

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Samantha Jackson, Chair
Dr. Rowland Russell, Vice Chair
Michael Davern
Autumn DelaCroix
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Janelle Sartorio, Alternate

Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community Development
Director
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks and
Recreation
Don Lussier, Public Works Director

Members Not Present:

Dillon Benik
Councilor Edward Haas
Diane Duffy

1) Call To Order, Roll Call, and Welcome

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

2) Approval of August 14, 2024, Minutes

With no corrections, Ms. Autumn DelaCroix moved to accept the minutes and received a second from Dr. Rowland Russell. With all in favor, the August 14, 2024, minutes were unanimously accepted.

3) Downtown Infrastructure Project

A) Bike Lane Rules Update

Chair Jackson stated she knew there was an MSFI meeting later in the month. Mr. Rounds explained that the city manager wants to take the rules to MSFI as a testament to the rules committee's work. They are not voting necessarily to support the regulations but to include them in the process. Eventually, they will have to be turned into an ordinance to be enforceable downtown. Right now, the goal is to wrap them into the larger project once they have gone before and received support from MSFI.

Dr. Russell asked if there would be a public discussion at the meeting. Mr. Rounds was not sure and offered to check. Dr. Russell suggested that all BPPAC members attend to answer questions as they arise.

Mr. Redfern asked about the date of the next MSFI meeting. Mr. Don Lussier, the Public Works director, shared that it is scheduled for September 25th, 2024, at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers.

4) Safety and Outreach

A) Community Bike Share

Chair Jackson did not have anything to add. Mr. Marcus McCarroll said they sent in the paperwork, but it was rejected. He plans to resubmit. Currently, all bike materials are in storage. He shared that there is a meeting today, September 11, 2024, at the Keene Public Library at 3:00 PM in the Vincent Room upstairs. He hopes to have a robust meeting today.

Chair Jackson said she has yet to ask the library whether they can use the basement space, but it is on her list of things to do. Mr. McCarroll responded that it was rejected out of hand and that they would have to go through the library channels to make that happen.

Dr. Russell asked Mr. McCarroll to clarify what paperwork he was referring to. Mr. McCarroll explained that the paperwork was to reinvigorate the old Keene City Green Bikes non-profit status, which had been defunct. The initial paperwork he had filed with the Secretary of State was not filled out correctly, so he must resubmit.

Ms. Carrah Fisk-Hennessey explained that Councilor Haas had requested that she contact Mr. Chris Jackson, which she did. Mr. Jackson has not gotten back to her. Mr. Davern also spoke with Mr. Jackson, who said he had no non-profit status.

B) Other

5) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Rounds brought up the spreadsheet contained in the agenda packet. Regarding bike racks, Chair Jackson shared that she still needs to fix some things in the presentation. She has not had the opportunity to sit down with it, but it is on her radar for later this week or early next week.

Mr. Redfern had a question for Mr. Lussier through the Chair. Mr. Redfern asked if the city had included the bike racks' type and location in the new improvement planning. Mr. Lussier shared that he believed the consultant had a plan of where they were looking to put them and thought they had also received feedback and some ideas from the BPPAC on where to place them. The locations are not locked down yet, but they have an informed idea of where they will go regarding the design. One of the tasks still on their to-do list is to meet with the Heritage

Commission and discuss the style. He knows some support the public art style of bike racks, which may not be welcome in the historic district. He wants to get more public input.

Dr. Russell shared that they did try to track down the Keene High School artistic bike rack competition discussed last month. A friend recently shared three photos of bike racks in Ireland with him, which he will share with Chair Jackson and, per request, Mr. Lussier. Mr. McCarroll suggested hanging bike racks because of their greater space-saving capacity.

Mr. Rounds did not have an additional update for the Safe Streets for All Grant beyond what was listed in the agenda handout. Chair Jackson noted that outreach would also be included in the MSFI meeting later this month.

Mr. McCarroll asked how frequently the paths get resurfaced. Mr. Lussier explained that this will be the first time it has been done since the 1970s. He believed it was planned to be done within the next two years. Ms. DelaCroix mentioned a washed-out area near the Ashuelot River. Mr. Lussier noted that the area was in the Community Improvement Plan.

Mr. Lussier shared that the Eastern Ave Heritage Trails are currently being designed. They must undergo an archeological survey with test pits every few feet for that corridor, which has slowed them down significantly. However, he is confident that they are on track to do construction next year. Chair Jackson asked if Mr. Lussier was aware of any public meetings. He shared that there will be a review with MSFI and some independent meetings with property owners.

6) Volunteer Opportunities

A) Bike Rack Census Counts, Yield Counts, and Bicycle/ Pedestrian Counts

Chair Jackson shared that she did approximately four census counts last week at various times. She obtained a decent range of numbers but struggled to get out there during the busier times. It is a more challenging time frame for her, but she would like to see some census counts for those time frames. It is informal, and she urged members who had their phones with them to do a quick count.

Chair Jackson explained that she had been going up and down Main Street and counting how many bikes were at a rack. If there are any notes about bikes, such as one missing a wheel, that is good information. Or if numerous counts have been done and one bike is continuously there and does not seem to move, it may be a long-term storage bike. Noting those situations helps try to ensure accuracy.

Chair Jackson also noted that if she is doing a count and sees a rack with no bikes but notices three or four people at a bench with bikes next to them, she notes it as three bikes in the square unlocked next to users. Chair Jackson said the yield and pedestrian counts were supposed to be for West St. Dr. Russell noted that Mr. Schoefmann was to send out a sign-up and suggested waiting to discuss it until he returned.

Dr. Russell mentioned that they expect to meet to nail down a time for the annual fall clean-up of the rail trail. It will likely be scheduled before the snow but after the leaves are down.

7) **Old Business**

A) **Wayfinding Updates**

Dr. Russell shared that he and Councilor Haas met with Mr. Andy Bohannon last week and were looking to identify locations of trailhead kiosks, directional signs, etc. They have done some preliminary identification, and they have a meeting scheduled this Friday, September 13th, to look more closely at the map and the information they gathered. Councilor Haas had been doing bike rides to identify places to use as confidence markers. Mr. Bohannon said it is a matter of finding a location and determining the exact language. He expected the installation to be in the spring.

Chair Jackson recognized Mr. Redfern, who recommended Tom Little Way as a promising area as the trail breaks off from the shopping center. Often, people do not know where to go and frequently go through the plaza without realizing that the trail continues. Dr. Russell expanded on Mr. Redfern's suggestion, mentioning where the current kiosks are and explaining that they tried to do concentric circles with priority phases to bring attention to things closer to downtown. He noted that the funding does not go forever and will only stretch so far, so they wanted to get the downtown area and then radiate out further as funding permitted. Ms. Sartorio asked if it was a matter of people not knowing where the trail goes or more that they do not care. There was discussion about the route people sometimes take through the plaza and how they are likely unaware, given the awkward route they must take to get through that area. Dr. Russell added that the area needs work to clarify where the trail goes and believed that is where the confidence markers come in. He shared that they have had some significant buy-in from the Keene International Market, which often tells shoppers about the bike paths and promotes them. Dr. Russell suggested more outreach to some businesses that draw customers on bikes that use the bypass. Mr. McCarroll pointed out another "wheel-breaker" spot in that area must be resurfaced. Multiple members noted that the roots from adjacent trees were causing the pavement to heave. Mr. Redfern asked if cutting some of the roots was possible without destroying the tree. Mr. Lussier was unsure and said if roots are causing the pavement to heave, paving over will not correct the issue, and it will continue to happen. Chair Jackson suggested checking the trees for any significant health issues that might result in the tree falling on someone.

Dr. Redfern asked if the new maps on the kiosks had been done. Mr. Rounds did not believe they were final but close to completion. Mr. McCarroll asked if those maps showed wayfinding through city streets or only bike paths. Mr. Bohannon stated it was only bike paths. Mr. McCarroll suggested adding less busy city streets as alternative ways to connect. Mr. Rounds asked Mr. Lussier if there was any impact on vehicle operation if the city was officially calling them bikeways. According to Mr. Lussier, under state law, bikes are vehicles entitled to use the road, so it does not result in needing to change anything with the road. Mr. McCarroll asked if

that was a case where bikes were allowed to go against a one-way street. Mr. Lussier reiterated that bikes are, under state law, vehicles and must follow the same road rules.

Dr. Russell asked if it was possible to ensure Mr. Schoefmann shared that map again with committee members. He liked what Mr. McCarroll said about showing some of the additional road crossings, and he could see how that would be helpful. He stated he knew Pathways worked hard on the map, but he would find it helpful to, for example, show Krif Road intersecting. Mr. Redfern added that intersecting roads or streets would help people understand how to get to a trail, to which everyone agreed. Ms. DelaCroix noted that having a symbol designating it as an intersection helps promote and increase riders' awareness at intersections. Dr. Russell supported Mr. Redfern's suggestion of adding intersections and identifying things that cross the official trails.

Chair Jackson shared that she recently went to Stonewall and Archway. In traveling that way, the bike path goes up and over Arch Street, but there is no way to the trail because it goes above the road. She believed it would be essential and valuable to ensure that the map shows that they intersect but are not connected.

8) New Business

Chair Jackson wanted to follow up on the MSFI and keep the census counts on the agenda for next time.

9) More Time

- A) Continued Bike Racks Discussion**
- B) Public Art and The Trails Updates**

Dr. Russell shared that Friends of Public Art would be meeting that evening, September 11th, and he had three items related to the trails he would discuss. He reminded everyone that Peter Poanessa had an old railroad signal that he had retrieved, and they still had not gotten a bid to restore it. They continue to follow up with Mr. Poanessa, but time remains. The idea would be to be placed somewhere along the Transportation Heritage Corridor, either as a gateway with a kiosk or somewhere in a prominent location. It still has the electrical box, so Mr. Poanessa said he would see if it could be cleaned. The second item is the abutment they will work on next year and make more prominent where the Marlboro Rail goes over the Cheshire Rail. It is a concrete abutment, and they have discussed a wall-type stylized map on its face showing all the rail lines, where they intersect, and maybe windows of different eras of trains. They would probably look to Mr. Poanessa for the execution of that. There is some funding at the Historical Society for continued mural work. The board has been briefed on both projects, and they have talked to their development person about looking for funding opportunities.

The third is on Apple Way, where the tunnel travels underneath Route 9/10 and how that has become a graffiti magnet. There has been discussion about doing a mural like the four-season

one on the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail. The hope is to discuss that at tonight's meeting and whether they want to investigate the possibility of a mural focused on the Ashuelot wildlife and its history.

Chair Jackson asked Mr. Lussier if complaints had been coming in about the graffiti and issues like the roots mentioned previously, and he confirmed they had. She promoted the SeeClickFix app, to which Mr. Lussier explained that complaints through the app are automatically routed to parks and recreation and are the most efficient way of getting those complaints into the right hands to do something about them.

Chair Jackson recognized Mr. Redfern. Mr. Redfern said there are numerous areas where there are lips as one comes off the bridges, causing significant drop-offs. If a bicyclist is traveling at any rate of speed, those lips create a hazard. He believed it would only require some stone dust and asked Mr. Lussier if it was readily available. Mr. Lussier responded that for the stone dust paths, it is simple to repair, but for paths that are asphalt, repairs are more intensive.

Mr. Rounds asked Mr. Lussier if there was any money or time to determine why these issues keep reoccurring and choose the right engineering solution to prevent them from happening again. Mr. Lussier said the solution is more regular maintenance. It is caused by wear and tear.

Mr. Redfern said that people had created an informal path to get from the neighborhood onto the Cheshire Rail Trail South trail, on the industrial heritage segment, not too far from the retirement home complex. This informal path has caused significant erosion underneath the pavement, causing it to start collapsing.

Chair Jackson recognized Mr. McCarroll, who wanted to extend the invitation to the meeting mentioned earlier to all in attendance.

Dr. Russell asked Chair Jackson if a monthly bike ride was coming up. She shared that the group now has a Facebook page, and the bike rides will be posted and advertised there. The next ride is scheduled for Friday, September 20, 2024, arriving at 5:00 PM and departing at 5:30 PM. There is a safety discussion before the ride. The route has not changed from the last time.

Chair Jackson shared that yesterday, she was talking to Mr. Jake Colin, and he mentioned that he was curious about the difference in the perceived safety of bike speed, specifically regarding the bike paths on Main Street. He wondered at what speed a bicyclist would feel safe using those bike paths and at what speed pedestrians would feel comfortable with bicyclists riding nearby, understanding that it would not be known for sure until they had been made. She is primarily a bicyclist and could only provide that perspective. She presented it to the committee members who walked to try and get their perspective. Mr. Redfern responded that there would be two different types of riders: commuter bike riders and casual riders. He believes there should be two distinguishing speeds in the code, where riders going ten-plus miles per hour should be riding on the road and treated like vehicles, as state law outlines. Mr. Redfern asked Mr. Lussier what

would be considered an appropriate commuter speed. Mr. McCarroll jumped in and said fifteen to twenty miles per hour is a commuter rate of speed. Ms. DelaCroix added that under ten is akin to jogging/sprinting speed. Mr. Redfern believes that Mr. Colin's question is important and that the speed issue needs to be addressed. He shared that certain counselors have said it would be easy to convert bike lanes back into sidewalks if problems arise and bike lanes become problematic. This is the reasoning behind the desire to have them at certain levels and to be easily demarcated. He thinks Mayor Kahn is very forward-thinking about issues like this, and Chair Jackson believes it resulted from his visit to Europe. She understood that during his trip, tour guides made it clear that bike lanes are for bikes, and one takes their life in their own hands when they decide to walk in the bike lane. They attributed it to walking into traffic. Europe has been biking since the 1960s and building that infrastructure since at least the 1990s. From her perspective, Keene is starting at zero, and in two years, people in the community will have very different perspectives on what is safe. Mr. Redfern agreed.

Ms. Sartorio added that, from a pedestrian perspective, speed will depend on whether the pedestrian knows that the bicyclist is coming. Mr. McCarroll responded that every bicycle has a bell by law in Europe, France, and Amsterdam. They also have bicycle police that police the bicycles, which Keene does not have. Those police enforce the rules, and there are consequences for breaking those rules. In those areas, bicyclists respect pedestrians, and their rules create an environment where it is safe to have bicycle pedestrian zones because everyone knows what is expected and what the consequences will be.

Chair Jackson recognized Dr. Russell, who said two things came to mind for him. One is enforcement. Bandwidth and budget would potentially limit that, at least to begin with. There's potential to advocate for that as a committee, but he is not sure that is one they can touch. Education is one area that the committee could touch and should be intimately involved in. Many of the current education efforts are providing workshops for riders, doing promotional events, and using various forms of media. He believed the BPPAC committee should be helping with every aspect of that education.

Ms. DelaCroix noted that the committee needs to be aware of risks but urged caution regarding how the group talks about those risks so as not to panic the public. She did not want to promote the idea that bikes can hurt people when the vast majority go slow enough to avoid incidents, and in the rare occasion of an incident, they are often very minor. Mr. Redfern added that electric bikes are causing that to shift. He shared that the New Hampshire Rail Trails Coalition struggles with the increased popularity of electric bikes because they go significantly faster than bicyclists and tend to be less courteous. They generally have a younger audience than a traditional biker.

Ms. DelaCroix shared that she has encountered at least eight people on the local rail trails who have used electric bicycles, and all of them have been very aware of other people on the trails and have adjusted their speeds accordingly. Mr. Redfern responded that the dealers and industry are pushing for no speed limits on electric vehicles (electric bikes, scooters, and one-wheelers) in public. They are pushing for behavior written enforcement; in other words, if somebody is

reckless, give them a warning, a fine, and arrest them. He questioned how that is gauged and felt it fell to the eyes of the beholder as to whether the user or the victim was reckless.

Mr. Rounds said he sat in on many of the downtown bicycle lane committee meetings and believed Dr. Russell made a good point about the enforcement and education. He believed the city needs to be honest and be clear that they do not have the time or money to have a police officer or officers policing the space and be honest that they are resistant to signage. The committee's solution was to have a robust website. He did not find the answer because, as a bicyclist, he does not think of checking a city's website to determine the speed limits when he travels or prepares for a long ride. He believed there were a couple of things the BPPAC could lean on, and having lived in a lot of places with bike lanes of various types; they are both the pedestrian and cyclist behavior changes. If there is a six-foot-wide bike lane, it changes the behavior of the users. If a bicyclist is comfortable going fifteen to twenty miles per hour, it will likely be on the road anyway because it wants to travel at a higher rate of speed. They will not want to ride in a six-foot-wide bike lane where they must worry about people walking across it to get to the sidewalk. It makes it an uncomfortable place for those types of riders to ride. He believed there was going to be a natural stratification of users that would occur. He also believed that the place where much of this education will need to happen is as these lanes get built. He mentioned that the committee discussed the possibility of having marked areas where pedestrians can cross the bike lane, which all users know as a safe spot to cross and to look out for. While he was unsure if something like that would work, the committee did not include speed in their rules because most people do not have a speedometer on their bikes.

Ms. Sartorio asked about the pushback on the signage and wondered if that was a funds issue or more of a lack of desire to have them. Mr. Rounds believed it was felt that additional signs increased the clutter. Mr. Lussier clarified that the city wants the downtown to have a particular aesthetic, and putting up a sign every twenty feet is not conducive. He added that one thing discussed is the possibility of doing more pavement marking than signs.

Dr. Russell said that when he first traveled in Canadian Provincial Parks versus National Parks in the United States, he was very struck that in almost every park he went to, they said they only had one rule- treat each other with respect and courtesy. He noted that Mr. McCarroll had previously mentioned ethics. He suggested that when he and Mr. Bohannon meet, they consider whether a brief statement around courtesy could accompany the wayfinding and reinforce the basic message. Mr. Bohannon stated that they have those already. Dr. Russell said that if that message is reinforced everywhere they are crossing and stopping to look at the kiosks, that will help, and if it is framed positively, it is often received better than just hitting people with rules.

Mr. Redfern noted that Mr. McCarroll raised a good point that in Europe they have the bike police. While Keene is a smaller city and does not have the culture to have bike police, he does agree that the public has been demanding over the decades to have a cop patrol the downtown area and believed that they could serve a dual purpose of satisfying the merchants and meet the public including looking for bicycle violations. At some point, once the bike lanes are closer to

being installed, he believed they should request an allocation of time for a downtown beat cop. Mr. Lussier responded that he had noticed that a police officer was patrolling downtown on a bicycle throughout the summer. He believed that it was already happening to some degree. Mr. Bohannon clarified that the police officer who patrols downtown on a bike is usually the school resource officer, so he only does the patrol in the summer when the school is out of session.

Mr. McCarroll said that he spoke with officers during the festival and was told by the officers that they are not allowed to use the bicycles. He counted six walking around downtown. Chair Jackson wondered who “they” were. Mr. McCarroll said he rides all year, and it is just a question of wearing the right clothes. He stated they could get around quickly and be on par with the patrol cars if they used an e-bike.

Ms. DelaCroix pointed out that cars will go fast on a big straight path; the same is true of bikes. The bike lanes downtown are very curvy, and it is difficult for anyone to choose to go over fifteen miles per hour. The structure of the bike lane will dramatically force cyclists to go at a much slower rate of speed.

Dr. Russell asked those who have traveled in Europe whether a bike lane was equivalent to rumble strips. Both Mr. McCarroll and Mr. Lussier answered that there are and listed things such as physical barriers, paint, and signage that can also be used. Chair Jackson asked Mr. Lussier if he had ever seen the lights in Oslo, Norway, projected down onto the bike path to light up, marking or highlighting the speed and are used because of the amount of snow they get. Mr. Lussier had not seen them and asked that she forward it to him.

C) BPPAC Website

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

10) Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 9, 2024.

11) Adjournment

With no further business, Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at 9:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Coordinator, Community Development