

City of Keene
New Hampshire

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

8:15 AM

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

Members Present:

Drew Bryenton, Chair
Todd Horner, Vice Chair
Dillon Benik
Jan Manwaring
Michael Davern
Rowland Russell
Charles Redfern, Alternate

Staff Present:

William Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Members Not Present:

Dr. Chris Brehme, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Drew Bryenton called the meeting to order at 8:17 AM.

2) May 11, 2022 Minutes Approval

Chair Bryenton requested approval of the minutes. Jan Manwaring seconded the motion. Unanimous approval from Committee for approval of the May 11th minutes.

3) Top 5 Project Priorities 2022-23

Chair Bryenton mentioned how a large chunk of the May 11th meeting was used to start the discussion around the top five project priorities. He would like to use some time today to finish identifying those. The committee ended last meeting on the Pat Russel park improvements. A decision was made last meeting to take that off the list because it was in progress. Resuming today looking at Gilbo Ave and Colony Mill, which were exploring bike lanes and counter flow bike lanes to get people in and around the Mill. It was the old "Roundhouse T" project. The owners, no matter who they have been, have never had any interest in a collaboration. Will Schoefmann stated he believed this was probably a low priority considering there is a trail connection between the power line right-of-way (Thom Little Way).

Dr. Russell asked if the pocket park was a different item. Mr. Schoefmann clarified that it indeed was.

Todd Horner pointed out that people cut through all the time, Mr. Schoefmann stated it seems to be treated as a do not ask do not tell situation. The group thinks it should be kept it on the list, but should be given a low priority rating.

West Street- Mr. Schoefmann pointed out that they had tons of bike and pedestrian count information there. He stated that they know it is in the Department of Transportation ten-year plan; however, the exact timeline is unclear. He continued the sidewalk plan is in dire need of upgrades, possibly some mid-block crossings. Dr. Russell stated, as many times as he has been almost run over, long term, if ever the funding, a pedestrian bridge would be ideal. He believed it to be the most run red light in the city, coming off island onto West.

Mr. Schoefmann does not see an overpass happening unless it was part of the ten-year plan with a serious case in justification for it. While the group agreed a resolution like that be the ideal, Dillon Benik said there are other measures like getting utility poles out of the sidewalks and improved signage that would provide short-term improvements. Mr. Schoefmann also mentioned that Dr. Chris Brehme had always talked about the bypass along the backside of West Street as his pipe dream. The goal being to improve sidewalks on one side and create a mixed-use path on the other side. Dr. Russell and Mr. Benik stated this would be high because it is one of the worst and most travelled areas in the city. Mr. Schoefmann agreed that this could definitely qualify for the top five.

Mr. Horner suggested that, as a committee, the group could start to workshop by rolling out a big map of West Street and hashing out some of the problem areas in an effort to get the conversation going before preliminary engineering starts going. Dr. Russell asked if people in the committee were familiar with the organization America Walks. He plans to send out the link after the meeting, but discussed that they are an advocacy groups for walking and biking. Their focus is on urban areas and equity. Much of the work has been around pedestrian and bike safety. There was a comment period that just closed on regulations that congress was considering to make cars less dangerous to people. They have many resources in their website and it would be worth looking through in coming up with ideas around calming West Street. They also have small grants to apply for making cities more walkable.

Mr. Horner pointed out that getting out in front of engineering will likely also help with potential engagement with abutting landowners. A mixed-use path would likely require property owner buy-in as it would likely require using their land. Mr. Schoefmann pointed out that the West Street lanes are massive and suggested one alternative would be looking at narrowing the lanes to include a bike lane and mentioned how the narrowing might also help with the speed.

Andy Bohannon arrived at 8:30. Mr. Schoefmann welcomed him to the meeting.

Dr. Russell suggested laying out a map and point out risk areas and focusing another meeting towards this. Mr. Benik suggested adding it as a topic in November or December when things generally slow down.

Next project discussed was the West Street bypass lane that would go around the back of Hannafords plaza. Dr. Russell mentioned that might be next to impossible given the fence the plaza owner has put up in an attempt to address the issues with homeless individuals camping behind the plaza. Mr. Schoefmann pointed out that this perhaps could be tied to the centralized hub where Ashuelot could be hub of trail system since everything converges there. A west side

informal trail goes up Ashuelot River behind the Melanson property. In the scheme of things, seems like a lot of work with minimal inertia.

Mr. Bohannon pointed out that people do not want to walk through Ashuelot and Jonathan Daniels because of the homelessness in that area. It is likely going to be a huge challenge both legally and logistically. If the city purchases the land, that is one thing, but if it is privately owned, then it is going to be an uphill battle with regards to moving anything forward with that project concept.

The committee agreed that they would consider this project a low priority and a long term, but not to remove it from the list. The City is trying to come up with creative solutions around the unhoused population and if we can successfully do that- that could cut into the need for camping in the woods. Mr. Schoefmann added the whole idea of a side path (mixed-use) on the North side of West Street might address that. He believed that Dr. Brehme's original concept was trying to create a safer passage given the current state and hazards of West Street.

The Committee moved onto the topic of amenities and Mr. Schoefmann pointed out that this topic is all encompassing. It covers anything from bathrooms to features like tune up stations, water, etc. Mr. Schoefmann suggested it be rated a high priority with committee agreement.

Chuck Redfern pointed out that Pathways for Way Finding will be voting on Monday to approve the grant money from Granite State Wheelers. Mr. Bohannon has asked for a way-finding kiosk at the new Ammi Brown Trailhead. Andy will be mentioning that at the board as an expenditure.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Mr. Bohannon if we were in wait and see mode on the trail lighting. Mr. Bohannon responded that the City has not expanded the footprint of lighting. The ones they do have seem to work ok, but maybe down the line a decision might be made to put more in. At this time, they are focused on fundraising for bigger projects, which might ultimately lead to lighting. Namely, the Eastern Ave to Water Street area, which would also include Russell park as increased lighting there would be beneficial especially since Hundred Nights is going in that area. Mr. Redfern mentioned that there is some type of conduit that goes along the trail and questioned whether the lights could be hardwired rather than solar. Mr. Bohannon believed the conduit was fiber, not electric.

Dr. Russell stated that ultimately, when the Transportation Heritage Trail is completed, it will likely get a lot of use and bringing the lighting all the way down to 101 makes along of sense.

It was suggested that this topic be rated a medium priority. Chair Bryenton asked if the city is monitoring the maintenance costs. Mr. Bohannon attested that they have not received any complaints nor has maintenance been required. He did report there was an issue with Court Street, but it was with the timer. He does request his crews to trim back growth to ensure it does not impede the solar functioning.

Mr. Schoefmann summarized that the group had come to seven high/high projects. He also noted that everyone agreed with City's take on things and pointed out that it was nice to have consensus all the way around.

Mr. Schoefmann asked where group wanted to put energy between June 2022–June 2023 concerning this list of seven. He added that there was consensus between the committee and staff rankings

Mr. Horner and Mr. Benik stated they thought Main Street is happening now and probably the most immediate focus that the BPPAC could focus its attention on. The committee stated Main Street as the top priority.

Mr. Horner asked whether there a final design for Main Street? Mr. Bohannon reported that it was still in conceptual design. He would be going to one of the staff meetings afterwards. Mr. Schoefmann reported that the group also has two weeks of work collecting data to use in the design and decision-making.

Dr. Russell suggested the BPPAC think about the list as what are the ones the committee needs to exert pressure on now.

Mr. Bohannon added there were five different locations starting back at Railroad Road Square and working up to Bank of America, where the City is adding a sign to five of those posts for public restrooms notifying of restrooms at city hall (limited hours, but still available). He added that it is likely going to take time because the branding piece is what the City is currently waiting for. Mr. Schoefmann pointed out that while we wait for the branding, it be looked at as an advocacy opportunity for the committee.

Dr. Russell mentioned that he keeps looking at wayfinding as part of amenities. Mr. Schoefmann reminded everyone that the committee chose to break it out because wayfinding currently has the inertia and funding right now. Chair Bryenton said that Main Street and Heritage are both dependent on the City's next move. The committee recognized that it needs to be ready to take action, but are in limbo until the next step. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the with regards to the Transportation Heritage Trail project getting information from the City Engineer on the potential collaboration and role this group could have with Heritage Commission is something to consider. The committee agreed that out of that seven, there is not anything to eliminate. Creating a timeline would be a useful strategy for coming to a decision of how/when to address each one.

Mr. Benik said he would be meeting with the Main Street committee on the 21st and he will be able to report where they are at and where it falls in the sequence. Mr. Horner asked who was on the committee? Mr. Benik stated downtown business owners and some City staff.

Wayfinding implementation is imminent and happening. Wayfinding should be green in terms of happening now and in terms of sequencing, should be ready to act.

Dr. Russell asked if a consultant had been identified and/or hired for the Main Street committee? Mr. Schoefmann responded that the consultant was Stantec.

Dr. Russell also asked when the Jonathan Daniels trail maintenance was estimated to be happening. Mr. Schoefmann stated he believed it was FY 23.

Mr. Redfern mentioned that one neighbor in the Eastern Ave area has concerns about people going by his house. He assured the property owner that there have been studies down by the Rail

to Trail Conservancy out of Washington, DC, saying that there is no increase in crime with bike paths and that in fact those homeowners appreciate it and it does help increase property value. The owner was not particular vocal, but he is curious and asking questions and we should be prepared to give him assurances best we can. Has anyone encroached on that right away with structures? Mr. Schoefmann said the only encroachment he was aware of has been with yard waste.

The Committee agreed on the timeline of projects. It was suggested by the committee to do a quick review of the timeline and list every meeting and see if anything new has come up.

When/what do we work on amenities? Mr. Schoefmann suggested that as the opportunities come up, we have to take them. Dr. Russell stated it almost feels like we should have it on our radar earlier. Wayfinding should include where amenities are. Chuck Redfern said that historically Pathways has bought the bike repair stations, paid for the kiosks in part or in whole. Antioch also helped purchase. With Antioch selling their building, there is a bike repair station on campus and the bike repair station is not part of Antioch and can be relocated once Antioch moves. This is an ongoing thing that will require the committee members to keep their ear to the ground.

Once Pathways gets the Amy Brown Trail Head at summit road that would be a great location for a bike repair station.

4) CRT/North Bridge Encampments

Will received an update from the housing inspector on the West Street Plaza that said the police placed no trespass on behalf of the property owner and property maintenance would be clearing out garbage and such. Encampments are in the process of being removed and cleaned up.

5) Old Business

A) Wayfinding/Amenities

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Mr. Bohannon had updated the committee at the start of the meeting on the Main Street program. Will asked if anyone else have anything to add to the amenities situation? Then asked whether anyone had used the biking parking stations downtown? Highway did not provide info other than “we put it out where they were last year”. Suggested committee members that are out take a moment to investigate current and potential or best options for placements.

It was asked by Dr. Russell, if there was one near Modestman as that gets a tremendous amount of traffic. He continued that there are at least two biking groups that show up there regularly.

B) Bike/Pedestrian Counts: 2022 Plans

Mr. Schoefmann mentioned that he had an email from Henry Underwood that he has to follow up on. From what he saw when he scrolled past it, it sounded like it is in a que of other counting requests. We might need to look at where we could supplement with some good old-fashioned manual counts.

C) Public Art and the Trails Update

Mr. Russell discussed that the 3-year anniversary of Walldogs is rapidly approaching. There are no plans to do anything community wide, but Rowland will be reaching out to other members of the executive committee to see if they can get together. Mr. Russell had reached out to Alec Doyle (Colonial Theater) and Alec did not feel like a mural done on the showroom walls was on the radar. The next project behind that was the abutments at North Bridge. Dr. Russell noted that there are some funds that were transferred to the Historical Society that could be used for that. He had plans to reach out to see where Peter Poanessa is and what he has the energy to do going forward.

Georgia Casamitis and Dr. Russell have been working to identify potential projects as well as new board members for Friends of Public Art. One thing being discussed was trying to identify who paints the underpass on Appleton Way. It was painted recently and has already been tagged. Sophie Tuttle, who specializes in wildlife murals literally all over the world, did the mural at the back of Antioch. The idea is to create a montage of water marsh organisms painted the same color that is already there. The project and a go-fund-me campaign would require the city would have to sign off on, but Mr. Schoefmann did not see a challenge with that. Next step is to reach out to Sophie and get a budget. A couple other muralists in town have agreed to work with her on it if she comes up with an idea. The other thing that would be an opportunity and would be included in the funding would be to have a solar array that could light the tunnel.

Ms. Casamatis is a fan of graffiti art and thought there should be a section left for graffiti artists. Rowland is not a big fan of that idea. Mr. Russell spoke with Kathy Burke and while she was not able to give updates about Skate Park, but he noted that one of the installations would be a graffiti wall, which would be used for workshops and activities for kids to be offered by a professional graffiti artist.

D) Earth Day/Green Up Keene (April 16)

Mr. Redfern shared that Pathways got a booth at the Earth Day and shared with Monadnock Rail Trail Collaborative. They also sold books for New Hampshire Rail Trail Coalition, so the booth had three groups—Pathways for Keene, Rail Trail Collaborative, and the Monadnock Rail Trail. They had a train set up and offered stickers to draw the kids. Essentially, he drew the kids in and then presented to parents. Sold memberships and books and sold 17 altogether. Pathways also sold a map based on Mr. Poanessa's design.

It was asked whether the books and trail maps were available online for order. Mr. Redfern stated the book is available on NH Rail Trail Coalition or NHRTC.org. The map is not online, but agreed that it should be because it is nice. Mr. Redfern believes Pathways is going to put it up on their new website. Sam's, Ted's, and the bike shop were suggested as locations to have it for sale. Mr. Redfern added that the Bike shop could not keep it in stock.

Mr. Schoefman's wife introduced him to new owners of Norms—John and April. He mentioned that one of them sounded interested in participating so suggested committee members reach out. Michael Davern offered to touch base.

E) Kiosk Map Updates

Mr. Schoefmann is working on a couple drafts. It will be stylized like Mr. Poanessa's because Mr. Schoefmann gave Mr. Poanessa the base for it. He will e-mail them out to committee members when they are done for previews.

F) Regular Project Updates

Chair Bryenton asked if there were any other project updates. Mr. Schoefmann shared that there were only a few for this month and trail work is underway. Mr. Horner had asked if they are putting symbols in the bike lanes but Mr. Schoefmann has not gotten an answer yet. He plans to ask The City Engineer and mentioned to the group that the Highway supervisor may also know. He did state that he was aware many roads have removed centerlines. Mr. Schoefmann also mentioned that the new lining contractors were astounded by the amount of lining we have.

Dr. Russell stated that it does feel like people are going somewhat slower and that the removal has been traffic calming. It was noted that this was a fairly cheap and useful improvement. The Park Ave project made such a noticeable difference that it would be great to try to do more roads like that. It was asked whether there would there be bike lanes for Marlboro. Will Schoefmann stated they are in the plans, but nothing yet. Todd Horner asked if there was a listing or plan for road rehabilitation, Ms. Manwaring stated there is in the CIP, Mr. Schoefmann reiterated this.

6) New Business

Mr. Redfern stated he wanted to make sure there are signs put up designating the North and South Bridge and announcing what rail trail is crossing those bridges. He stated roughly 23,000 trucks that travel under North Bridge every day. Putting the signs is great because those driving under are not aware of what they are driving under. Many of these people travel to go biking and have no idea that we have this trail system in Keene. If we mark it like Windham, and for less than \$200/sign, it could really make a significant difference in promoting the paths. Mr. Schoefmann said they had confirmation from Department of Transportation that they agreed to do it. Committee agreed to add it as new business.

Chair Bryenton asked if Mr. Schoefmann knew where the rankings were, if he would be willing to bring up the CIP.

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Bryenton adjourned the meeting at 9:24 AM. Next meeting date—July 13, 2022

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

BPPAC Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2022

ADOPTED

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, Community Development

Additional edits by,
Katryna Kibler, Clerk's Office