. “It’s already a bike-friendly community.”

To those who want to encourage children to ride their bikes to school, the advantages seem clear: It’s better for the environment. And in an age of increasing fears about childhood obesity, they argue, it’s better for kids.

But not everyone agrees. Some parents and school officials are fearful about children sharing busy roads with minivans and SUVs ferrying children to school. (Most Arlington children live within a mile of an elementary school, so there are no school buses.)

Recently, MassBike began a statewide effort to encourage children to ride their bikes to school. In 2008, the first year of the project, 10 schools signed on for bike safety training for grades 4 through 8. Last year, 23 schools joined the project, including Ayer, Watertown, Westfield — and Arlington.

Watson, who believes children can bike to school safely in Arlington, argues that encouraging children to ride their bikes when they are young will make them more likely to continue to bike when they’re older and provide more choices for transportation. Now MassBike is beginning to train school teachers to teach bike safety to children, allowing the program to reach more students.

“The interesting thing is that a very large percentage of the traffic around schools is generated by parents dropping their kids off at school,” Watson said. “So you get this very circular argument where parents say, ‘I can’t let my kid walk or bike to school because of all the traffic.’ But they’re the ones creating the traffic.”

Deborah D’Amico, principal of the Hardy School, came to the school four years ago when the no-biking policy was already in place. “I know this has been a hot issue in Arlington in recent years,” she said. “In previous years, it was forbidden and enforced as such.”

But last year, after a group of parents began looking for ways to change the policy at Hardy, D’Amico became convinced that it was time to change. The parents came up with a “dismount zone” around the school, requiring children to walk their bicycles. Since the program began, D’Amico has been pleased with the results, though she thinks principals need to decide whether bike programs would work at their schools.

Now D’Amico and the parent group are talking about installing bicycle racks at the school.

In the Arlington program, parents helped launch the program last spring, with bicycle safety education for students, run by MassBike, and a bike-to-school week, where children tracked their mileage. They also publicized the dismount zone around the school.

Last year at the Hardy School, the elementary school children biked and walked a total of 1,000 miles over 70 cycling days, said Lauren Hefferon, an Arlington mother who helped bring the program to the school. Still, she said, the school system has declined to come out and endorse cycling to school.

“They’re just fearful if they completely support it and a kid gets hurt, it’s on their back,” she said. “I don’t think it’s grounded in actual statistics, but that’s their fear.”

Arlington crossing guards are among those who believe biking to school is unsafe. Roseann Casazza, president of the Arlington Traffic Supervisors, argues that Arlington has heavy traffic, especially around the schools at drop-off and pick-up times, making biking on the streets dangerous.

Meanwhile, the town also prohibits biking on sidewalks — although the bylaw is not strongly enforced — because that can be dangerous for pedestrians, especially parents pushing strollers.

“When they started with this pilot, kids were riding the bikes on the sidewalk, and knocking some of the parents over who had carriages,” she said. “Parents were complaining. We truly feel that it’s an ‘unsafe’ issue.”

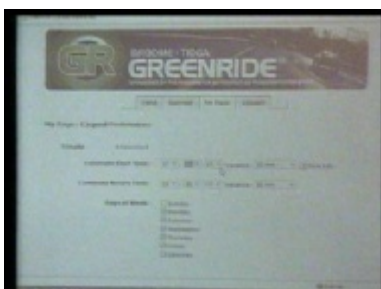
So far, no other schools in Arlington have adopted the biking program. Now Hefferon, founder of a bicycle touring company, thinks her next project will be encouraging children and parents to bike to athletic practices. Nearly every athletic field in town is near the Minuteman Bikeway, she said.

“I feel like every Saturday morning, as a parent of three, you see kids being driven to all these sports,” she said. “It’s ironic to me that kids are active in all these sports, yet they don’t know how to get from one place to another without being driven.”

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BMTS Greenride <http://www.wicz.com/news2005/viewarticle.asp?a=13525>



Developers of a county program to save commuters money and keep the environment clean are reaching out to local businesses.

Since BMTS started Greenride last July, about 350 users signed up in Broome and Tioga Counties to the web site that connects drivers for car pooling.

By this July, the county hopes to reach at least 500 users, so BMTS is offering local employers a chance to control how their employees travel to work.

"Employers can create their own portal in which they can have their own administrators for the web site and they can do their own outreach to their employees," said Scott Reigle, senior transportation planner.

So far Lourdes Hospital, UHS, Delta Engineers and Binghamton University have created their own portals.

The City of Binghamton will launch its Greenride portal this month.

GlendaleNewsPress.com

Glendale News-Press

No Easter Bunny for second pedestrian sting



A car does not stop for a Glendale Police officer dressed in a rabbit costume crossing the street at Central and Garfield in Glendale on Wednesday, March 31, 2010. The driver was pulled over for not yielding to a pedestrian. (Raul Roa/News-Press)



Officer Tom Broadway crosses the intersection of Glendale Avenue and Raleigh Street on Thursday, April 1 as part of a Glendale Police Department sting operation aimed at catching drivers who do not yield to pedestrians. (Leah Thompson/News-Press)

By Veronica Rocha

Published: Last Updated Thursday, April 1, 2010 9:29 PM PDT

SOUTH GLENDALE — Glendale police officers went forward with another pedestrian enforcement operation Thursday, a day after Councilman John Drayman took them to task for an earlier sting in which an officer dressed in a rabbit costume.

Glendale Police Officer Tom Broadway dressed in a pair of shorts and T-shirt, a far cry from the furry Easter costume that he sported a day earlier. On Thursday, he walked back and forth at two crosswalks, one lighted and marked, the other not. All the while officers cited drivers who failed to yield, while giving them a rundown of pedestrian safety rules.

The operation was less of a spectacle than the full-sized bunny outfit deployed Wednesday, which turned heads and invited the wrath of Drayman, who called the decoy "breathtakingly dangerous" and a poor use of city resources.

"I am happy to hear that they modified the sting and agreed that the idea of a giant rabbit — a total anomaly out in the roadway — is not exactly training our drivers to learn really anything," he said Thursday.

The city was reevaluating the use of costumes as decoys, although they have not been uncommon at previous pedestrian enforcement campaigns, city spokesman Ritch Wells said.

"[The campaigns] were very effective in getting the word out," Wells said. "People need to be careful when they are driving, and people need to be careful when they are walking as well. Both drivers and pedestrians need to watch out for the other one."

Police officials have repeatedly pointed to Glendale's abysmal pedestrian safety record as reason for the full-court press on enforcement and public education campaigns.

However eye-catching the bunny suit was, the goal of the operation was just as much about education as it was enforcement, said Lt. Gary Montecuolo, who would not comment on statements made by public officials regarding the use of costumes.

"We want to create an environment where people are safe," he said.

Thursday's sting was at two intersections — Glendale Avenue and Raleigh Street, which has a marked and lighted crosswalk, and Pacific Avenue and Hawthorne Street, which has an unmarked crosswalk.

The two intersections were selected based on the number of accidents at the locations in the past and resident complaints, Montecuolo said.

The plainclothes officer was nearly hit by passing motorists several times Thursday. Officers cited 36 motorists for failing to yield, up from the 27 issued the day before with the bunny costume.

The recent operations were part of a new safety campaign, in the works for months, to raise awareness among motorists and pedestrians of the rules of the road, Wells said.

Part of the safety campaign will target high-risk groups, including seniors, who are at highest risk of pedestrian-related collisions, Wells said.

Even local rap artist Super Sako has offered to help city officials with the campaign, Wells added.

City officials will be visiting convalescent homes, making TV appearances and bringing back the Behind the Badge TV program, which was cut due to budget constraints, he added.

A cameraman from the city's public access channel, GTV6, filmed the bunny costume sting for an episode planned for May.

"In their efforts to crack down, we definitely want to make sure that their safety is kept at a premium," Councilman Ara Najarian said. "That should still be the top priority. I definitely don't want to see an officer injured when they are trying to enforce our pedestrian laws."

U.N. General Assembly Proclaims "Decade of Action for Road Safety"

<http://www.embarq.org/en/news/10/03/05/un-general-assembly-proclaims-decade-action-road-safety>

EMBARQ and partners lead global road safety program in 10 countries

Published on Mar 5 2010



Traffic in cities like Bangalore can be deadly. Photo by Roy Sinai.

The U.N. General Assembly proclaimed on Tuesday that 2011-2020 will be the "Decade of Action for Road Safety," recognizing the "tremendous global burden" of fatalities and injuries resulting from road crashes each year.

Road traffic crashes kill 1.2 million people and injure up to 50 million each year, according to the World Health Organization. Road traffic injuries are projected to be the fifth leading cause of death globally by 2030.

Part of the problem is the explosive growth in the number of vehicles, exacerbated by high speeds and a lack of regulation, especially in developing countries. Children are the most at risk.

The U.N. General Assembly is calling on the WHO, the U.N. Road Safety Collaboration and other stakeholders to prepare a "plan of action" for the decade. It is also encouraging Member States to plan their own road traffic casualty-reduction targets.

"We congratulate the Assembly for taking a pro-active step towards making our streets safer worldwide," EMBARQ Director Nancy Kete said. "It's important that we do not develop solutions in isolation, but rather, collaborate across sectors to create entire systems of change."

Last November, EMBARQ became one of six organizations awarded a total of \$125 million by Michael Bloomberg to implement programs in low- and middle-income countries to prevent death and disability from road traffic crashes. This is the largest single donation ever for international road safety.

Bloomberg's five-year program -- known as the [Road Safety in 10 Countries Project](#) (or RS10 for short) -- will focus on 10 low- and middle-income countries that have a high burden of road traffic injuries and fatalities, representing 48 percent of traffic deaths globally. These countries include Brazil, Cambodia, China, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mexico, Russia, Turkey and Vietnam.

EMBARQ's programs will focus on incorporating sustainable transport and reduced emissions in urban planning. "Helmets and seatbelts are very important, but you also have to think about policies that protect all urban residents, not just transport users," said Nancy Kete, director of EMBARQ, which includes a network of Centers for Sustainable Transport based in Mexico, Brazil, India, Turkey and the Andean Region. "We're tackling the problem at the root by considering all of the health and safety benefits associated with mass transit, cycling, walking, clean fuels and vehicles, and vibrant public spaces. These solutions not only provide safer streets, but they also lead to cleaner air, reduced carbon emissions, more physically active citizens, and greater social inclusion."

Other organizations involved in the initiative include the World Health Organization, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility, Global Road Safety Partnership and the Association for Safe International Road Travel.

"We look forward to collaborating with the other Bloomberg partners," said Claudia Adriaola, EMBARQ's expert on road safety. "Our success will depend on a coordinated effort to achieve results, and that's what makes this program so powerful."
