
Residents share wish list for bike/pedestrian plan

10/27/2006 -

By Arielle Kass

Staff Writer

arielle.kass@gwinnettdaily.com

DULUTH - Brian Vaceluke said he's scared to cycle on suburban streets. So he'll put his bike in his car, drive to Stone Mountain, then ride the rest of the way downtown from there.

"They need to widen lanes, they need to widen shoulders," he said. "If you try to get out there on a bike, you get killed. People are swearing at us, flipping us off. They don't think we belong on the road."

At a Thursday meeting to discuss the Atlanta Regional Commission's Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan, Vaceluke and others told members of the ARC what they would like to see done to increase accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians.

Regan Hammond, the ARC's senior planner for the transportation planning division, said they are seeking feedback for the final plan, which is expected in the summer of next year. On average, she said, the 750 miles of roads the ARC studied rate a D or D- in accessibility.

"Since it's major roads, we thought they would probably not accommodate bicycles well, and it proved us right," she said.

The study only incorporated main roads in the 18-county region, Hammond said, and did not deal with off-road trails or other points of access for bikers. Vaceluke said his transportation wish list includes more bike access on Five Forks Trickum Road, Ga. Highway 120 and U.S. Highway 29. That could consist of wider shoulders and lower speed limits in lieu of bike lanes, he said.

Beverly Bryant, who also bikes, said she wants to educate both motorists and bikers about the rules of the road. Many drivers are disrespectful to people on bicycles, she said, but cyclists who run stop signs and red lights perpetuate bad blood between the two groups.

Grant Guess, a division director for project administration in Gwinnett County's Parks and Recreation Department, said he would like to see more nodes connected with pedestrian or bicycle access.

"Schools are a big place to reduce the number of vehicles on roads," he said. "If we have pedestrian and bike routes to schools, neighborhoods, parks, we can reduce the number of trips people require an automobile to use."

Attendees at each of the five workshops in the region filled out a seven-page survey about their biking and walking habits and the conditions they would like to see. Hammond said she received more than 70 responses in the first three meetings, the final two were held Thursday night in Jonesboro and Duluth.