

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Drew Bryenton, Chair
Todd Horner, Vice Chair
Dillon Benik
Jan Manwaring
Rowland Russell
Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate
Sam Jackson, Alternate
Autmn DelaCroix, Alternate

Staff Present:

Kürt Blomquist, ACM/Public Works
Director/Emergency Management
Director
Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation,
Cemeteries and Facilities Director
William Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Members Not Present:

Councilor Andrew Madison
Michael Davern
Charles Redfern, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:32 AM.

2) Approval of June 23, 2023 Minutes

With no edits or corrections, Chair Bryenton requested a motion to approve the June 23, 2023, minutes. Mrs. Manwaring motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Dr. Russell. The motion was unanimously approved and the minutes from June 23, 2023, were accepted.

3) Regular Project Updates

Mr. Schoefmann advised the committee he was having some issues with the meeting audio on Zoom and suggested they move the order of the agenda around slightly and go over project updates while he worked on fixing the issue.

4) Downtown Infrastructure Updates

Dr. Russell stated he wanted the extra turn lane at central square.

Mr. Todd Horner shared that he attended but was there with his young daughter. She started to get disruptive so unfortunately, he had to leave.

Chair Bryenton said he watched after it was recorded. He heard several councilors say, “we don’t see cyclists, so why do we need bike lanes?” He included several studies and intended to vocalize that at the next meeting. Dr. Russell shared that he is going through the studies of economic benefits of bike lanes and wants to distill that down to eventually challenge the idea mentioned by some councilors that bike lanes will hurt our economy.

Ms. Sam Jackson noted that in the time the committee had been sitting, there she witnessed a number of bicyclists that had ridden by. Mr. Horner was unclear if the Council was voting on the recommendation out of MSFI after and if there is ability to substantially change that at MSFI again? Mr. Blomquist shared that he recently spent forty-five minutes with the mayor and chairs going over the meetings and “the ancient books of protocol”. The way that the motion has been done is that it is sent to the MSFI committee for public comment. The committee cannot do a motion with a substantial change. It is unclear if they can modify what has been sent to them, but what is clear is that once it goes back to city council, they have the freedom to make changes. He is not totally clear, but it seems as though they will not be able to substantially change what was sent to them. Chair Bryenton asked if they could do a motion to not accept or make a recommendation, which he agreed that they could.

Mr. Horner asked if once full council votes if that is the end. Mr. Blomquist said ideally the council will decide on the major components they want to see next Thursday night. They could potentially turn around and do something else, but his sense is that in general, the council is ready to close this phase out. Councilors can do whatever they want but he suggested the committee keep the focus on multimodal transportation. Mr. Horner said the agenda that was sent out said it was not a public session.

Mr. Bohannon said his thought process was that this committee was charged with a particular purpose and there have been master plans related to street infrastructure. Currently, there are city councilors and past city councilors on the committee as well as Professors from Keene State, and professional planners. All these amazing people are at the table provided expertise and help with looking at the bike infrastructure in the city. He noted this is now about current state but more the next 20-50 years. If the vision is to keep it the same, we may want to change the charge and the code. He added that members of council do not always see the why. This committee should serve to remind them of that. These items they have adopted and are their guiding principles should be their guiding principles for this project as well.

Mr. Blomquist suggested connecting the why back to their documents. He suggested reminding those members of the public that are against it of the master plan. Being sure to point out that the public has participated in these processes and that is what makes them valuable. The anti-group,

while loud, is a small select group. The master plan had over 2800 people. Mr. Bohannon reiterated that this is not about the now. The building blocks have been laid for years prior to this. There has been a huge effort over the past ten years to get to where we are with plenty of history with Healthy Monadnock, Clean Streets, etc. and it is being dismissed by a couple of minority voices. He believes that showing that history is going to be crucial.

Dr. Russell asked Mr. Blomquist if by not being able to change things, does that include the bike lanes? Mr. Blomquist responded yes and that this is what the city attorney has indicated to the chairs. The MSFI committee may not be able to do that but once it gets back to fill committee, everything is on the table. Mr. Russell asked who was planning to be there that night and noted that three minutes is a really short time. He asked if anyone was willing to take on the history. He will share the economics and asked about any other things like safety, work commuting, and whether there were other things to share.

Mr. Horner said the hybrid design seems like a compromise solution. Putting his fingers in the wind, he does not see a lot of those things happening and the fact that bike lanes are even part of the discussion attests to the work this group has been doing. Compared to some of the other scenarios, the hybrid design is modest and recognizes that multimodal transportation is important and part of the future of downtown Keene. If you take the bike lanes out, there is not recognition of needs for future.

Dr. Russell suggested members encourage people to come even if the members themselves are not able to come. Chair Bryenton said the committee needs to keep pushing and wanted to ensure a presence of people. Mr. Blomquist said representing the pedestrian community is crucial and making sure it includes those with mobility issues and has non-vehicle options.

Mr. Horner said he has heard people say bicycle lanes will be taking away from pedestrians. Mr. Blomquist said that simply is not true as they are actually adding. The compromise of eliminating the parking in the middle allows for the multimodal facilities such as widening the sidewalks and safer bike facilities. The hybrid option includes both the widening and the bike lanes.

5) Old Business

A) Volunteer Opportunities

- i) *Trail Cleanups***
- ii) *Bike Friendly Community***

Chair Bryenton stated he was setting up a meeting with some volunteers to go over the application and answer what they could before handing it off to Mr. Schoefmann. They were waiting on access to the application which needed to be sent from Mr. Schoefmann via email. Mr. Schoefmann confirmed.

B) NHDOT North/South Bridge Signage

C) Project Priorities

Chair Bryenton explained this was started back in May and was tabled in June. The goal is to keep some visibility of the top bundle of priorities. One interesting point noted in the meeting was that Mitch Greenwald does now own an electric bike and the committee would welcome him with open arms.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that the committee reviews all the projects in the mix annually and goes through a ranking exercise. They look at the level of organizational support, if there is funding, is it in the plans, etc. They start by ranking by high, medium and low and then further ranked by level of importance to the committee.

Cheshire Rail Trail Phase V, Ammi Brown up to Westmoreland town line - Mr. Blomquist suggested the question of the effectiveness to improving this section would be what Surry and Westmoreland would be doing to improve the sections connecting to it. Mr. Mike Kowalczyk provided an update that an RTP grant was written last year. With regards to Surry and Westmoreland, this year, there will be trail clearing and work on the cut. He said not to expect a hard packed surface this year, but the idea is to continue to work up to the Westmoreland/Walpole town line. Walpole also received an RTP grant with similar work keeping the trail passable year-round. Should be seeing by the end of this reason an improvement to the cut in Surry as well as the trail in Walpole. The committee ranked it as Medium

Mr. Bohannon noted that the Jonathan Daniels (JD) Trail expansion is at the bottom of his list. Mr. Schoefmann said the main concept was that there would be improvements made to made it more accessible and create a loop. The committee ranked it as Low.

Wayfinding facilities and signage – Mr. Schoefmann stated has had some movement with the UNH Downtown Trails Initiative. Mr. Bohannon owes a huge apology to the Rotary Club. He received \$35,000 from them for the wayfinding. It is on his desk and just needs to move it along for approval. He needs to get names back to the design company. The committee ranked it as High. Mr. Schoefmann noted Wayfinding plan was combined with signage.

South Bridge/Ashuelot Rail Trail Gap, Old Railroad Trestle Bridge by Keene State College – Mr. Blomquist said the question at the end of the day is that Keene State deals with it from Winchester Street to the campus. Mr. Schoefmann stated he remembered the gap not being paved and that the abutments are hardpack and not paved. Mr. Blomquist confirmed the abutments are hardpacked and not paved. This should be a bigger discussion with the committee and involve reaching out to Keene State College. Mr. Russell suggested adding the trestle bridge and revising. Mr. was suggested to invite Keene State College to a meeting. Mr. Bohannon said the current administration is likely to be open to some sort of joint project and thought it worthwhile to reach out to them. Chair Bryenton suggested keeping it a low priority, the committee agreed.

Ashuelot Green Space Trailhead – Mr. Schoefmann stated it is the parking lot that is being developed off Ashuelot Street. The committee agreed to keep it Low.

Main Street – decision was to keep it high.

Marlboro Street – Mr. Blomquist stated it will be started next summer. Chair Bryenton asked if support was needed. Mr. Bohannon suggested the group should keep it as high as it is going to be constructed. Mr. Horner asked what the design was for that connection. Mr. Bohannon stated down Bartholomew Court past the Fleet building then up to the Cheshire Rail Trail.

Beaver Brook Green Way - is a conceptual idea and something that will require a little more effort. Worth keeping on the list even if it is Low. The committee agreed that Low was a good ranking.

Gilbo Ave and Colony Mill – Mr. Schoefmann explained this was an effort to continue the Cheshire Rail Trail along Gilbo Ave with setting aside counter bike lanes, but there has never been any success negotiating with the landowner. Mr. Blomquist suggested keeping this Low but that there will be funding for redesign and construction of West Street in 2027, there would be an opportunity there as it is an 18 million project that's just three years away. Mr. Brehme noted that there are currently no sidewalks along Gilbo Avenue. The committee agreed Low.

West Street – Mr. Blomquist reiterated that in 2027, they will be getting funding for construction of West St. Currently there is a multiuse trail that parallels the back and there is a lot of traffic. Connecting the trail and any improvements from Gilbo back up to an improved West Street is important. Mr. Schoefmann stated there's probably about five year's worth of bicycle and pedestrian counts the committee has conducted and are on file in his office.. Chair Bryenton suggested keeping West Street and West Street Bypass a medium priority. The committee agreed in making it a Medium priority.

West Street Bypass – Mr. Schoefmann mentioned it was a concept of dealing with the issues along West Street and Mr. Brehme stated it was out in left field in terms of reality. The committee agreed keeping it Low.

Amenities – Mr. Schoefmann explained that amenities is all encompassing at this point. Mr. Bohannon suggested reviewing the 19 recommendations in the UNH study. There already is a document and a plan it just needs to be revisited. No need to recreate anything new and keep it a high priority. Chair Bryenton suggested there was an element with regards to Trail Lighting, the Mr. Bohannon stated lighting has been working. Mr. Blomquist suggested bringing in the Police Department as there are often questions around why the police are not patrolling especially when you light it and make it more accessible. Mr. Horner was surprised to hear that the brightness of the lights was a safety issue? Mr. Blomquist replied in the affirmative and people want lighting that make it look like day not just lights up a spot. The problem is that it doesn't light up areas that are adjacent to the trail and that is where people get uncomfortable and bringing in the police might be useful. Mr. Blomquist stated it would be time to think about where to have the lighting to encourage usage and have that conversation with the police department. Mr. Schoefmann

suggested it could be an issue of “perception of safety” and the areas people perceive as unsafe are actually not when you review the data for where crime is occurring.

Mr. Bohannon said Dr. Chris Cusack did a lighting study from Keene State. The technology has changed quite a bit since the lights were put in. Generally, if one is walking the lights gradually light up as you walk, but when on a bike, the speed is greater, and the rider is often well past by the time the area lights up. It was suggested to keep it in the High priority by adding it back into Amenities overall and creating one category/project again. The committee agreed. Lighting added to Amenities and it would be ranked High.

Chair Bryenton asked members to send any new business to him or Mr. Schoefmann via e-mail. Mr. Lacey said he thinks of the downtown rail trail as dangers. Suggested the committee look forward enough to have the bicycles in the traffic flow.

- 6) **New Business**
 - A) **Items to be Included for Next Meeting**
- 7) **More Time**
 - A) **Kiosk Map Updates**
 - B) **Public Art and the Trails**
 - C) **BPPAC Website**
 - D) **Wayfinding/Amenities: North and South Bridge Signage**
 - E) **Bike/Pedestrian Counts**
- 8) **Adjournment**
 - A) **Next meeting: August 9, 2023**

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:36 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development Staff