



July 17, 2014

VIA EMAIL AND FACEBOOK POST

Joyce Braverman, Director of Planning
City of Shaker Heights
3400 Lee Road
Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120

Ann Klavora, Principal Planner
City of Shaker Heights
3400 Lee Road
Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120

Re: Lake to Lakes Trail

Dear Ms. Klavora and Ms. Braverman -

In order to gather input from a larger cross-section of Shaker cyclists and potential Lake to Lakes Trail users and further our discussion, Bike Shaker has decided to start this "open letter" with you and copying the email list of Bike Shaker. We have also posted this letter on Bike Shaker's Facebook page. We invite all Bike Shaker members and City officials to provide their thoughts, input and responses on Bike Shaker's Facebook page under the posting of this letter, and we'll post replies to this letter there as well. If you're not on Facebook, you can send your input to me, and I'm happy to post it on your behalf.

As you know, Bike Shaker provided comments on the Lake to Lakes Trail's draft Trail Alignment Plan presented at the June 16 public meeting, and requested an opportunity to discuss those comments (which are copied [in Exhibit 1 to] this letter). We have also asked whether there will be an opportunity for additional public comment or a discussion with interested citizens prior to submission of the preliminary Trail Alignment Plan to ODOT, which we think should happen soon as we understand that the Trail Alignment Plan could be submitted to ODOT within a month. In response, you have indicated the next opportunity for community input will be in the fall of 2014. But we think it makes much more sense to take advantage sooner of the input that Shaker residents, many of whom actually ride and walk this route on a near daily basis, can provide to make this route safer and more likely to be used. I'm sure that you would agree that public projects turn out best when the public is allowed to provide input throughout the project,

not just at the initial planning stages and at the end when flexibility and the chances of accommodating public input would seem to be quite limited.

We heard from several individuals who attended the Lake to Lakes Trail public meeting on June 16 that they were disappointed with the meeting and didn't feel like their voices were heard. Although attendees were encouraged to comment individually to the City officials and the City's consultants regarding any aspect of the plan after the presentation concluded, the City and its consultants seemed most interested in comments on crosswalk designs, artwork and signage to be included along the route. While these aspects undeniably contribute to the design feel of such a project, they don't get to the heart of what this trail is supposed to provide, i.e., a safe and convenient way to move by bike and to walk between the lakes.

Although we all recognize that you and the City's consultants are the planning and traffic engineering professionals, we fail to understand why the taxpayers, including those of us who will very likely be biking on this route don't have a real opportunity to provide input throughout the development of the Trail Alignment Plan. We think such input would greatly improve the Train Alignment Plan, because citizens also have an important perspective to offer to make the project better. How folks feel about crossing Fairhill without the benefit of a HAWK signal (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HAWK_beacon) or street light, for example, would have been a great question to ask the 30 or so attendees at the June 16 public meeting. But because of the structure of the meeting, that question went unasked.

Speaking of the planned Fairhill crossing, we were disappointed that the City has so far not accepted Bike Shaker's invitation to specifically discuss our comments about that crossing. Apparently the decision was made to include only a flashing crosswalk to assist pedestrians and cyclists attempting to cross Fairhill. To the extent this decision was made in reliance on car counts, we think it fails to take into account the context in which many people will experience that crossing. To be sure, there are times during the day when there is light traffic on Fairhill, but during the morning and evening hours accompanying rush hour there is a steady stream of traffic and some quite fast and aggressive driving along that road. It is important to understand that Bike Shaker has requested a HAWK signal or traffic light at the Fairhill crossing as a matter of safety, not comfort. The main purpose of the Lake to Lakes Trail is to create an environment that is safe for pedestrians and cyclists for transportation and recreation. Because these users are most vulnerable at intersections and street crossings it should be a priority to make the intersections of the Lake to Lakes Trail as safe as possible. According to Bike Cleveland, a 2010 FHWA study in Tucson, Arizona found that the addition of HAWK signals resulted in a 69% decrease in pedestrian-related crashes, among other benefits. We believe this supports choosing a HAWK signal over the alternatives for the Fairhill crossing. We think failing to include such a HAWK signal to assist cyclists and pedestrians crossing Fairhill will reduce the usefulness of this route, which has already arguably been diminished by the number of crossings required between University Circle and Coventry. Please take a look at the attached photos [see Exhibit 2] showing remnants of some recent wrecks along the Lake to Lakes Trail on Stokes/Fairhill. They

provide a sense of the aggressive driving that occurs along that route on a daily basis. As a result, we believe the crossing needs to be very safe for pedestrians and cyclists – including children, the elderly and folks with mobility issues – and that it would be greatly enhanced with the benefit of some kind of stop light.

Shaker residents are fortunate to live in a community where groups of residents come together to provide input on issues of importance to the community. In that spirit, Bike Shaker members attended the June 16 public meeting, Bike Shaker members gathered along Fairhill to discuss the Trail Alignment Plan and Bike Shaker members drafted comments to the Trail Alignment Plan that Bike Shaker presented to the City. Each of those activities represented an investment of time and energy on the part of that group of Shaker residents – with the simple purpose of playing our part to make this infrastructure investment better. We think that most would agree that that kind of public participation should be welcomed and, in fact, this past fall, one of our elected officials celebrated that kind of public participation in her campaign materials. So, we do find it disappointing the City has not yet reached out to Bike Shaker to discuss the comments that its members submitted to the City or otherwise engage Bike Shaker in a discussion regarding the next draft of the Trail Alignment Plan. Instead, so far the responses to Bike Shaker have suggested that our comments are premature and that folks have to wait until the fall when the Trail Alignment Plan goes before the Planning Commission to comment.

We hope the Shaker Heights elected officials copied on this email – Mayor Earl Leiken, Councilwoman Anne Williams and Councilwoman Julianna Senturia – will help facilitate a discussion between the City's planning department and Bike Shaker to review our comments and to allow public comment on the drafts of the Trail Alignment Plan that the City and its consultants will prepare. Perhaps a bike ride including City officials and Bike Shaker members along the planned Shaker Heights segment of the Lake to Lakes Trail would be helpful to facilitate such a discussion.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Haddock
Austin McGuan
Rick Smith
Mitch Thompson

bcc: Bike Shaker listserv

Exhibit 1

Comments and questions Bike Shaker submitted to the City on June 27, 2014:

1. The current Trail Alignment Plan provides for a crossing at Fairhill that does not have a stop light; instead, cyclists and pedestrians will activate blinking lights in the crosswalk. Crossing Fairhill without the benefit of a stop light is dangerous and will discourage use of the Lake to Lakes Trail. The City should provide a traffic controlled signal (e.g., hawk beacon) or a traffic light at Fairhill and E. 127th and to calm traffic along the trail and adjacent parkland. This road has heavy, fast moving traffic, especially during peak times, and in our experience is the site of some of our area's most aggressive driving and speeding, likely due to the multiple lanes and median strip. We understand that a traffic light might not be warranted at this intersection according to an ODOT regulation; however, we believe that it is necessary to provide a safe crossing for all users, regardless of skill level. This is especially the case if the trail is intended for use by the more vulnerable members of the population, including children, the elderly, and people with mobility to help cyclists and pedestrians safely make this long crossing limitations.
2. Could the bike crosswalk at Kemper and Fairhill pass through the median to shorten and make safer the crossing for cyclists and pedestrians?
3. The turning radius at the intersection of South Park and Fairhill for motorists making a right turn onto South Park should be sharpened. This improvement will provide a safer and shorter crossing for cyclists and pedestrians using the bike crosswalk as they come off of the Lake to Lakes Trail to connect to South Park or proceed down N. Moreland. The current intersection configuration results in a sharp, and essentially blind, right turn for motorists who are not expecting anyone to be beyond the bend. Many motorists turning right onto Fairhill from South Park only think to look left. This improvement can be accomplished with bollards, a fairly simple and inexpensive infrastructure change.
4. Eastbound cyclists currently have to make two crossings at the intersection of North Moreland, Fairhill, and South Park to proceed east on South Park. The City should include improvements so that only one crossing is required at that intersection.
5. The bike crosswalk at the intersection of South Park, North Moreland and Fairhill should extend from one side of Fairhill to the other and then continue to the other side of South Park. According to the City's Trail Alignment Plan, the bike crosswalk extends only from the north side of Fairhill to the median.
6. What is the City's plan to provide a safe passage where the path narrows along the bridge over Fairhill? Specifically, what will be done to the bridge's railings so that they do not catch handlebars as cyclists make their way on that narrow section of path?

7. Will any bike racks be included in the project? For consistency within the City and based on our understanding of their durability and usefulness, Bike Shaker recommends the “Simple Rack” manufactured by Metro Metal Works.

8. All pedestrian islands should have rounded edges so as not to catch bike tires as they pass through. For an unfortunate example of how not to do this you can examine the island at MLK and Fairhill that the Cleveland segment of the Lake to Lakes Trail passes through now.

9. We understand that the width of the bike crosswalks has not been determined, but we believe that all bike crosswalks should be of a consistent width and grade, including at the point at which they cross through medians, and wide enough to allow cyclists and pedestrians moving in both directions to cross the street safely and comfortably.

Exhibit 2

