



Committee Meeting ~ Woodland Park July 23, 2015 Minutes

Members & Guests – Bill Otter, Dan Schulte, Jan Orlich, Mark Heintz, Joe Rurode, Phil Gralik, Duane Davison, Jenny Orsburn, Steve Antonetti, Jim Mandon

Staff – Mitch Barloga, Belinda Petrosky

Mitch called the meeting to order at 1:45 pm thanking Jenny Orsburn for the use of the Woodland Park facilities.

Ped

A. South Shore Trails Update

Valet bike parking will be provided at Pierogi Fest and bikes will be watched at no cost. The bicycle parking will be located at Liberty Savings Bank.

Pedal –

A. Bikes on SS Study Presentation + Feedback–*Dan Schulte & Bill Otter Quandel Consultants*

NIRPC transit planner, Belinda Petrosky noted the impetus of this study was brought on by a conversation between Save the Dunes and former NIRPC employee Jack Eskin. An interest group was put together that met with NICTD, who was very supportive of pursuing a grant to look at the feasibility of getting bikes on their trains and have remained supportive and cooperative. She also noted that Quandel has done an outstanding job for the region in biking interests looking at NICTD.

Dan Schulte began the presentation by noting Quandel Consultants is a small engineering firm out of Chicago which does a lot of inner city passenger rail and commuter rail planning, engineering and construction projects. Some NWI trails interface well with Southshore stations which is a beneficial step toward mobility in the region. The Bikes on Trains Feasibility Study was done to look at reasons why NICTD is not allowing bikes on trains and how to move toward a solution. A draft report from the study has been submitted to the Committee, presented to the public and is now being presented to various NIRPC committees for thoughts.

The three-step methodology developed for the study looked at considerations for implementation of bikes on trains service; development of implementation criteria; and an alternatives analysis. A case study was done on 20 commuter railroads across the country. NICTD's characteristics were looked at closely and it is a unique railroad in it's overhead electric systems and types of cars and platforms used. A user demand study was posted online in February and produced excellent results which have helped guide decision throughout the process.

There are two common Bikes on Trains Programs, the off-peak/shared ADA space and the dedicated bike car. Most trains that allow bikes do not allow them during peak times. Each railroad has different types of cars; doorways; platforms; areas served; train length; and climate, all of which were looked at during the study. The three general types of train cars are single-level; gallery bi-level; and multi-level, but ADA space is not the same in all cars on all railroads.

Four of the transit systems studied that Dan highlighted were the New Jersey Transit, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Metra Electric and Maryland Transit. New Jersey Transit offers off-peak/ADA shared space and is similar to NICTD in that they use single and multi-level cars and different platform heights. MBTA has off-peak/ADA shared space cars, but also use a dedicated bike car and is similar to NICTD in that they have a centralized location the riders with bikes want to go. Metra Electric operates a little differently than NICTD with all bi-level cars and high-level platforms. Maryland Transit was a hold-out in allowing bikes on trains, but when they retired some of their old cars, built a bike car and now have year round service on weekends. The major lesson learned during the case study was that while shared ADA space seems the obvious thing to do, there's a lot that goes into

it. Types of frequencies and are enough trains running to accommodate the expected bike market have to be looked at. It worked for New Jersey but in Boston they had too many bikers and had to have a dedicated bike car. Also, old equipment has to be dealt with and crews have to be trained regarding the bikes on trains process and service.

Dan handed the presentation to Bill Otter. NICTD is a 90 mile route from South Bend to Chicago and like Metra uses an overhead 1,500 volt power system. They are the only two railroads in the United States that the 1,500 volt system, so cars cannot be borrowed from other rail lines. NICTD also has three different types of platforms. In addition NICTD's characteristics keeps changing due to changes in management, wires being changed, equipment reliability, etc.

When assessing how bikes would work on NICTD's rolling stock, it was found that some bike handlebars are too wide to fit between seats and ADA space is smaller than on other lines and doesn't follow federal regulations when a 72" bike is placed there. End doors also proved to be an issue when moving from car to car since the doors pull toward the passenger and is difficult when a bike is being held. Stairs are also an issue, especially if the train is full and there is nowhere to go. These reasons are why level boarding and remaining on the same car you enter in are recommendations from the study. Some of the impacts to train operations due to a bike program include inability to accommodate bikes during rush hour; unpredictable station dwell times; slower overall train schedules; delayed train meets; missed MED schedule "slots"; inability to utilize spare equipment for bikes; disputed equipment cycles; difficulty in predicting bike demand; inability to change seat configuration on short notice; potential for stranded bike passengers due to lack of capacity; heavy passenger loading on weekend trains; and ADA space conflict resolution.

The online survey results showed that the three locations respondents indicated they would get on were Chicago, the Dune Park area and South Bend. Most respondents said they would use bikes on trains for recreation only and a small number said for work only. A high number of both frequent and non-frequent customers indicated they would use the bikes on trains service for recreation and most respondents would travel in groups of 2-5. The five criteria established to guide development of feasible alternatives included: there is no available capacity on weekday peak periods; removing seats is not recommended; 72" back to front tire bike length should be used for planning purposes; accommodate bikes at level boarding and full-length platforms; and whatever is done must be Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) compliant. Evolving NICTD characteristics; published bike policy and train crew protocols should also be considered.

Bill handed the presentation back over to Dan who discussed the three alternatives analysis from the study findings. The recommended alternative would include refurbishing five retiring older single-level cars into dedicated bike cars when NICTD procures new rolling stock and recommends two additional trains with two bike cars and adding two bike cars onto two currently scheduled trains on weekends and holidays. Bikes would only be allowed on and off at high-level, full-length platforms. Two examples were shown of how cars would look when accommodating bikes at both 30 and 40 degree angles. Both would allow for 2 ADA bikes and riders to be seated in the same car as their bike. A five year/five car program covering capital, operating and maintenance costs would be between \$9.5 and \$9.6 million. A five year test period would determine market use and allow for adjustments to be made as NICTD changes. The second alternative is an off-peak/ADA shared, all trains/all platforms approach. Seating availability and low-level platforms are concerns with this alternative. The third alternative, no-build, really means nothing is going to happen. Several alternatives were not feasible and included: hanging bike racks inside and outside cars; longitudinal flip-up seats; an unpowered trailer bike car and purchasing older cars from another railroad.

The Next Meeting is Thursday, September 24, 2015

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.