

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 11, 2019

8:15 AM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Dillon Benik, Chair
Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair
Christopher Brehme
Charles Redfern
Todd Horner

Staff Present:

Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Don Lussier, City Engineer

Members Not Present:

David Souther
Brad Dufresne

Chair Benik called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM.

1) Roll Call

Guests from Pathways for Keene, Aaron Shields and Wink Faulkner, introduced themselves.

2) November 13, 2019 Minutes

Mr. Horner moved to approve the minutes of November 13, 2019, which Mr. Bryenton seconded and the Committee approved unanimously.

3) City Engineer's Report

Cheshire Rail Trail Phase 3: the offer letters for right-of-way acquisition have gone out and staff has discussed those with the various property owners. The City Attorney will schedule the signing. The City Engineer is confident that this project will be advertised in January/February 2020, for construction this spring. A portion of this project is already finished at the intersection of Park & Arch Avenues, which accomplished with 100% City funds because it was becoming a concern due to outdated traffic lights.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Funding: this Department of Transportation (DOT) program directs funds for bicycle and pedestrian oriented projects through grants, for which applications are solicited biannually. Over time, NH DOT accepted a backlog of these projects and thus put more projects into the NH 10-year plan than there was federal funding for, with the expectation that some projects would not move ahead on schedule or at all. More recently, the state restricted programming in the 10-year plan to what is already funded. Therefore, all backlogged TAPS are being reorganized over time in the plan. For example, the Marlboro Street project that is in the design phase was originally scheduled for 2022/2023 and has now been pushed to 2026. The state has given the City the representation that as projects advance in design and construction, they can reorganize the schedule again to try to ensure it would go to construction in the same year that bids are made.

Mr. Redfern noted that there was an article in the Manchester Union Leader titled, “Recession of the Rescinding of Funds for TAP Overtuned?” A recession of funds for the upcoming two-year cycle has been eliminated. He will share copies.

The City Engineer reported on the current design for the Marlboro Street project connection to Bartholomew Court, which is facilitated by the Department of Public Works (DPW). There will now be bike lanes on both sides of Eastern Avenue to Main Street. Mr. Schoefmann asked about intersection crosswalks in the project area. The City Engineer replied that there would be crosswalks at the following intersections: Adams & Grove Streets (east side of Grove Street with new push button flashing crosswalk lights when the crossing guard is not there), Baker Street at Butterfly Park, and at Kelleher Street. There was concern with crossing at Optical Avenue because of an ADA safety compliance. The intention is also to have a concrete 8’ wide sidewalk from Marlboro Street to the end of Bartholomew Court, for which there would be a paved trail around the back of the building and up the slope. The dead end sidewalk coming from Keene Ice will also be extended to connect to the Rail Trail.

Transportation Heritage Trail: This project includes upgrades to the Old Stone Arch Bridge, including repurposing the historic Prowse Bridge to connect Eastern Avenue/RT-101 to the Stone Arch Bridge via a new pedestrian bridge over RT-101. In the long term, if the Victoria Street extension occurs as staff hopes, the Bailey bridge will be repurposed to span the Victoria Street extension. There will ideally be wooden structures to carry the trail over Swanzey Factory Road. Staff is working with a team of civil engineering students at University of New Hampshire (UNH) on their senior design capstone project; the students are studying reuse of the Prowse Bridge, including design computations, geotechnical borings, and foundation design. If nothing else, the project will get the bridge story more publicity. Mr. Schoefmann noted that the Heritage Commission would possibly be organizing a brainstorming session on opportunities for preservation grants for the bridge project.

Mr. Redfern is the President of Pathways for Keene, which fundraises annually. There has been ongoing discussion about lighting paths, but the City seems to be moving beyond that effort. Pathways is now finding something to do and Mr. Redfern said they support the City Engineer’s efforts and will do so monetarily, upon staff request. The City Engineer said that all together,

from Eastern Avenue to the Prowse Bridge, making the Stone Arch Bridge safe for pedestrians and letting the trail end at Swanzey Factory Road is anticipated to be a \$2.5 million project. Any help from Pathways is appreciated.

Mr. Redfern asked if there is opportunity for Keene State College (KSC) geography students to work with the UNH students on parts of the trail. The City Engineer said that he is working with a KSC geography team that is studying the feasibility of incentive programs to manage storm water on parcels. Mr. Redfern asked about the Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality grants, which the City Engineer said were traditionally given to attainment areas near the sea coast/I-95 corridor, where there are obvious air quality concerns. The City has submitted a pre-application for traffic signal optimization and coordination on West Street. This project is partially prepared but not complete. The effort needs more analysis and to quantify the alternative transportation benefits. Mr. Redfern recalled the Mr. Schoefmann specializes in grants.

Arts & Culture Corridor Project: the concept of closing a portion of Gilbo Avenue to pedestrian traffic to create a pedestrian mall. The City is in communication with Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and Steven's Associates about the project. The City Engineer is focused on implications for underground utilities with new infrastructure. The 2020 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes some programs for replacing utilities (drains, sewers, & water lines) in the Gilbo Avenue/Railroad Street area as a part of an eventual Arts & Culture Corridor. There still needs to be a study of closing traffic/pedestrian way for a portion Gilbo Avenue; it is yet unclear if this is the City's or MEDC/Steven's Associates purview.

Downtown Revitalization Project: the City Manager is trying to integrate the Arts & Culture Corridor with the Downtown Revitalization Project, but it is more likely that the Arts & Culture Corridor will be completed first. Phasing will be important so that the downtown is not under construction for long periods. Downtown revitalization is currently funded for FY22, with public input and design beginning spring 2020.

4) Membership and 2020 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the Community Development Department has been focused on assigning Councilors to all Boards & Commissions. It will be important to ensure a Councilor is assigned to this Committee; Councilor Jan Manwaring is interested. Mr. Schoefmann will be passing a list to the City Clerk, which will go to the Mayor-Elect, who has final discretion for appointing Committee members. There will be openings for two active members and two alternate members. Current members should tell anyone interested in serving to submit a form on the City website and/or to send a letter to the City Clerk. Mr. Redfern and Mr. Brehme are both interested in serving as alternate members (their current terms are ending).

Chair Benik recognized Aaron Shields, who owns a small business on Emerald Street that abuts the Bike Path, who briefly described his interest in serving on the Committee.

The Committee agreed to change the November 11, 2020 meeting on Veteran's Day to November 18, 2020. Chair Benik moved to approve the Committee Schedule for 2020 as amended, which Mr. Brehme seconded and the Committee carried unanimously.

5) Old Business

a. Fall Bicycle & Pedestrian Counting Update

Mr. Schoefmann will compile KSC student counts and fall counts for the January meeting. Mr. Brehme mentioned that KSC geography students could help with the winter or spring counts. Typically last week of February and first week of March (coincides with school break when more people are out walking) would be the next count, followed by May.

b. Dedication of Path System Section (Thom Little Way)

Mr. Schoefmann referred to an approved Council Action included in the meeting packet to adopt the new resolution designating the official trail names for the City, which now includes the Thom Little Way (end of Emerald St. to Island St.). Chair Benik briefly recalled presenting this dedication to the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee and thanked members for attending to show their support.

Mr. Redfern asked if there would be a sign marking the trail. Mr. Schoefmann said that is the intention of the Public Works and Park & Recreation Departments. The sign could include a plaque describing who Mr. Little was and his work for the City. Mr. Redfern had presented a potential sign description, which he will share again with staff.

6) Project Updates

Lighting: the Appel Way lights are installed and members reported they look great. Chair Benik recognized Mr. Faulkner, who said that the City requested that Pathways for Keene hold off on buying new lights until there is a plan for what to do with them. The Transportation Heritage Trail (Water Street to Eastern Avenue to RT-101) could be the next new area for lighting. Mr. Redfern asked if there is a waiting period to see how the performance and specifications will work for the installed lights in the five-year warranty period. He said it makes sense to hold off buying more until it is clear how the current are performing. He hopes the City will assume battery replacement, as Pathways for Keene is not interested. Mr. Schoefmann confirmed that the City is more interested in ensuring that future purchased lights are placed where there is a need and that their performance level is as expected. Mr. Faulkner said that in conversation with the City Manager, that wayfinding signage and maintenance projects are great project possibilities, but a formal request is necessary from the city for PFK (Pathways for Keene) assistance. The committee members were glad to hear of PFK's support for those types of projects.

Mr. Bryenton noted that only 50% of the lights on Appel Way are illuminated on any given night. He was unsure if it is just the season, but it might be something to investigate.

The Committee recalled project updates provided by the City Engineer.

Mr. Breynton asked if bike racks would stay out in the winter parking areas designated. Mr. Schoefmann will inquire with DPW on the Transportation Center overhang and the Wells Street parking deck.

7) New Business

a. Items to be Included for Next Meeting

Elections for 2020 will take place at the next meeting. Chair Benik said that all More Time items should be addressed at the next meeting.

Mr. Redfern noted that Peter Poanessa and Antioch University are interested in working on a mini pocket park and trailhead between the Ashuelot and Cheshire Rail Trails. Mr. Redfern thinks the project should move forward whether Antioch receives the grant needed to do so. Mr. Schoefmann will research the status of the project and report after the holidays.

Mr. Horner asked about sidewalk and trail snow plowing priorities. With the first major snow storm just passed, he saw many inconsistencies that resulted in slips/falls due to poorly maintained sidewalks. He asked for an update on DPW's methodology for what is plowed and when.

8) More Time

a. Public Outreach & Events Subcommittee

b. Downtown Bike Racks & Winter Parking

c. New Trailhead near the Food Network Trail System

9) Adjournment

The next meeting date is January 8, 2020. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Edits by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Community Development