

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH COMMITTEE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 8, 2017 8:00 AM 2nd floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Christopher Brehme, Vice Chair
Thom Little
Don Hayes
Charles Redfern, via speaker telephone
Dillon Benik, Alternate
Sam Hawkes, Alternate

Staff Present:

Will Schoefmann, Planner

Members Not Present:

Emily Coey
Ed Guyot

1) CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rubin called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM. Roll Call was conducted.

2) MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: JANUARY 11, 2017

Mr. Little proposed a written list of changes, which he described as very minor, to the minutes. Mr. Little made a motion to accept the minutes with his proposed revisions. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brehme and approved by unanimous vote. Chair Rubin said the revisions would be included in the final version of the minutes.

3) MONADNOCK ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION (MAST) UPDATE

Mr. Schoefmann reported that MAST, a regional transportation advisory group previously known as Monadnock Region Transportation Management Association, operates out of the Southwest Region Planning Commission and meets on a quarterly basis. He explained that MAST has identified four project areas from its strategic plan on which it plans to focus over the course of this year. Then he described MAST's projects undertaken in 2016 and its plans for this year.

He stated that the Rack-It-Up Program, which MAST and the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SRPC) headed up, will continue with its work, but will concentrate on some towns outside of Keene. Last year, he said Keene used that program to purchase some bike racks, usually U-shaped, but also was able to install some multi-use racks in front of the library.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that MAST continues to pursue its Complete Streets Program, in which the group sponsors events such as the daylong event held in Keene on Marlboro Street two years ago. Last year, he said MAST held similar events in Hinsdale and Winchester.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that MAST is also pursuing through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control additional “Safe Routes to School” programs. Chair Rubin noted that there are four such programs in Keene and another three or four outside of Keene. Mr. Schoefmann explained that a CDC grant brought this program to Keene, and was under the purview of a volunteer board, much like the BPPAC, that coordinated plans with the City of Keene and MAST as well as the SRPC.

In addition, Mr. Schoefmann reported that MAST undertook a study to investigate car-sharing scenarios, specifically to determine the feasibility of their use in Keene. He said he expects MAST to pursue work in this area following that initial study.

Mr. Schoefmann said MAST will continue to help coordinate events associated with Bike-to-Work Day event, and possibly a Bike-to-Work week event. He said MAST also has an online trip planner associated with Bike-to-Work month, which is in May. Mr. Schoefmann said he would try to keep the committee updated, but noted that updates also would be provided on the MAST website.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that MAST selected to work on Keene’s Bike Friendly City application. He said he is working with a volunteer group that is a subcommittee and will be focusing on a number of feedback areas provided by the League of American Bicyclists, which puts on that program. The information about this effort, he said, can be accessed on Google Drive. Mr. Schoefmann said he would resend the information after the meeting, but also invited participation in the subcommittee by any members interested in the subcommittee’s work. He said he would provide a meeting schedule to anyone interested in that subcommittee, which he heads up.

He stated that another focus area for MAST is the Municipal Transportation Fund, which is the program that Keene adopted per New Hampshire law that allows the city to charge up to \$5 with car registrations to put into a fund that goes toward transportation projects, funds specifically earmarked for use on roads.

Mr. Schoefmann summarized MAST’s four focus areas as follows:

1. Bike to work week event
2. Regional Car Sharing
3. Bicycle Friendly Community Reapplication for Keene
4. Municipal Transportation Fund, which includes outreach and education into other communities.

In response to a question from Mr. Brehme about the frequency of MAST meetings, Mr. Schoefmann said that the MAST steering committee meets quarterly and the subcommittees meet monthly to pursue the goals developed during the quarterly meetings.

Chair Rubin expressed appreciation for the excellent work being done in conjunction with MAST and mentioned that its annual meeting was very informative.

4) PROJECT UPDATES

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there hasn't been significant movement on Master Plan projects because the projects have just been added and have begun being scoped, and work on the Master Plan hasn't been completed. He said he would update the committee as progress is made on pertinent focus areas.

He said the only major project that he needed to report on was the Cheshire Rail Trail Loop Project, which is part of the NH DOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The public meeting on the project had to be postponed because of the weather. The meeting has been rescheduled for Monday, February 13, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Parks and Recreation Building. Mr. Schoefmann said the meeting would begin with an open house for the first half hour, then a half-hour presentation of planning and design concepts, and then an hour for feedback from the public and to answer any questions. Mr. Schoefmann said he would send the committee a notice for the public meeting.

Chair Rubin asked if there is expected to be any significant pushback from neighbors. Mr. Schoefmann said his office had received a good number of phone calls and questions from people interested in the project, but he did not know if there would be a significant amount of opposition. He said the public meeting initially was scheduled to be held at the YMCA, but based on the amount of interest, it was decided to move the meeting to Parks and Recreation in order to accommodate a larger number of attendees. He said that if the meeting has to be postponed again due to weather, it will be held at the same time and place on February 15th.

Chair Rubin stated that it would be beneficial for as many members of BPPAC as possible to be at the meeting to advocate for the project.

Mr. Little said that a courtesy copy of the handout had been made available to BPPAC members in advance of previous informational meetings so that committee members could prepare for the meetings with ideas for providing meaningful support for the project or asking interesting

questions. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the presentation would be uploaded to a city website, and he could provide a link to that. The PDF form of the presentation is fairly massive, but he will try to upload it to Google drive. In addition, he said, he could make a copy available in the Planning Department or at his office.

In response to Chair Rubin's request for a brief summary of the project, Mr. Schoefmann gave the following explanation:

The project is intended to provide for access and create a loop in west Keene. As proposed, it would add bike lanes or widen sidewalks down Park Avenue where one or the other can be accommodated for the multi-use scenario of bicyclists and pedestrians. That would extend all the way down Park Avenue, onto Summit, past the YMCA, where it would then turn up a hill on the left which is Slyline Drive / Summit Ridge Drive. At that point, a Class 6 road called Ami Brown Road, is slated to be improved up the hill to the rail trail. The trail itself has been improved with better drainage on the side, brush clearing, grading of the surface, improving on the grade where necessary, and laying a foundation of stone dust on the top. Then, once it hits the rail trail, southerly to Hurricane Drive.

He said the scope of the project is fairly substantial, consisting of both in-street and separate grade facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that the way the loop is created is by bringing people off of Pitcher Street and connecting them with Park Ave. He said a couple of different options for connecting Park Avenue are under consideration, so he pointed out that this is one of the issues about which planners are seeking public feedback. He said one connection is by North Ridge at Pitcher Street, and the other is where Ami Brown comes in at Summit Road.

He said the packet contains a great deal of information, with pictures that are helpful in understanding how it would work. He said he would try to get it to committee members one way or another.

Chair Rubin asked how the funding for the project is being handled.

Mr. Schoefmann said the project is part of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). He said that staff submitted the concept of this project to the NH DOT during the application process about a year and half ago. Then this project was put into a pool of projects from all over the state. Keene's project was ranked regionally and ranked by NH DOT and then by commissioners and representatives, which resulted in this project being awarded funding. He said the cost of the project will be met through 80 percent federal allocation through the state and 20 percent matching funds, which Pathways for Keene has graciously provided, along with some funding from the Monadnock Conservancy. The total cost, he said, is about \$411,000.

Chair Rubin repeated the need for committee members to attend the public meeting and advocate for the project.

Mr. Little then reported on the progress of work on South Bridge, for which he provided a handout with a drawing showing the status of work on the bridge. He said the form and the protective plastic and piping and heating for the deck were removed, and the deck is complete.

Mr. Little pointed out on the picture he provided that coming up on both sides on concrete is an edging that is being installed right now on top of the deck. The entire strip on both sides is wrapped in a cover and it is heated, to assist the process of curing the poured concrete. Next, he said, that cover gets removed and the screening, which is identical to the screening on North Bridge, goes up on both sides. He reported to the contractors that they didn't have a sufficient barrier, and now noticed that they have a very substantial barrier on both ends to keep people off, which is a great idea because it is a dangerous place.

Mr. Little stated the one issue that come up at the last meeting was his question about whether there were going to be bollards. He said he was thinking of having bollards like the ones on North Bridge, through which some vehicles can drive if they are sufficiently narrow. In that case, he said, the bollards are arranged such that a car cannot be driven through them without having a key to unlock it and removing one of the posts. He said he didn't know what would happen if a truck drove over it. When he had been checking the site, he noticed truck tracks in the snow on the trail from Keene State College to South Bridge. He said that he could think of no reason why anyone would be driving a truck there, since construction vehicles would have no reason for being on the full length of the trail.

Mr. Redfern said his only concern about putting the traditional bollards on South Bridge was that they would interfere with the multiple use function of the bridge. He noted that there was a commitment made that the bridge would be open for snowmobiles. Putting bollards at the end of each ramp would imperil the safety of snowmobilers and pedestrians if the bollards are configured the same way they have been in the past, such as they were on North Bridge.

Mr. Redfern suggested that the committee should assert it is a multi-use bridge, as was promised in the court order for snowmobilers to be able to use. He said that was why the surface was different than the wooden surface. He said that he didn't think the committee should interfere with the intent and cause problems for the safe travel of snowmobilers. He said that he believed there were other ways to address the issue of trucks, snow plows and other large vehicles.

Chair Rubin said that she didn't think that the BPPAC would be reaching out to make any recommendations about the bollards.

Mr. Schoefmann said that the only place we could address the problems with snowmobiles would be if there was snowmobile traffic further down the trail, because they are not allowed within the city compact. He said that snowmobilers generally understand where they are allowed

to go, and don't seem to travel where they are not allowed. Mr. Schoefmann said he didn't think there was a need to take any action until there is a problem.

Mr. Little said he was not trying to reorient the intent of this project. He said that the state directed that it be designed to carry snowmobiles, but that it is up to the city to determine whether or not they will allow snowmobiling. He said the bollards could be removed during the winter so that there would be no impact on snowmobiles. He said it seemed highly unlikely to him that anyone would want to drive a car or a truck in the wintertime over that surface.

Mr. Little suggested there probably will be a longtime debate about whether or not to plow the bridge. He said snow and ice on the trail is extremely dangerous at this time of year

Mr. Schoefmann said he didn't know all the details of the agreement between the state and the city engineering department. He said that was an issue that would have to be resolved when and if it comes up. He said he could find out more about that.

Mr. Little said he would consider the issue tabled, but that he had been under the impression that Mr. Schoefmann had committed during the last meeting to talk to the DOT about the matter. Mr. Schoefmann suggested that Mr. Little send an email asking about the issue and that Mr. Schoefmann would then forward it to the project manager at the DOT for a response.

Mr. Hawkes raised a question of the unsightliness of the rust on the bridges. He asked whether the committee had ever considered painting the bridges.

Mr. Schoefmann said that the bridges are made with self-weathering steel that forms a patina that is a barrier that helps them ward off deterioration so that they don't need to be painted.

Mr. Little said that the bridges don't look good for the first five or six years after they're built, but then they develop a reddish-brown patina. He said that the bridge on the Industrial Heritage Trail is an example of the way the steel on the bridges will look after eight or ten years. He said that a major selling point for this steel was that it would not have to be painted for 150 years.

Mr. Little suggested that something should be done about the stains in the concrete on North Bridge. He said he recommended that the concrete be painted a reddish brown to improve the appearance.

5. OLD BUSINESS: PUBLIC OUTREACH AND WORKSHOPS

Mr. Schoefmann said he was planning to put together a list of planned events, as he did in previous years. He said he planned to post the listing on Google Drive and the website.

Regarding the Dedication of the South Bridge, Mr. Redfern suggested that before its next meeting the committee should start getting some ideas about who is on the dedication committee and when it will meet. He suggested that Chair Rubin get in touch with the Mayor to inquire

about planning for the dedication, including the makeup of the committee and a plan for it to meet. Chair Rubin agreed to do that.

Mr. Schoefmann said that for anyone interested in becoming a League of American Bikers Certified Instructor, there is a course being offered in Hartford.

6) NEW BUSINESS

Trail Enhancement Benches

Mr. Little raised a question regarding an announcement that was made during the week about a bench made from recycled bike parts that was approved for installation on the Industrial Heritage Bike Trail without input from BPPAC. He pointed out that often the largest costs associated with amenities such as benches are associated with maintenance, more than the initial purchase price. He stated that in previous years, BPPAC had been asked for input on benches and bike racks that were being considered for installation on bike paths. He asked why the bench did not come before BPPAC, how well-constructed is the bench, and who will be responsible for maintaining it.

Mr. Schoefmann said it is under the purview of the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Little said that he can remember BPPAC having input into decisions related to bike racks and benches and their location.

Mr. Redfern said that this bench is to be located in the Railroad Square area, near where the original bike manufacturing plant was located. He said this has been referred to City Council for acceptance of a gift from the Parks and Rec Department, and is going before a Council committee.

Mr. Redfern said he agreed with Mr. Little that BPPAC should have input into the process, adding that City Council has responsibility to ask these questions when donations are made: Who is going to maintain it? How long can it be expected to last? At the very least these questions should be asked by the City Council committee. He said that he thought the Finance, Organization & Personnel committee would be discussing the bench donation at its meeting later that evening.

Chair Rubin said BPPAC needs some clarification on the process for dealing with trail enhancements like benches, specifically on the question of whether or not the enhancements should come before BPPAC.

Mr. Redfern said that in this case the bench is intended to be functional artwork, a little different than a standard bench.

Mr. Schoefmann said he thought that the idea of highlighting history is beneficial, and that this might be a good opportunity to invite a representative of the organization donating the bench to a

BPPAC meeting. He said that there might be other opportunities to highlight history on the trails, and that the concept is in line with the Master Plan Project 29 relating to amenities in furtherance of public art.

Allocation of Municipal Transportation funds

Mr. Schoefmann said he would try to find out more about the bench, what it looks like. He suggested that BPPAC invite a member of the donating organization to speak to the BPPAC meeting in April.

Regarding the Municipal Transportation Fund, Chair Rubin asked if BPPAC could get someone from finance to come to a BPPAC meeting to explain what Keene is doing with its automobile registration fees. In addition, she asked for an opportunity to review the relevant ordinance.

Mr. Schoefmann suggested that as a first step he could get information on the allocation of transportation funds and report back his findings to the committee. He said he could get a printout of projects to bring to the next meeting or before the next meeting.

Chair Rubin said she would also like to see the ordinance, to see whether it mentions bikes and pedestrians. She thought that there were supposed to be funds earmarked for active transportation.

Mr. Redfern said the fund is supposed to be used for all things transportation. He said he was advocating for alternative transportation options, but the public pushed back and wanted them used also for roads.

Chair Rubin made a motion to direct planning staff to report information about how automobile fees have been spent for the past two years. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hayes, and passed by unanimous vote.

Priority Projects

Chair Rubin expressed gratitude to Mr. Schoefmann for getting the priority projects on the list. She asked for an overview of the process for next steps needed to move forward.

Mr. Schoefmann said he is compiling a number of documents that he would like to use as a platform to structure what he will do. By March, he said, he should have an introduction and start filling in the outline that we have in the Google Drive folder.

Mr. Redfern asked if it would include an executive summary.

Mr. Schoefmann said that it would, but that the summary usually comes last after the document has been finalized.

In response to Chair Rubin's question about a deadline for a draft, Mr. Schoefmann said that it should be done by the fall or winter.

Chair Rubin asked when some movement on some of the projects can begin, and Mr. Schoefmann said that he could start talking to various department heads, particularly engineering, for data on access and sidewalk connectivity.

Chair Rubin asked if the data collection could be a student project.

Chair Rubin asked if it would be advantageous for the BPPAC to present an update to the City Council or one of its committees that includes the prioritized projects.

Mr. Schoefmann said that BPPAC would be putting forth the whole plan and updates in the committee's next annual update.

8) Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 8, at 8:00 AM

9) Adjournment

Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting at 9:02 AM

Respectfully submitted by

Kathleen Fleming