

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

3:00 PM

**Room 14,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Councilor Edward Haas, Vice Chair
Brian Phillips
Rowland Russell
Jacob Robertson
Michael Davern, Alternate
Diana Duffy, Alternate
Andy Holte, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Coordinator
Jason Nadeau, Parks & Recreation Program
Manager
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer (remote; left early)
Megan Fortson, Planner (arrived at 3:29 PM)

Members Not Present:

Dwight Fischer, Chair
Samantha Jackson
Charles Redfern

1) Introductions

Vice Chair Haas called the meeting to order at 3:07 PM. Roll call ensued. The project consultants with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) introduced themselves: Phil Goff (Active Transportation Planner) and Ahley Cunha (Transportation Engineer). A reporter from The Keene Sentinel was also present. Mr. Schoefmann reviewed the agenda. Vice Chair Haas requested more detailed introductions from the project consultants.

Mr. Goff said Active Transportation is what he does and it includes pedestrian, bike, and trail planning. VHB is a multidisciplinary planning, engineering, and design firm. They design roadways and civil infrastructure of all types and do a lot of planning related to roadways, but also a lot of trail planning and pedestrian network planning, which is Mr. Goff's specialty. Mr. Goff grew up in the City of Keene, so he knows the City well, and he lives in the Boston area now. He has completed other City projects with VHB, such as on the Cheshire Rail Trail (CRT) expansion and the Aimee Brown Trail. In addition to his work in Keene over the past seven to eight years and developing pedestrian/bike networks for cities, he has also worked on regional and state plans for various states in the northeast. VHB has done a lot of planning and design at all scales throughout New Hampshire (e.g., Granite State Rail Trail). Ms. Cunha has been with VHB for seven years as a Transportation Engineer, working on everything from corridor studies to impact studies, and multimodal education planning. She has worked a lot with Mr. Goff over the past few years on city and townwide pedestrian plans and active transportation plans as well, such as ongoing plans in Westboro, Massachusetts, and Augusta, Maine.

Ms. Duffy asked if the consultants won a bid for this project. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there was a request for proposals that was open for one month for this \$50,000 approved Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project. Mr. Goff also recalled the competitive process through which VHB was selected about two years prior for the City's Roadway Safety Action Plan (RSAP) via the Public Works Department; a multimodal plan focused on all safety, including pedestrian and bike-related improvements. That was a key study that will influence this Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Master Plan, in addition to the City's Comprehensive Master Plan. These planning efforts will provide a solid foundation for this new plan.

Mr. Goff led a presentation on what this Steering Committee would be working on over the next seven months to develop the Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, starting with this kick-off meeting, which was to explain the project foundation and scope of work. The consultants would also seek initial feedback from the Steering Committee, who are experts on this topic and know the local walking and biking needs. The consultants want to learn from the Committee; the plans and reports are only so helpful.

2) Overview of Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan Scope of Work & Schedule

A) Task 1: Public Engagement

i) Schedule for BPMPAC Meetings

Mr. Goff began with the scope of work, noting that usually in a project like this, the client (the City) develops the scope (a series of tasks), to which the consultant agrees for a certain fee to develop a number of deliverables for each task. Mr. Goff reviewed the tasks for this project: (1) Public Engagement, which is important for planning efforts like this one. There will be a schedule for these Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Committee (BPMPAC) meetings; he said the Committee could change that to a simpler title if it chose. These meetings are always open to the public. In essence, the scope of work defined by the City is a series of meetings scheduled on an as needed basis, likely every month and a half or two months in 2026, depending on the deliverables. The group could decide collectively on the meeting time and choose to have a mix of different times because they are de facto public meetings and hopefully other members of the community will attend, which Mr. Goff said tends to work a little better in the evening.

ii) Stakeholder Meetings (KSC, KHS, etc.)

A part of Task 1 is holding up to five stakeholder meetings and Mr. Goff said they already held one at the Keene State College Student Center on this date. There was no student participation, but there was staff engagement, which was great because some of them lived on campus and did a lot of walking and biking, so there was some really great feedback. Mr. Schoefmann added that Community Development Department staff would be tabling at the Student Center again the next day on the first floor from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM to try to capture more of the students' perspectives. Mr. Schoefmann was also working on a meeting with Keene High School students. Mr. Goff added that he was trying to set up a meeting with the senior housing community to better understand their needs around particular neighborhoods.

Mr. Goff asked the Committee for ideas about other stakeholders to potentially meet with in small focus groups. The suggestions were:

- Antioch University graduate students who are all commuters (some very long) and have classes on the weekends on campus (Ms. Duffy and Dr. Russell would provide contacts).
- Keene's Energy and Climate Committee, which has been looking at climate resilience.
- Various local biking/trail/transportation groups: Pathways for Keene, the Monadnock Cycling Club, the Monadnock Rail Trails Collaborative, the New England Mountain Bike Association, and the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation.
 - A lot of people overlap on these groups. Mr. Schoefmann suggested a strategy to have a focus group with representatives from many of these groups at the same time rather than going to them all individually. Mr. Goff agreed. Mr. Schoefmann agreed to coordinate.

Vice Chair Haas suggested a presentation to the City Council's Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee about the scope of the project as soon as possible, not only at the end of the project. Mr. Schoefmann thought one of the staff liaisons, such as the City Engineer or Senior Planner, could work on a project summary for the Committee. Mr. Schoefmann agreed it was a good idea. Vice Chair Haas added that it could be one of the Committee members too.

Suggestions of stakeholder groups continued:

- The downtown business community. Specifically: Mark Rebillard, who is very active with the Greater Monadnock Chamber of Commerce, and Sam from Fire Dog Breads (where monthly community bike rides begin).
 - Discussion ensued briefly as Mr. Goff questioned whether the downtown business community would be so focused on the downtown infrastructure project that this would be off their radar. Dr. Russell thought it was a valid concern. Ultimately, the Committee determined that it would depend on each business and that they could target a focus group of specific businesses with interests in bike/pedestrian issues who could separate themselves from the downtown project.
 - Vice Chair Haas volunteered to approach the Keene Downtown Group about this idea and report back to this Committee.

City Planner, Megan Fortson, arrived at 3:29 PM.

Mr. Holte suggested targeting younger kids, parents, and teachers. For example, talking to them en route to and from the Middle School during drop off and pick up time. Mr. Schoefmann noted challenges of that and said the right way to do it would be to get into the school and somehow reach that group. He was working on high school social studies but could contact someone at the middle school too. If considering the elementary schools, he thought it would be better to try access via the Parent Teacher Association; it was noted that this was nearing the end of the school year. Mr. Goff thought it might be tricky to try grouping the parents for this. Although, Mr. Schoefmann said they would be trying to distribute the survey to the schools somehow.

Vice Chair Haas welcomed Ms. Fortson, who reported on attending the stakeholder focus group at the KSC Student Center and said it was interesting to hear from the people in charge of the residence halls, who live in them as well. They talked about how important it is and how

disappointed Keene State students are in the closure of the bridge that connects Martell Court to Krif Road. So, they hoped for a solution to reopen that despite the complicated history. Committee members agreed. Ms. Duffy noted the KSC athletes have to drive to practice now.

iii) Landing Page on City Webpage

Mr. Goff said the City put together the initial landing page for the project on the City's website. It started with some of the interim deliverables and a link to the RSAP and community survey. Mr. Schoefmann said he would work on having it linked to the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC) webpage.

iv) Online Survey and Input Map

Mr. Goff said the survey takes five to seven minutes to complete. It is the same survey software the City used for the RSAP. He would distribute it directly to the Committee. He said there were plans for news or social media communications about it by the end of the week. The goal is for it to be a community-wide survey. The survey deadline is July 15, 2026. Brief discussion ensued about advertising the survey at upcoming events like the Monadnock Co-Op Earth Fest and Kiwanis Kool Wheels events.

B) Technical Tasks 2–4

Mr. Goff proceeded, describing Task 2: Preliminary Design and Engineering.

- 2.1: Review City of Keene Plans, Policies, and Reports
 - 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan; 2025 RSAP; 2015 Complete Streets Design Guide; and any other applicable materials
- 2.2: Data Collection and Base Maps (e.g., crash data, pedestrian data for 10-years)
- 2.3: Existing Conditions Assessment
- 2.4: Gap Analysis (i.e., gaps in pedestrian, bike, and trail infrastructure throughout the City)

Vice Chair Haas asked if there is accident information in the RSAP. Mr. Goff said yes. Vice Chair Haas did not imagine that it is very specific to bicycles. Mr. Goff recalled that data collection process and being surprised about what was reported. Mr. Schoefmann said this Master Plan is an opportunity to improve information collection.

Mr. Goff described Task 3: Assessment of Future Scenarios and Improvement Alternatives

- 3.1: Draft Project Goals
 - These eventually become evaluation criteria for the various recommendations.
- 3.2: Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Recommendations
 - A complete network that is longer term and aspirational.
- 3.3: Recommended Bicycle and Pedestrian Treatments
 - Treatments for each recommendation, which is not common in a plan like the RSAP that does not necessarily cohere into the network.
- 3.4: Project Prioritization

- This is the most critical. They will use mapping tools to create a matrix of the goals from these dozens of organizations to develop evaluation criteria. Those criteria (some quantitative some qualitative) will go into the matrix (i.e., the goals from 3.1 become the evaluation criteria).
- Establish weighting: work with the Committee and any community members to determine whether it is relevant to weigh any of the criteria (e.g., criteria on connectivity to schools vs. environmentally sensitive areas) depending on priorities.
- Set scoring thresholds (quantitative and qualitative criteria, typically)
- Complete scoring and ranking: key deliverables are the network maps and prioritization tool.

Task 4: Final Report

- Draft and Final Report Document
- Final Update for City Council Action

Based on the consultants' experience, Vice Chair Haas asked what some goals may be for Keene's plan. Mr. Goff said that for a lot of plans like these, goals relate to improved school connection, trail projects and environmental resource area costs and engineering challenges and impacts to traffic due to recommendations from the plan. He noted how safety would be a comprehensive goal and a valuation criteria that helps to rank projects depending on the type of project. Vice Chair Haas suggested a goal to have more signalized crossings, for example, and said the valuation of that would be improved safety. Mr. Goff said that the goal of signalized crossings may not transition smoothly into an evaluation criterion, but the consultants would develop a criterion that ties into that safety enhancement for crossings. Ms. Cunha will be working on maps and product deliverables. Vice Chair Haas asked what maps they had on hand: Citywide and insets of downtown and some areas of Washington and Court Streets.

C) Project Schedule

Vice Chair Haas asked Mr. Schoefmann to email the whole group in advance when scheduling the stakeholder meetings so they will know about them. Dr. Russell asked the consultants, in their experience, if it is helpful to have the Committee members present at the stakeholder events. Mr. Goff said it is not a bad thing; it depends on whether there is an affiliation between someone and the group. Discussion ensued about how they would not want to overwhelm stakeholders (e.g., KSC students) but could also just be there to listen. Mr. Goff did not think the Vice Chair's request was unreasonable and said it makes sense to have that awareness.

3) Round Robin Discussion Questions

A) Where are 2–3 critical streets and intersections in need of connectivity and safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists?

The Committee provided critical streets, intersections, and trails in need of connectivity and safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists:

- Court Street:
 - Not enough sidewalks and some parts with no sidewalks.

- Limited space for bicycles, making it challenging.
- It connects to a lot of other areas.
- There is parking on both sides on lower Court Street up to the Hospital, beyond that there is no shoulder (people still park there).
- Crossing Court Street:
 - Only one signaled crossing at Vernon Street for the Fire Department. (no button)
 - Ms. Duffy does not feel safe crossing near the church downtown.
- Cheshire Rail Trail:
 - West, in Downtown Keene, in the center of Colony Mill:
 - It suddenly disappears from Emerald Street to a connector, to Island Street, and back to the Rail Trail west. People tend to use parking lots, which is unsafe, but it is the direct route of the rail beds that were developed over.
 - It is not correctly marked. Discussion ensued about how only insiders know where to go because they live here. There is only one sign that is unclear, but Mr. Schoefmann said there are facilities you could navigate the area with. He said the issue has always been private property that absorbs the old railroad, so the ability to build through there depends on their willingness to take on responsibility.
 - Dr. Russell pointed out another route with blue markers that is pretty identifiable that the Wantastiquet–Monadnock Trail uses.
 - Mr. Holte said Emerald Street is a public right-of-way and awful to navigate on a bike. There is a sidewalk that is great, but it is a very narrow road with a lot of cars going through and limited signage of where to pick up the trail on Island Street. It also connects to the trails in Ashuelot River Park (the trailhead), so he said that whole intersection of three trails should be left there.
 - It is a wider sidewalk on Island Street to get back to the Rail Trail. Discussion ensued about how it is unclear where it is permissible to ride on the sidewalks and where it is not. There was a feeling that most cyclists would ride in the street.
 - Mr. Goff asked if the distance between the CRT turning west on Island Street and the Jonathan Daniels Trail in Ashuelot River Park is specifically an important gap to address.
 - Dr. Russell said yes because it ties into one of the third areas, which is West Street, and one of the most problematic intersections, which is crossing West Street onto Island Street and making the left turns. There is car and bike accident data from that intersection. The BPPAC's counts would show 40–50 cars running those red lights in a period in all directions. Discussion ensued about the rebuilding of Island Street, how it was still a work in progress, and varied perspectives on its success.
 - Mr. Goff said there is no plan to identify bike lanes on West Street. Mr. Schoefmann said the BPPAC has three years of counts at three nodes on West Street (Island, Pearl, and CRT spur).

- Discussion ensued about CRT plowing (only pavement) and incontinenes on either side of the bridge. Some portions are maintained by snowmobile clubs in the winter and thus unmaintained for their use.
- Wyman Way and Main Street:
 - A major exit for KSC and Ms. Duffy said the left turn heading north on South Main Street before the Post Office rotary is dicey.
 - People have had accidents trying to leave work at KSC. Ms. Duffy said there should be safety for cars since there are lights for pedestrians.
 - It is a challenging left turn on a bike as well.
- Lower Winchester Street:
 - It is very narrow and inaccessible.
 - On the Ashuelot Rail Trail over the bridge and turn left on Krif Road going south, the bridge is also narrow. The City Engineer had reported to the Committee that although the Lower Winchester Street project was delayed in the State's 10-Year Plan, the bridge would be one of the first things completed.

Vice Chair Haas noted that things like Rt-10, the Prowse Bridge, and West Street were already in the State of New Hampshire's 10-Year Plan. He wondered if the Committee was diluting its Plan by including them. Dr. Russell thought they should be named even if not priorities; today's priorities may not be tomorrow's. Mr. Holte said it bothers him that every intersection of the rail trail is not the priority, the road is the priority, and everyone on the rail trail has to yield or stop to make sure they are going to be able to see if they cross; whereas if it were a major route, which he said it is, he thinks there should be raised across crosswalks so the drivers make sure they do not run anyone over who is trying to cross. That would be his ideal. Mr. Robertson was unsure where he had seen that. He thought all rail trails usually stop and cars have the right-of-way. He thinks it is hard because most people get around with cars. Discussion ensued about examples of trails having the right-of-way, with Vice Chair Haas citing an example at Matthews Road in Swanzey.

When talking about areas heading out of town that do not have many facilities, whether it is on rail trails or on streets, Dr. Russell advised the consultants that it is where the Monadnock Rail Trail Alliance would be really helpful. They work in Keene and have been very good about getting grants to repair things. The Alliance is more for Cheshire County. He also recommended the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), which has done significant multi-town planning with Keene for the Ashuelot Rail Trail and the Cheshire Rail Trail. Mr. Schoefmann said those plans should be on the two organizations' websites and Dr. Russell recommended that the consultants review them. Dr. Russell also mentioned Lisa Steadman, Monadnock Region Mobility Manager with SWRPC, who had been looking at sites and attending BPPAC meetings.

- North-South Passages (street and trail)
 - Vice Chair Haas feels there are no north-south passages, providing the example of Washington Street: it is wide with marked bike lanes and then it ends. He said Court Street is a disaster. Discussion ensued about Court Street. Vice Chair Haas would like to see bike lanes throughout this corridor.

- On Washington Street, Mr. Holte suggested that speed is an issue and suggested switching the parking and the bike lanes for safety.
- Mr. Holte suggested focusing on destinations to reach, such as the Monadnock Food Co-Op; it is not as easy for Market Basket, for example.
 - Mr. Goff said that was feedback during the KSC stakeholder meeting; that the easiest stores to get to are the Co-Op and Price Chopper.
- “JD2”
 - On the other side of the Ashuelot River, behind the Hospital.
 - Colloquially it is known as “Jonathan Daniels 2” because it was conceptualized as an extension of the Jonathan Daniels Trail but never came to fruition.
 - Mr. Robertson used to ride trails in that area in middle school. He said it would solve the Court Street problem: getting on at the top of Appel Way and continuing to the Middle School, Wheelock Park, Symonds School, and more. Discussion ensued briefly about how it could be the best way to bypass Court Street. It is City land. Mr. Goff reviewed the map and possible routes.
- Identifying safer streets for visitors:
 - Dr. Russell suggested identifying ways for visitors to get to key destinations using safer streets. They would not have to reinvent the wheel: Mr. Schoefmann thought that was why Complete Streets were conceptualized, stating the goal is for these to be Complete Streets at some point. He said some of the street types (e.g., a bicycle street or a pedestrian street) had not yet been realized.

B) Are there particular policy or program-related needs in the City?

Mr. Goff said the scope of the project is not to fully flesh-out policy for the Council to approve, but he welcomed ideas for various education and encouragement programs, and enforcement. Vice Chair Haas reported that the City Council had a great challenge trying to develop regulations for the new downtown dedicated protected bike lanes and asked the consultants to review that Ordinance and provide ideas on how to lever that into more helpful ordinances around the City. Vice Chair Haas is always interested in ideas on banning Class III e-bikes. Dr. Russell agreed about having comprehensive rules for anywhere in the network.

Mr. Phillips mentioned the concept of the “Idaho Stop,” which is law in some states. He said 70% of accidents happen at intersections, so it is dangerous for cyclists to be stopped at them. With the Idaho Stop, cyclists treat stop signs as a yield if there is no traffic coming and treat red lights as stop signs if there is no traffic coming. He said there had been studies done on the safety of keeping cyclists moving through intersections without fully stopping. Mr. Phillips wondered if it was something the Committee should advocate for; it involves a lot of education for motorists too, who may think bikes should follow the cars.

Dr. Russell suggested another study the BPPAC did to advance tourism with the UNH cooperative. He said to amplify in this Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan what was attempted in that plan: focusing a lot on how bike/pedestrian infrastructure makes the City more livable, how it

attracts new residents, how it attracts businesses, and how it makes things safer. He said the goal is to make the City younger and connect to schools, so safer transportation is needed for kids all the way, and this plan could make the City promote itself as a more appealing place to live and work.

Mr. Holte shared that, from an infrastructure standpoint, it seems like the City tends toward a project by project approach, citing a lot of examples with the downtown project becoming political and a veto type process of not wanting certain changes. He thinks certain pieces of infrastructure, like roads and drainage, are determined by engineering standards. However, he saw the active transportation specific projects become vetoable by people who do not want certain things. He wondered how this plan could standardize things so that if something is being worked on in this City, certain things should automatically be built into the process, so that it is just a normal experience. Mr. Schoefmann heard that as reconfirming the Complete Street Design Guidelines when projects are being planned in the CIP.

C) How should this plan be used to advance walking and bicycling in Keene?

Ms. Duffy knows this is the BPMPAC but wondered if some of the language should include mobility. She said the bike/pedestrian people were trying to realize that people are getting around in all kinds of ways and she wanted to represent the people who are getting around in ways that are not on bicycles. She wondered how to say that because it also impacts how they would talk about sidewalks. Mr. Goff suggested that if straying from the bike/pedestrian language, specifically to consider “active transportation,” which is where a lot of communities seem to be going (vs. bike/pedestrian of about 10 years ago). Whereas he thinks “mobility” is broader and incorporates transit issues. Discussion continued briefly.

It is not only mobility, but mobility for those with mobility issues; so, it is too broad and too narrow in some ways. Ms. Duffy wanted to do the right thing. Dr. Russell said the City had been using mobility in some of its grant applications. Mr. Schoefmann said the Parks and Recreation Department has the Active & Passive Recreation Master Plan. Mr. Goff thought most people would know what a “Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Master Plan” means, whereas many may not know what an “Active Transportation Master Plan” means. Mr. Goff said the Committee could also consider whether this should be called a “Master Plan” or something like a “Strategic Plan” or a “Network Plan,” so all the master plans do not overlap.

Mr. Davern talked about encouraging people to use these facilities, in particular the rail trail, Appel Way, Jonathan Daniels Trail, and the non-road-based pathways. He suggested things like what they have done in places such as Bentonville, Arkansas, by making these routes fun to really encourage kids to ride their bikes to school, and families to go out on bike rides because they have interesting things as opposed to a straight path. He spoke about rollers and jumps that are often done in conjunction with public art that look super nice, so people want to go on a bike ride to go to school. He mentioned associated costs.

Mr. Roberston wondered if there would be promotional opportunity through this effort as well, recounting an “underexposed” video that features the trail networks in Keene. He thought about tying all that together and promoting it. He thought it would be good for tourism, including a

business connection for advertising this as a great place to live. Mr. Schoefmann mentioned the maintenance that comes with promoting trails that way and usage; how to capture some of that toward development and maintenance? Dr. Russell asked how to draw from this plan to better pursue funding opportunities.

D) Are there other stakeholder groups that the City should reach out to?

Ms. Duffy recalled that a former Committee member was the boss of People's Linen and a lot of their employees bike to work. So, she recommended them as a part of the business stakeholder community. She also mentioned an event with Keene City Bikes and the Cycle Sanctuary on April 26, 2026. Mr. Schoefmann thought bike shops would be another good stakeholder group.

4) Next Steps

Next Steps: Scheduling stakeholder meetings, the City promoting the survey, VHB reviewing City plans and studies to understand materials, and then looking at the bike/pedestrian related needs and gap analysis throughout the City. Mr. Goff wanted to meet again after VHB had time to digest all of this and suggested mid-June. Vice Chair Haas suggested waiting to schedule until the time is closer and Mr. Schoefmann would send a poll for the date.

5) Adjourn

There being no further business, Vice Chair Haas adjourned the meeting at 4:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan A. Fortson, AICP - Planner