

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ROADWAY SAFETY PLAN COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 25, 2024

4:00 PM

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

Members Present:

J.B. Mack, Chair (remote)
Councilor Laura Tobin, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Autumn DelaCroix
Ockle Johnson
Erin Roark
Frank Linnenbringer
Fred Roberge

Staff Present:

Don Lussier, City Engineer

Members Not Present:

William Lambert
Debra Bowie

1) Call to Order

Vice Chair Tobin called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM. Frank Koczalka, project consultant from VHB, was present in the meeting room. Other consultants from VHB attended remotely: Eric Tang, Phil Goff, & Sammy Snider.

2) Roll Call

Mr. Lussier called roll.

3) Approval of Minutes – September 23, 2024

A motion by Mr. Johnson to adopt the September 23, 2024 minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Roberge and the motion carried on a roll call vote of 7–0. Mr. Linnenbringer abstained.

4) Review of Final Draft of Roadway Safety Action Plan

The Committee proceeded through a lengthy review of the final draft of the Roadway Safety Action Plan, discussing key remaining edits, with the goal to adopt the Plan during the meeting. Then, it would be presented to the City Council’s Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure

(MSFI) Committee on December 18, which would review it before ideally recommending that the City Council adopt it.

Mr. Roberge corrected his title in the Acknowledgements as the “Commission *on* Disabilities” not “*for* Disabilities.”

The Committee considered many suggested edits from the new City Engineer, Bryan Ruoff, during this review and ultimately decided in most cases that they could have gone either way on most word choices.

Vice Chair Tobin wanted to ensure that all of the colors used in the Plan would be accessible for people with color blindness and she was unsure about some areas with orange or red near green, so she suggested contrast. Mr. Roberge agreed that the Plan would need to be accessible for those with disabilities. Ms. DelaCroix suggested textured coloration for images. Mr. Lussier agreed, especially given that a City Councilor at this time was color blind. Mr. Tang noted that VHB’s graphic artist was a Section 508 Compliance and Accessibility expert, so they would double check right away.

The Committee agreed to the following edits:

- Page 5:
 - Replace “Major Employers” and “Social Services” with one section on “Stakeholder Agencies.”
 - Change “invaluable in” to “valuable to.”
- Page 11:
 - Change “safer driving environment” to “safer transportation environment.”
- Page 12:
 - Add period after “Route 12.”
 - Change “spines” to “corridors.”
- Page 13:
 - Change “Schools” to “Keene Public Schools.”
 - Change “University” to “Colleges and Universities.”
- Page 17:
 - Change “membership included” to “the TAC included.”
- Page 18:
 - Change “to accepting humans” to “that humans make mistakes.”
- Page 19:
 - Change “distributed to” to “provided to.”
- Page 20:
 - 2nd sentence refers to the color orange but the color in the graph is green (perhaps it should just refer to the graph and the reader could look at the legend, which would show a hatched texture).
 - Change “40 and 80” to “40 to 80.”
 - Change “they were higher” to “they remained higher.”

- After “2014–2017,” add: “and continued to climb through 2022.”
- Page 21:
 - A discussion ensued about the graphics at the top of the page and the note from Mr. Roberge that not everyone in a wheelchair would have a serious injury. He was concerned that it could offend someone in a wheelchair.
 - The Committee debated possible graphics that could be more appropriate to represent a serious injury (e.g., crutches or ambulance) or if graphics were needed at all to demonstrate the Injury Severity Scale. Ultimately the Committee agreed to allow the consulting graphic designer reconsider better icons.
 - There was also a note that a head injury, as represented by the band aid icon, might not indicate a minor injury.
 - After “below the peak levels in 2014–2017,” clarify that it refers to Figure 3.

A lengthy discussion ensued about how the data was presented in the “Crashes by Year in Keene” chart on page 21. Vice Chair Tobin began, noting that there were a lot of numbers presented in a small area and it felt redundant, busy, and hard to follow to her. Mr. Koczalka thought the intent of the trend line on the graph was to show that the overall percentage of severe crashes had started to drop over time even though accidents had increased. Discussion ensued about whether the two scales were needed on each side of the chart. Ms. DelaCroix questioned whether the trend of severe crashes had truly been decreasing, but more so a matter of whether they were K, A, or B (K = fatality, A = serious injury, B = minor injury); she felt like the percentages were “lying numbers.” Chair Mack said those percentages were important to the Plan because of its goal to reduce fatalities, serious injuries, and minor injuries; the trend line represented that, and it was going down over time. He said the accompanying text outlined how property damage-related crashes were increasing. However, the KAB crashes were decreasing as a total percentage of crashes. Mr. Koczalka added that it was evident that as overall crashes were rising, the KAB was not increasing because of whatever the City had incorporated. Ms. DelaCroix understood but said that in looking at the graph, she did not see a substantial shift in KAB crashes, while the graph made it appear as though there was a substantial decrease, when in fact there was a substantial increase in the total number of crashes; so, she felt like the percentage trendline was a lie. Chair Mack asked if it was a lie or unimportant, stating that he would agree that it was unimportant. Ms. DelaCroix said it was deceptive and would make someone think something was happening that was not.

Discussion continued on the “Crashes by Year in Keene” chart, and Vice Chair Tobin reiterated that she could not extract much from it because there were too many numbers on it. If all of the numbers needed to be shown on a graph, she questioned if there should be two clearer, more effective graphs. The Vice Chair did not think it was necessary to show all of the Committee’s work. The Committee debated what could be removed from the chart to be less visually busy. Mr. Lussier suggested removing the side scales and index lines and keeping only the bar graph and orange trend line. Mr. Koczalka noted that the trend line was established with the text on the previous page, with emphasis on the community’s vision of working toward 0 fatalities.

Discussion ensued about the data in this chart compared to statewide data on the next page that went down in comparison, but there was mention that there could be discrepancies between reports of property damage in rural and urban areas of the state. Vice Chair Tobin asked if the Committee thought the data in the graph was wrong. Ms. DelaCroix said she was focused on the trend line because she said it would inform the community that the City was already doing amazing work when she did not think that was represented by the community's actual experience. Ms. DelaCroix thought the most important data to retain in the graph was the injury information.

Discussion continued on the "Crashes by Year in Keene" graph, and based on the conversation, Mr. Lussier suggested removing the trend line from the graph. Mr. Linnenbringer disagreed, stating that he thought that while perhaps the trend line did not work on this graph, he thought it was valuable for comparing to other cities year-to-year based on the total traffic volume. If striving for that comparison, Ms. DelaCroix suggested that it should mention population. Ultimately, the Committee agreed to remove the trend line from the chart and to delete the righthand percentage scale.

Vice Chair Tobin commented that the graphics in the Plan were helpful, and Mr. Koczalka informed the Committee that the graphics were consistent with the NH Federal Highway Administration's (FHA) Strategic Highway Safety Plan. There was a recommendation early in the meeting to replace an orange cross graphic because it was vague, but later that recommendation was retracted once it was noticed that the graphic was used consistently throughout the Plan.

The Committee agreed to the following edits:

- Page 22:
 - The Committee asked for more commentary about the data anomaly in 2017 due to the change in the Department of Transportation (DOT) system. Mr. Johnson said that any statistician would see something wrong. Mr. Koczalka said he was awaiting a call with the DOT to find out more and would pass that along to the City. If they find out information after the Plan is completed, the City will have it.
 - The Committee did not suggest any edits.
- Page 24:
 - In the "Emphasis Area Involvement" chart, change the dark green portions of the bars and the associated percentages listed to a contrasting color (e.g., orange) that would stand out better.
 - There was a question about why crash rate was deleted in a previous graph but maintained here. One argument was that change year-over-year was different than the extent to which different behaviors/activities cause crashes of the same severity.
- Page 27:
 - In "109, or 44%" delete the comma.

- There was a brief discussion about whether the percentages should be presented as for those motorcycle users wearing helmets or not wearing helmets. Mr. Lussier called it a correlation vs. causation issue. Ultimately, the Committee made no further edits on this page. Ms. DelaCroix mentioned that in many cases, vehicle drivers are more aggressive toward cyclists who do wear helmets.
- Page 28:
 - In the subheading, remove the parentheses and change it to: "... pedestrians, wheelchair users, bicyclists, and e-bikes."

The Committee turned its attention to the topic of enhanced lighting and signing on page 50, as Ms. Roark was concerned about the potential for excessive lighting. While she did not oppose enhanced lighting, she cited situations in the City when newer, higher wattage, downcast lighting could be blinding. She hoped to not make lights both brighter and LED, because LED would feel naturally brighter. She implored her fellow Committee members and the consultants to visit the tennis courts at Keene State College at night to see an example, where she said it was bright enough to perform surgery at night. Mr. Lussier said the strategy of this Plan would be to provide enough light for drivers to see pedestrians. Vice Chair Tobin said that when she read "Enhanced Lighting Projects," she interpreted it to be about what needs to be lit and the best way to light it, like best practices. Mr. Lussier agreed, saying they could be considerations for the City during design projects, for example, like the recent Winchester Street roundabout lighting (from the Island Street intersection to Route 101); they are more downcast, with a lower lumen and thus a lower glare so that you do not see the source of light when driving but everything is still bright. Ms. Roark wondered if her concern was a less of a factor in driving zones and more so in pedestrian areas. Mr. Lussier added that this Plan would not dictate anything specific like light fixture types, but would only recommend enhanced lighting to better allow vehicle drivers to see pedestrians. A brief discussion ensued about changing it to "enhance *tolerable* street lighting," but the Committee agreed that the Plan already met the City's guidelines. The City Manager quoted the Plan: "replacement bulbs using brighter where appropriate." Ultimately, the Committee did not make any edits to this section of the Plan.

Brief discussion ensued as the Committee decided how to proceed reviewing the rest of the plan. They agreed that it would be a living document once adopted.

The Committee agreed to the following edits:

- Page 52:
 - Change "All six roundabouts" to "All seven roundabouts."
- Page 53:
 - Add the following roundabouts to the list:
 - NH Route-9/Ashbrook Road/Production Avenue
 - NH Route-9/Route-10/Route-12/Route-101

Mr. Linnenbringer compared the emphasis areas (older drivers, younger drivers, vulnerable non-motorized users, and intersections) addressed under potential strategies on page 51 to page 28.

For the non-motorized users, it talked about dark lighting related to crashes, but lighting was not mentioned for older or younger users. He said that in his opinion, there was no correlation between the information the consultants provided about those crashes and the strategies needed for those particular users; like assigning a strategy without knowing that the strategy is needed for the particular user. Vice Chair Tobin asked if the graphic or the text was not clear. Mr. Koczalka said that some statistics like the one mentioned on page 51 (i.e., “44% of non-motorized vulnerable roadway-related crashes occurred in dark lighting conditions.”) do not neatly match emphasis areas from the Strategic Highway Safety Plan shown on the other pages like page 28 because there is no emphasis area for lighting; this is why he said there was no matching emphasis area. Mr. Linnenbringer referred to the next one, “reduce conflicts at intersections,” and said it correlated to the emphasis areas of motorized, non-motorized, and intersections. Mr. Koczalka said that lighting came up a lot through the public involvement process and that 44% was a substantial number, so they wanted to note it in the Plan because even though there was not a direct emphasis area based on the FHA guidelines, there were key strategies to address it. Mr. Tang recalled that those FHA emphasis areas were derived from Federal strategies. Ms. Roark asked if the enhanced lighting referenced in the Plan would only apply to sidewalks and not the Rail Trail, etc. Mr. Lussier agreed that this Plan would only apply to the roadway. Mr. Koczalka said that enhanced lighting would also apply to things like stop signs.

On enhanced lighting, later in the meeting, someone referred to the second image on page 62, noting that it was very hard to see the pedestrian in the intersection. Mr. Goff explained that the intent of that photo was to show overall ambient lighting in a commercial district, where everything—the sidewalks, the buildings, the street—was very well lit. It was less about spotlighting the pedestrian.

The Committee agreed to the following edits:

- Pages 55–57, Non-Infrastructure Strategies:
 - Chair Mack introduced the idea of adding a section about advocacy/coordination with the NH and Federal governments on transportation policy; some things are beyond Keene’s control. For example, NH is the only state in the nation without a seat belt law for adults, which Chair Mack said is challenging for him as a transportation professional. This could include advocating for grant programs that could help Keene.
 - The Committee agreed that the consultants, Chair, Vice Chair, and City Manager should work on the general language about coordination and efficient use of resources for the final Plan to be presented to the City Council. The City Manager recommended keeping the language general as policies and legislation could change over time.
- Page 57:
 - Delete the repeat of “build a culture of roadway safety.”
- Page 61:
 - Show examples of protected bike lanes (e.g., Burlington, VT).

- Page 69:
 - Change “Been recently completed” to “Recently completed.”
 - The Bike Lane Improvements on Park Avenue should extend to Summit Road (secondary).
 - Rt-101/Swanzey Factory Road signage project:
 - Change notes to specify a roundabout and relocate approaches.
 - Pedestrian sidewalk near Rocky Brook Motel:
 - Remove reference to the DOT Rt-101 project. It would be a potential City-funded project in the future (not currently planned or in Capital Improvement Program).
 - Water Street at Carpenter Street (secondary):
 - Remove reference to the DOT Rt-101 project. It would be a potential City-funded project in the future (not currently planned or in Capital Improvement Program).
 - Add to this list: the NH Route-9/Route-10/Route-12/Route-101 roundabout project that is in the NH DOT 10-year plan (Project #44357).
- Page 70:
 - Change the last sentence to: “The City’s understanding of its safety needs identified through this Plan may be eligible for funding through regional, state, and federal grant programs.”
- Maps in the Appendices:
 - Increase font sizes of titles above maps to stand out more.

Somewhere else in the Plan, Chair Mack suggested listing the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) Complete Streets Implementation Grant Program because it could pay for crosswalks or small projects (e.g., flashing beacons). Also, Vice Chair Tobin suggested adding contact information for the City’s Public Works Department. Mr. Roberge asked if the City would maintain the project site on the City’s website. Mr. Lussier was unsure if it would always be a title on the homepage but thought the Roadway Safety page would remain. Mr. Koczalka thought it would be great to keep the project alive and to give the public an opportunity to engage with the Plan and leave comments; Mr. Lussier said the comment function could remain on.

Mr. Johnson made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Ms. DelaCroix.

On a roll call vote of 8–0, the Roadway Safety Plan Committee authorized the Committee Chair and Vice Chair to finalize any remaining minor edits with the assistance of City Staff; and further that the draft “Keene Roadway Safety Action Plan of 2025,” as amended, be referred to the Keene City Council with a recommendation to adopt the Plan by Resolution.

5) **New Business**

None presented.

6) **Next Meeting TBD**

This was the final Committee meeting.

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Tobin adjourned the meeting at 6:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
December 4, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,
Donald R. Lussier, P.E., Public Works Director

NOTE: Since this Committee has completed its charge and will not convene another meeting, these minutes will remain in a “Draft” form.