

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Samantha Jackson, Chair
Dwight Fischer
Michael Davern
Councilor Edward Haas
Jan Manwaring
Charles Redfern, Alternate
Andy Holte, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Coordinator

Members Not Present:

Rowland Russell, Vice Chair
Autumn DelaCroix
Diana Duffy, Alternate

1) Call to Order, Roll Call, Welcome, and Mission Statement

Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM and proceeded with Roll Call. Chair Jackson read aloud the mission of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee, as stated in Section 2-715 of the Keene Code of Ordinances.

2) Adoption of Minutes

Chair Jackson welcomed corrections to the minutes. Mr. Holt corrected the minutes to state “bike investor annual council” instead of “E-bike investor annual council.” With no further corrections, Councilor Ed Haas moved to approve the minutes with the previously mentioned edit. Mr. Mike Davern seconded, and with unanimous approval, the motion was approved.

3) Safety and Outreach

A) Annual Report to City Council - Review of Final Letter

Chair Jackson, Councilor Haas, and Mr. Schoefmann discussed the status of a document, noting that it was essentially finished with only a minor bullet point adjustment. The letter had been voted upon at the August meeting, pending a suggested correction from Chair Jackson.

They agreed it should be sent to the council, with Chair Jackson and Mr. Schoefmann confirming they would review it for accuracy and formatting before sending it out.

B) MAST Grant Applications - Review of Draft Final Letters of Support

City Engineer, Mr. Bryan Ruoff, joined the meeting, and Chair Jackson opened the floor for him to provide updates. Mr. Ruoff reported that two separate MassDOT grant applications are being submitted: one for pedestrian beacons and raised crosswalks, and another for downtown bike lanes with features like colored concrete and striping, which are more feasible cost-wise. He asked the committee to authorize letters of support, which can be sent directly to Southwest Region Planning Commission or through the City.

Councilor Haas moved to authorize Chair Jackson to send out the letters she drafted with Mr. Schoefmann, thanking her for the work and noting they should be sent immediately to meet the Friday deadline. Ms. Jan Manwaring seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously, and the committee expressed appreciation for her efforts.

Councilor Haas asked if letters of support from citizens could strengthen the grant applications. Mr. Schoefmann suggested contacting Mr. Ruoff to confirm, noting that Council approval was already part of the process, but additional support might still be helpful. They agreed it could be valuable to harness broader community backing.

Mr. Redfern stressed the importance of the upcoming 10-Year Plan discussion with the district councilor, noting it stems from detailed Public Works applications and includes the Prowse Bridge project. He urged committee members to attend and voice support, while he planned to emphasize the economic value of trails to appeal across political lines. Mr. Schoefmann offered to confirm the meeting date with Mr. Ruoff and share it with members so they can prepare brief public comments.

C) League of American Bicyclists - Fire Dog Bread

Chair Jackson announced that Fire Dog Breads was recognized as a Bronze-Level Bicycle Friendly Business by the League of American Bicyclists. Councilor Haas noted Chair Jackson's effort in that, along with the bicycle delivery team. Chair Jackson credited Mr. Sam Temple for initiatives like painting the bike rack and adding a public bike pump. Committee members congratulated them.

D) Bicycle and Pedestrian Yield Count Updates

Mr. Schoefmann said he would send out yield count dates. Chair Jackson noted the upcoming leaf-peeper season and how that will provide different data. Councilor Haas thanked them and asked if counts could be done at any time. Mr. Schoefmann confirmed there are specific days that align with the counting algorithm, but counts can be scheduled for the rest of the month.

E) Airport Road Closure

Councilor Haas reflected on missed opportunities when the wastewater treatment plant road was built, noting the wetlands there could have been leveraged as a community asset for a pedestrian walkway. He emphasized that utilitarian spaces like treatment plants or power plant areas often hold natural value and should be seen as assets. Relating this to the downtown project and protected bike lanes, he stressed that these improvements aren't just for cyclists, but also expand sidewalks and enhance community use, an example of leveraging assets for broader benefit.

Mr. Schoefmann noted the area had been closed during business hours. Ms. Manwaring pointed out that it has since reopened, following a trial period to see if people would self-regulate. Ms. Manwaring added that issues like unleashed dogs and cars stopping on the road have created safety concerns, especially for trucks. Despite these challenges, she highlighted that it remains a beautiful spot for a three-mile walk.

Mr. Holt explained that the area was initially closed during business hours, but after pushbacks, it was reopened for a three-month trial to see if people could self-police, after which a decision will be made. Chair Jackson inquired about signage, noting that there wasn't a clear plan yet, and suggested that simple temporary signs could help set expectations and support the trial's success.

Ms. Manwaring, having arrived after the initial introduction, requested an introduction to the guest, Ms. Molly Ellis. Ms. Ellis introduced herself as Chair of the Heritage Commission, mentioning her son had just learned to ride a bike and that she was attending to listen and learn more about raised bike lanes.

Mr. Holt welcomed her and emphasized the importance of framing bike lanes not just as a means of protecting pedestrians from cyclists, but also as a way of protecting cyclists, especially children, by providing them with a safe space away from traffic, which could help build public support.

Ms. Ellis shared that her son just started kindergarten and is learning to ride a bike, noting she'd love to bike with him to school but worries about safety, especially at crosswalks. She emphasized the need to train children in safe habits, such as stopping and looking both ways, and stressed that protecting both cyclists and pedestrians is an important priority.

Mr. Redfern asked Ms. Ellis, as a member of the Heritage Commission, to consider supporting the Prowse Bridge project by highlighting its historical significance in the NHDOT 10-Year Plan. He explained that the bridge was one of the first engineered for the Interstate system, became a national model, and won awards, making its heritage value essential to preserve. Ms. Ellis agreed to make a note and welcomed follow-up by email. Mr. Schoefmann offered to connect them.

4) Regular Project Updates

For project updates, Mr. Ruoff noted the Marlboro Street project contract was awarded, but that work may not start until later this year or early next spring. He went on to say that the Transportation Heritage Trail (THT) project is going out to bid now with work expected to start this year and finish next year. Finally, the downtown project will have a 45-day bid period with an opening in mid-December. The goal would be to start work during the spring next year. Councilor Haas asked how many bidders there were, to which Mr. Ruoff responded that there were three. He explained the low bidder for Marlboro St was disqualified, with Basen Brothers awarded instead due to their strong record in Keene.

Additional updates included ongoing Parks & Rec bridge rehabilitation (the Ashuelot River Park suspension bridge is nearly complete, with redecking and railing repairs at two Cheshire Rail Trail bridges). Mr. Schoefmann shared that the wayfinding signage is moving forward; installations are expected by October, along with revisions to kiosk maps.

Mr. Redfern asked if the paving work by Basen Brothers included the Transportation Heritage Trail Phase I, specifically the spur from the Public Works building to the trail. Mr. Ruoff confirmed it does and explained that while some right-of-way work may occur this fall, the Marlboro Street portion will likely be completed in the spring, pending the contractor's schedule after the pre-construction meeting.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that significant staff time since the last meeting was spent advancing the recommended bike lane rules for the Downtown Project to MSFI. The committee had previously forwarded two drafts: one from Councilor Haas and a more concise version from Ms. Autumn DelaCroix. The Bike Lane Policy Committee reviewed both, researched practices from other communities, and recommended 5–6 key items for ordinance consideration. MSFI then directed staff to draft an ordinance, prompting staff to move the process forward. As Mr. Schoefmann was not present at MSFI and Councilor Haas was, Mr. Schoefmann welcomed Councilor Haas to fill in any gaps.

Councilor Haas recalled that the committee's earlier extensive work on bike lane rules, done over a year ago, which never received clear feedback, but did move through the process. He noted that the rules recently recommended by the committee helped restart momentum, leading to discussion at the MSFI meeting. While some debate remains on certain points, staff will consolidate the different inputs, and the issue will be returned to MSFI for further consideration.

Mr. Schoefmann explained that timing influenced progress, since staff wanted rules closer to when facilities were being built. During the legal review of the Bike Lane Policy Committee's recommendations, many items were found to be redundant with existing laws. To avoid conflicts with potential state law changes, most were removed, leaving only about two concise items after legal review.

Councilor Haas emphasized three points: first, the ordinance should be written narrowly, while the committee develops complementary educational materials such as brochures, guidelines, and tourist information. Second, although regulations won't include everything due to redundancy with state law, the committee should continue advocating for its broader goals through education. Third, it's essential to keep the conversation active and promote safety messaging so pedestrians, businesses, and the public feel reassured, helping to diffuse concerns and build support.

Mr. Dwight Fischer asked whether public pushback was mainly about multi-use concerns or something broader. Councilor Haas responded that the resistance is largely about multi-use, shaped by people's negative experiences with cyclists on sidewalks, such as speeding or unsafe behavior. He added that it's an adjustment for the community and noted the need to clearly distinguish between raised protected bike lanes and regular bike lanes.

Mr. Schoefmann noted that part of the campaign will be about promoting expected etiquette on city facilities. He said the group has many examples from other cities, like Somerville, Cambridge, and Sacramento that can guide messaging and infographics. He highlighted a Sacramento graphic showing a setup like Keene's planned design, with parking, separated bike lanes, and sidewalks, which could be helpful when the group begins creating educational materials.

Mr. Fischer observed that unsafe cycling behavior is already a problem in downtown areas, with riders speeding through crosswalks and sidewalks. He stressed the importance of clear messaging and signage to define what's allowed, pointing out confusion at the Gilbo Avenue/Cheshire Rail Trail crosswalk. He added that while he feels comfortable biking, driving downtown is stressful and even frightening due to the unpredictability of cars, cyclists, and pedestrians. He emphasized the need to acknowledge this reality when advocating for improvements.

Councilor Haas suggested the committee may want to revisit developing infographics and educational materials, noting these would run through the City's communications team. He highlighted the role of social enforcement in shaping behavior. He connected the discussion to the wastewater treatment plant road issue, emphasizing the value of aligning these efforts to build momentum and keep progress moving forward.

A) BPPAC Master Plan Update Process

5) Volunteer Opportunities

Chair Jackson announced the next community bike ride will take place next Friday, starting at Fire Dog Breads with a 5:15 PM meetup and 5:30 PM departure. She noted the rides are designed to be inclusive and family-friendly, with participants ranging from young children to

adults returning to biking. The rides are slow-paced and typically loop through downtown streets and connect with local trails, with efforts underway to improve advertising through posters and signs.

Mr. Fischer expressed concern that including busy streets like Main and West in community bike rides could create tension with drivers, pose safety risks for children, and undermine advocacy efforts. He suggested using rail trails instead. Chair Jackson disagreed, stating that streets are shared resources and riding on them is part of advocacy. Ms. Manwaring clarified that the community rides are separate from the committee's work.

6) Old Business

Mr. Schoefmann and Mr. Holt reflected on the previous guest's presentation, noting it was engaging, but unclear as to how the information would be used. They discussed the idea of connecting him with other individuals in the community who are already doing the work or similar work.

Councilor Haas asked if anyone besides Marcus McCarroll was involved in bike repairs or community bike-sharing efforts. Mr. Redfern replied that some initiatives may be happening independently, but the only other person he was aware of was Josh Bernsten, who runs The Cycle Sanctuary on Marlboro Street.

7) New Business

Mr. Schoefmann suggested revisiting outreach on the downtown bike lanes in coordination with the communications department. He proposed adding it as a new business for the next meeting, starting early on brainstorming infographics and educational materials. He offered to bring examples reviewed by the Bike Lane Policy Committee to help guide ideas, and the committee agreed it would be a good starting point.

Councilor Haas suggested members bring new examples of effective social regulation or behavior signage from other communities, mentioning Philadelphia's Schuylkill River trail, which posts a 7-mph speed limit. Mr. Schoefmann agreed, proposing that members send him examples before the next meeting or use a shared virtual drop spot to collect them, noting the group had already reviewed many resources in the past.

8) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at 9:09 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner