

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Drew Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:16 AM. Minutes should reflect that Mr. Charles Redfern was sitting as a full member. Mr. Dave McNamara and Mr. Ed Roberge, both of Stantec, attended.

2) October 12, 2022 Minutes Approval

Mr. Rowland Russell motioned to approve the minutes from October 12, 2022. Ms. Jan Manwaring seconded motion. Unanimous roll call approval was received from the committee.

3) Downtown Infrastructure Project- Letters of Support and Update

Chair Bryenton said there were a number of questions identified on the design options during the October meeting. The Stantec team was invited and attended the meeting to try to provide answers and clarification to those questions. Chair Bryenton's goal for the meeting was identify a specific design proposal that the group supports and from that, develop a recommendation for City Council.

Chair Bryenton opened it up for any questions. Mr. Todd Horner said he had a question regarding designs three and four and how they extend north. He would be interested in hearing Stantec's thoughts on the differences between those scenarios.

Mr. Ed Roberge spoke and said they have been working closely with the technical review committee (the staff cross-sectional committee) on a whole host of scenarios. When they looked at the option of closing the top of Central Square, there were three things driving the feasibility of that. One being if trucks are using that route, could trucks, school busses and firetrucks make it if that particular route was eliminated. Through studies, they confirmed that they indeed could. The second issue looked at whether there was enough space to reserve an open plaza space and would there be enough space should fire trucks or emergency personnel need to get in there. The third issue was in regards to the parking and whether elimination of that could be mitigated. They were able to show in a couple of concepts how they propose mitigating those parking spaces both on Court Street and Washington Street.

As it is currently, the interior finished circle is about 17,000 square feet. With elimination of that roadway section and bringing Court and Washington into West Roxbury, it will cause a gain of about 14,000 square feet and almost double the size of the interior finished circle. The roadway configurations nearly keep the whole original circle space untouched. The roundabout does have some front nose modifications, but they believe it to be minimal. The study indicated not only could it be done, but could be done in a fashion that operates similar to what the expectation is today.

Dr. Russell asked how these different options impact bike/pedestrian traffic. Mr. Roberge responded that if Washington Street continues to West Roxbury Street, the goal would be to maintain bike lanes right into the Main Street intersection with a one-way bike lane on both the north and southbound side. They have a number of options for those bike lanes in the design options (protected, unprotected, etc.). Currently, there are no bike lanes on Court Street, so they would introduce something similar to what is currently present on Washington Street, where the lanes would enter the West Roxbury Square. He noted that there is space to accommodate that. They are also looking at crosswalks and in particular, how people come and go and the overall safety of them. There are existing crosswalks at the top of the square and some at the bottom. They are trying to maintain those and they think they could maintain the pedestrian access with a lot less pavement.

Dr. Russell asked how they propose increasing the safety of the pedestrian crossing in the roundabout option especially given that they would not have the benefit of a signal, which they currently do have. Mr. Roberge responded that there are a number of challenges in that. He added that roundabouts have the cross walk positioned beyond the first car stacking at the intersection. The benefit of that particular proposed design option is that by reducing the crosswalk widths; it would provide increased visibility and less traffic. The Rapid Flashing Beacon (RFB), can be used to draw attention to pedestrian crossings and provide awareness for the driver. Another benefit is the pedestrian is only crossing one lane at a time and even if there is a splitter lane; there is refuge for the pedestrian to ensure the driver has pedestrian awareness.

Ms. Manwaring asked what would be the option for pedestrians that are visually impaired as they will not be able to visually see a flashing beacon. Mr. Roberge responded that for visually impaired pedestrians, there are auditory systems that can be put in place to provide additional

safety mechanisms and/or things such as adding a stop condition or a red light at each of those lights to provide additional safety.

Chair Bryenton asked specifically regarding the mini-roundabout and whether the volume capacity in that option was comparable to what it is today. Mr. Roberge responded that it would actually be an improvement to what is present today. They have modeled that and will be presenting it to the Steering Committee next Tuesday. They looked at the existing, 5-leg signal and were able to show that the roundabout outperforms as it keeps traffic moving. The northbound would be a two-lane approach and that right lane would be for right lane onto Roxbury Street or straight north onto Washington Street. The left inside lane would be for a left turn onto Court Street or a hard left onto West Street. He stated they would expect those queues to be less than the length of the blocks shown in the Central Square option 4- mini-roundabout image.

Chair Bryenton asked if this committee was meeting their goal and meeting their vision of more bike and pedestrian traffic, how would that impact the amount of traffic that can move through. Mr. Roberge responded that he believes they included bike facilities at all approaches to the roundabout. The task now is to refine how they process bikes through the roundabout. Often times, roundabouts use a wider shared lane outside of vehicle traffic. Stantec plans to review that to see if it would fit. The widening does interfere with parking, but alternatives would be considered to either have the bikes join the traffic or place them outside the vehicular traffic. He thinks the model can accommodate all of that plus pedestrians.

Mr. Horner asked regarding roundabout and bike and pedestrian safety, a key consideration is speed. One reason he liked the roundabout is the avoidance of signals and people gunning it to get through lights. He wondered what the design speed is of this roundabout. He asked how fast they anticipated vehicles moving. Mr. McNamara responded that the curbs are designed to slow people to twenty miles per hour.

Mr. Horner wondered how the decision about Central Square relates to street design on Main Street. He questioned whether a single lane option on Main Street might become a more feasible option from a traffic standpoint, if the decision was to proceed with a roundabout versus a signalized intersection. Mr. Roberge noted that was a great question it was and how that particular question was part of the studies they completed. He noted that they had alternative 1, 2a, 2b and 3. Those have splintered into about eight and they are trying to make sure they can manage and talk through all of them appropriately. The 5-leg signal does add some queuing during peak hours. They have identified that all three alternatives work fairly well. He added that from the geometry, when looking at the exit southbound on Main Street, it is presently a single lane. This has potential to be opened up and with consensus of the community, could maintain a multilane roadway. When entering the roundabout, the two lanes for northbound are still needed to process the traffic and get the vehicles started into the roundabout. The other lanes (Court, Washington, Roxbury and West Streets) would all be single lane approaches.

Chair Bryenton asked if there were any other questions on Central Square. With no further questions, they moved onto the four Main Street options for Central Square. Regarding the Main Street and going from two lanes to one lane, he noted that they discussed how the roundabout

can accommodate, but he wondered how two lanes allow in this section of roadway. Mr. Roberge said the two lanes versus one lane in the straight line corridor of Main Street would behave very much like it does today. The cars would use it much the same as present. If it were single lane, speed will likely slow down and from the pedestrian perspective, it will all balance. It really comes down to signal delays and whether that can be maintained. Today, there are three lanes that sit there for the signal. Signal delays would be a little longer and require a little more time. Drivers might have to wait a little longer for the light for Roxbury, but they would not have to go all the way around thereby reducing the total travel distance. Whether single or two, they have studied both and they are both pretty comparable and nothing was noted that would be a big disconnect or que time that would be problematic.

Mr. Horner stated that one feature he really liked about the single lane was that it opened potential for east/west connection on Emerald and Eagle Streets as well as Gilbo and Railroad Streets. If people can get directly across town on east/west, it removes some traffic from those central locations.

Mr. Charles Redfern said he was not sure where the group was in the overall discussion. One previous discussion was regarding a bike lane and a dedicated lane going opposite ways right down the middle. There was question of how to enter into the traffic flow on the south part and how to exit on the north part. Dr. Russell added that he noted the reduction makes it harder for people to get to businesses to shop. It takes away the benefit of people passing through. It works for through traffic and a few destinations downtown. Mr. Roberge responded that based on corridor width, if referring to the alternative that is shown with the multiuse path, they really only have the opportunity for that in the first block. It provides a decent connection to the Cheshire Rail Trail, but it narrows back down shortly after. It really becomes a challenge of getting them out and in safely.

Chair Bryenton asked if any other questions on the main street section of the design.

Dr. Russell mentioned that a number of the group were very positive about the raised section. He questioned whether that could be on the table regardless of one lane or two lane. He noted that it was only listed in one option, but seems highly desirable for traffic calming, pedestrian safety, events, etc. Mr. Roberge said they looked at it as a gateway treatment focusing on that arrival into the trail. It would operate very well regardless of single or multi-lane.

Mr. Horner asked about the single lane option and requested clarification on if the protected bike lane was at sidewalk grade. He really liked the sidewalk grade and thought the thirty-four foot grassy green space was awesome and wondered if maybe it would be possible to have protected bike lanes along with a linear park up Main Street.

Dr. Russell added that the green space adds options to water gardens, bios walls, and greater flexibility.

Mr. Roberge said they tried to maintain the existing outer limits of the current parking area and all the trees that are there today. This design maximizes that and provides a balanced flexibility.

Mr. Redfern said he also prefers the raised bike lane. His only concern is thinking ahead, e-bike popularity are increasing. With the increased speed of e-bikes, he suggested a speed limit on the pavement on the bike lane so the riders have time to react to the pedestrians.

Mr. Roberge responded that it remains a concern and there is signage he has seen used in other projects to increase awareness. Another option is to use strong pavement markings to increase awareness of pedestrian traffic.

Chair Bryenton asked if any other questions. With no further questions, they moved onto the Gilbo Avenue and Railroad Street area and asked Mr. Roberge to go through the design alternatives. Mr. Roberge stated the existing condition is a two-way access. They have been looking at a one-way alternative or west bound from Gilbo Avenue and whether the circulation would work from that pattern. If that was done, there is potential for a better plaza space. It mimics what can be programmed on the other side of Railroad Street. The third option was to emphasize the importance of the rail trail and its crossing so it was proposed to raise that to sidewalk elevation. The travel way north and southbound would ramp up. The continued elevation between Railroad and Gilbo space would tie in quite well, but would still be predicated on the one-way traffic.

Dr. Russell asked how they proposed mitigating the one-way Gilbo Avenue heading west and the impact on public transportation. Mr. Roberge said that is being studied right now. Kurt Blomquist added that the City is completing a microgrant study and that the goal is to keep Gilbo Avenue multimodal. There are still conversations that need to be had with the Greyhound bus company around what kind of impact it will have on them.

Chair Bryenton asked if there were any general questions for the team. With no further questions, Chair Bryenton noted that all the options presently on the table will allow to process existing traffic acceptably with no major impacts. Some of these options have splintered off. He asked Mr. Roberge what directions those splinters are going. Mr. Roberge said most of those are around on-street parking, parking type and bike safety and passage. The next piece was Central Square and whether the north piece could be closed off. He said the key takeaway is that the street could be replaced with flexible space.

Chair Bryenton asked how far it extends. Mr. Roberge said the project area is south of Water Street.

Chair Bryenton thanked the Stantec team for coming. He then opened it up for comment from the committee.

Ms. Manwaring said she is very against the roundabout option. She regularly watches people struggle to cross and does not see the average individual being able to cross easily, let alone someone who has any challenges. She favored option two.

Mr. Dillon Benik mentioned that the business owners are very protective of their parking and he is curious to hear their input.

Mr. Redfern liked the idea of the extension of Central Square with the green space. He favored the roundabout. The group consensus was in favor of the sidewalk grade bike lane.

Dr. Russell also favored the raised bike path. He stated he supported expanding Central Square park and he is leaning more away from roundabout.

Mr. Horner stated he had concerns with the roundabout and pedestrian safety. While the roundabout jumps out as the one that makes sense, he always comes back to the walkability and the roundabout does not have the same degree of walkability. If it were possible to put up beacons and some signals for visually impaired, he stated it would certainly be a possibility.

Mr. Davern liked the roundabout from a traffic sense, but noted that when adding in the beacons, it creates a random sequence that from his perception, could bottleneck things. He favored option two and four. For Main Street, he preferred the 2b multimodal with the bike path at sidewalk grade.

Dr. Russell pointed out that almost everyone talked about traffic and cars. As a business, he would want opportunities for cars to stop downtown. The roundabout seems more predicated on moving traffic through downtown to the detriment of bike safety. He was curious what, honestly, do the business favor and thinks the group needs to take that into account in their decision.

Mr. Davern questioned whether a more steady flow of traffic makes it harder on the corridor parking wise.

In preparation of Ms. Manwaring leaving, Mr. Will Schoefmann questioned whether the group was able to form a consensus before Ms. Manwaring left. The most important takeaway is that we need bike facilities in downtown and a central square expansion is ideal. The group agreed.

Mr. Benik said the Steering Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, the 15th. He will report back to the group.

Chair Bryenton said the group will not have time to meet in December, but can get the feedback and update the letter. The motion will say something to the effect of the BBPAC is in support of the following four implementations to the downtown projects:

- 1) Expanded central square park
- 2) Separated and protected bike facilities in downtown
- 3) One lane traffic through project area
- 4) Raised intersection at Gilbo Street

The group will wait to hear from the results of the Tuesday meeting and will make appropriate adjustments in the hopes of getting the open letter to the public and then the support letter to the Council next week.

Chair Bryenton asked if speaking to business owners would be helpful. Mr. Davern said it might be best to wait to see the feedback from Tuesday. Mr. Redfern asked if there were any councilors the group should reach out to. Mr. Davern said there were a couple of councilors on the committee.

Mr. Schoefmann suggested completing the letter sooner rather than later. Mr. Davern noted that there are a number of businesses in support of bikes and that he understood they will also be writing letters in support. Dr. Russell asked if the public facing letter was different from the Council letter. It was clarified that it was separate and the open letter was approved by motion in the last meeting and had been finalized.

Motion is on the table for the Council Recommendation, which mirrors Mr. Horner's letter to City Council. Dr. Russell seconded the motion. The group provided unanimous approval.

4) **BPPAC Website**

No Update

5) **Old Business**

A) Wayfinding/ Amenities: North and South Bridge Signage

Mr. Schoefmann added that he heard from Andy Bohannon that they finally had communication on the North and South Bridge signage.

B) Bike/ Pedestrian Counts

No Update

C) Public Art and the Trails Update

No Update

D) Volunteer Opportunities

Dr. Russell stated that it did not appear as though the weather would be ideal for cleaning Friday 10am. He mentioned that alternatives were Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning at 10. A number of members preferred Sunday morning at 10, if it is dry. The meet up location is Pearl Street where the seating location is. Dr. Russell will send out a reminder and will also create a little flyer.

E) Kiosk Map Updates

No Update

6) **Regular Project Updates**

No Update

7) **New Business**

No Update

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Mapping Technician
Community Development