

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 13, 2022**

**8:15 AM**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

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

**Staff Present:**

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician  
Andrew Bohannon, Director of Parks  
and Recreation  
Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public  
Works  
Don Lussier, City Engineer

**Members Not Present:**

Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate  
Dillon Benik

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM. He recognized Mr. Redfern as a full member for the meeting.

**2) March Minutes**

Mr. Davern made a motion to accept the minutes of March 9, 2022 as presented. Mr. Redfern seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**3) UNH Downtown Trails Presentation**

Mr. Bohannon stated they sent out the final report for the UNH Downtown Trail program. He reminded everyone that they started the project back in August and he will be presenting the final report to the MSFI committee, then they will enter into action mode. He invited Shannon Rogers to present the final report.

Ms. Rogers reported that they have been working on this project for about 6 months and she is excited to share the results, have discussion, and hear questions and comments. She reminded everyone of the broader context being the National Trail Town movement across the country over the past decade. They have researched those programs and got a grant to visit the Kentucky Trail Town program and learned a lot about the Pennsylvania Trail Town program as well. She

mentioned that they don't call their program a Trail Town program because it is copyrighted. Additionally, they wanted to put the downtown piece first and emphasize the business and economic development component, because it's really an economic program they have established.

Ms. Rogers went on to state that they categorized four elements for success: natural, built environment, economic, and social/leadership, and she briefly went over those for the group. She next reviewed some of the components of the program such as reviewing research, conducting a spatial assessment, trainings for surveys, observing opportunities, and engagement with the broader community. Ms. Rogers touched upon the assessment characteristics which she stated are research based and demonstrate that if your community has them in place it can help you better connect your downtown and trails for economic vibrancy. These were all assessed in Keene and she mentioned that it's amazing for Keene to have two Rail Trails in the community.

Ms. Rogers reported receiving almost 200 responses on their surveys which were from people out using the trails. She noted that about 150 of those responses were usable data, which is a good sample size. 81% were residents of Keene and the majority of visitors were coming from other parts of NH, VT or MA. All reported that they had been on a Rail Trail and primary activities that they were participating in at the time included biking (57%), walking (33%), and running (10%). They then asked them about their level of satisfaction with the trails which Ms. Rogers reported was high. She noted similar results when asked about satisfaction with downtown Keene.

Ms. Rogers next covered the comments respondents gave with regards to their level of satisfaction, which included both positive and negative aspects. With regards to downtown comments, she explained that some folks commented that there was a great variety of businesses, services and restaurants, and others wished there were even more. She noted that many people thought there was an appealing Main Street in Keene and some folks commented on safety concerns, particularly for pedestrians or cyclists. Limited parking was commented on, which Ms. Rogers stated is typical with these types of surveys. In a positive aspect people commented on there being a friendly and welcoming feel to the downtown and the convenient accessibility to trails. With regards to Rail Trail comments, Ms. Rogers stated some folks appreciated all the maintenance and upkeep and some commented that they'd like to see even more of that, same with safety and lighting. Accessibility and proximity to downtown was a positive again, as well as suitability for different recreational and fitness uses, and the scenery. She added that some people commented on inconsistent trail conditions throughout the network, including wayfinding. Ms. Rogers read some quotes from the survey as well and pointed out that some folks were very supportive that the City is focusing on providing safe outdoor experiences for residents and visitors, which is important information to have especially when thinking about destination development and tourism. She also mentioned comments about better signage so that everyone can discover the many charms Keene has to offer, as well as accessibility and directions to restrooms and water access. Lastly, she stated there was a comment about there

being a full-time position at the City for developing the area economically and recreationally for trails.

Ms. Rogers reminded everyone that trails, especially the longer ones, can be a gateway to the downtown for businesses and mentioned that she and Mr. Bohannon presented to the Keene downtown group a few weeks ago. She stated it is important to think about how to connect the pieces, for example if you're on the trail and see signage that helps you find food or services. She went on to state that, in addition to the two Rail Trails, Keene also has wonderful natural assets and trail related infrastructure, which they can leverage for economic vibrancy and to become a destination for outdoor recreation visitors.

Ms. Rogers went on to state that their spatial assessment showed that there was a need to add to and coordinate signage and wayfinding. She stated folks mentioned that what is present is a great start and many communities do not even have what Keene has to date. She explained that signage should indicate where the trail is and how it connects to downtown and other attractions. For example, signage with language that says in half a mile there's food, retail and overnight accommodations to help people orient themselves and want to come into the City and spend money.

Lastly, Ms. Rogers went over community engagement and early impacts from their work. She stated she and Mr. Bohannon presented to the Keene downtown group and there were 10 people present. They also presented to the Rotary Club which was well attended. Ms. Rogers added that they have shared the report on their UNH Cooperative Extension social media, posted it on the website, and will be working on a blog. She pointed out that businesses have been added to the Trailfinder Trailside Services just because of the efforts of this program, and Keene now has 10 business in total, which is one of the biggest clusters. Mr. Bohannon mentioned that more businesses have been added since their meeting with the downtown group. Ms. Rogers mentioned that they have already heard positive impact, noting one business owner (Life is Sweet) has already seen customers come in because of the listing on Trailfinder Trailside Services and was very enthusiastic about the program. Mr. Russell suggested that the aforementioned business owner could be someone they try and recruit to be a part of BPPAC.

Ms. Rogers stated they will be sending out an evaluation survey for feedback on their process and to collect other impacts and input. She ended by stating that they are still available to support the group in their action process.

Mr. Redfern stated in Salem, NH they put up signs for their bridges that cross over the highway and asked Ms. Rogers if she heard any comments about people liking those bridges over the highways and if it is increasing usage of the trails. Ms. Rogers stated wayfinding has come up in every community they have researched and worked with and noted that bridges are generally helpful as well as having signage. Mr. Redfern commented that he thinks Keene should put up a couple of signs announcing where the Asheulot Rail Trail and Cheshire Rail Trail bridges are.

Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Lussier joined the meeting at 8:35 AM. Mr. Blomquist stated there have been budget cuts so the maintenance plan for new projects is important to think about.

Ms. Manwaring asked if there was anything about bike racks in the report. Ms. Rogers stated she believes they did a section on transportation that allows people to stay in the community longer and it may have been included in there. Mr. Bohannon stated in the Streets and Transportation section there is a highlight of a bike rack at the basketball courts and the bike repair stations, as well as benches. Ms. Manwaring asked about someone from BPPAC being on the new downtown steering committee. Mr. Bohannon stated Mr. Benik was appointed. Ms. Rogers commented that it is great to have cross pollination of the many committees and connections with the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club.

Mr. Russell commented that he loves the report and mentioned that it would be great for more art/sculpture. He added that he is working with the Historical Society and Friends of Public Art and is hoping to get more installations downtown. He explained that one idea is bike rack related where an old railroad car would be fitted out for bike lockers and become a surface for painting. Ideally, they would like someone to run bike rentals out of it. Another idea is to install a railroad signal along the Rail Trail and use it as a way to talk about arts and transportation and industrial heritage. He added that using industrial and transportation heritage materials to do contemporary sculptures is what ties it all together. Mr. Redfern suggested he contact Arts Alive as well. Mr. Kowalczyk stated there is a block signal just south of Winchester Street on the Ashuelot trail; however, it is rusted and blends in, so they could enhance that to make it more visible and possibly put up a small description sign to show a good piece of railroad history already present. Ms. Rogers stated art is very important and another asset Keene has. She mentioned the arts corridor and an opportunity behind the Food Co-op, additionally, connecting the broader brand initiative of the Chamber will be important.

Chair Bryenton thanked Ms. Rogers for her work.

Mr. Bohannon stated he has an upcoming phone call scheduled with the Recreational Trails Program to see if there's funding for the wayfinding side of things.

#### 4) **Ammi Brown/CRT Summer Trail Closure**

Mr. Schoefmann stated there were some concerns from the committee regarding closing the trail, so they invited Mr. Blomquist and Mr. Lussier to speak on the topic. Chair Bryenton asked them to discuss the impact of the closing and if there are any strategies to mitigate it. Mr. Lussier stated the contractor mobilized on April 11<sup>th</sup> which means they are under construction and will start clearing trees and vegetation. He explained that the trail will need to be closed for the duration of construction as it is very narrow and would not be possible to have both workings and safe use of the trail at the same time. He added that there are trail closed signs at each end and it is barricaded off. Mr. Lussier stated the construction is slated to be completed by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Davern commented that the newspaper article indicated that the whole Rail Trail and Ammi Brown will be closed for the entire project. Mr. Lussier stated the reality is that they will likely be done with the off-road section before July 1<sup>st</sup> and as soon as that happens they will open it up for people to enjoy. Mr. Davern stated he ran into the contractors on a recent bike ride and they indicated that they will close Ammi Brown from the bottom and the top and leave the Rail Trail open until they move their work up there. Mr. Lussier stated he has no objection to that but it will likely only take them a day or two to clear the Ammi Brown section and then they'll move up to the Rail Trail.

Mr. Bohannon stated the difficulty is trail access for the contractors, it takes a lot of coordination with the heavy equipment and is a big reason why they need to shut the trail down. Mr. Lussier added that the clearing work is pretty minimal and the heavy lifting will be importing the stone dust. They will likely set up a one-way circuit where the trucks can come from Ammi Brown and drive out the other direction so multiple trucks are continuously flowing.

Chair Bryenton wondered if this would push folks to the water tower entrance. Mr. Blomquist stated the City only has an easement for accessing the water tower so they can't officially say there's parking there. Mr. Lussier stated he has heard feedback that people who use the trails know of other ways to access them while construction is occurring.

Mr. Redfern asked how the City is accounting for speed on Ammi Brown road, particularly with the bike traffic coming down, and if they have features in mind to slow that down. He also asked if the stone dust will slide down the slope to the bottom. Mr. Lussier stated speed is a valid concern and any way they could try and slow down bicycles would make the trail noncompliant with ADA, which has specific guidelines on outdoor recreational facilities. For example, they can't put something across the trail to slow down mountain bikers but they could put signs up. Mr. Davern commented that most mountain bikers use a parallel trail in the woods and noted that the improved surface isn't going to make them going any faster than they already could right now. The real worry would be about younger kids who might go faster than they can control. Mr. Blomquist stated they are trying to make multi-use facilities so it's a challenge because they are for pedestrians, bikers, and other multiple users.

Mr. Lussier stated the trail surface is designed so there's a crown on it so water drains off the edge and not straight down the trail. He noted it does require maintenance from time to time but it's fairly durable.

Mr. Kowalczyk stated he is already receiving positive feedback about the project and mentioned that there's a group formed in Surry and Westmoreland to start working on the Rail Trail, starting at the Surry/Keene line and moving to the Westmoreland/Walpole town line. It's about a 7 mile stretch and they have done some surveying and grant preparation.

Mr. Russell mentioned that the article in the paper said July 31<sup>st</sup> for completion of construction. Mr. Lussier stated that is correct and apologized that he misspoke saying July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Blomquist stated as they open up the trail he requests the committee educate the communities who utilize it, especially the bicyclist community, to respect the folks who live around the trails, noting that they have expressed concerns. Mr. Redfern stated Pathways for Keene can help with that as well. Mr. Davern stated that he has dealt with folks who live near the trails and has formed a good relationship with them so those concerns should be resolved now. He added that most bikers won't be using the new trail so there shouldn't be any more new conflict. He also mentioned that a big focus for him as president of NEMBA is awareness and education.

Mr. Davern asked about the parking spots in the parking lot indicated in the newspaper article. Mr. Lussier stated he believes it is 12 spots.

Mr. Horner, present via Zoom, pointed out that cyclists are getting a lot of attention as far as safety concerns and asked why speed of snowmobilers is not a concern as well. Mr. Blomquist stated they certainly are but it's lower in popularity.

**5) Old Business**

**A) Wayfinding/Amenities: Other**

There were no other updates here.

**B) Bike/Pedestrian Counts: 2022 plans**

Mr. Schoefmann stated they agreed on 3 locations for laser counters last meeting and will now need to talk to Southwest at some point and see if they can do infrared counting, and possibly look at fall counts. He added that he will set up a sign-up form. Mr. Kowalczyk stated Don Moyer of Friends of Northern Rail Trail put up counters last year and he is willing to show the group what he does and the types of reports they generate. Mr. Schoefmann stated he will invite him to a meeting.

**C) Public Art and the Trails Update**

There were no other updates here.

**D) Earth Day/Green Up Keene (April 16)**

Chair Bryenton made the correction that it's on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Redfern stated there will be three entities sharing a 10x10 tent on Trails Day/Earth Day, including Pathways for Keene with maps and their literature, Monadnock Collaborative, and NH Rail Trail Coalition selling books about Rail Trails in NH, which have been very popular. He stated the event goes from 10am to 4pm and if anyone wants to help that would be appreciated.

Mr. Russell stated Antioch University adopts a section from West Street/North Bridge and beyond all the way to Emerald Street and down to Winchester Street, and will likely do their clean up the Friday before Earth Day.

**E) Kiosk Map Updates**

Mr. Schoefmann stated he will have proofs and final edits to Mr. Bohannon soon.

**6) Regular Project Updates**

Chair Bryenton stated he submitted the Granite State Wheelers grant which is for \$2,500 for various bicycle related things to try and get some more funding for the Master Plan, but has not heard that it has been received. Mr. Redfern stated he submitted one for signage and wayfinding for the City and heard that it was received but hasn't heard anything else.

Mr. Bohannon stated Jonathan Daniels trail maintenance is CIP budgeted for next year.

Mr. Schoefmann stated the bike racks are going out soon and the locations should be the same as last year. Mr. Blomquist stated that should happen within the next couple of weeks, noting they usually get them out by Memorial Day.

Mr. Schoefmann stated, with regards to the arts and culture corridor, there was a design meeting that happened for the smaller scale version of the arts corridor. Mr. Russell stated they are now using the term arts core instead of corridor. He noted they are wanting more signage as well and hoping to work together on that.

The Downtown Infrastructure Group has their tentative first meeting scheduled for April 19<sup>th</sup> and Mr. Schoefmann reminded them that Mr. Benik will be representing. He added that there is great cross-sector representation.

Mr. Blomquist stated, with regards to the Lower Winchester Street project, they have done the RFQ and Council has authorized negotiations. Mr. Lussier is working on the scope which will then go to Swanzy for review because it's a three-way agreement and will then go back to state for review. They are planning to establish a small steering committee hopefully this fall. He added that Upper Winchester Street will go into construction around June 1<sup>st</sup> and be under construction for the next two years.

Mr. Kowalczyk asked if there's a way to direct bicyclists and pedestrians to the trail via Krif Road. Mr. Blomquist stated that will be something to discuss once the design process is started.

With regards to wayfinding and signage, Mr. Schoefmann stated they have seen movement on the Master Plan projects and just had the presentation from the UNH Downtown Trails program. He also stated they have seen movement on the Transportation Heritage Trail projects. Mr.

Blomquist stated they received congressionally directed funding for the first section between Eastern Avenue and 101. He noted that they haven't heard yet what the execution schedule requirements are but it will likely need to be done by December 2026. The design should start this fall and go through next spring, which means it could be under construction in 2023 or early 2024. Mr. Blomquist mentioned that the Marlborough Street design is with DOT and they are waiting for their approval of preliminary engineering. Mr. Schoefmann added that West Street is also a DOT project.

7) **New Business (Items to be included for next meeting)**

Mr. Schoefmann stated next meeting they will discuss updating the top 5 priority projects.

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff

Additional edits by,  
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