

Talbot County Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 29, 2025
Talbot County Community Center, Wye Oak Room

I. Welcome and Introductions

Members Present: Howard T. Callahan Sr., Frank Carollo, Robert “Bob” DeGour, Lt. James (J.R.) Dobson, Heather Grant, James Edward “Ed” Heikes Sr., Jessica Lister, Carl “Mike” Owens,

County Council Liaison: Pete Leshner

Staff: Clay Stamp, Cassandra Vanhooser, Emily Gilmer

Members Absent: Bob Burgner, Ava Ellett, Philip (Phil) Starkey

Guests: Ted Bautz, Elisa DeFlaux, Althy Dulin, Kristen Goller, Andrew Nixon

II. Administrative Structure

Ms. Vanhooser thanked those present for volunteering to serve on the advisory committee, which was formally established by the Talbot County Council through an [administrative resolution](#). Mr. Leshner explained that as an advisory board, the committee is not a governing body. Its role is to provide advice to county staff and the county council so they can set priorities and policy around the development of bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Ms. Vanhooser shared a copy of the administrative resolution and reviewed its main objectives:

- a. Identifying and prioritizing projects that enhance the safety and accessibility of nonmotorized transportation.
- b. Promoting public awareness and education of bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- c. Advising the County Council on matters related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure by creating a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.
- d. Assisting the County in applying for grant funding to support future plans and projects.

In discussing the committee structure and meeting frequency, Mr. Leshner expressed a desire to elect a chairman and vice chairman. These roles, with the support of the county staff, will report directly to the County Council.

Ms. Vanhooser called for nominations. Mr. DeGour nominated Ms. Grant for the position of chairman, which was seconded by Mr. Carollo. Ms. Grant accepted the nomination, and without further discussion her nomination was unanimously approved. Mr. Stamp nominated Mr. Heikes as vice chairman, who was then unanimously approved.

The group discussed dates and times for meetings. They agreed that while not ideal for everyone, early morning meetings will work for the majority, with a preference for in-person meetings. Minimally, meetings are required to be held quarterly, but depending on the momentum of the group, additional meetings may be required.

III. Master Plan for Bike and Pedestrian Trails

Ms. Grant provided information to initiate a discussion on a master plan. There are many examples to draw from. Sometimes the document is called a Vision Zero Plan or Complete Streets Plan. The Town of Easton is in the process of completing a Complete Streets Plan.

Queen Anne's County is the first on the Eastern Shore to complete a county-wide plan, which was just released. Ms. Grant offered this as a model. She noted that she has spoken with the contractor who developed the plan and obtained a working estimate of \$300,000.

A federal grant program is available and accepting applications through June 26, 2025, which could fund a master plan. The Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program is funded over the next two years. During past application cycles, all counties that applied for planning grants have been funded. However, the focus must be on the development of a safety action plan. The program provides 80% funding, with a 20% cash and/or in-kind match required.

Ms. Vanhooser asked for volunteers to form a work group to develop a scope for this project. Mr. DeGour, Ms. Grant, and Mr. Leshner volunteered, and county staff including Ms. Vanhooser and Ms. Gilmer will assist. While the scope will be further fleshed out, it was concluded that the master plan would be a step towards establishing needs and priorities. The scope, once approved by the full committee, will be presented to the County Council with a request to apply for the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant.

Mr. Stamp confirmed that funds were not included in the FY26 budget for a match. Additional funding sources were discussed that could assist in providing the match, including state programs. Timing is imperative, as the County Council only meets twice in May. The committee will need to request time on the agenda soon. If not, alternate funding sources could be investigated, or the committee could apply for this same program next year.

IV. Trail Developments

Ms. Vanhooser shared a copy of the Talbot County Bike Trails Guide, which includes bike trails throughout the county. However, the trails are dated and pose safety concerns as they cross U.S. Route 50. Ms. Vanhooser and Ms. Grant, through her role with Talbot Thrive, have discussed potential changes. These potential changes were shared via maps. As new trails are finalized, the county will consider a digital option.

Ms. Vanhooser shifted focus to maps created by the county's GIS manager that show railroad lines located within the county. A discussion was held regarding banked, abandoned, and active rail lines. Ms. Vanhooser included a copy of a summary sheet provided by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) regarding the state's proposed Frederick Douglass Rail Trail. It was clarified that this project has been proposed by the state, not the county. Ms. Vanhooser noted that Mr. Thomas MacKay, Rail Program and Policy Manager from the Maryland Department of Transportation, presented about this topic previously in Talbot County, and he will be invited to a future meeting. The County is aware that there are many questions from the community regarding this project, particularly after MDOT's letter to property owners.

The conversation shifted to focus on a proposed Oyster Trail from Easton to Oxford. Ms. Grant explained that the immediate and current goal is to connect the town of Oxford to the Oxford Conservation Park, which is only a small portion of the proposed trail. The middle trail section would be a heavy lift, which would connect Oxford Conservation Park to the neighborhood of Cook's Hope. From there, the goal would be to connect Cook's Hope to Woodland Park and eventually to Easton.

Ms. Vanhooser shared that Mr. Owen Bailey of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy will be invited to a future meeting. He is spearheading an effort to connect the entire eastern shore via trail system. A question was asked regarding the St. Michaels rail trail extension. Committee members confirmed that this is a project led by the town of St. Michaels through a federal grant.

During open discussion, Ms. Dulin addressed the letter she sent to the Talbot County Council regarding the Frederick Douglass Rail Trail. Ms. Vanhooser confirmed its receipt and noted that a copy was included in everyone's packet. It will also be posted online with committee materials.

V. Next Steps

Ms. Vanhooser will post documents and all relevant materials online at TalbotWorks.org: <https://www.talbotworks.org/bike-and-pedestrian-advisory-committee/>

The next meeting was set for 7:30 a.m. on May 27, 2025, at the Talbot County Community Center.

VI. Adjournment

Ms. Grant made a call to adjourn the meeting, which was put forth by Mr. Owens and seconded by Mr. DeGour before unanimous approval.