

# Listening Sessions Summary

## Overview

During the fall and winter of 2015, the project team conducted listening sessions with a variety of stakeholders in Saint Croix County. The intent of the listening sessions was to solicit information and feedback from specific groups, specifically learning more about their project concerns, goals, and ideas about how the St. Croix County Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plan can be most valuable to their organization/agency and constituents.

Five listening sessions were conducted as part of this project and were held in Hudson and Baldwin. Groups that attended the sessions included County Highway Department staff and commissioners, avid bicyclists that bike regularly in the County, and representatives from towns, cities, villages, and schools. The listening sessions consisted of a short project overview presentation followed by a facilitated discussion by the project team. The objective was to determine how the Plan could be most valuable to the groups that attended the sessions.

Listening Session Date	Location	Attendees
August 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Hudson	County Highway Department
November 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Baldwin	Town Representatives
November 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Hudson	City and Village Representatives
November 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Hudson	Avid Bicyclists
December 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	Baldwin	City, Village, and School Representatives

The sessions were framed around the following three questions:

- What are your and your constituents' primary concerns?
- What are your and your constituents' goals for this project?
- How do current bike and pedestrian plans work well and how could they be improved?

## Discussion Summary

The first of the five listening sessions was with the County Highway Department. At the meeting, the project team lead participants through a facilitated discussion of the County's planning and project development processes, focusing on places where the bike and pedestrian accommodations can be brought in to the design in the most efficient manner to support and enhance the County's existing project development process. The group also discussed which County highways are being considered in the short, medium, and long-term for striping improvements and paved shoulder additions or replacements.

In the other listening sessions, participants highlighted how the plan will help identify future connections throughout the county, illustrate the need for a bicycle system, and clarify the cost implications and economic development potential. Several other topics arose at multiple listening sessions, including education, maintenance, connectivity, and bikeway system legibility. Participants discussed how legibility of the system can be improved with increased signage and wayfinding, and the uniformity of road signs.

They mentioned how some county highway signs are confusing and inconsistent. The lack of roadway striping was also mentioned multiple times, as many of the rural roadways do not have striped shoulders to delineate space for motorists and cyclists. Related to this last point, a strong desire was expressed by several participants to increase County and WisDOT communications regarding multi-year transportation planning as well as the scoping and design of individual roadway projects with municipal representatives and the general public.

Participants spoke about their desire for increased connectivity across the county. Connections between cities, towns and villages were mentioned, as well as connections within cities, especially connections to important destinations such as schools. Representatives from Glenwood City noted that many students live within one mile of their school but do not walk or bike due to the lack of connections.

Education was another topic of discussion. One participant mentioned how important it is for people to understand that improvements identified in the plan are for communities, not just for current bicyclists. Education of drivers and education on the costs of implementation were also mentioned, noting that low cost options are available. Lastly, maintenance was a common topic among the groups—both seasonal (winter) maintenance and ongoing infrastructure maintenance (repair). One participant asked if maintenance is part of the cost estimate for infrastructure improvements. Another participant inquired about the use of federal funding to build a trail, and whether those trails need to be maintained year round. In general, participants were concerned about how well bikeway and pedestrian facilities would be maintained, and who would be responsible.

In addition to discussing these topics, a key element of the listening sessions that occurred in November and December was providing the opportunity for participants to review in detail maps of the Study Network, especially as it pertained to their jurisdiction or area of familiarity. Participants were asked to point out obstacles and opportunities, verify the connections that were being studied, and identify any logical alternative corridors to study.

### Key Take-Aways

- Implementation of the Plan needs to be a coordinated effort and a top priority for the County, municipalities, tourism groups, and economic development organizations.
- It is important to increase communications with municipalities and the public about upcoming projects.
- An effective and sustainable funding strategy needs to be developed.
- Identifying maintenance responsibilities is a necessity.