

FINAL

**PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2020
REMOTE MEETING – MICROSOFT TEAMS (CALL-IN ONLY)
7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Colin Smith (Chair); Erling Heistad (City Council); Alan Schnur; Marie McCormick; Alex Belensz; John Kelleher (Vice-Chair); Clifton Below (Alt)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sarah Crysl Akhtar

STAFF PRESENT: Rebecca Owens (Associate Planner)

1) CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Review of meeting procedures and NH RSA 91-A “Right-to-Know” requirements. Ms. Owens reviewed the executive order requiring public audio and video access and options for participation.

A Roll Call of Board Members who participated remotely is listed above. Mr. Below was appointed to serve as a regular member in place of Ms. Akhtar.

There was a brief discussion about the opportunity to fill open positions on the Committee for a regular member and a Planning Board representative.

2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 10, 2020

***Mr. Heisted MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.
Seconded by Mr. Schnur.***

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Chair Smith, Mr. Schnur, Ms. McCormick, Mr. Kelleher, Mr. Below, Mr. Belensz and Mr. Heisted.

****The vote on the MOTION was approved (7-0).***

Minutes approved as presented.

Chair Smith additionally requested for the agenda heading to be corrected for future meetings, to “Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee”, in place of the type-o with “Bicycle”.

3) OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

4) STUDY ITEMS:

- A. Updates from Other Boards
 - Planning Office - Planning Staff

Ms. Owens identified several recently approved and in-progress developments that had been previously shared with the committee. She said that there is a potential for a new development

project application in 2021 related to Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center's (DHMC's) recent Request for Proposals for an approximately 350-unit workforce/rental housing development on 40 acres north of the Centerra development. As this project would increase the intensity of transportation needs in the area, and relate to currently approved projects, the committee expressed interest in learning how conditions of other projects like DHMC's new patient towers and emergency department expansion would relate to future developments. Ms. McCormick requested an update from Planning & Development staff about the definition of traffic and pedestrian improvements in associated Planning Board conditions of approval, and timeline for implementation of such improvements.

Ms. Owens conveyed that the Planning and Development Department is also in the process of finalizing a scope of work for the West Lebanon Streetscape Plan.

- Safe Routes to School - Planning Staff/Police Staff

Chair Smith reported that he will sign the letter to City Council in support of the Lebanon Middle School crossing and rail trail connection for which a motion was passed at the last committee meeting and recognized Mr. Belenz for drafting the letter.

- City Council – Erling Heistad

Mr. Heistad reported that the City Council is focusing on budget finalization and has also reviewed a police funding (reduction) proposal, new sewer and water rates, and citizen concerns about electronic meeting access.

Chair Smith asked about the police funding issue and enforcement of traffic regulations, and whether there has been discussion. Mr. Heistad responded that surveys have shown interest in reduced traffic enforcement. Mr. Below said that Mr. Belenz presented about ways to calm traffic and that he has learned that 90 percent of traffic stops are warnings, not tickets, to help correct bad behavior. He also noted that Lebanon has a large volume of cars relative to its population due to the size of the city as an employment center (sixth highest in NH). Mr. Heistad believes that cutting back on enforcement will not mitigate the traffic concerns. Ms. Owens asked about which surveys are being referenced and Mr. Heistad and Mr. Below agreed that one of the sources is the police department's community outreach about citizen concerns. Mr. Below highlighted that speed enforcement has been a high priority in survey data; the default limit is now 25mph, which is the lowest allowed by the state, and implementation has included warnings and signage at the City's gateways. There is some police budget reduction but not per the petition by the UVDSA and not funds that would likely impact speed enforcement.

Mr. Belenz stated that the new 25mph signs are confusing and he has heard that from other people, as the 25mph sign is sometimes followed closely by a 30mph or other seemingly contradictory sign and because the text on the signs is quite small. He has heard that the police department will warn people about the change but wonders if more outreach or better signage would help. Ms. Owens replied that she will ask and that the topic dovetails with Hanover's interest in how Lebanon enacted the reduced default limit. Mr. Below agreed that communicating ways to make the policy more effective is important and clarified that where two signs are near each other, the higher limit applies. Mr. Heistad said that on Route 120 South, it is pretty clear that it is 25mph once you enter town. Chair Smith said it is not very clear on Route 4 as you approach Bank Street Extension, where it says 25mph, then that sign is followed by a 30mph sign for Bank Street. He advises having signage that is more readable as you drive past. Mr. Schnur said that the 25mph signs, by being smaller, might seem to drivers to be conditional. Mr. Belenz said that limiting the 25mph signs to gateways and making them hard to read results in enforcement having to be the primary control of speeds, which doesn't seem to be a very effective strategy; better signage and even some temporary physical measures like traffic warning bollards or cones are good additions as a balanced approach.

Mr. Kelleher said that he has questions about speed limits posted on the Northern Rail Trail as well. Ms. Owens indicated that those are for snowmobiles and that it may be worth reconsidering those limits as electric bikes become more popular, and that she will do a field check on signage. Mr. Schnur asked if the road speed limit of 25mph and trail speed limit should be synchronized. Ms. Owens reported that there was a significant effort to achieve 30mph signage on the trail. Chair Smith asked if incorrectly placed signage was corrected and Ms. Owens replied that she believed it was. Mr. Schnur implied that there is now a case to change the rail trail speed limit to 25mph as well. Mr. Belenzs reminded members that it is state property and may be hard to change. Ms. Owens added that there will be a new Trails Bureau chief soon and that negotiation is required for speed limit changes; this has also been Mr. Belenzs's experience, he shared. Ms. Owens surmised whether speed will be addressed in the state rail trail draft. Chair Smith asked if there is a record of what was recommended for signage on the NRT, and for staff to validate whether what was installed matches the recommendations.

- Planning Board/CIP – VACANT

Mr. Below said that one item that has been moved forward for Council consideration in the CIP budget is the tunnel-Northern Rail Trail connector path near Spencer Street and that public hearings would begin on December 2nd, with the final hearing and action in two weeks. Ms. Owens communicated that some recent updates to the budget as relates to reduced interest rates is a potential positive factor for the City budget.

- Police Reports - Alan Schnur

Mr. Schnur reported that the October monthly City Manager's report showed one new collision for a total of six ped-bike related crashes year-to-date, based on police data. He stated that this statistic matches the collision rate from 2019 and that the darkest, most dangerous months are still to come. He has not received updated data or clarifications from Lebanon Fire Department.

- Mascoma River Greenway Coalition - Colin Smith

Chair Smith deferred updates to the Study Item on the agenda.

- State of NH Updates - Alex Belenzs

Mr. Belenzs reported that the UVLSRPC, as well as City of Lebanon representatives and Chair Smith, are participating in the NH Department of Transportation's Route 120/Exit 18 Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings and that the project was launched with a site walk earlier in the fall. The project is in the Ten Year Plan and will build on the UVLSRPC's corridor plan input.

- Class VI Roads – Colin Smith

Chair Smith informed members that the Class VI committee is looking at MacAllister Road next and that recommendations to City Council continue to learn toward converting such roads to Class A trails.

- Rails to Trails - VACANT

No updates.

- Communications - Ms. McCormick

Ms. McCormick reported that recommendations for website amendments have not been completed. A LebNews safety reminder was submitted by staff and Ms. McCormick said that she is reviewing a letter to the editor for VNews. Ms. Owens asked if the plan might benefit from some new year resolution content, to educate citizens about ways to walk, bike and stay active in Lebanon.

B. Mascoma River Greenway – Survey and Usage Count Results

Chair Smith shared his screen to show the current dashboard summary of survey results. Mr. Belenz said that the plan for sharing the final MRG results continues to consist of a stakeholder-focused presentation that can be followed by a general public presentation and MRG blog post. Related goals for follow-up from the results are expected to include identification of stewardship and improvement priorities, funding needs, outreach and education opportunities and updates for the MRG Action Plan.

Mr. Schnur asked if original leaders of the MRG project like Paul Coats and Russell Hirschler would be part of the coordination. Ms. Owens suggested that presentation of follow-up priorities might include identification of survey synergies with other data like the Recreation and Parks survey about community facilities. She also noted that the survey data can be interpreted to show original donors to the MRG that their work has had a high return on investment and that information may help to energize new efforts. Chair Smith elaborated that data including trail usage counts will help show how people are experiencing the Greenway in terms of intensity, mode types, access points, and destinations and what improvements there is funding appetite for. Mr. Below noted that in final summaries, regional users like those from Hartford might want to be identified more generally versus their current label/affiliation as “White River Junction”. Mr. Belenz remarked that the organization of the survey data as a dashboard is more engaging than a report and he thanked Chair Smith for applying his professional skills to the analysis.

C. Route 10 – NHDOT Resurfacing Project

Ms. Owens reminded committee members of the notice that was shared with them by email regarding NHDOT’s invitation for City input about the upcoming NH Statewide 43060 resurfacing project on Route 10 between Lebanon and Hanover, from Maple Street to Mink Brook Road. Staff drafted a letter that summarizes the committee’s findings and perspectives, from over the past year, about examples and best practices in roadway resurfacing gleaned from NHDOT and federal guidance. It also incorporated some input from Hanover’s Bike-Walk Committee. Opportunities for such projects include the reallocation of pavement space via vehicle lane narrowing, while promoting traffic calming, and the addition of pavement space on shoulders, where there is space beyond the fog line. All suggestions in the letter are couched as design considerations for “when practical” and are permissive rather than direct requests.

Mr. Below indicated that he has a long history of assessing Route 10 in collaboration with others, including as part of a federal Transportation Enhancements grant application in the 1990’s that did not succeed due to the cost of the project proposed, but which helped to gather information about roadway widths and conditions, issues with poles, culverts and guardrails, and safety improvement prospects. He shared that he is in favor of the letter, as amended by several proposed edits.

Mr. Belenz commented that while it has been suggested as an option, building an off-road path parallel to Route 10 would be very challenging and therefore this project, with on-road upgrades, represents one of the only real, near-term chances to improve multimodal accommodations along Route 10.

Mr. Schnur added that for positive economic and recreational impacts that would be supported by upgrades to Route 10, the letter should mention the popularity of the Boston Lot, as many people from Lebanon and Hanover currently bike to it and would do so more often if the route was safer. Such changes would also support bike and transit commuting on Route 10.

A MOTION by Chair Smith that the Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee recommends that the City Administration and Departments, including Planning and

Development, sends a letter to NHDOT as soon as possible to identify opportunities for improvement associated with the NH Statewide 43060 resurfacing project on Route 10.

Seconded by Mr. Belenz.

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Chair Smith, Mr. Belenz, Ms. McCormick, Mr. Schnur, Mr. Heisted, Mr. Kelleher, and Mr. Below.

****The vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).***

5) OTHER BUSINESS:

Staff inquired about whether there was interest from committee members to establish a new meeting time that would be earlier however most members indicated that the current meeting schedule is best for them. No changes were made.

6) FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & FOLLOW-UP NEEDS:

- Review of Bike Friendly Community criteria for renewal of Lebanon's designation, due Spring 2021 (working group)
- Review with Public Works signage for sharrows (staff)
- Resurfacing opportunities for Department and City Council consideration (staff)
- Winter road and sidewalk maintenance (all)
- Compare bike storage provisions in Planning Board applications to draft regulations (staff)
- Get clarifications on LFD EMS data (Mr. Schnur)
- Review the Committee's webpages for updates (working group)
- Explore a central document repository for the Committee (staff)

7) ADJOURNMENT:

A MOTION by Chair Smith to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Heisted.

Roll Call Vote: Members voting in favor included Chair Smith, Mr. Belenz, Ms. McCormick, Mr. Heisted, Mr. Schnur, Mr. Kelleher, and Mr. Below

****The vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Owens, Planning Staff