

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Brad Dufresne
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Benik, attending via Zoom, called the meeting to order at 8:21 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2) November 10, 2021 Minutes

Mr. Davern noted two comments in the November minutes found in sections 4.a. and 5.b. that were attributed to him but were actually said by Mr. Kowalczyk. Mr. Schoefmann noted these corrections would be made. Chair Benik made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Redfern seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Master Plan Update

Mr. Schoefmann provided an update on the Master Plan. He noted he and Parks and Recreation Director Andy Bohannon have discussed reaching out to either a private consultant or the Southwest Region Planning Commission because they are equipped to do the work required. This had been previously discussed with J.B. Mack. Mr. Schoefmann noted the total cost was approximately \$20,000, with a City match of \$5,000. The City is working on identifying a funding source at this time and he should have confirmation by the January meeting. He offered

to answer any questions on the Master Plan Update. There were no questions from the committee.

4) **Kiosk Map Updates**

Mr. Schoefmann stated they will be obtaining better maps of the trailheads and will be updating the “You are here” maps. He and Mr. Bohannon are working on this and will be back with updated maps at a future meeting.

Vice Chair Bryenton joined the meeting at 8:30 AM.

Mr. Russell asked if this map will be available for people to download and print themselves. Mr. Schoefmann stated the City can create a pdf file to provide to the public online.

Mr. Redfern asked about the turnaround on this. Mr. Schoefmann stated he would have cost estimates prepared for the next meeting.

5) **Old Business**

a. **Wayfinding/Amenities: UNH Downtown Trails Update; Other updates**

Mr. Bohannon referenced a packet that had been distributed to the members. He stated that Shannon and Giada had completed the intercept surveys and spatial asset data, and put together a rough draft plan. He referenced the spatial data stating they were very pleased and noted that coming from one of their goals is the wayfinding and this project is the impetus to make that happen. He was surprised that the waste and recycling wasn't more of a concern, although there is a need for receptacles in some areas. Mr. Bohannon went on to state that one of the things they want to have happen in Keene as a result of their trails is economic development. He referenced a new bike shop in town and applauded the Committee for their work. Mr. Russell commented that the bike shop owners mentioned the network of trails is what drew them to this area. He also added that they are thinking of doing bike rentals.

Mr. Bohannon went over the next component of the packet which is the downtown trail survey. They received 191 responses, which was great; however, 81% of the respondents were residents. Mr. Bohannon explained that this is an economic development study so they are looking for people out of town who are coming to Keene as a result of the trails. The non-resident component is important. The word cloud demonstrated that people are coming into town and spending money on things such as coffee and the food co-op. He reported that they have a very high level of satisfaction with regards to their trails, due to the fact that they are perceived as safe, clean and accessible. Mr. Bohannon ended by saying he feels they are headed in the right direction and noted that he, Shannon, Giada and Mr. Schoefmann will be meeting in the near future to discuss next steps and the details of holding a public meeting.

There was discussion on how to obtain non-resident data and Mr. Russell suggested working with partners/collaborators and utilizing social media to specify wanting to hear from visitors. Mr. Schoefmann suggested a targeted approach such as training staff to ask restaurant guests a few questions. Mr. Bohannon mentioned that they didn't want to put the survey on social media because it could skew the response, but he will pose the question and explore targeting non-residents. Mr. Horner stated, through the rail trail planning initiatives, they have an email list of 200 plus contacts that could be utilized. Mr. Russell suggested newsletters. Councilor Manwaring stated Pathways for Keene had contact with Granite State Wheelers and a group of seniors who specifically chose Keene purposely for trails, and suggested obtaining their contact information. Mr. Schoefmann suggested sorting out non-resident contacts from 4 on the 4th participants. Mr. Russell added direct outreach with customers at the Historical Society, Children's Museum and Horatio Colony.

Mr. Bohannon stated they'd like to do one more initial outreach for non-residents and are committed to having a final report by the end of February, followed by a presentation to the committee and City Council in March. He thanked everyone for their continued support.

b. Sidewalks: Council Proposal

Mr. Schoefmann recapped that public works looked at their condition assessment scoring and locational hierarchy of proximity to certain areas and came up with an overall score associated with every sidewalk, and a complete street designation. They are making strides to integrate it into the larger framework of infrastructure. This resulted in a CIP program for rehab and maintenance of sidewalks. He added that he will find the City Council presentation on this and share it with the committee.

Mr. Horner asked if the scores are available to the public and Mr. Schoefmann stated it should be public information but there is no specific interactive viewer as of now. Kurt Blomquist joined the meeting at 8:52 AM and Mr. Schoefmann asked him if there was a public list available from the sidewalk analysis they presented. Mr. Blomquist stated there was not a list created for the presentation but rather background was provided on how the list would be developed. He noted that most of the asphalt sidewalks are located on the southeast corner of the City and factored heavily on condition, as well as being within a half mile of a school, recreational facilities, shopping, etc. Mr. Schoefmann added that there will be more information in the CIP when it is finalized, and in the meantime he will work on obtaining a list.

c. Bike/Pedestrian Counts: 2022 plans

Mr. Schoefmann stated he added this item to remind the committee to begin considering it so they can get meaningful counts and discuss areas that may need to be prioritized.

Mr. Horner commented that they should be sure to have counts on the eastern side of town on the rail trail so that they have baseline data prior to the installation of the bridge and improvements.

This way they can track if they are seeing increased traffic due to the improvements. Infrared counters were mentioned and Mr. Schoefmann stated he will reach out to Mr. Horner to discuss that further.

Mr. Russell suggested including Swanzey Factory Road. Mr. Schoefmann stated he will discuss with Mr. Bohannon the best spots for infrared and manual counting. Mr. Redfern stated trailheads should definitely be included.

Mr. Blomquist stated Department of Transportation (DOT) does a 3 year cycle of different counter locations and asked if they had established a similar pattern for the trails. It was unknown whether or not there is a formalized system but it was noted that there is a list of locations that may or may not be on a regular cycle. Mr. Blomquist encouraged the committee to establish a standard cycle to create consistency and measure growth.

Mr. Schoefmann stated for the next meeting he will have an idea of how many spots they will collect data for on the new Transportation Heritage Trail and an idea of which ones will be appropriate for manual counting.

Mr. Bohannon added that this summer there will be construction on Russell Park and ultimately their goal is to have more traffic along the rail trail as a result of the new park. He wondered if they would want to wait to count until after the construction has ended to show more accurate data.

Mr. Blomquist stated, with regards to the Transportation Heritage Trail, Eastern Avenue out to 101 is a dead end and there's only one other point of additional access off of Marlborough Street. He suggested they likely want to focus on the south side to get an idea of how many people are coming up to Swanzey Factory Road. Additionally, he suggested towards the Eastern Avenue end of the current Heritage Trail where people are coming off Water Street and surrounding areas and heading towards Main Street. Mr. Blomquist stated there are currently no public access points between Eastern Avenue and Water Street so theoretically the public is coming in at the street ends.

There was mention of not collecting data at the Stone Arch Bridge because it is not an area the public is supposed to be utilizing. Chair Benik stated the purpose of collecting data is to depict reality, and people are up there all the time, whether or not they are supposed to be, so they need to carefully consider ruling out collecting data at that location. He encouraged the committee to move slowly when picking data collection locations so that they can be sure to collect accurate data. Mr. Blomquist stated that if it becomes a problem DOT stated they can put fencing on both sides and noted that it's a very challenging location which requires careful consideration due to City liability.

Mr. Kowalczyk suggested Eastern Ave, Stone Arch Bridge and just south of Joslin Station Road. He added that Swanzey has done work on the Cheshire Rail Trail from Joslin Station to Web

Depot Road and he rides the trail crossing the Stone Arch Bridge into Keene. Mr. Schoefmann stated there's likely a strategic way they can get counts at Stone Arch Bridge without explicitly stating it. Chair Benik stated this should be a topic at the next meeting for further discussion. Mr. Horner added discussing what they are hoping to achieve by counting on or near the bridge.

d. Walldogs – Potential for Additional Mural along trails

Mr. Russell stated the Historical Society is working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which will lay out the reservation of money for repairs of Walldogs. The MOU doesn't touch on how many murals and when but Mr. Russell stated that information will be discussed closer to spring.

6) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann reported that, with regards to the Cheshire Rail Trail Park Ave Loop project, the trail work contract has been executed and a pre-construction meeting was held. The project will commence in the spring of 2022. There was talk of holding a celebration or grand opening and Mr. Redfern asked that the committee keep that in mind.

Next, Mr. Schoefmann reported the NHDOT TAP Grant 2018 project was stripped from federal earmark in the infrastructure bill. Mr. Horner stated none of the congressional direct to spending projects made it into the final infrastructure but this project is back on the TAP list for 2024. They are now waiting to see how the Infrastructure Investment and Job Acts funds are going to be distributed.

Mr. Redfern asked for clarification because he thought the TAP grant had already been awarded. Mr. Blomquist stated it is in the plan to be funded but not until 2024.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that for the Wayfinding Signage Facilities Plan the Complete Street Grant for 2020 was returned by the City of Keene and Mr. Bohannon submitted a letter to Southwest regarding the return of the funds that had been earmarked for the grant. He stated there was no way for them to pull this off after no bids were received and the wayfinding pilot crashed out with Walk Your City.

Transportation Heritage Trail updates included the notice of award for TAP for phase one (the Eastern Ave trail segment), promotional website and video release with the plan to push these out on social media after the holidays, and, with regards to the old Stone Arch Bridge, collaboration with the Heritage Commission should launch more extensively soon.

Mr. Blomquist stated he is going to see if they can find a consultant to take a look at the Stone Arch Bridge to give them an idea of what the permitting is going to be for appropriate planning. A concern of his is that it took 2 years to get permissions for the last maintenance work that took place on the bridge. It is on the national registry but with that comes many rules.

7) **New Business**

Chair Benik stated items to be included for next meeting include pedestrian counts. Mr. Redfern requested that toll credits be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Schoefmann stated they will also have elections and acceptance of the schedule for 2022 at the next meeting.

Mr. Russell stated, with regards to the Walldogs Walking Tour, they have held a few focus group meetings to draw more interest and they had the idea to create a rack card focused on trails, parks, museums, galleries, etc. The design would be a list on one side and a map on the other. They then hope to approach the Chamber and see if it's something they can publish.

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Benik adjourned the meeting at 9:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician