

**Croton-on-Hudson Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Committee
Phase 1 Outreach Report and Public Outreach Meeting Summary
November 2006**

A. Introduction

The Village of Croton-on-Hudson Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Committee (BPC) is an all-volunteer committee comprised of Village residents that was formed in 2006 to conduct a planning process related to pedestrians and bicycle access and safety, and promotion of non-motorized means of travel in the Village of Croton-on-Hudson and its environs. This Phase 1 Outreach Report provides a summary of the committee's September 28th Public Outreach Meeting, a summary of written comments received from the public, and an update on the committee's ongoing work and recent Village accomplishments in this area.



Public meeting breakout groups



Greater connectivity through safe access!

B. Mission Statement

The September 28th, 2006 Public Outreach Meeting began with review and comments on the committee's draft Mission Statement. The Draft Mission Statement was revised as follows.

Mission Statement

To maintain and improve the quality of life and safety of those who walk, ride, bicycle and rely on non-motorized means of travel in the Village and its immediate environs while preserving the organic network of Village roadways and historic Village sidewalk system, and to promote a long range plan for access improvements for commuters, shoppers, students, and biking enthusiasts, both for the health and welfare of our citizens, workers and visitors, and for the environmental and economic health of our Village.

C. Background

The following was presented at the Public Outreach Meeting as background:

“The Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Committee (BPC) ties into a strong history of planning for walkable and bikable streets in Croton that began with the 1911 Harmon Plan, with its grid pattern of streets, and most recently resulted in the Village’s new waterfront esplanade and trailway, which won a county-wide award last year for planning accomplishments. The Village also has a very successful sidewalk improvement program and is a leader in the County in leveraging federal, state and county grants for a range of safety, access and recreational improvements.

Our 2003 Village of Croton-on-Hudson Comprehensive Plan is another example of the Village’s planning efforts related to pedestrians and cyclists, and it serves as an ongoing guide for specific long range projects, as well as a toolkit for how to promote safer streets. It gives examples of traffic calming measures such as speed humps, and sidewalk neckdowns, and shows conceptual plans for the Municipal Place area, South Riverside and Harmon, and the Village’s Northern Gateway.

But as our village grows, and as our region’s traffic increases, further bicycle and sidewalk safety improvements are needed, and we have to

think about prioritizing what can get done over the next 5 to 10 years and beyond, and also to formulating a larger vision of the future of the Village related to transportation.

The Village is continuing to take an active role and is currently progressing plans for the Maple Street Improvement Project. The BPC has provided input into that project in its planning stage.

The role of the BPC's ongoing planning process is to provide guidance for future actions of the Village in an advisory plan. The plan will be developed based on the input of Village residents. Our public outreach program includes soliciting input through letters, the public outreach meeting, and a stakeholder outreach program. We've contacted Village Departments, organizations and committees and are outreaching to local businesses. Much input has been received, and we hope to formulate plan recommendations by the end of the year, and produce a draft report in early 2007."

D. Breakout Group Summaries

The Public Outreach Meeting was held at Village Hall and was attended by several dozen residents. The presentation began with an overview of the committee, and Village accomplishments and plans relating to improving pedestrian and cycling conditions in the Village. Committee members were introduced including Joe Biber, Justin Casson, Kevin Davis, Ann Gallelli (Board of Trustees Liaison), Jeremy Goldsmith, Josh Moreinis (Chairman), Karen Moy, and Robert Olsson. The heart of the meeting was obtaining resident input through four breakout discussion groups that met for 30 minutes each on topics including Neighborhood Connectivity, School Access, Commutation, and Recreation. Large scale maps were used at the breakout group tables to aid in the discussion of issues and opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Following is a summary of the breakout group discussions. These summaries represent the direct input received from the public on September 28th. The issues raised will be discussed and analyzed as part of the next phase of the planning process.

Neighborhood Connectivity

Eight people attended the Neighborhood Connectivity breakout group discussion. Josh Moreinis, Ann Gallelli and Kevin Davis led the discussion for the BPC. Comments regarding neighborhood connectivity ranged from ways to educate the public about pedestrian and bicycle safety to roadway design issues. A number of problematical intersection and roadway locations were discussed.

The session opened with a discussion of Cleveland Drive, which is a major corridor in the Village for cyclists and pedestrians, although it has unsafe curves, often has speeding cars, and is used by drivers as a through route to Route 129. Several residents of the Harmon neighborhood complained that speeding cars make driveway access and conditions for pedestrians and cyclists hazardous, including in the vicinity of the Circle School. Crosswalks are lacking around the traffic circle at Benedict Boulevard (Gotwald Circle). Whelan Avenue was cited as another example. County buses sometimes drive too fast on Cleveland Drive.

Several solutions for improving bicycling and pedestrian conditions on Cleveland Drive were discussed. Marked shoulders for cyclists and improved crosswalks are needed. A stop sign at Park Avenue was recommended. Street signage and educational efforts through the Village Website and public access channel are needed to promote the shared use of Village roadways. One participant that is knowledgeable about interchange redesign practices recommended replacing the configuration of the traffic circle at the five point intersection at the end of Benedict Avenue with a modern roundabout. Modern roundabouts are being promoted and constructed by New York State Department of Transportation as tools for better controlling traffic (see Town of Cortland's recent modern roundabout project); they are commonly used in Europe utilizing a smaller area than older US traffic circles.

Other locations with safety concerns that were discussed included Old Post Road North of the Upper Village. Sidewalks would be helpful in the vicinity of the recently approved subdivision construction site. Striped shoulders may also be helpful. Veteran's Way at the Croton-Harmon Train Station could be improved relating to pedestrian safety. Circulation improvements and parking lot improvements by the Village are being undertaken to correct some of the problems. Village Engineer Dan O'Connor also reported that curbing and other improvements are being planned for Benedict Boulevard, including the traffic island closest to South Riverside Avenue. Possibilities for a bicycle lane on Benedict Boulevard were discussed.

Train station connectivity was discussed. A mixed use development proposal for a site to the west of the Exxon Station will be located along the Croton Point Avenue corridor, which is a critical connection to Croton's neighborhoods. Bicycle access is hazardous, particularly during the evening rush hour. Solutions for a separated bicycle lane need to be explored. A multi-use path for pedestrians and cyclists on the north side of the roadway would avoid vehicular turning movements onto 9A, but would require a crossing at South Riverside. The southbound 9A exit ramp at Croton Point Avenue presents problems for pedestrians and cyclists due to cars that do not observe crosswalk right-of-way and traffic regulations, particularly during the morning rush hour. Better enforcement, improved signage and other traffic calming measures are needed.

A traffic report by AKRF evaluated options for roadway improvements.

The group discussed the need for off-road pathway connections. The recent senior affordable housing project may include trail improvements connecting the River Landing

subdivision to the Upper Village and the Highland/Mt. Airy Road vicinity. The trail will partly be on easements through the River Landing subdivision, and will also connect to Grand Street.

Neighborhood sidewalk conditions were discussed. It was noted that some parts of the Village may have low traffic volumes and wooded character, and that some Village residents are opposed to installing sidewalks in their areas in order to protect neighborhood character. Such conditions and character need to be considered in planning and prioritizing future sidewalk improvements. Nordica Drive was discussed in terms of its mixed sidewalk availability, and the need to protect neighborhood character. Other areas such as Mount Airy Road are in need of improved sidewalks and new sidewalks, though sufficient right-of-way width is a constraining factor for sidewalk construction.

Two streets where adequate sidewalks are lacking but where pedestrian traffic is high are Olcott Avenue east of Maple Street, and Bungalow Road, which is an old road that narrows down in some locations.

The Crest Street sidewalk improvement project was discussed as an example of a successful project using the Village's 50/50 program (now 60/40 homeowner/Village contribution).

Recreation

Justin Casson and Jeremy Goldsmith led the discussion in this group, which included five additional community members. Discussion and comments centered around three subtopics:

1. Neighborhood and destination connectivity
2. Safety issues
3. Bicycle education

The discussion opened with a quick comparison of the village sidewalk situation 15 years ago compared to now, including how the village sidewalk program has greatly improved pedestrian safety. However, bicycle lanes are needed on our thoroughfares to discourage people from relying solely on driving to access local destinations, including recreation destinations like Croton Point Park, Black Rock and Senasqua. Specific mention was made of the Riverside/Croton Point Avenue corridor leading to Croton Point Park, and how unsafe it feels to ride into the park that way. It was noted, though, that the path from Senasqua, by Elliott Way, and behind Half Moon Bay leading to the park, has been a great improvement for bicycle access, although somewhat indirect for some.

A comment was made that, overall, there should be better connectivity to our trails network from the village roads, via bicycle lanes.

Lack of connectivity to the Quaker Bridge/Teatown area was discussed, noting that riding the Route 129 stretch from the Village to Quaker Bridge Rd. is hazardous and frightening for most recreational riders. A possible solution might be to develop the steep trail from the Gorge trail past Silver Lake down to the road just adjacent to Quaker Bridge, providing easy access to both Black Rock and the Aqueduct trail and Quaker Ridge area. This led to a discussion of Route 129 as the gateway to our village, and how it can have a more welcoming appearance. A comparison to gateway routes into other villages was made, noting that traffic is usually calmed well in advance of town center by sidewalks, road narrowing, etc. Even though Route 129 is posted at 30 mph, the way it is laid out makes it feel like a highway all the way to Grand Street. The presence of guard rails, and lack of sidewalks or bicycle lanes or streetlights all seem to contribute to this. Ann Gallelli noted that changing this might be a tough sell, as Route 129 is a State roadway, but she also pointed out that the New York State Department of Transportation is encouraging traffic calming measures and environmental improvement efforts of late.

In terms of safety issues, the main ones discussed were:

1. The need for greater enforcement related to cars parked illegally on sidewalks.
2. The need for tree maintenance adjacent to sidewalks (low hanging branches, roots displacing concrete)

A discussion ensued of the fact that our village has become car-clogged. It was offered that “we are the problem”, that we all buy into the car culture. The following recommendations were made related to changing that mindset, to try to make it “cool to ride a bicycle”:

1. Periodic Village-sponsored bicycle events, such as a “Loop around Croton”, perhaps modeled after the Harry Chapin run.
2. Bicycle education program, perhaps in the schools, co-sponsored by the Police Dept., teaching traffic rules, the importance of lights and helmets, and maybe some basic bicycle maintenance.
3. Bicycle racks installed throughout the village, with laminated maps showing bicycle paths and connections (modeled after the maps at the Bee Line bus stops).

One participant commented that since he moved to Croton, he felt that “the Village has gotten uglier”, referring to homogenizing efforts like uniform (and more numerous) sidewalks, tree removal, etc. He advocated preserving what we have as opposed to changing things too much; for example, slowing traffic down instead of adding more sidewalks. The Hughes St. triangle by CET was cited as a project that has had limited success, causing traffic delays and aesthetic impacts.

Commuting

The Commutation breakout group was facilitated by Robert Olsson and included four other residents. The discussion began with a review of troublesome locations related to both bicycling and pedestrian issues for three corridor subareas/locations as follows:

Sub-area 1: Croton Point Avenue subarea including Croton Point Avenue; South Riverside Avenue; entrance into Croton Harmon Station and parking lots.

Sub-area 2: Riverside Avenue and Maple Street subarea

Sub-area 3: Cleveland Drive; [Gotwald Circle] Benedict Avenue; Maple Street

Sub-area 1 discussion included the following issues:

- Lack of snow clearance in winter on commercial sidewalks near law offices & elsewhere on Croton Point Avenue
- Need for safer ingress/egress to station for pedestrian & bicycle commuters
- Unsafe bicycle parking for thefts, need for improved lighting
- Police monitor the upper Croton Point Avenue parking lot and station entrance. Additional enforcement is needed including issuing tickets to drivers that speed to/from parking lots
- Lack of bicycle lanes on South Riverside Avenue/Croton Point Avenue
- Hazardous crossing from Croton Point Avenue parking lot entrance
- Hazardous crossing at S. Riverside / Croton Point Ave.
- Parked cars blocking side of Croton Point Avenue during limited parking lot use during periods of flooding
- Possible ped / bicycle path construction to link Half Moon Bay Drive with upper Croton Point Avenue parking lot to reduce driver/pedestrian conflicts
- Bicycle lanes to Croton Point Avenue and Riverside Avenue are needed
- Safer bicycle access is needed on sidewalks [both east and west of main station entrance leaving train station
- Safer bicycle access on sidewalk ascending Riverside Avenue northbound to access Benedict Avenue, Riverside Avenue (for safer access in the PM commutation period)
- Possible addition of traffic light at the intersection of Croton Point Avenue and train station entrance
- 'Tire-eating' drainage grating at corner of Riverside/ Croton Point Avenue
- Failure of some southbound [Route 9] exit ramp traffic to make full stop onto Croton Point Avenue compromises pedestrian crossing safety, particularly in AM commutation period.
- Failure of some northbound entrance traffic [onto Route 9] to yield to east-bound cyclists and pedestrians on Croton Point Avenue, particularly in the PM commutation period.

- Failure of some southbound entrance traffic [onto Route 9] to yield to east-bound cyclists and pedestrians on Croton Point Avenue, particularly in the PM commutation period
- Lack of clear markings or signage to announce presence of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Debris on Croton Point Avenue shoulder
- Seasonal AM-PM sun-blindness aggravates pedestrian/bicycle-vehicular conflicts
- Sidewalk now under Route 9 overpass over Croton Point Avenue could be converted to a bicycle lane to provide safer eastbound bicycle travel to access to Croton Point Avenue shoulder east of the north bound Route 9 entrance / exit ramps.

Subarea 2 discussion included:

- Lack of bicycle lanes / usable shoulder on S. Riverside near Dodge dealership and across the street due to parked cars during rush hours
- Lack of bicycle lanes at the Maple / Riverside intersection and further east along Maple Avenue past Croton Commons / Black Cow
- Shopping areas
- For South Riverside Avenue between Oneida and Maple, evaluation is needed of whether there is room to re-center double yellow line in the middle and add bicycle lanes.
- Addition of a sidewalk for South Riverside Avenue between Municipal Place / Maple Street should be considered as well as north & south bound sidewalks and bicycle lanes
- North Riverside Ave: near 'The Tavern at Croton Landing ': speeding cars; parked cars; lack of visibility, hazardous entrances for High Street, Brook Street, Bank Street, Farrington Road, Prospect Place. Evaluation is needed of whether Rumble strips can be added for traffic calming; increased police enforcement is needed.
- Parked cars in front of medical facility, Croton Vet clinic, Best Web, Hardware Store in front of Riverside / north of Grand Street
- Re-center double solid lines on Riverside Ave north of Municipal Place in front of Chevy dealership to include bicycle lane on east and west sides of road
- Parked cars in front of Gulf gas station force bicyclists to ride into automobile traffic lane on Riverside Avenue
- Evaluation is needed of whether above-listed issue can be addressed with widened roadway (Riverside) to allow bicycle lane where there is grassy shoulder next to parking spaces and for north-bound Route 9.
- Some bicycle / ped alternative routes to train station included Brook Street Bridge over the train tracks to Senasqua to bicycle path. A safer more direct route such as proposed link through Metro Enviro property or edge of southbound Rt. 9 from Half Moon Bay Drive
- Through to upper Croton Point Avenue parking lot should be evaluated, with fencing for protection of pedestrians/cyclists.

- Improvements are needed to allow future long range commuting from northern areas and regional connections, including extension of bicycle / ped pathways further north.

Subarea 3 discussion included:

- Problem of speeding cars on Cleveland Drive during rush hours
- Greater enforcement of speeding cars is needed
- Use of convex mirrors to increase safety / visibility should be considered for Cleveland Drive intersections such as Oneida Avenue
- Need to implement traffic calming measures
- Sidewalks often not shoveled during winter
- Broken sidewalk sections
- Some individual homeowners' driveway entrances rise significantly in grade above the sidewalk level
- Lack of visibility of Cleveland Drive pedestrians from Park Ave entering traffic
- Parking issues on Radnor were discussed
- Unclear roadway configuration where Whelan Ave joins Cleveland near traffic circle at Benedict (Gotwald Circle). Potential for a bicycle lane was discussed
- Need for bicycle lanes on Cleveland, Benedict Ave. and need to extend lanes to library, CET, Albany Post Road, village shopping.
- Westchester County Bee-Line buses traveling at high speeds present a hazard for cyclists on Cleveland Drive and Old Post Road.
- Roadway conditions are a problem on Benedict Boulevard as a result of water main replacement construction.

Schools

The Schools Breakout Group was facilitated by Joe Biber. Issues discussed included the following:

- Need for a pedestrian crossing on Cleveland Dr. at Park Avenue, especially for children walking to CET/PVC/CHHS; Cleveland Drive can be hazardous due to a blind curve and narrow sidewalks (also raised in a letter submitted to BPC).
- Need for a pedestrian crosswalk on Cleveland Drive at the Library
- Traffic calming needed on Cleveland Drive; narrow sidewalks and speeding; walkers cross side to side based on sidewalk conditions
- Need traffic calming on Route 129, especially near Olcott; need sidewalk on Olcott in both directions for children walking to or from PVC
- Westchester buses speed, especially the No. 14 bus

- Trail between dead end streets off of Radnor and the CHHS/PVC should remain open to students and residents; new signs by school district prohibit use; residents rely on trail for connections to upper village; steep asphalt trail without railing by Emerson field is too steep and needs stairs
- Van Cortlandt Place poses danger to children walking to PVC since there are no sidewalks and students must walk in the street; bushes screen view of walkers; walkers at Olcott and Maple Street don't use the crossing guard; consider making Van Cortlandt a one-way street
- Need crossing at Olcott and Maple (mentioned by several participants); cars speed on Olcott at drop-off and pick-up times; school crossing signs are screened by trees; need to cut brush back
- Municipal Place has sidewalk on the wrong side of the street
- Dunkin Donuts shopping area needs a crosswalk to Croton Commons
- CET now has a bicycle rack but now needs safe routes to school; School District needs to provide guidance for cyclists
- Special semi-rural character of Croton needs to be balanced against the need for sidewalks; need traffic calming on Cleveland Drive and other locations
- Consider speed bumps or humps, one-way streets, radar signs, announce school zone further in advance, more stop signs vs. more sidewalks
- Traffic is too fast and there is not enough space for a bicycle lane
- There may be a cultural issue with parents not wanting their children to ride bicycles to school (such as being overly protective)
- Public education on bicycle safety is needed
- Parents should use buses for their children and not drop off children in cars

Miscellaneous Public Meeting Comments

Other comments from residents attending the September 28th meeting included the following:

- Educational programs and activities are needed to emphasize and promote bicycle and pedestrian safety.

- Immediate safety improvements should be addressed on a short term basis.
- Greater enforcement efforts are needed to ensure bicycle and pedestrian safety.

E. Written Input

In addition to the public outreach meeting, written input from the public was solicited through newspaper announcements and a poster campaign for the BPC Public Outreach Meeting. The following input was received in letters to the BPC (additional input is welcome, please send comments to Village Hall, c/o BPC Comments):

- Cleveland Drive safety improvements are needed, including as a school route for students.
- A stop sign is needed for Cleveland Drive traffic at Park Avenue to address crosswalk safety, speeding cars, and the limited sight distances of drivers.
- Cross walks and slower bus speeds are needed on Cleveland Drive, with its hazardous curves.
- Driveway ingress/egress is problematical for Cleveland Drive residents due to speeding cars.
- School bus pick-up/drop-off safety improvements are needed.
- Better trail maintenance is needed for trail surrounding Kaplan's Pond, including for Glengary Road, Lounsbury Road, Arboretum, skating pond access (overgrown trails).
- A trail is needed in the vicinity of Glengary Road, Hixson Road, and Hessian Hills.
- Improved safety is needed for Mountain Trail and Mount Airy Road areas, including through extending the sidewalk system up Mount Airy Road to Georgia Lane, or to at least Glengary or Highland Avenue, or parallel to King Street. Better access is needed to the Temple, schools, and to shopping.
- Make Riverview a one-way road that exits onto Mount Airy Road or put a stop sign on Mount Airy.
- Sunset Trail/Park Trail paper road trail access improvements are needed, better marking and trail clearing is needed

- For train/commuter access, need a sidewalk and bicycle path on the south side of Croton Point Avenue, or even a tunnel under the highway if possible. Croton can be a destination for weekend tourists from New York City and other areas, and for recreational cyclists, such as Piermont.
- Safer pedestrian access to Shoprite is needed by installing sidewalks on both sides of the entrance and along the South Riverside frontage of the property.
- Parked cars are an obstacle for pedestrians in the Harmon area, forcing residents to walk in the street. Grass areas abutting the roadway should not be paved over.
- Sidewalks are needed for access to the skate park crossing, to Senasqua, and from River Walk from Maple Street.
- Sidewalks are needed on Olcott between Radnor and Larkin for better schools access
- Greater code enforcement efforts are needed to ensure proper sight lines at intersections in terms of fencing and plantings that obstruct views. Hedge rows encroach on sidewalk space, including on some parts of Grand Avenue.
- Public outreach is needed to remind residents and businesses of the need to maintain cleared sidewalks in the winter.

F. Committee Update

In addition to the September 28th public meeting, BPC outreach has included press releases, as well as informational letters about the committee's efforts sent to local stakeholders including businesses, institutions, departments, and organizations. The BPC has also coordinated and worked with other Village committees including the Trails Committee and the Visual Environment Board, and has had the strong support of the Village Board of Trustees.

Committee members are now evaluating the input that was received this fall. A field visit/bicycle tour was conducted with the assistance of Charles Komanoff of Transportation Alternatives (see below).



BPC Bicycle Tour with Charles Komanoff

An associated Issues and Opportunities Database has been prepared and is continually being updated to reflect the latest suggestions from the public. The Database identifies the various locations and actions discussed. This information is categorized by location and other factors, and there is a column indicating whether the actions are short term or long term. We are very focused on immediate short term solutions to safety issues, but are also looking at long term improvements, and the larger issues of the way we choose to travel, educating the public on bicycle and pedestrian safety, the quality and character of the Village's roadways, the environment, public health and sustainability.

Below are some examples of major corridors, issues, and locations that were mentioned in the public outreach process. These are being addressed initially by our all-volunteer committee and will be discussed in an upcoming public meeting in 2007.

- South Riverside Pedestrian and Bicycle Access, Crossings and Shopping Access
- Maple Street Connectivity & Corridor Improvements
- Croton Point Avenue Station Access
- Expanded and Enhanced Waterfront Access Improvements
- School & Library Access Improvements
- Benedict Boulevard/Gotwald Circle Improvements

G. Projects Update

The Village of Croton-on-Hudson is continuing its ongoing construction and planning for sidewalks and pedestrian and bicycling improvements. Some of the issues that have arisen in the BPC's planning process are already being addressed through the Village's

capital improvement planning and roadway improvement program including the following:

1. The County is installing two pedestrian-activated crosswalks on Croton Point Avenue and South Riverside Avenue. One crosses from Exxon to the Croton-on-Hudson Veterinary Clinic side of South Riverside Avenue, and the other crosses from Exxon to the Shoprite Plaza side of Croton Point Avenue. Look for future improvements on South Riverside Avenue.
2. A bicycle rack has been installed in the Zeytinia shopping area.
3. The Maple Street Improvement Project is being planned by the Village to improve sidewalk conditions on Maple Street just north of Riverside Avenue (from the Diner to the Capriccio I/Croton Mini Deli shopping center). The proposed improvements on the east side of Maple Street in this short stretch of roadway will include curbing, a sidewalk, roadway markings, landscaping, drainage, and others.
3. Sidewalk planning and construction continues, including through the Village's sidewalk improvement program and ongoing Community Development Block Grant program improvements through the Westchester County Consortium.

H. Conclusion

As committee members, we see tremendous opportunity to build on Croton's reputation as a well planned community and the Village's planning accomplishments in this area. As stated above, we hope to formulate a long range plan in 2007 to be used by the Village on an advisory basis related to further access improvements.

The BPC continues to seek the assistance of the public in its master plan process, and in helping to formulate a strategic plan for the Village's sidewalks and roadways related to bicycles and pedestrians. Written suggestions can be mailed to the Village of Croton-on-Hudson, c/o BPC Comments, Stanley H. Kellerhouse Municipal Building, One Van Wyck Street, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.

Working together, we can achieve greater connectivity through safe access!