

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

8:15 AM

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

Members Present

Dillon Benik, Chair
Drew Bryenton, Vice Chair
Michael Davern
Todd Horner
Dr. Rowland Russell
Charles Redfern, Alternate

Staff Present

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks and
Recreation
Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public Works

Members Not Present

Councilor Jan Manwaring
Brad Dufresne
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Benik called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM and roll call was conducted.

2) August 11, 2021 Minutes

Chair Benik moved to accept the August 11 meeting minutes, Dr. Russell seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

3) Walldogs – Potential for Additional Mural Along Trails

Dr. Russell informed the committee that the Walldogs Executive Committee met and attempted to set up a meeting with the Historical Society, however, they were not immediately available. They are aiming to transfer funds under Arts Alive to the Historical Society which includes a maintenance fund, as well transfer funds towards another mural. Dr. Russell stated that they also aim to discuss a proposal with the Historical Society to do five new murals over the next five years, with one new mural each year. He stated that they discussed a mural with Transportation Heritage on the North Bridge but that would not happen this year, which will allow them time to consider themes and funding options. He said that are also doing an auction item with a special tour Mr. Poanessa and Mrs. Rogers to raise funds for the Historical Society and educational materials for the Wall Dogs tours. He said a second item would include Mr. Poanessa, Mrs.

Rogers and Mr. Jacobs raising funds specifically for new murals. Dr. Russell stated that the tour would cost \$200 but that will be confirmed at the next Walldogs meeting. He noted that they must also consider timing and perhaps they can time it with some of the construction work that is being done with the Transportation Heritage trail as well.

4) Old Business

A) Wayfinding

i) *UNH Downtown Trails*

(Mr. Bohannon and Kürt Blomquist joined the meeting). Mr. Bohannon stated that Ms. Shannon Rogers was unable to attend the State meeting a few weeks ago and he assumed she could not travel at all, however, that may not be the case. He has been contacting Ms. Rogers about the possibility of him becoming a part of the committee, as well as if they could arrange a specific date and time for the meeting. He is hoping to have all details available in the next week or so. He apologized for the delay.

Ms. Lacey asked if wayfinding refers to knowing which trail you are on or what intersection you are on. Mr. Schoefmann replied wayfinding refers to trails and destinations. Mr. Bohannon added that they are focused on the rail trails specifically, which would also include identifying your location in proximity to Downtown and some of the area businesses. He said that study is about the economic impact, and they are interested in the economy more than the trails. Chair Benik added that students have no idea that they can access shopping areas off the rail trail so there is a lot of awareness that needs to be done. Ms. Lacey noted that when she first moved to Keene, she had similar questions. Dr. Russell stated that people must also know what they are on to know where to go next.

ii) *Needs and Design Surveys*

Mr. Bohannon stated that he spoke to Ms. Rogers about incorporating BPPAC questions into the intercept survey and she said that is not a problem.

iii) *MRRTC – no update*

iv) *MAST Grant*

Mr. Bohannon stated that they are submitting a letter back to Southwest Regional Planning Commission that they are not able to accept the funds as sidewalk projects had no bids and the Walk your City project is not part of the program. Mr. Schoefmann stated that without construction it was not feasible, and due to the scope and scale of the project they did not receive any bids. Vice Chair Bryenton asked Mr., Bohannon if there is opportunity to continue the project next year and Mr. Bohannon and Mr. Schoefmann spoke about it but decided to scrap the project. He said the sidewalk project will eventually go back to bid when the economy for construction improves. Mr. Bohannon said they would rather allow the funds go back into the competitive process rather than holding other projects back that are more ready to go.

B) Amenities

i) Survey

Mr. Schoefmann stated that they must reconvene the work group and he will try to find time next week to go over the questions. Mr. Bohannon added that the businesses he has reached out to are short staffed and do not have the capacity as of now. He asked what BPPAC members think about creating a subgroup to make the UNH project happen. Members all agreed. Mr. Bohannon proposed that he reach out to Ms. Rogers and suggest that the BPPAC committee will serve as a subcommittee for that initiative. Mr. Schoefmann suggested that he notice it as well. Mr. Bohannon asked if all agree, and members all agreed.

Vice Chair Bryenton asked if members from BPPAC would be sufficient or whether they should invite members from other groups. Mr. Bohannon replied that the core of six individuals should be enough to begin with and then they can consider bringing in other individuals as Ms. Rogers also has two interested individuals. Mr. Bohannon stated that they can do the initial call over Zoom and he will set that up in a couple of weeks. He asked members if the timeframe works for everybody, and members replied yes. Vice Chair Bryenton asked if there were students interested at Keene State College and Mr. Schoefmann replied that it was mentioned so he will reach back out about that. Dr. Russell added that he will ask the Internship Coordinator at Antioch University New England as well to see if there are any graduate students interested in assisting with the project.

ii) Shade Trees – No update.

C) Sidewalks

i) Council Proposal

Mr. Blomquist stated that the City Council and the Infrastructure committee reviewed the sidewalk issue. The Department is proposing using their last data survey from 2017 and developing an asset management plan. He said they were able to provide the Council with the condition ratings of the City's sidewalks. He said about 60-70% of the City's sidewalks are in adequate condition (usable for pedestrians and cyclists); about 30-35% of sidewalks are in extremely poor condition (most of those are asphalt with a smaller amount being concrete). Mr. Blomquist stated that part of the process is a prioritization to identify which sidewalks to repair first. They will not target the worst sidewalks as those may have low pedestrian use so they will focus instead on sidewalks that affect the most people.

Mr. Blomquist stated that along with the condition rating, sidewalks will receive a score based on proximity to and within ½ mile of a school, parks, and trailheads as well as commercial areas. He stated that DPW will also present the results of the program as part of the 2023-2029 Capital Improvement program. The preliminary estimate is \$3.5-3.7M for the poor sidewalks and they will suggest that Council spend about \$200K per year for sidewalk work. He said the Council will review this as part of their CIP discussions which will begin after the first of the new

calendar year. Mr. Blomquist stated that Mr. Schoefmann is also assisting with the sidewalk scores. Mr. Schoefmann added that all the sidewalks have Complete Streets designations associated with their street segments as well. Dr. Russell added that the proximity data could be useful for wayfinding as well. Members agreed.

D) Bike/Pedestrian Counts
i) *EcoCounter Grant*

Mr. Davern announced that he placed two counters initially at Drummer Road/Green Acres Road trailhead and Timber Lane Drive/Old Gilsum Road access and he moves them every two weeks to other locations. He stated that he will have the counters throughout the fall, so he will continue to move them every two weeks to various trailheads to capture data. He said there have not been many surprises in the data so far, however, if anyone interested, they could access the dashboard which displays the data and creates customized reports.

Mr. Bohannon asked if the 634 total visits include all sites and Mr. Davern replied yes. Mr. Schoefmann clarified that the lower Drummer Hill Road trailhead site had 15% and the Green Acres trailhead had 85%. Mr. Davern stated that the new lot on East Surry Road has already surpassed the Green Acres trailhead. He said there are six more location son the website so if anyone is interested, he can provide access. He said he logs different events as well, for example, storms and racing events to help interpret the count data more accurately. Mr. Bohannon said that this data is exciting as the City is hiring a branding consultant and he has provided money from Parks and Recreation to brand the trails and this information will be very useful in the branding initiative.

Dr. Russell stated that SWRPC counters count bikes but not pedestrians and it would be useful to count both to estimate pedestrian traffic as well. Mr. Horner stated that he has access to infrared counters which use pneumatic tubes. Mr. Davern said after he has completed the trailheads, he could use the infrared counters at Amy Brown Road as that is heavily utilized. Mr. Bohannon stated that the proposal involved the UNH study happening at the same time, and he has been stressed about that but he thinks these two projects will align well.

E) Big E Expo Presence

Mr. Redfern stated that there are only two volunteers signed up for the Big E Expo as many people have backed out due to COVID. He suggested they remove it from the agenda as it will be over by their next meeting.

5) Regular Project Updates

A) Jonathan Daniels Trail

Mr. Bohannon stated that Pathways for Keene (PFK) donated \$18K to trail improvement; he said the construction has already happened, and it looks great.

B) Cheshire Rail Trail-Park Avenue Loop-Phase Three

Mr. Blomquist stated that they received an updated MOU from the Railroad Bureau. He noted they have taken the items from the first iteration off the table, so it is focused strictly on Cheshire Rail Trail Phase Three sections, and the section from north on the westside. He said they are combining one of the old MOUs with this new one. He hopes that it will be approved in the next week or so and that will allow them to go to NH DOT Community Planning to request authorization to award the contract.

C) Transportation Heritage Trail

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the promo material consultant that PFK paid for was linked in the email. He said it included a story map, a website, and a free video on what the sections will look like when completed. Mr. Redfern asked if they could show the presentation at the next meeting. Mr. Schoefmann agreed that he can cue it up for the next meeting. Mr. Bohannon stated that they were the same design firm that did Russell Park.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the Eastern Avenue section to Route 101 was accepted for a TAP grant, they do not know when, but it will be in the ten-year plan. He said the same section is on Congresswoman Custer's list of congressionally directed projects which has made it through the House. Process. He said Congresswoman Custer was in the Keene last week and met with Mr. Bohannon, the City Manager and Mayor at the Old Stone Arch Bridge site. She indicated that they must continue to communicate with Senator Shaheen's office as that bill is moving from the House over to the Senate and they need consistency for remaining in the appropriation bill.

Mr. Redfern asked what the total amount of the TAP grant was, and Mr. Blomquist replied it was \$411K. Mr. Blomquist stated it is an 80-20 split and if the Custer project moves through, and maybe they can use the money identified for this project for another project. He said the funding will not be finalized until the new calendar year, around February-March of 2022, and they should know by the end of the fall whether they will receive the Custer funding or not. Chair Benik asked if this is part of the Reconciliation bill and Mr. Blomquist replied that it is from the Transportation component of the Infrastructure bill. Mr. Bohannon noted that Congresswoman Custer was excited about the project because it hits all the buttons, including the economy and trails and they had a good conversation with her and her staff. Mr. Blomquist stated that Ms. Maggie Hassan's office is not participating in the congressionally directed project currently and Senator Shaheen's office is the lead in consolidating the New Hampshire requests. Mr. Schoefmann asked if they should send a letter to Senator Shaheen's office from BPPAC, and Mr. Blomquist stated that it would not hurt. The committee agreed to get the language from Congresswoman Custer's office.

Chair Benik moved that he write a letter to Senator Shaheen's office to express BPPAC's support for the Transportation Heritage Trail-Phase One project, Mr. Bryenton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

- 6) New Business - Items to be included for next meeting**
 - A) UNH Downtown Trails survey questions and agenda item**
 - B) Report out on Sidewalk statistics and scores**
 - C) Review website on Transportation Heritage Trail**
 - D) Updates on EcoCounter project data and locations**

7) Next Meeting Date – October 13, 2021

Mr. Redfern announced an open PFK annual meeting on October 18 at Keene Parks and Recreation, Room 14.

8) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:08 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff

Additional edits by,
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker