

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**ROADWAY SAFETY PLAN COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, February 26, 2024**

**4:00 PM**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

J.B. Mack, Chair  
Councilor Laura Tobin, Vice Chair  
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager (arrived at  
4:06 PM)  
Debra Bowie  
Autumn DelaCroix  
Frank Linnenbringer  
Fred Roberge (remote)  
William Lambert  
Erin Roark

**Staff Present:**

Don Lussier, City Engineer  
Brett Rusnock, Project Manager  
Rebecca Landry, Communications &  
Marketing Director/Assistant City Manager

**Members Not Present:**

Ockle Johnson

**1) Call to Order**

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

**2) Roll Call**

Roll call ensued and a quorum was declared present at the meeting location. Mr. Roberge was participating remotely from Maine, and there was no one in the room with him.

**3) Approval of Minutes – January 29, 2024**

Revisions:

- In the attendance list, change the last name “Tank” to “Tang.”
- Line 130 should reflect that Chair Mack and Ms. DelaCroix abstained from the votes.
- Lines 172 & 189 should reflect that Mr. Goff was speaking, not Mr. Koczalka.
- Line 341, change “complaint” to “compliant.”
- Line 370, add a space between the words “good” and “demonstration.”

A motion by Mr. Lambert to adopt the January 29, 2024 meeting minutes as amended was duly seconded by Mr. Linnenbringer. The motion carried on a roll call vote. Ms. Bowie abstained.

**4) Election of Vice Chair**

Chair Mack nominated Councilor Laura Tobin to serve as Vice Chair for 2024. Ms. DeLaCroix seconded the nomination. Councilor Tobin was elected as Vice Chair on a unanimous roll call vote.

**5) Committee Business**

**A) Project Website**

Phil Goff, Project Manager from VHB, began by providing a high-level overview of the project website: [www.KeeneNH.gov/RoadSafety](http://www.KeeneNH.gov/RoadSafety).

**i) *Active***

The website is now live. Information on the website includes complete streets details, NH Department of Transportation (DOT) funding, the Safe Systems Approach (which many roadway safety action plans are based on), statistics, and the project schedule. Mr. Goff provided some examples (listed on the website) of what these plans encompass and the types of recommendations that could result. The recommendations from this Committee will be higher level—systemic safety issues, policy issues, programs, and enforcement issues.

From the Roadway Safety Action Plan (RSAP), various countermeasures are possible for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. This can help members of the public to anticipate what could be coming for the future of Keene’s roadways. These details should also be useful during the neighborhood meetings.

**ii) *Public Survey***

Mr. Goff noted that as of this meeting date, there had been 27 responses to the public survey. Many more were anticipated as further press releases and advertising ensued. Additionally, as more stakeholder meetings occur, more people would learn about and consider taking the survey. This 14-question survey will provide strong data. The questions are based on whether the user walks, bikes, or drives. One question, for example, asks how the user would allocate \$100 among different transportation safety infrastructure and programs; three of the four early respondents said they would keep the money for winter maintenance. Mr. Goff noted that some of the survey questions could have been confusing or unclear. Another question asks users what modes of transportation they would use during a given week with nice weather. Approximately five of the respondents indicated that cycling is their primary mode of transportation. Approximately the same number of respondents said they use vehicles 100% of the time. Otherwise, 60%–70% of respondents drive primarily, 10%–20% walk, and 5% ride bikes. None of these early respondents

use any kind of public transportation. When asked, 2/3 of respondents said they do not like roundabouts, while others really like them. When asked to rank the top three locations where they desire vehicular, pedestrian, bike, and other safety improvements, West Street was ranked first, Central Square/Main Street was second, and streets near elementary schools were ranked third. Interestingly, 1/3 of these initial respondents do not live in Keene, but they work here.

Mr. Roberge had not reviewed the survey in detail because he is not a Keene resident. Still, he shared the survey with the Executive Director of Granite State Independent Living and the Executive Director of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, the latter of which Mr. Roberge was representing on this Committee. Mr. Goff appreciated Mr. Roberge sharing the survey, and he encouraged the rest of the committee to do the same. Mr. Goff added that the survey is open to anyone, not just Keene residents; several people who are not Keene residents had already responded. The survey is open to anyone who travels around Keene for any reason.

Mr. Goff and Mr. Lussier thanked Ms. Landry for helping with the press releases. They agreed that the survey should be available through the end of March. When there are more survey responses, the data would be used to populate an input map to visualize where people want roadway improvements.

The Committee commented the survey:

- Ms. Roark:
  - When she took the survey, there were glitches and a limit of 100 characters for some responses.
  - She suggested moving the “1, 2, 3” closer to the map and color code to better facilitate the visual connection; everyone agreed that this is important and could be even more challenging if taking the survey on a phone.
  - Regarding getting more accurate responses to the \$100 question, she suggested changing the response options to a sliding scale. Mr. Goff said that was the goal but did not work for technical reasons, per the survey developer. If that would not work, Ms. Roark suggested color coding.
  
- Vice Chair Tobin:
  - She asked for copies of the QR code so she could hang them around town; Mr. Goff shared copies so everyone could post them in relevant locations.
    - Ms. Landry said that depending on how the links are posted, the links can be customized based on specific collector strategies. This would provide good metrics when analyzing the data. City Staff would need to weigh the value of this, and this could be applied to bigger projects moving forward.
  - Vice Chair Tobin had hoped that the survey would include a question asking, “How did you learn about the survey?”
    - Mr. Goff said it was too late to change anything substantial about the survey beyond typos, etc., because it would confuse the data since some had already completed the survey.

- The Vice Chair and Ms. DelaCroix agreed that this would be a good question for future surveys.
- The Vice Chair also questioned the most effective use of communication and what stakeholder groups might have been overlooked.
- Mr. Lambert:
  - He said that when visitors come to Keene, they usually park and then walk around. He wondered if the commute to Keene should be considered when responding to the survey. Mr. Goff suggested including that commute, given that someone coming to the City would have to take Rt-9 and other City streets, for example.
- Ms. DelaCroix:
  - She thought the \$100 question was interesting. She noted the difference between asking how someone would spend \$100 to improve Keene and asking what percentage of the \$100 they would allocate to various things. Mr. Goff thought that survey change was still possible. The survey could instead ask: “*What proportion of funds should be spent on various aspects.*” The Committee agreed that this was a reasonable change.
    - The City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon, noted that when the City posts FlashVote surveys, City Staff consider future maintenance or enforcement costs. She did not think it made a significant difference in this instance, but she could understand the pros and cons.
- Mr. Linnenbringer:
  - About the \$100 question, he suggested clarifying that the \$100 would be from a “*new source of funding*” and not “*existing funding.*” This distinction could change someone’s actions.
    - The City Manager noted that because 27 people had already taken the survey, there should not be any more substantial edits of the survey, as consistency is important for the data. Mr. Goff agreed.
- Mr. Roberge:
  - He strongly encouraged considering information on vulnerable road users—people with disabilities and/or seniors—in the RSAP. He thought that only walking or cycling pedestrians were considered as vulnerable in the plan so far. There is a document available from DOT with assessment guidance. Additionally, the State of NH recently completed a Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment for vulnerable users, and he thought a lot of those details should be considered in this process.
    - The consultants had received helpful demographic data to analyze; this is a part of the next phase of a project.

- He also wanted to ensure that the transit system is included because they have a lot of experience serving people with disabilities and seniors.
  - The City Manager agreed, noting that direct outreach is planned for Keene Housing, for example.

Mr. Lussier reminded the Committee that there would still be seven more stakeholder meetings focused on the various human services organizations: Keene Housing, Southwestern Community Services, and Home Healthcare, Hospice, & Community Services (HCS). HCS operates the local transit system.

Mr. Roberge added that the Keene Housing Authority would also have information on seniors and those with disabilities. Further, he suggested following available assessment guidance for this demographic; Chair Mack might play a key role with this data. Mr. Roberge asked if the survey and website were in an accessible format. Ms. Landry said they did everything possible to meet all accessibility requirements. While she did not create the survey, she thought that if it was created with a modern survey tool (e.g., Survey Monkey), it would most likely meet accessibility standards. Mr. Goff and Ms. Landry will continue working to ensure everything is accessible.

### **B) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting**

Mr. Goff summarized the work completed by City staff members serving on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): Mr. Lussier, Mr. Rusnock, Ms. Landry, Jesse Rounds (Community Development Director), Chief Farquhar (Keene Fire), Will Schoefmann (GIS Technician), and Lieutenant Nugent (Keene PD). The TAC meets weekly.

Mr. Goff shared key high-level takeaways from the first TAC meeting on February 13:

- There is confusion about what “roadway safety” really means. It is not just the area between curbs or edges of the asphalt. It is the whole right-of-way.
  - Enhancements could include bus stops, for example, or a strip of grass to stand safely between the sidewalk and street.
- The IMC Database (a software package used by Keene Police Department) can provide local crash data versus State sources.
  - Initially, VHB only looked at five years of crash data, but found that that was not enough data to infer conclusions. So, they broadened to a 10-year period, but 2013 data is unavailable, so it is really nine years.
  - Most of this data was collected before before the new roundabouts were constructed on Winchester Street. It will be interesting to see how the data fluctuates over time.
  - There are ongoing grant applications. Having the RSAP completed will allow for pursuing some of the grants.

Chair Mack asked if the roadway system includes the bike path. Mr. Goff said it would only include the bike path where it crosses the right-of-way. The City’s grant and this Committee’s

charge are limited to roadway-related safety. Recommendations to correct roadway safety by creating separate bike/pedestrian accommodations may be valid and appropriate within the scope of the project.

On the topic of whether trails would be eligible for the U.S. DOT Safe Streets and Roads for All grants, Michelle Marshall of the Federal Highway Administration suggested reviewing the City's eligibility, as trails are eligible now. The new Safe Streets 4 All Grant funding round changed some definitions of what Federal funding can be used for. Further details on eligibility can be found here: <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/ss4a/implementation-grants#eligible-activities>. Please see footnote<sup>1</sup> for details on this eligibility.

**C) Stakeholder Engagement**

**i) *Completed Stakeholder Meetings***

A significant part of the RSAP is the stakeholder meetings. The scope includes up to 8 meetings. One occurred already with the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC). The meetings will conclude in early April. Other groups include: Keene State College (KSC; faculty, staff, and students), SAU 29 (principals and administrators), Keene Housing Authority (administrator and residents), multiple social service agencies, major employers (TBD), neighborhood meeting #1 (downtown, including east Keene), and neighborhood meeting #2 (west Keene). The consultants asked the Committee to help spread the word about these meetings. Some, like the neighborhood meetings (open to all if cannot attend their specific neighborhood meeting), would be open to the public, while others (e.g., KSC students) would be closed meetings. In addition to KSC, the City Manager suggested engaging Antioch University New England and River Valley Community College. Vice Chair Tobin suggested contacting KSC's Office of Disability Services.

The City Manager asked if parents would be involved in the SAU 29 meetings. She cited many challenges with drop-off and pick-up impeding traffic. Mr. Lussier intended to contact the superintendent to ask for recommendations from each school and PTO/PTA to designate representatives to attend the stakeholder meeting. Mr. Linnenbringer suggested involving schools outside of SAU 29, like charter schools, or the Waldorf school on South Lincoln Street, which causes significant traffic challenges. Mr. Rusnock recalled that VHB's scope included eight

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<sup>1</sup> "Supporting the development of bikeway networks with bicycle lanes for different roadway volumes and speeds that are safe for people of all ages and abilities is an eligible Implementation Grant activity."

A project to build off-road bicyclist and pedestrian facilities, including trails, would also be eligible if the separation of mode users from the existing road network is identified in an existing, eligible Action Plan as a project to address a safety need.

Be sure to include any relevant right-of-way acquisition needs in the 'Project Readiness' portion of your narrative." <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/ss4a/implementation-grants#eligible-activities>

stakeholder meetings. If other stakeholders arise, the City could target them without VHB's help, or expand VHB's scope. The goal is to reach all key stakeholders.

Regarding neighborhood meetings, Mr. Lussier said his intention is to have both meetings geographically spread over two dates and times. The City Manager and members of the Committee expressed concern about lumping east Keene with downtown, so the City Manager intended to give that more thought.

Mr. Roberge suggested inviting the HCS transit team to their stakeholder meeting too.

(1) **Bicycle & Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee**

Discussed above.

ii) ***Future Stakeholder Meetings***

No comments.

**D) Data Collection/Data Analysis**

Mr. Tang discussed data on crash locations. He reiterated that they were working with nine years of data. He showed a map with geocoded crash information from State of NH data for 2014–2022. The map displayed 4,561 crashes with some sort of injury level.

Mr. Lambert asked if there was hierarchy on the map; could there be fatalities underlying other crashes, or would the fatalities be the most obvious? Mr. Snider explained that the most severe crashes would always be the most visible on the map.

Mr. Tang continued his presentation, focusing on the fatal and serious injury crashes. It is anticipated that there should be significantly more fender benders than fatal crashes. Identifying these problematic intersections helps to show where to prioritize resources and limited safety dollars. Serious accidents occurred in locations like Rt-101 going east–west, as well as some on Main Street. Mr. Tang demonstrated how this data can help to visualize a clear pattern and predictability. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) data can help to normalize the City's data and determine whether certain streets have higher crash data. Mr. Lussier added that the VMT data shows, for example, that a road with 20,000 vehicle users daily should, theoretically, have 20 times more crashes than a road with 1,000 daily users.

Mr. Tang noted that by isolating the analysis to pedestrians and bicycles, more crashes were evident in the center of town. The consultants compiled the nine years of data and analyzed contributing factors that include number of accidents at an intersection, the type of crash (angle, rear end, head-on), time of day, day of week, weather conditions, correlation with travel volume,

impairment, and seatbelt use. A high percentage of older drivers were not wearing their seatbelts. This robust mapping exercise would provide the City with layers to map in years ahead.

Mr. Lambert asked if there was any relationship between the crash data and ambient lighting (e.g., dawn, dusk, streetlights). Mr. Tang said he would have to investigate the data to provide an answer, but these details were available in the dataset. Mr. Lambert was thinking about the vulnerable road user assessment and graphing time of day and month. He also suggested adding a layer for street lighting. Mr. Tang recently attended an American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) presentation, which highlighted a lot of what Mr. Goff had talked about. Mr. Lussier reminded the Committee that this was a “sneak peek” and a deeper dive into the data would be presented later in the process.

Vice Chair Tobin asked—if there were a lot of low severity crashes in one area and fewer high severity—what would that say about general patterns and problems to correct for? Mr. Goff said it was important to understand that this data was only about reported crashes, not the environment at the time. Low crash data does not mean the consultants will not consider those roadways; they will still consider improvements.

Ms. DelaCroix asked if the crash data and map shown were available somewhere that the Committee could access to adjust slicers and see if they could catch something the consultants might not. It was not clear whether the Committee would be able to interact with the map that way. Mr. Lussier noted that as a part of this exercise, VHB’s scope is helping to determine how to maintain that data. It is an ongoing tool.

Ms. Bowie appreciated the data, but wanted to hear from the Police Department on what they are seeing locally, which might not match the crash data. Mr. Goff said that is an ongoing discussion at the TAC meetings, where they were reviewing data corroborated by the Police and Fire Departments. The data does not include private property crashes in parking lots.

Mr. Tang also touched on socio-economic factors. Part of VHB’s scope is to consider equity by helping the City to correlate factors contributing to challenges using transportation, such as lack of access. These correlations could be an additional mapping layer that helps the City to prioritize roadways. The survey data will also be essential because the data on reported crashes do not provide the whole context of an accident.

Mr. Tang also talked about a potential roadway safety dashboard, which he thought was intriguing. Beyond the reported crashes, it would be important to capture information on near misses to overlay that information. He said establishing a dashboard would ultimately be between the City of Keene and State of NH (since they maintain crash data). However, the City would not want to be in a situation with someone using the dashboard information to sue the City and State. Mr. Tang cited U.S. Code 407, where crash data can be reported. There are certainly dashboards across the nation that cite U.S. Code 407 to protect the reporting agency from being litigated against.

Vice Chair Tobin wondered if the consultants had a sense of whether people of lower socio-economic status tend to report incidents less than other demographics. Mr. Tang said yes. For example, a computer and internet are needed to complete this survey, which is cost prohibitive for some members of the community. To address this disparity, the consultants can refer to census data to identify populations with less access so the consultants can expand their outreach. Chair Mack thought that car insurance might be the first thing some cut from their budgets since the State does not require it. Ms. DelaCroix cited past experiences being hit by a vehicle while on her bike, and noted the discomfort of engaging with an angry motorist when she cannot get away quickly on her bike.

6) **New Business**

A) **Letter from Residents of East Keene**

A representative of the east Keene neighborhood, Vicky Morton, was present. She said the eastside neighbors had been raising safety concerns since August 2023. She thanked the City Staff in the room for helping to make some progress. She noted that the speed radars had been placed in the neighborhood. Mr. Lussier explained that radar is used to collect data. To collect the best data, they are usually installed with speed warning signs turned off for a period (approximately one week) of collecting data (specifically about speed). Then, the speed warning signs are turned on for another week while data is collected to see if there is a change in behavior. Ms. Morton felt encouraged by this Committee's work. She agreed about the school parking issues at the Waldorf School on South Lincoln Street are a problem, noting that it is unhelpful to have no parking signs but not enforce it. The Committee thanked the eastside neighbors for their letter.

Mr. Lambert mentioned he looked at NHDOT's Tom Moves subscription during the meeting and noted that that speeds were 32–33 mph in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile on Water Street. Mr. Lussier thought that was consistent with a lot of the City's data collection; most reasonable drivers are at or a few miles per hour over the posted speed limit. Then, there will always be the 5% speeding far too quickly.

7) **Next Meeting: March 25, 2024**

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mack adjourned the meeting at 5:29 PM.

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

Reviewed and edited by,  
Donald Lussier, City Engineer