

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 13, 2024

8:15 AM

2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall

Members Present:

Samantha Jackson, Chair
Michael Davern
Councilor Edward Haas
Autumn DelaCroix
Charles Redfern, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician
Don Lussier, Public Works Director
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Members Not Present:

Dr. Rowland Russell, Vice Chair
Diana Duffy
Dillon Benik
Jan Manwaring
Janelle Sartorio, Alternate

1) Call to Order, Roll Call and Welcome

Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 8:21 AM. She noted that alternate Mr. Charles Redfern would be an acting member for the meeting.

2) Approval of Minutes from October 9, 2024

Chair Jackson noted that she had already submitted a correction to Mr. Schoefmann and the minute taker, saying that Diane needed to be changed to Diana. Chair Jackson recognized Councilor Ed Haas. Mr. Haas stated he searched for the E-Bike regulation from New Jersey prohibiting E-Bikes in protected bike lanes and could not find it. He could see that they define a low-speed E-Bike as limited to twenty miles per hour. He was unsure if that was a minute change or clarification but offered to continue researching. Mr. Schoefmann requested that he send the research and note where it applies if he wants the minutes updated. Councilor Haas said he would send it as an addendum and suggested they proceed without it.

Chair Jackson moved to accept the minutes. Councilor Haas seconded her motion. With no other comments and all in favor, the minutes from October 9, 2024, were approved.

3) Safety and Outreach

A) New York Bike Summit Report Out

It was tabled due to Ms. Duffy not being present.

B) Plan Discussion

Mr. Schoefmann explained that during the last meeting, there was a note of a need to discuss developing a safety and outreach plan, especially given the desire to request budget items. He questioned whether anyone had given thought to that. This could be something that gets focused on within the upcoming bicycle-pedestrian path plan, but suggested creating some goals into a formalized plan, a board target concept, or at least some elusive metrics about what the committee is trying to accomplish with safety and outreach.

Councilor Haas offered to outline what he thought it should be and welcomed input from other members. He hoped to have it in a form that could be adopted for the next meeting. Mr. Schoefmann suggested considering it a lighter version of the projects list and possibly even tying it back to the projects list.

Councilor Haas asked Mr. Redfern if he knew of any local guidelines for education he could point Councilor Haas towards. Mr. Schoefmann said it could be as simple as “release quarterly public service announcements” describing what that looks like, “update the website,” “reach out to and engage 4-5 cycling groups,” etc. He cautioned them not to get bogged down, saying that 4 to 5 goals should be sufficient to show the council the committee has goals, ambitions, and intent.

C) Budget Requests

Mr. Redfern provided historical context by explaining that in preparation for the Sentinel’s 125th Anniversary celebration, they had created and printed some basic maps that became extremely popular with participants and attendees. He intended to create a two-sided map utilizing a city map that Mr. Schoefmann had designed and a regional trail map produced by the Southwest Regional Planning Commission as part of a grant they received. He proposed creating a two-sided document with the regional map on one side and the city map on the other. He believed there would still be plenty of room on the side with the city map to include basic bike etiquette, bike lane rules, and bike path rules. This would require a budget request from the city for the initial printing, but he proposed that there could be a two-dollar per map charge to self-sustain the additional cost of printing.

If he could get Pathways, Mike’s group, and The Monadnock Regional Trails Collaborative to contribute funds, he believed three hundred and fifty dollars would be sufficient for an initial print run. The hope was that it would be self-sustaining after that. He added that bike shops would also be referenced in the map. He believed it would be valuable for tourism and noted that

the Greater Monadnock Chamber of Commerce is willing to contribute three to four hundred dollars.

Councilor Haas asked if they had completed this map or if it was in progress. Mr. Redfern responded that it was finished. Mr. Schoefmann clarified that it was in draft form and had been sent out for feedback. He explained that there were several organizations that he had started with for the City of Keene map, which informed how they grew the regional side. The regional side now has a particular look that needs to be integrated into the city side.

Mr. Schoefmann cautioned against putting all the education and outreach eggs in one basket by assuming this map and brochure would check all the boxes. He noted that there are pamphlets and websites geared explicitly towards etiquette that provide a cliff notes version of state laws and rules around those things.

Mr. Redfern countered that they could refer readers to those pamphlets or websites. Mr. Schoefmann pointed out that the issue is that the websites do not exist yet. There was some disagreement between Mr. Schoefmann and Mr. Redfern in response to a question from Councilor Haas on the level of completeness of the maps. Mr. Redfern responded that he was hopeful the website would be finished and believed the map was sufficient for an initial print. Mr. Schoefmann noted Mr. Redfern's initial request and asked him for his second.

Mr. Redfern explained that the second request was to set up a 10x10 booth and table. Mr. Lussier asked what the process would be for updating the maps as the bicycle facilities in town change over the next twelve months and urged consideration for that. Mr. Schoefmann noted that in the past, they listed the Amy Brown and Park Ave trail with a date and designated them in a different color.

Ms. Autumn DelaCroix noted that they had discussed organizing specific events like a speed gun contest in the last meeting. Mr. Schoefmann explained that events are part of the committee's engagement with other groups and that they may establish a working group. There was discussion about whether working groups were allowed and what constituted a working group. Mr. Schoefmann cautioned and suggested that if some people want to work on it, voice it here and then coordinate. Mr. Redfern expressed interest. Chair Jackson also expressed interest, but sadly, she could not participate.

Chair Jackson asked if the map was available online, to which Mr. Schoefmann responded that it was not. He went on to clarify that it was in draft form. The idea is that it will be digital and eventually have physical copies. Chair Jackson asked if it would be available online by the time they print it, stating that if it was, they could put a link with a disclosure explaining that the map updates regularly and to please check it out.

Chair Jackson asked if there were any other budget requests. Mr. Schoefmann said he had an amount of three hundred and fifty dollars to put into the regional map project, which is supposed

to come to fruition around the turn of the year. If all the pieces fall into place, he can e-mail some drafts to the committee to see the regional side of it.

Mr. Schoefmann revisited Mr. Redfern's request for a booth and noted that Community Development has a 10x10 pop-up tent. He asked Mr. Redfern what they were talking about for outreach materials.

Councilor Haas said they would create and present a plan for agreement at the next meeting. Mr. Redfern asked if anyone else was interested in the working group. Councilor Haas suggested waiting until he finished the document and circulated the plan.

4) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann shared that the Safe Streets For All Grant has a report to present before the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee on December 18th. He asked Mr. Don Lussier what the results were for the bids for the Marlboro Street project. Mr. Lussier passed it to Mr. Bryan Ruoff, who shared that the bids were unfavorable. They rejected all bids and will re-bid on January 2nd.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Ruoff if the bids were over budget, to which he responded that the bids were about twice the available budget. When asked by Mr. Schoefmann if anything was being removed from the plan that they should be aware of, Mr. Ruoff explained that they plan to have the consultant look in detail at some of the items that came in significantly higher than anticipated to make sure there is not a quantity bust on that before revisiting. He anticipated making some tweaks to the contract. He shared that some things came up with the submitted bid that did not make sense. They intend to vet that out and repackage this winter to prepare for early January. Outreach to contractors is planned to increase awareness of the upcoming bid.

Councilor Haas asked if that was all under the city's control now or if it would need to go back to the state to review any changes. Mr. Lussier explained that it is still under state control to some degree as they provide final approval of the bid and would need to approve any changes within the design. He went on to say that the changes Mr. Ruoff mentioned are not material changes to the design. It is more about ensuring no problem with the contract document itself. As part of the process, Mr. Lussier explained that they must send the state a bid tabulation, and the state then gives the city authorization to award the contract.

Mr. Lussier acknowledged that winter is a tough time to bid on projects. He stated that his gut feeling is that the prices they received reflected the lack of available staffing. He felt that the excessive pricing was either an attempt to cover that and/or potentially fatten their pockets before the holidays.

Councilor Haas asked how long it typically takes for the state to review the accepted bids. Mr. Lussier said that it generally happens within a week. The more time-intensive piece is ensuring

the contract is in order. He explained that the state typically approves so long as they go with the lowest responsible bidder.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Lussier if there was any other news on the Downtown Infrastructure Project besides preparing bid documents on phase one. Mr. Lussier said he would also be on the MSFI committee agenda for December 18th and shared that the consultant would be back to discuss some final material design choices. The preliminary design sets the framework, and now they are looking into the details of its options. Mr. Schoefmann asked if there was anything the BPPAC committee could assist with in trying to sell that. Mr. Lussier suggested interested committee members could attend that meeting, provide their perspectives, and share their opinions while the MSFI deliberated. Mr. Lussier clarified that the date is not locked down. The chair will be traveling, so the clerk is trying to find an acceptable date for all.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Councilor Haas if he had anything to say about wayfinding. Councilor Haas shared that they are working on improvements to a map, which include better cross-street and entry-point identification. The funding for the signage has been obtained, and the signage has been designed. The last bit is for the consultant to place the signage at the designated locations on the map and create a final cost.

Councilor Haas asked who typically does the contract work for the signs. Mr. Lussier responded that it depended on the signs' fabrication. He was unsure if GemGraphics did metal signs but suggested Councilor Haas come to their building as they have a new polycarbonate sign.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that he and Mr. Ruoff had one thing to go over about the Transportation Heritage Trail. As Mr. Lussier mentioned earlier, they are proposing to have a bid ready for spring. He brought up a map and explained that there is a trail connector between Chapman Road and Marlboro Street. Mr. Ruoff explained that this project receives funding from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). As such, the NHDOT has a lot of say in what is done in this type of project. In this initial route from Chapman Road, Mr. Ruoff explained the consultant had proposed a trail slope of 13.5%, slightly above the federal American Disability Act (ADA) desired maximum of 12%. The consultant's proposed route is the flattest option; alternatives would require steeper grades, significant tree removal, and extending onto private property, complicating the right-of-way process.

DOT's feedback recommends adding flat rest areas every 200 feet. However, implementing these platforms introduces challenges:

- A rest area mid-trail disrupts the slope and vertical curve continuity, creating usability issues.
- The steep surrounding terrain makes constructing safe, stable platforms difficult without overhangs or extensive grading.

Key concerns include whether a continuous slope (with smooth vertical curves at transitions) might be safer and more practical than forcing rest areas. Mr. Ruoff sought feedback from

BPPAC members on whether these adjustments meet safety, usability, and ADA compliance or if the current plan should be refined further.

Ms. DelaCroix said that, from a behavioral standpoint, a large slope with something that levels off will encourage some to jump off it. Mr. Ruoff stated they had thought of that. Mr. Davern did not believe that a 15–20-foot level flat area would not create enough of a lip to jump. Mr. Schoefmann said that while the grade is not extreme, it is significant enough not to want to send a scooter down it.

Ms. DelaCroix asked about the most extreme slope through Jonathan Daniels's trail. Mr. Schoefmann believed it would be Appel Way. The area was thought to be steeper than the Amy Brown Trail and the Transportation Heritage Trail.

Mr. Redfern asked about the slope for the infrastructure built concerning the north and south bridges. Mr. Schoefmann stated it had a slope of five. Chair Jackson said the proposed slope Mr. Ruoff discussed strikes her as steep. Mr. Schoefmann clarified that this slope is just about the connection between Marlboro Street, across Optical Avenue, extending up to Chapman, bisecting the trail. The grade challenge is on the connector, not the trail itself. From an accessibility standpoint, if someone with mobility issues were to get on the trail, there would be no place to get off until the proper turnaround, and it would require coming back on the same route.

Mr. Lussier asked Mr. Ruoff the distance from Chapman to where the rail trail joins. Mr. Ruoff believed it was about 550 feet, possibly 575. However, after looking at the map, it was determined that it was 480 feet.

Councilor Haas asked if there was a cost difference between the two options. Mr. Ruoff said putting in the landing and the associated grading was slightly more work, but he did not believe there was a considerable cost difference.

Chair Jackson asked Mr. Ruoff to remind her of the benefit of flattening the grading. Mr. Ruoff stated that NHDOT is looking for a flat resting landing approximately every two hundred feet. Initially, Mr. Ruoff explained that NHDOT was looking for a pull-off. Still, the problem was that it was difficult to reduce from 13% to a landing area without having a large fill and adding a lot of infrastructure to accommodate it.

Councilor Haas said she liked the landings as they broke up the slope. Mr. Redfern concurred. Mr. Schoefmann asked if this was a foreseeable issue. Mr. Lussier said there would likely be signs cautioning users of a steep grade and advising them to take caution.

Mr. Davern said this works; people must use their brakes and be wise. If it is steep going up, one can always get off the bike and push it up, and vice versa when coming down. He asked Mr. Ruoff what the surface type would be. Mr. Ruoff responded that they have two surface

alternatives based on how the bids come in. Ideally, they would pave it, but they would use stone-descent material if they did not have the funds. Mr. Davern said even if they could not pave the whole length of the trail, he hoped they would pave the ramps from a maintenance and longevity perspective because they would be susceptible to washout. He added that the flatter spots would help with runoff and shedding water.

Chair Jackson did not believe it would be a big enough change to warrant removing break spots, as she believed people would still want them. Mr. Ruoff thanked everyone for their feedback.

5) **Volunteer Opportunities**

A) Seasonal Community Rides Report Out

Chair Jackson shared that the seasonal rides were fun. They had a decent turnout of about twenty people. The last ride was shorter than the first. Mr. Schoefmann suggested using Chair Jackson's successful template for organizing the rides and tempting people with food on other outreach opportunities. Adding the template might be helpful to build from for other members interested in helping out. Mr. Lussier asked if there was intent to do it next year, to which Chair Jackson said she would like to. She would like to start in April with Earth Day. Mr. Lussier said he could see how the downtown project might be interested in sponsoring one of those rides and using the snacks at the end in exchange for the opportunity to talk to people about the project.

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

Mr. Schoefmann said there was still time to do yield counts but wondered whether bandwidth was available. Chair Jackson acknowledged that she did not have her notes but remembered that West Street and Main Street at the Gilbo Avenue crossing were both suggested areas for the counts. Mr. Schoefmann provided Mr. Ruoff with an explanation of the yield counts. Mr. Schoefmann offered to try to coordinate something but suggested reviewing the methodology before completing any counts. He explained that he has not found a good one yet, which may serve as a stumbling block.

Chair Jackson recognized Mr. Don Lussier. Mr. Lussier explained that Railroad Street construction is planned for 2026, so that count could be put off until next year. He added that Court Street and Washington Street would also be helpful to have in determining the effectiveness of the planned raised intersections with flashing beacons.

Chair Jackson asked if the focus was on non-signalized intersections. Mr. Lussier responded yes and explained that signalized intersections should be one hundred percent. Chair Jackson suggested adding the cross at the north end of the square by the church.

Mr. Davern asked if Keene had traffic cameras to use to perform the counts. Mr. Lussier explained that there is nothing you can watch because an optical detection watch controls the West Street signals. Mr. Schoefmann will look up some methodology for the counts and distribute his findings to perform some counts within the next six months. Mr. Lussier added that any time between now and April 15th would be optimal for performing the counts.

Mr. Lussier addressed Chair Jackson and asked to add another intersection. There was a request for the crosswalk at West Street and Pearl Street. He thought having some data before going before MSFI would be helpful. Mr. Schoefmann added that he has some counts that could be extrapolated and offered to dig them up and send them to Mr. Lussier. Mr. Ruoff asked Mr. Schoefmann if his department could assist with the yield counts, as they have staff available to help.

- 6) **Old Business**
 - A) **Wayfinding Updates**

This was discussed in the previous section.

- B) **Website**

Chair Jackson tabled the website discussion due to Mrs. Jan Manwaring's absence.

- 7) **New Business**
 - A) **Items To Be Included for The Next Meeting**

Mr. Redfern asked to include a report on the funding status for the Stone Arch Bridge safety improvements. Mr. Redfern explained that three individual efforts have been to muster up support for something just south of a \$1,000,000 allocation for Cheshire County or the Monadnock region on rail trails and up in the North Country. It has received bipartisan support as far as sponsorships go. An LSR is now being written about what the law would say. As nothing came from Keene, Mr. Redfern called Senator (Donvan) Fenton to explain that Keene needed safety improvements to the Stone Arch Bridge, highlighting the two casualties and one fatality. He addressed the need for aesthetically pleasing fencing or a barrier to keep people from falling off the sides. Senator Fenton did not provide resounding support, so Mr. Redfern attempted to drum up support from the Putnam Foundation, which contributed \$100,000 towards the Transportation Heritage Trail Three Bridges project.

Upon learning about the foundation's support, Senator Fenton changed course and became a more vigorous advocate. Mr. Redfern sent out a status update to Senator Fenton, the Putnam Foundation, Mr. Lussier, City Manager Dragon, and Mayor Kahn. Mr. Redfern offered to provide a report-out of any updates during the next meeting.

Chair Jackson asked to include the New York Bike Summit report. Mr. Schoefmann suggested adding a membership discussion to the next meeting as well.

- 8) **More Time**
 - A) **Bike Lane Rules Update**
 - B) **Continued Bike Racks Discussion**
 - C) **Community Bike Share**

- D) Public Art and the Trails Update**
- E) Connection via Cheshire Rail Trail at Arch Street Tunnel**
- 9) Next Meeting: December 11, 2025**
- 10) Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Coordinator