

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ROADWAY SAFETY PLAN COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 23, 2024

4:00 PM

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

Members Present:

J.B. Mack, Chair
Councilor Laura Tobin, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Autumn DelaCroix (arrived at 4:11 PM)
Fred Roberge
Debra Bowie
Ockle Johnson

Staff Present:

Brett Rusnock, Project Manager
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager

Members Not Present:

Erin Roark
Frank Linnenbringer
William Lambert

1) Call to Order

Chair Mack called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

VHB Consultant, Frank Koczalka, was present in person. Consultants present on Microsoft Teams: Eric Tang (VHB), Sammy Snider (VHB), Phil Goff (VHB), & Paul Maloney (FHWA).

2) Roll Call

Mr. Rusnock called roll.

3) Approval of Minutes – August 26, 2024

Revision: line 187, change “Susah Ashworth” to “Susan Ashworth.”

A motion by Mr. Johnson to adopt the August 26, 2024 minutes as amended was duly seconded by Vice Chair Tobin. The motion carried, with Mr. Roberge abstaining. Ms. DelaCroix was not yet present.

4) **Discuss Action Plan Comments**

Mr. Koczalka led the Committee through a lengthy discussion of the revisions the consultants made to the Roadway Safety Action Plan since the last meeting based on the Committee's feedback. He felt that the consultants had addressed about 95% of the comments, with the primary area outstanding being the Executive Summary he said they wanted to get the rest of the report done and return to it. After this meeting, the consultants would be working on the final format, including visuals in InDesign and more graphical statistics that will be easier to read. The consultants also had more work remaining to do on the Policy section.

Mr. Roberge asked about a statement in the Plan indicating that it was written "by a group." Mr. Koczalka replied that Mr. Snider did all the data analysis and started that section, and Mr. Goff did the public outreach and wrote that section to start. Mr. Koczalka, Mr. Tang, and two others took everyone's words and tried to make the wording as consistent as possible without losing the fine details.

Ms. DelaCroix arrived.

Mr. Koczalka mentioned suggestions from Chair Mack to review the City's Climate Adaptation Plan and other energy plans, which Mr. Koczalka said were beneficial to review. Chair Mack wanted to ensure the consultants understood that Keene had a strong history of climate adaptation and transportation that reinforce a lot of things in this Action Plan.

The Committee proceeded reviewing the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) section, where Mr. Koczalka said the consultants addressed a request about cross section communication and coordination of crash data. Chair Mack said his intention was to keep the Safe Systems Approach at the center of the Plan, and he noted that Keene has partners who can help with that.

Next, Mr. Koczalka showed how the Strategic Highway Safety Plan goal was reworded—as approved by this Committee—to create *draft* goals and objectives for Keene's Roadway Safety Action Plan.

- Goal: The goal of the Keene Roadway Safety Action Plan is to make transportation safety a top priority for City officials and staff. The Keene Roadway Safety Action Plan aims to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2035, working toward zero by 2045.
 - Objectives:
 - Prevent crashes resulting in roadway fatalities and serious injuries.
 - Promote a Safe System Approach to transportation in Keene.
 - Engage partners and the public to foster a culture of safety.

The Committee proceeded discussing edits to these draft goals and objectives.

Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager, suggested an edit to make it, "... Action Plan is to make transportation planning a top priority..." She thought transportation safety was a top priority already and asked what was different about this project. She imagined that Vice Chair Tobin was already prioritizing roadway safety at the Council level. Ms. DelaCroix said that "a priority" is different than "prioritizing something over others." Ms. DelaCroix said her instinct was to say that the City is not perfect, it is not at zero crashes, and it is not a max priority. Ms. Landry said she understood but noted that the objectives listed did not mention the City Council and did not tie into the goal, so it needed more editing. Mr. Roberge added that safety should be everyone's goal, and the goal and objectives of the Plan should be to involve a coordinated effort of the whole community in employing safety throughout the community. Ms. DelaCroix worried that one might perceive Mr. Roberge's comment as though the onus should be on the community as opposed to acknowledging that there is a decision-making body that is responsible for the results of the City. Vice Chair Tobin asked Ms. Landry her suggestion for the goal. Ms. Landry quoted Ms. Bowie: "Providing a tool to help the City Council and Staff improve transportation safety." Mr. Roberge said he was not speaking about the function of completing roadway safety improvements in the community, rather he thinks safety should be everyone's goal, and he thinks there should be efforts to help everyone improve their safety awareness in the community to achieve real substantial change.

Discussion continued about possible ways to revise the goal and objectives. There was agreement that the goal can only state that transportation safety is a goal for City officials and staff, not everyone else, because that is all the City can speak for. The intent was to ensure the goal and objectives were cohesive. Mr. Koczalka agreed to take general feedback from the Committee on the Plan goal and objectives and make the applicable revisions, noting that the feedback was not on the substantive features of the goal, like the percentage or year. To Mr. Roberge's earlier point, Mr. Koczalka noted that while the Plan can outline approaches and priorities, it will not provide a list of priority projects in order with background knowledge, etc. So, he suggested a that Public Outreach and Education sections would be beneficial at the end of the Plan. Mr. Roberge said the goal is to create the structure for the public to do the right thing. Ms. DelaCroix said that is why she does not believe in including the public in a mission that is directing what the City will do, when she said the City's only action—essentially—is on the public; she called it a cop out and said she does not buy that safety is a top priority, or she said we would not be worrying about the cost of the things.

Mr. Tang said this was a great discussion, noting that it is easy to get into the weeds with differing opinions in any community, but that everyone is working toward the same goal. He reframed the goal as straightforward and not specified to City officials or staff; it is in everyone's best interest if we have a safety goal. The Plan could have a mission statement. There could be more objectives than the three listed (within reason) to specify who would complete which actions.

Mr. Johnson disagreed with some previous comments, noting his position that having all of the public engaged in transportation safety is essential for everyone to be safe on the streets. So, he

felt that it would be useless unless it is a top priority for the whole City of Keene—citizens, Council, and staff. Ms. Bowie liked Mr. Johnson’s used of the word “engaged,” noting that it felt most fitting for what would be needed to reach the public in this regard.

Vice Chair Tobin stated her preference for language consistency. She hoped that some of the Safer Streets for All language where referencing the Master Plan would be incorporated with the goal language, specifically Ms. Landry’s point about developing a plan for the infrastructure, and a language about “community engagement, cross sector communication, and coordination.”

The City Manager stated that the Roadway Safety Action Plan is a plan to prioritize safety projects to get the most benefit from them. It is not to prioritize safety. She said this whole effort was about looking at where crashes are most frequently happening, the severity of crashes, and where the City would best impact safety by investing dollars in those areas to make these improvements. So, it was really an effort to come up with a strategic plan for investing in our infrastructure to improve safety. The City Manager continued, stating that she was fine with the second sentence of the proposed goal language, and she did not think the first sentence was needed at all. There was consensus to remove the first sentence. Mr. Tang agreed about prioritizing locations to get the best benefits for the community. He asked if the Committee still wanted to see behavioral/non-infrastructure references in the Plan, and the Committee replied collectively in the affirmative. Mr. Tang noted that the Plan is meant to be a multi-disciplinary approach so the Federal government will expect that as well.

Mr. Koczalka scrolled through the draft Plan, pointing out other minor track changes, like ensuring acronyms are consistent throughout. Under “What Types of Crashes Are Happening in Keene,” he showed some percentages as an example of how InDesign will improve the final visuals in the Plan.

Just below, Ms. Landry referenced Figure 1: Crashes by Year in Keene, and asked the consultants what the key takeaways should be, or if charts like this one are solely for visual purposes. Mr. Koczalka charts like Crashes by Year are more informational to start. Mr. Snider said it is to set the stage and provide background of general trends in Keene compared to Statewide. Chair Mack thought it was odd that total crashes doubled suddenly. Ms. Landry thought that a key takeaway might be that as crashes increased, KAB (K = fatality, A = major injury, B = minor injury) results decreased, which would be interesting to report. Mr. Koczalka noted that in 2018 the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) started a new database, which might have additional clarification on this crash data; this data is evolving.

Vice Chair Tobin suggested the following edit. Instead of starting paragraphs as, “As shown in Figure 2, the stark comparison ...” write them as, “The stark comparison (as shown in Figure 2).”

Mr. Johnson pointed out where some data in Figure 2 over the year 2017 was overlapping. Discussion ensued about the math listed in Figure 2 over 2017 and what might have been a

discrepancy/abnormality. There was a question of whether crashes of unknown severity were included in “total crashes”; Mr. Snider confirmed that they were not included in total crashes. The consultants would clarify and simplify the language.

Next, Mr. Snider noted that Figure 3 was revised to include unknown crashes, so it matches Figure 2. Ms. Landry said her takeaway from these visuals was that something big happened in Keene in 2018–2019, and if that was not supposed to be the takeaway, then it needed to be fixed. Vice Chair Tobin suggested an asterisk on the charts to denote and Mr. Snider said that would be possible.

Mr. Koczalka continued, noting that text was added on older drivers and the seat belt law at the end of the Action Plan Emphasis Areas. Chair Mack thought the adult safety belt law might be a softer issue that the Keene City Council might work with the NH Municipal Association and Donovan Fenton on. Chair Mack thought the median age driver was going up in Keene. Mr. Koczalka thought that could be worked into the education and policy sections at the end of the Plan. Ms. Bowie asked the population of over age 65 drivers in Keene. Discussion ensued on where to access that data. Mr. Koczalka recalled a AAA study that might have the best data, the City Manager thought the ambulance services might have data, and Mr. Rusnock mentioned a NH Highway Safety Plan from 2021 (Mr. Koczalka thought VHB completed that Plan, and he would try to access it). Ms. Bowie said it would be nice to know whether the over age 65 drivers are actually a problem regarding roadway safety if the City will be investing in education, or if more Keene drivers simply fall in that category. Mr. Rusnock agreed that it would be worth knowing if the older drivers are a higher proportion of the crashes in Keene. Mr. Tang said State information is available from the DMV but not by City. It may be worth a separate discussion with the DMV.

The City Manager said Figure 4 tells us that in terms of severity of crashes, vulnerable nonmotorized users and speeding and aggressive drivers are the two highest severity of crashes. Mr. Koczalka said yes. Mr. Johnson said that in looking at Figure 4, he was unsure who the audience was and who would be able to use the chart effectively; he was unsure that the statistics would translate to many as presented. Discussion ensued on different ways the chart could be presented to help it translate better to different users. Mr. Tang suggested representing each item in the chart as a circle, size dependent on the percentage shown, but each circle is an individual pie chart. Ms. DelaCroix said she liked that approach because the bar graph shown could lead someone to misthink that there would be less focus on vulnerable non-motorized users because they are in few crashes, whereas the circle/pie chart approach would better show the percentage. Ms. Landry liked Mr. Tang’s suggestion because as shown, the y-axes were two totally different measurements. Mr. Tang said they are not made directly proportional because the intersection circle would be huge; so, it would be larger but appropriate. Mr. Johnson asked if some numbers would be included in the pie charts and Mr. Tang said yes. Mr. Johnson said that is important when not totally proportional. Discussion ensued on whether percentages would need to be listed on a pie chart or whether the chart would indicate percentages visually; the consultants would provide examples for the Committee.

Mr. Koczalka proceeded scrolling through the Plan and pointing out other minor track changes Committee members had requested. For example, under Roadway Departure, the consultants thought it was important to highlight that 1/3 (35%) of roadway departures were due to distracted driving. Mr. Rusnock said that is a statistic that can actually be addressed through education and behavior change. Mr. Koczalka added that not all roadway departures are on Rt. 9, for example, and someone pulling off an intersection quickly downtown is distracted driving too. Ms. Bowie said the challenge is not knowing road conditions when these things happen. Mr. Snider said that data was available. So, Ms. Bowie said that if she departs the roadway on ice, it still counts as a roadway departure, and Mr. Koczalka said that is true. He added that those instances were few. If that is a “vanishingly small” statistic, Ms. DelaCroix asked if it would be worth listing in the Plan that 1% of crashed are the result of ice, as someone would be bound to ask about it; it could indicate that the City is doing well to maintain roads during ice conditions. The consultants said they could do that in a pie chart as long as the data is sufficient.

Mr. Roberge asked if it would be helpful to have a definition section for Figure 4. Mr. Johnson suggested that the consultants should consider in the final draft whether the descriptions in the blue boxes should come before or after the charts, though certainly the users need the definitions. Mr. Roberge said that to be concerned about the 50+ people in the chart who were injured, one would need to understand who a vulnerable non-motorized user is. Ms. Landry agreed that it would be helpful to read it in the pages before and Ms. DelaCroix suggested highlighting the definitions in the pages before. Mr. Tang suggested a full glossary.

Next, Mr. Koczalka turned to the section Who is Disproportionately Impacted by Crashes, where the consultants moved the heat map per Vice Chair Tobin’s request. Mr. Koczalka proceeded scrolling through the Plan and pointing out other minor track changes Committee members had requested. For example, the consultants were not referred to as such or as a “study team,” they are called the “project team” throughout. Redundancies were addressed throughout the text. Mr. Koczalka referenced back to comments earlier in the meeting when he showed an edit under Strategies and Actions to change: “The strategies presented in the section include potential actions—a listing of possible activities the City of Keene can implement,” to “The strategies presented in the section include potential actions—a listing of possible activities the City of Keene along with its partners, stakeholders, and residents can implement.” The City Manager said she was fine with that change.

Under Potential Strategies, the consultants presented edits to improve clarity. There was a great deal of involvement by the Committee and feedback to incorporate since the last meeting and the Committee took ownership of the Plan, as intended. Mr. Koczalka said some of the Emphasis Areas were updated, like Enhanced Lighting and Signage and a request from Chair Mack about the Main Street Slow Street Zone under Speed Management. Mr. Koczalka noted that there were options to edit the Policies section with input from the City based on its strategic planning, and Mr. Tang added that it was kept as a paragraph structure to follow the other sections for visual consistency but there could be other options once in InDesign. Mr. Rusnock said he asked Mr. Koczalka to provide a bit more detail on recommended policies because the project

recommendation table has a lot of projects that say “add a new crosswalk in this location,” for example. It is important to be consistent, so Mr. Rusnock asked the recommended frequency of mid-block crossings among a major arterial corridor; he said many agencies do things differently and there is no one set guideline, but the City may want to determine a recommended policy and adjust as needed. Chair Mack added that the City’s crosswalk policy might be affected by on street parking, for example. How many car lengths away from a parked vehicle should a crosswalk be to make it safe?

Next, Mr. Koczalka walked through Potential Project Components table, and specifically the Index of Potential Strategies to support the table. Ms. DelaCroix said that curb bump outs impacts speed management; the road getting tighter makes people slow down. Ms. DelaCroix also asked for Table 1 to be presented on only 1-page, which Mr. Koczalka agreed would be the final version. Ms. Landry suggested changing “See Index Below” to “See Index Following.” Ms. DelaCroix said that “See Index” leads her to look at the back. Other suggestions included “See Descriptions of Strategies,” accompanied by hyperlinks to those descriptions. Discussion ensued briefly about linking to trusted resources (e.g., Federal Highway Safety Administration) but there was concern for link rot.

Mr. Goff reviewed how the highest 25 priority projects were divided into two tables based initially on the Public Works Director, Don Lussier’s, feedback, in addition to subsequent feedback from the Committee and staff. The initial list was highly dominated by the downtown infrastructure improvement project, so those were divided out first. The first table of 25 projects he showed the Committee was everything that was a core part of the Roadway Safety Action Plan that is not necessarily a project that was under design or that had already been funded through New Hampshire Department of Transportation Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process. That table was followed by a map of those projects and a longer table of those specific infrastructure projects under construction or funded. He explained how some West Street projects were divided between the two lists depending on their funding sources. Ms. Landry noted that there were some completed projects on the latter table that Mr. Goff showed. Mr. Goff said he would update the header because Mr. Lussier wanted to include projects recently completed and Ms. Landry said she wanted to include them as well. The City Manager said she wanted to correct the wording “fully funded,” because a capital plan is a financing plan for the future and the projects are not actually funded until the year of the budget and things are move around. So, she suggested “planned in the Capital Improvement Plan” or something similar would be helpful, because otherwise people will think the City already has money for these projects so it can fund others, when in reality it does not have room in its CIP until fiscal year 2028 or 2029. She also wondered if “planned for” dates should be added, like Mr. Rusnock confirmed the West Street project is planned for earliest construction in 2032. The City Manager and Chair Mack agreed that “programmed in the CIP” could work. Mr. Tang added that could be left out of this section and detailed more in the long-term management section that will be updated annually, with flexibility for change.

Ms. DelaCroix asked how the top 25 projects were prioritized. Mr. Koczalka said a ranking system. Ms. DelaCroix pointed out that Upper Court Street was labeled as a high-injury network but only one change was proposed to it at the very beginning of that network; she thought it was interesting to identify it but not do anything about it. Mr. Goff said it was a good point, and a reality of the evaluation system and methodology. The high-injury network was one of eight different criteria, in which each recommendation received scores, so if those Upper Court Street projects got the maximum points for one criterion but not the others, it could be odd. Ms. DelaCroix understood and wanted to mention in case there is the opportunity for future attention to other important areas of the City. Mr. Koczalka noted that there was a list of over 170 projects so as other opportunities like grants come up, there could certainly be options. Mr. Johnson asked if all 170+ projects would be included in an appendix of the Plan. Mr. Koczalka said they would not be directly in the Plan, but the consultants would discuss the appropriate means to make that publicly available with Mr. Rusnock, possibly through the City website. Chair Mack held up a map and asked if all projects were represented, but Mr. Goff said it was a more generic Google map for internal use, not a revised version, but Mr. Snider might have an interpretation.

Vice Chair Tobin noted that in the Education section, “Build a culture of roadway safety” was listed twice. She also recalled her earlier suggestions to include other types of traffic (i.e., foot, bike) in how the Committee is defining roadways. She said that without regular reminders—even in a Plan like this—the response of many to foot and bike traffic in the roadway would be “well, they should get out of the street.” So, she suggested little references throughout the Plan that the goal is to make the roadway safe for all users, not just vehicle users. Additionally, Vice Chair Tobin pointed out that Mr. Lussier’s name was not listed anywhere in the Plan. She also suggested alphabetizing Councilors’ names under Ward 1 and At-Large as they were for the other wards. To Vice Chair Tobin’s point about subtle reminders, Mr. Tang said there could be an icon indicating multimodal transportation that is interspersed in the header or footer of every page, for example. Mr. Koczalka said there could be a graphic of a typical roadway and what a roadway for all means for all modes of transportation. Vice Chair Tobin said there are plenty of opportunities for references whether visual or textual, but by the time projects are listed in this lengthy report she wants to ensure everyone is still remembered and focused on. Mr. Koczalka said it was a good point.

Mr. Koczalka concluded his presentation noting that Mr. Tang created the long-term management plan, which would include guidelines for how to collect and evaluate data moving forward, including public recording, education, awareness, and integration of the Action Plan after it is implemented. Chair Mack asked if it would be a Chapter or section of a chapter. Mr. Rusnock and Mr. Koczalka said it could be an appendix. Mr. Koczalka said he thought it was good to include the City’s commitment to reporting.

Mr. Roberge noted that the Action Plan was also meant to be a livable document, used and updated on a regular basis, but he did not see any reference to that anywhere and asked how often the consultants recommended it be updated and what that process would be. Mr. Koczalka said it is in the long-term management section, but the consultants could note it. Mr. Roberge asked for more direction on how to keep it a viable document for the City. Mr. Koczalka said at

this time it was in the Appendix and the Executive Summary would be a great place to outline it up front, and he said it could be added to after.

Mr. Johnson referred to the Executive Summary. He cited personal experience riding his bike along the bike path, coming around the corner off Community Way by the Marriott when an electric scooter going 20 mph vs. his 10-mph hit him. He said he did not have the reaction time and fortunately he only sustained a minor injury, but his bike tire was very damaged. He noticed the next time riding there that there is a No Motorized Vehicles sign. Since then, when walking at dusk near the College and his house on Baker Street he encountered electric bikes confidently going 25 mph on the sidewalk. He cited another young kid on a motorized bike outside Luca's on the sidewalk. All instances were electric vehicles where they were not supposed to be, so while it was mentioned in the Executive Summary, he felt that it was not picked-up much elsewhere in the Plan and should be addressed. Ms. DelaCroix shared that the upcoming Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee meeting on September 25 would include the topic of bike lane regulations coming downtown redesign that will include a distinct bike lane that is not a shared use path, which she said is not generally true in most of Keene. She called it a big opportunity for increased education. Mr. Johnson called for bike lane speed limits. Ms. Bowie agreed, also calling for stop signs and enforcement, citing how aggressive they are in Germany, though they all have warning bells. Discussion ensued on the need for bike lane safety in the downtown redesign. Chair Mack pointed out how the downtown bike lanes will be a new opportunity for education for everyone. The City Manager clarified that the September 25 MSFI meeting would be about the work of a separate committee related to bike lane policies for the Downtown Infrastructure Project. The actual Ordinance and the work to consider the rules and regulations for the downtown bike lanes—an entirely separate process—would be later by the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee. There are concerns about high speed electric bikes and scooters Downtown. As the final design phase of the Downtown Infrastructure Project continues, there will be further discussion about features like signage and pavement marking incorporated into the design, as well as regulations via the proposed ordinance. Mr. Rusnock said he thought this Action Plan could identify the risk of high speed electric bikes and scooters as a known concern. Chair Mack mentioned the issue of enforcement. The City Manager said enforcement is by the Police Department and the hope that by creating the bike lanes, users that are supposed to be using the bike lanes will move into that lane instead of the sidewalk, because right now, many default to the sidewalk because they are not comfortable within the roadway. Police are not speed enforcing bicycles; the City Manager said it must be about reasonableness and following the same rules as everyone else.

5) New Business

None presented.

6) Next Meeting – TBD

The Committee preferred to delay the meeting a few weeks to receive a more finalized copy of the Action Plan, including graphics. Mr. Rusnock agreed to coordinate. This was Mr. Rusnock's

last meeting with the City of Keene, and he thanked the Committee for the collaboration. Mr. Lussier and the new City Engineer, Bryan Ruoff, would guide the Committee forward.

7) **Adjournment**

A motion by Mr. Roberge to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Mr. Johnson. The motion carried unanimously. There being no further business, Chair Mack adjourned the meeting at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
September 30, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,
Brett Rusnock, Infrastructure Project Manager