

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 12, 2016

8:00 AM

2nd floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Linda Rubin, Chair
Thom Little
Don Hayes
Charles (Chuck) Redfern

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, Planning

Members Not Present:

Christopher Brehme, Vice Chair
Ed Guyot
Emily Coey

Chair Rubin called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

1) Roll Call

Roll call was conducted.

2) Accept September 14, 2016 Minutes

Mr. Little submitted this correction to the minutes: Page 8, second paragraph, change “for ranking projects” to “for rating a project.” He also asked that the South Bridge section of the BPPAC Project Updates page (September) be corrected so that the start date is spring 2016 and the finish date is October 28, 2016.

Mr. Little made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected, which was seconded by Mr. Hayes and passed by unanimous vote.

3) BPPAC Master Plan – Priorities Discussion and Exercise

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is some renumbering, of BE6 and BE10 – 10 is now Cheshire Rail Trail (CRT) IV. Chair Rubin asked that they start with BE6 – CRT Swanzey Factory Road Project.

Mr. Little stated that he listed corrections: BE5’s reference to “and Swanzey Factory Rd.” should be deleted since that is what BE6 is. He continued that regarding BE19 through BE23, they discussed at the last meeting that the titles should start with “Complete

Streets – .” Mr. Schoefmann replied that he put them under the Complete Streets heading but if the group feels those words should be in the titles, he can make that change. Chair Rubin replied that that seems to make sense. Mr. Little agreed. Mr. Schoefmann replied that a couple other projects might end up going in that category. He continued that the final breakdown will be pending, because there are a couple projects they have not rated yet, that might be in this category. He hopes to have this by next week.

Chair Rubin asked for thoughts on BE6, which staff has not ranked yet because they just added it. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he is fairly certain it would be “medium” from staff’s perspective. He continued that completing the CRT’s northern limits is a priority and on the Mayor’s list of items to accomplish. Mr. Little, Mr. Redfern, Mr. Hayes, and Chair Rubin all rated this as “medium” as well.

Chair Rubin asked what the group thinks about BE10. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the current TAP project up Park Ave. with the proposed connection to the CRT, all the way back to Hurricane Rd. is supposed to be improved as part of that. He pointed this out on the map. He continued that CRT IV would be the green line that heads north, and would go all the way to the town line by the landfill. Mr. Redfern asked what the current condition is. Mr. Schoefmann replied passable until it gets to the landfill. Mr. Redfern asked what the probability of usage would be for that segment. There are no neighborhoods beyond Summit Rd. that he is aware of, to the transfer station, and that is not much of a draw. Mr. Schoefmann replied that past that into Westmoreland lots of folks use that as a pull-off/ad hoc trail head. He continued that it is just a dirt spot on the side of the road, so he does not know if they are heading further north into Westmoreland, or coming into Keene. When he was there doing conceptual work for CRT III, he spent time up and down that section of the trail due for improvements, north of Hurricane Rd., and there was definitely bike traffic, people using it recreationally. Mr. Hayes replied that yesterday he and three other people were biking there and they saw three or four other people. He continued that he thinks people like that trail just for exercise. Mr. Redfern asked what the condition of the trail is between the informal trail head in/near Westmoreland and to the landfill. Mr. Schoefmann replied pretty rough. Mr. Redfern and Mr. Hayes agreed.

Chair Rubin asked what the group rates this trail, based on their criteria of safety, accessibility, availability, connectivity, and sustainability. Mr. Little voted “high.” Mr. Hayes agreed. He stated that he thinks more people would use the trail. Chair Rubin stated she would rate it “high” for recreational use, but not for helping people get places, so she ranks it “low,” thinking of the criteria they use for rating projects. Mr. Schoefmann stated that this plays into regional connectivity to a certain degree – there is this ad hoc but well-used trail head on Route 12 north, so the idea of that having bicycle traffic coming into town from outside, plays into the regional connectivity to a certain degree. Mr. Redfern rated it “high.” Mr. Hayes agreed. Mr. Little stated that they had similar discussion when rating BE1, which is rated medium/high. Chair Rubin asked if that is the same project. Mr. Little replied that BE1 was how to come up with a strategic plan for finishing the CRT. Mr. Redfern stated that he sees a higher probability if Westmoreland is willing to improve its trail section. Discussion continued about the

condition and size of this trail in Westmoreland. Mr. Redfern stated that multi-town projects seem to score high. He continued that the question is whether Westmoreland would step up to the plate. Mr. Little replied that he thinks they are talking about the second phase of what they said they would do, comparing project to project. Chair Rubin stated that they ranked Main Street high, so rating this “high” would not feel right; they are not in the same category. Mr. Little replied that when they get to phase II that would be “high.”

Mr. Redfern asked if the Mayor rates this “high.” Mr. Schoefmann replied not this one particularly, but he rates finishing the CRT as a whole as “high.” Mr. Little stated that they are evaluating accessibility, safety, connectivity, availability, and sustainability. Chair Rubin replied that they have to think about the size of population using it. This project would improve all of those things, but only for a handful of people. Main St. improvements would affect thousands of people. She thinks about the maximum number of people benefiting from the increased safety, availability, accessibility, etc. That is what she has been using in her head the whole time.

Mr. Hayes stated “medium.” Mr. Little stated that his brother was on the Tri-State Transportation Commission and the purpose of their evaluation was to figure out where the population would be in 20 years so they could build roads now that would be ready for the population growth. That went on for seven years and then they canceled the project because they realized the populations would be wherever they built the roads. He thinks this project would be of that nature. It is hard to fathom now how much this trail would be used, because it does not exist yet. If you could park your car, get on your bike, and go to Main St. from that location, he thinks it would be a popular thing to do. Chair Rubin, Mr. Little, Mr. Hayes, and Mr. Redfern all rated BE10 “medium.” Mr. Redfern asked what staff ranks this. Mr. Schoefmann replied “medium.”

Chair Rubin moved on to BE26 – Gilbo Ave./Colony Mill. Mr. Schoefmann stated that this project has been around for some time; it is one of the routes proposed as part of Roundhouse T Phase II project initially. He continued that he included this project because there is still a lot of bike and pedestrian traffic from the terminus to where the CRT ends at the intersection of Gilbo Ave. and School St. People use the shortest and most direct route they can. People are still using the Colony Mill, whether the owners admit that or not. This project tackles that area.

Mr. Hayes asked if they have considered better signage. Mr. Schoefmann replied that that would be part of the wayfinding project, putting probably directional markings on the sidewalk, to direct people down School St. to Emerald St. He continued that for folks who live around here, to get from A to B they are not going to go down Emerald St., they will still ride through the parking lot. The project description mentions the possibility of bike lanes, or a counter-flow bike lane – like a separate grade path, eked out of a travel lane. These are all conceptual things. He explained an old route that was conceptualized, which is expensive. They could do it, or there are alternatives that could be done. It is up to the committee to say whether it sounds like a good idea. He does not think it falls into any of the categories they are using to rate projects.

Chair Rubin stated that this is a heavily trafficked part of the path. She continued that people will go through that parking lot no matter what you put on the street. Mr. Schoefmann replied, unless they make the option on the street more attractive. Chair Rubin stated that going through the parking lot is not safe. Mr. Redfern stated that the City should send a message to the owner that they consider it at least “medium,” and “high” if they could see a resolution of this sooner than later. Chair Rubin replied that the probability of the project happening is not a criterion for rating. They are rating only for safety, accessibility, connectivity, etc. It is rated “high” for those criteria. Mr. Schoefmann stated that it is “high” for safety and connectivity, but they have a solution, as summarized well by Mr. Little – both the Emerald St. route and the one through the Colony Mill are components of the trail system that need to happen. Mr. Little stated that they have to improve how to go from Emerald St. to Gilbo Ave. He continued that the Emerald St. route will probably be more popular than the Gilbo Ave. route and if this project survives he would contend that it is “low.” It is dangerous. The Emerald St. one is not dangerous for bicyclists. Something that brings bicyclists to that dangerous parking lot is a mistake. This would reduce safety. The weakness now is the Gilbo St. to Emerald St. connection on School St. That concrete will be marked as a path, but it is still narrow. Perhaps that should be widened. The Roundhouse T Phase II trail that it connects to could also be widened.

Mr. Schoefmann asked what the group says about this project, relative to Gilbo Ave. and the Colony Mill. Chair Rubin replied “high.” Mr. Redfern asked if a building is on the horizon for the corner of School St. and Emerald St. He continued that he has heard rumors. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he has not heard anything about this. Mr. Redfern stated that he agrees with Mr. Little – emphasis should be on widening the informal path on the other side of Emerald St., because it will drop people on Roundhouse T Phase II. Chair Rubin replied that that is a different project. Mr. Redfern stated that he ranks this “medium.” Mr. Little stated that he thinks the project was determined to be fairly expensive. Mr. Schoefmann read the project description. He continued that it could be this project, or something less formal that improves conditions for cyclists. Chair Rubin stated that this is a major thoroughfare and thousands of people will continue to go through the Colony Mill, and it is not safe. She continued that this does not even say what the project is, it just says “Let’s figure something out.” Mr. Redfern replied that if it focuses just on BE26, he agrees. They cannot argue with safety. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks “medium” is okay. Mr. Hayes stated “medium.” He continued that it seems like they can make a small change to make it work, and if people still go through the Colony Mill, so be it – they cannot force people to do something.

Mr. Little stated that he thinks this sounds like trying to improve how people would get to a dangerous location. He thinks they should think of a way to keep people out of the parking lot. Mr. Schoefmann stated that that is a mischaracterization of the project. Mr. Little spoke more about how dangerous it is for bicyclists to go through the parking lot. They should come up with safe solutions. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he is asking the group to look at the area from a perspective of improving safety, accessibility, availability, sustainability, and connectivity. He is not asking them to solve it. He is

asking if it is important to look at this area to find a solution. Chair Rubin replied that she ranks it “high” because of the high use in the area. Safety needs to be a priority. The BPPAC does not need to come up with the solution themselves. There are stumbling blocks, yes, and there is no plan, but the question is: how important is it to make this pathway, which is the direct route to connect the two sides of the trail? To stop people from going through the parking lot they would need something extreme like a fence. Mr. Little replied that a fence is a good idea. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the City will not put up a fence. Discussion continued about the Colony Mill.

Mr. Hayes asked why the Roundhouse T Phase II project happened. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the initial plan was to put the trail through the Colony Mill but the owners were unwilling so they had to change it. He continued that there might be methods of increasing bicycle safety in that area that the owners would agree with. He is only asking if the BPPAC agrees that this is an important location to look at. Mr. Hayes asked if the idea was that the Roundhouse T Phase II project would solve the problem. Mr. Schoefmann replied that there is a big gap – the Colony Mill area does not have trail facilities. The CRT there is clearly interrupted.

Mr. Redfern stated that he agrees with everything Mr. Schoefmann says, but he wants to put the blinders on and only look at BE26 to come up with a ranking. He asked how others rank that. Mr. Little stated “medium.” Mr. Redfern and Mr. Hayes stated “medium high.” Chair Rubin stated that this one is hard for her because it is personal. Discussion continued about the rating. Mr. Little stated that he really likes the idea of a fence. He explained more how the fence could be placed, with an arrow so that people can see that there is a trail they can use. Mr. Hayes agreed that signage could help. Mr. Little suggested adding the idea of the fence into the project description. Chair Rubin replied that there are no specifics for a plan yet; they are discussing now the concept of increasing safety in this area. Mr. Redfern suggested they average the votes to “medium.” Chair Rubin agreed.

The group moved on to BE27 – West Street. Mr. Schoefmann read the project description. Mr. Hayes asked why staff ranks it “low.” Mr. Schoefmann replied that it is a high priority for him, personally, but in terms of the projects the City has in the hopper, and under the criteria of budget, policy, support, it is not necessarily that high. He continued that that may change a little bit now that they have the Complete Streets policy, but there are lower-hanging fruit with Complete Streets that staff might be looking at first. It is a considerable undertaking. It is not just a matter of laying down paint. The sidewalks are too narrow to accommodate pedestrian traffic. It is in need of improvements but there is not enough on the policy and budget side.

Chair Rubin stated that this should probably be moved to the Complete Streets section in the list. Mr. Redfern and Mr. Hayes agreed. Chair Rubin stated that she ranks this as the highest of the high, due to the number of people using this major corridor – it has to be improved. Mr. Redfern stated “high.” Mr. Schoefmann stated that staff envisions improved traffic calming and crossings, bike lanes, widened sidewalks, some street-

scaping with green space, and so on and so forth. This is classified as a gateway street in the Complete Streets document. Mr. Hayes rated this “high.” Mr. Little agreed.

Mr. Little asked if BE28 and BE29 could be merged with BE27. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they could be, but he was thinking that West St. is a huge nut to crack. He continued that if they can chip away at certain components of making it a Complete Street that might be useful. Mr. Little asked if they should move BE28 and BE29 to the Complete Streets section. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Chair Rubin stated that she is not sure if they need to break it out like this. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they can remove these two if the group wants. Discussion continued. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he could combine BE28 and BE29 into BE27 if he adds the descriptions into BE27 and he would then rate it “medium” from the staff’s perspective, since it is kind of two “lows” combined with a “high.” Chair Rubin replied that that is fine.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he thinks BE30 was Mr. Brehme’s idea – creating a West St. bypass on the north side somewhere. Chair Rubin asked if he means it is not really part of the street. Mr. Schoefmann replied that that is correct. Mr. Little suggests “parallel to West St. and one block north” as the language. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, that sounds like what Mr. Brehme had envisioned. He continued that he does not think staff had conceptualized anything for this area, so it was interesting to hear the idea. It would create a connection between the Jonathan Daniels trail and the sidewalk out towards Hannafords but he does not know how it would look. There is a lot of private property out there. Chair Rubin and Mr. Hayes chose “low.” Mr. Redfern and Mr. Little agreed.

Moving on to BE31 – Amenities, Mr. Little stated that he rated this “?” having no idea. Chair Rubin agreed. Mr. Schoefmann replied that this is looking at things that can go along the trail, like solar lighting, kiosks, benches, bike maintenances stations with an air pump and some tools, water fountains, and so on and so forth. Mr. Little asked if those can be listed in the description. Mr. Schoefmann stated that BE32 is for trail lighting specifically, and BE33 and BE35 are about other trail facilities. They all fall under the “amenities” category, but BE31 was envisioned to be like “Okay, here is what we have, here is what we envision we could have.” It is about establishing a baseline for where to go with those things. Chair Rubin asked if he means an assessment of what already exists, and plan for what to have and where. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes.

Mr. Redfern stated that regarding BE33 –Kiosk/ Trailhead Facilities, Benson Wood has created three kiosks, paid for by the Monadnock Conservancy and Pathways for Keene and they are being picked up by the City today. He would thus rank BE33 “high” because it is low-hanging fruit that is already happening. Mr. Little stated that he does not know how this fits into what they said they were using as criteria for evaluating. He had problems with that, and also why they do not just merge BE31 through BE35. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he thinks trail lighting is worthy of being its own project. Discussion continued. Mr. Little asked how these things improve safety. Chair Rubin replied that if people read kiosks it can guide them on the trail, for example. Mr. Little stated that he ranks these all “low.” Chair Rubin stated that she agrees that trail lighting should be a separate category. She continued that there are places where safety becomes

an issue when there is no lighting, within the core bypass system. She continued that one example is the stretch leading to North Bridge – it gets a little sketchy in the evening when the light is fading. She will go onto West Street when it gets dark, which feels somewhat safer. To her, lighting adds to safety, if they put lights in the most heavily trafficked areas that people use.

Mr. Schoefmann asked if the group wants to vote on BE33 per Mr. Redfern's suggestion or go back to BE31. Chair Rubin stated that maybe amenities get all put together, but there are so many different kinds of amenities, so they need a plan for that. Discussion continued. Chair Rubin stated that she thinks creating an amenity plan is "high" and it seems like a perfect activity for this group – to determine what they think are the most important amenities and where they should be. Mr. Hayes stated that he would rate BE33 "high." Mr. Redfern agreed. Mr. Little asked why lighting would be high. Chair Rubin replied because it increases safety. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it would address availability, too – most of the trail system is not available after dusk unless you are comfortable riding with a head lamp. Chair Rubin stated that women do not feel safe in the dark in many of these places. Discussion continued.

Mr. Redfern suggested they finish the rest of the agenda and have Mr. Schoefmann ponder how to blend these together or present them in a different way. Mr. Schoefmann asked if they want him to leave them broken out or combine them. Mr. Little stated that he rates BE32 "high." Mr. Schoefmann asked if they want him to combine the rest. The group replied yes. Chair Rubin stated that the group will need to determine what amenities are priorities, where they are looking to put them, how far out, and so on and so forth. It is good idea to combine the projects into one and then create a plan. They will rate the amenities at the next meeting after Mr. Schoefmann does some combining, although they have today rated trail lighting as "high." At the next meeting they should only have two or three items left to rate.

4) Project Updates

Jonathan Daniels Trail, Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no change to the Jonathan Daniels Trail or the Jonathan Daniels Trail Phase II.

CRT Park Ave. Loop

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the initial survey work is being completed. He continued that they should have ideas about that hopefully in the next week, so they can submit that part of the project to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) and move forward with the engineering study phase. Chair Rubin asked if there is a public meeting scheduled. Mr. Schoefmann replied not yet. He continued that it would be in the engineering study phase of the project. Mr. Little asked if it might not be in November. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, it might be December – he will let them know. Mr. Little stated that at the last meeting they talked about making materials available to the BPPAC ahead of time. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes.

South Bridge

Mr. Little stated that they are making great progress. He continued that the drawing will be given to the Mayor – it is the image that is from the Request for Quotes, which is very close to the final design. He does not have documentation on the final design. He understands that NHDOT did not make it available to the City, either. Regarding the structure itself, the two center sections are 100 feet each, and one is ready to go up and the other has not yet arrived on site. The one already constructed arrived in pieces and they spent three days putting it together. Once those are up the concrete deck has to be installed. The work on the ramps has not been done yet. There is supposed to be fencing going up on the top part of the ramp. He asked, but there was no statement regarding the projected date when it would be open to the public. This information was reviewed by the Project Manager and he said he did not have any additions. Mr. Little continued that to him this is exciting – this was the highest priority project in the trail system for over a decade. He thinks it will have a very positive impact for Keene State College (KSC), too.

Mr. Redfern stated that the process is moving along well. With North Bridge they had a dedication. He asked if anyone had considered having a dedication to celebrate South Bridge. Chair Rubin replied yes, they should celebrate this. She continued that if it is opening in November they could maybe do something then. Mr. Redfern replied that they could wait until spring and involve KSC, BPPAC, Swanzey, PFK, citizens in general, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Schoefmann suggested they reach out to NHDOT, since they are the ones building the bridge. He continued that they could reach out to Ronald Grandmaison and a few other folks, to see if they had plans, and/or if they wanted to be a part of the planning. Mr. Little replied that the City would need to contact them and see what the plan is. He asked who maintains the bridge once it is built. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the City is responsible for general maintenance, such as graffiti removal, but the majority of structural maintenance would be the responsibility of NHDOT. Chair Rubin asked if he can reach out to NHDOT regarding a grand opening/ribbon-cutting, etc. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Mr. Little stated that he has always been trying to help NHDOT and stay out of their way, so he does not want to do anything that causes them more work. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will just ask NHDOT if they are interested in participating in a celebration that the City is doing. He will touch base with Public Works Director Kürt Blomquist, too.

Bike Racks

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there is no update.

Complete Streets

Mr. Schoefmann reported that they are plugging away at trying to figure out which streets to address first.

Master Plan

The BPPAC is working on this.

Mayor's Challenge

Mr. Schoefmann reported that there has not been much movement. He continued that the document is on Google Drive for the BPPAC to access, and includes a summary of the BPPAC's findings and feedback to the Mayor.

Signage

Mr. Schoefmann reported that he hopes to get the smaller signs installed this month. Mr. Hayes replied that that is great- the Bike Club has been asking for a long time.

Lighting

Mr. Schoefmann reported that the contract employee will be doing an analysis of the core bike trails, such as the paved segments, and the potential for lighting. Brief discussion ensued. Mr. Redfern asked if any of the Transportation Improvement Fund would be used for bicycle, pedestrian, etc., or if it would all be going to other projects. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will talk with Steve Thornton in the Finance Department.

5) Old Business – Public Outreach & Workshops

6) New Business

7) Adjournment

Chair Rubin adjourned the meeting at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker