

FINAL

**PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLIST ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY APRIL 6, 2021
REMOTE MEETING – MICROSOFT TEAMS
7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Colin Smith (Chair); Erling Heistad (City Council); Alan Schnur; Marie McCormick (Vice-Chair); John Kelleher; Clifton Below (Alt); Gregorio Amaro (Planning Board); George Sykes (City Council Alt)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sarah Crysl Akhtar

STAFF PRESENT: Rebecca Owens (Associate Planner); James Donison (Director, Department of Public Works); Christina Hall (City Engineer); Brian Vincent (City Engineer)

1) CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

A. 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, in addition to staff present.

Two guests, Amy Chan (Ped-Bike member application pending) and Alex Belenz (Planner for Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission) joined.

2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 2, 2021

Amendments: Ms. McCormick recommended a correction on page 1, to change "Mr." to "Ms." In reference to Ms. McCormick. Mr. Schnur noted clarifications on page 4 lines 20-21, to insert "just" before "after", insert "the" before "30mph", and delete the "s" in "signs". He also asked for "sidewalk" to be inserted in page 4, line 35 before "snow".

Ms. McCormick MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.

Seconded by Mr. Heistad.

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

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

Minutes approved with amendment.

3) OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

4) STUDY ITEMS:

A. Updates from Other Boards

No updates were completed due to the meeting running out of time. Alternatively, based on a

request from the City Manager, after the agenda was published, for LPAC to review several upcoming Public Works projects, discussion shifted to consideration of three projects.

The first project reviewed is “Phase 2” of the installation of new sidewalks on the north side of Miracle Mile. Ms. Hall presented the project, noting that curb cuts were shortened where possible and that the busiest one at the Urgent Medical Care Center will have a pedestrian crossing striped across it. This complements Phase 1, the recent completion of sidewalks and a bus stop relocation across from the LISTEN store. Existing bike shoulders will not be changed. The project is going to bid on April 8 and construction will probably start in June. LPAC was supportive of the project and Ms. McCormick commented that it was a positive improvement given that many other parts of Lebanon feel defined by wide driveway/curb cuts.

The second project reviewed is the installation of new sidewalks on a segment of the south side of Mechanic Street. Ms. Hall explained that it will connect existing sidewalk on Slayton Hill Road to existing sidewalk in front of Jake’s Coffee, with the limits of construction near the American Legion (aside from a 15-foot stretch to be added in front of the Carpet Mill). This improvement was originally in the state’s Ten Year Plan (TYP) for reconstruction of the entire Mechanic Street length but in recent years, the state has had the City break improvements into multiple phases/projects and this segment is not mentioned in the near-term in the TYP project pipeline so the City has decided to address it on their own as a critical safety and connectivity gap. A driver for the current focus on this location is the potential availability of federal funding through Representative Kuster’s office and City Manager Mulholland has asked if LPAC is willing to provide a statement of support for the application. Ms. Owens elaborated that the project criteria requires it to be under \$400,000 and as a result, recommendations such as for a crosswalk and connections to the Greenway would continue to be considered but not in this project scope. Poles and retaining walls are part of the project’s constraints. Mr. Below suggested that the median dimensions adjacent to the proposed sidewalk be reconsidered in order to provide more width for the road shoulder, which cyclists use. The travel lanes are already 11 feet wide. Mr. Belensz asked if the project will try to consolidate uncontrolled access drives and Ms. Hall replied affirmatively, citing Dulac’s shop as one opportunity to increase curbing.

There was a Motion by Mr. Heisted that the Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee supports application by the City of Lebanon for funding to complete a sidewalk construction project between the Slayton Hill intersection and Barre Tile of NH, and further supports collaboration between the committee Chair and Planning staff to draft a letter of support.

Seconded by Mr. Kelleher.

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

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

The third project reviewed is the proposed re-design of the intersection at Hanover Street and Route 120, in downtown Lebanon. Ms. Owens provided an overview of the project area, context, and recent related studies including the 2016 Downtown Vision Study, UVLSRPC draft Route 120 corridor plan, and current NHDOT I89 Exit 18/Route 120 interchange study.

Mr. Donison indicated that as part of the Vision Study, the consultant developed several conceptual alternative designs for the intersection and included a traffic memo with data on vehicle counts and turn movements. He stated that the intersection’s level of service for one of the directions is ‘F’ and that the memo and public input from the study suggest a preferred alternative for continuous northeast and southwest bound traffic flows to and from Route 120. A traffic stop would be installed for southbound Hanover Street traffic. This intersection was

included in the 2020 CIP budget for the City to further develop preliminary design alternatives and Public Works, the Planning and Development Director and the City Manager last reviewed the alternatives in August 2020. One of the alternatives is a roundabout.

Mr. Donison was asked if there will be other opportunities to look at the rest of Hanover Street given that the draft plans show improvements beyond the intersection, through the whole corridor down to High and Mascoma Streets. He replied that there will be opportunities for public review of those other sections and agreed that the Route 120 intersection was the focus for this meeting. He indicated that Public Works will present its proposal to NHDOT before its next I89 Exit 18/Route 120 project meeting in late April. The goal is to determine the scopes of work between City and NHDOT efforts in this area, as the boundaries currently overlap and both include the intersection. Mr. Donison noted that it would be ideal for NHDOT's scope of improvements to include up to Summer Street so that the City could focus on expediting work and funds for the remainder of Hanover Street.

Mr. Donison displayed a color-coded image of the City's preferred design, including proposed pedestrian routes, bicycle routes, vehicle turn movements and landscaping. Mr. Kelleher asked about the location of stop signs and the speed limit in the vicinity and there was discussion that given the proximity to I89 and the highway velocitation tendencies of drivers, the City should work with NHDOT to lower the speed limit entering that intersection in lieu of or in addition to other traffic calming and control strategies. Mr. Donison responded that he is open to ideas. Ms. McCormick asked if the multi-use path segment shown in the southeast corner of the intersection, leading to a proposed crosswalk is a definite part of the plan and Mr. Donison said that it would likely be feasible with some collaboration with an abutting property owner. The intent of the MUP is to serve as a transition for northbound bike traffic from using bike shoulders on Hanover Street, to then get onto the MUP, dismount, and cross over the north- and south-bound vehicle traffic in order to continue onto Hanover Street and resume biking on the shoulders. Members agreed that a MUP is preferable to a sidewalk in the proposed design but noted that under current conditions, bike traffic has a simple and direct route to the other side of Hanover Street in order to access the I89 pedestrian bridge. Mr. Heisted commented that this is a busy intersection and there is going to be an increased learning process necessary for traffic merging under the proposed design, and also asked if there are examples of similar designs that function well. Mr. Donison did not have examples available.

Mr. Below recalled that this intersection has "always" been a dilemma. His opinion is that the proposed design is a fairly good approach but will only work if there is a flashing light traffic control or similar strategy because otherwise the constant flow of traffic, especially during southbound rush hour from Route 120, will make it hard for other traffic including bikes to find a break in the traffic flow.

Mr. Belenz asked Mr. Donison about the impact of removing the existing stop condition on southbound 120 traffic. He suggested that it would help to think about the downstream impact of having higher speed continuous traffic entering and continuing down the rest of Hanover Street given the current challenges of access and exit movements in the Summer Street/Dunkin Donuts area. He cited horizontal deflection as an example of potential mitigation. Mr. Belenz also observed that with the proposed design, it will be unsafe for bikes trying to make a left turn in-traffic from Hanover Street through northbound and southbound continuous vehicle traffic and that mitigations should be evaluated for that as well.

Ms. McCormick echoed Mr. Belenz's concerns about southbound traffic and also noted that it will be difficult for pedestrians to cross two lanes of traffic without there being a stop.

Mr. Amaro asked for clarification about the design at the proposed southbound Hanover Street stop sign. Mr. Donison agreed that the curb could be changed at that location to make it less

confusing, including as relates to traffic trying to get to the gas station. Mr. Amaro stated “There is a lot going on” not just for drivers but for cyclists who have to look out of a lot of issues with the proposed design. He also said that with the proposed design, there needs to be some kind of calming and/or indicators to those coming off of the interstate that they are entering a very busy zone and that is especially true for visitors who have never come through Exit 18 to Lebanon.

Mr. Donison replied that the City’s consultant could examine reducing the southbound lanes in the proposed design to one lane as a way to slow traffic and also look at installing a traffic warning device.

Mr. Schnur indicated that Hanover Street is part of the Safe Routes to School travel route and that currently, bikes have right of way priority while cars [going south from 120] have to stop but that the proposed design shows bikes having to cross several lanes of higher speed traffic. While the design is less of an issue for pedestrians, it presents reduced safety from current conditions for cycling. He said we know that interstate drivers do not adjust quickly and could hit cyclists while going 40mph and that could be an issue.

Mr. Kelleher noted that he was hearing committee concerns about the proposed crosswalk. He asked if shifting the pedestrian route to move on the west side of Hanover Street from Summer Street is feasible. Ms. Owens commented that such a shift might put more north- and south-bound bikes and pedestrians on the same path and in conflict with each other. Mr. Below submitted that the main user of the proposed crosswalk would be northbound beginner or intermediate cyclists, in addition to pedestrians, who don’t want to bike in vehicle traffic.

Chair Smith stated that his main question has to do with the origins of the preferred alternative design; he is not sure how much public input there was for a detailed design and how confident we can be that the proposed design will improve the ‘F’ Level of Service in contrast to the sacrifice of making conditions worse for cyclist, and if not, whether it’s really necessary. If it is necessary from a car traffic perspective, then he advised that we need to make the best of it for ped-bike users or otherwise it will not be worth just shaving a few seconds off for cars.

Mr. Donison restated that three alternatives with different costs, \$1.5 million for the realignment, \$1.9 million for the roundabout and then a no-build option were looked at with the Vision Study.

Mr. Below expressed that a potential hybrid of the no-build (do nothing) alternative that also costs less would be to have continuous traffic flow but with a traffic light that has special controls to sense turn and crossing movement needs for non-vehicular traffic. The light could be triggered by video sensors on Hanover Street extension, for example and could give cyclists a safer direct route to the pedestrian bridge. He was also not sure that a roundabout would help at this location and noted that if there is a realignment with no stop controls, he liked the idea of narrowing it to a single lane.

Mr. Heisted agreed that it is better to narrow lanes were possible and that his big concern with the realignment still centers on traffic calming needs and how to deal with cyclist crossing needs. Ms. McCormick also liked the idea of eliminating the proposed southbound right turn lane to make the crosswalk safer.

Mr. Donison said he believes that Mr. Below’s concept with light controls is viable with today’s technology using optical cameras that could detect cyclists too depending on sensitivity.

Mr. Schnur indicated that with there already being a stop sign for southbound traffic, the City could keep that intersection as it is but add a traffic light and that would help avoid the issue of no detection for bikes like what has happened at Greensboro Road in Hanover.

Ms. Chan followed up on Mr. Kelleher's prior question about locating bike traffic to be two ways on just the west side of Hanover Street to avoid crossings near the intersection, saying that she would like to learn more about that idea.

Mr. Amaro stated that he feels neither of the current designs being discussed, a realignment or continued use of the intersection but with a traffic light, solves safety concerns for cyclists particularly for those going north and who have to contend with traffic going around them while constantly looking over the shoulder to find openings between cars to merge or cross the traffic. That is a very rapid and advanced cycling move with little margin for error and it is not ideal to make people have to get off their bikes to use the pedestrian crossing. He said that from personal experience frequently cycling from West Lebanon to Centerra, he always tries to avoid that intersection even in its current condition, even if it means taking the hilly back road route because at least it is predictable and safer.

Chair Smith agreed with Mr. Amaro that cyclists come up against cars racing around them at that intersection and that they get cut off by drivers who are in a rush. He stated that overall, he is conflicted about this project and that he had problems with it back in 2016; he is very concerned about the danger of the northbound route for cyclists.

Mr. Donison replied that if the City does not give NHDOT direction about its preferences for the intersection then they will probably leave it as it is so this is an opportunity to dovetail City improvements with NHDOT's work.

Mr. Heisted spoke to the idea of two-way cycle track routes and does not recommend them based on his direct observation of head-on cyclist accidents when they're made to ride in close quarters, and that it is too dangerous.

Mr. Kelleher discerned that for the NHDOT meeting on April 29th, the Committee does not seem to have a decision and that if this results in the status quo for intersection conditions, that might be the best thing in the short-term.

Ms. McCormick agreed with Mr. Amaro's assessment of cycling challenges and asked if Clifton's idea with the lights is possible whether that could apply to people coming away from downtown, to let cyclists cross safely, and not just address traffic coming into town.

Mr. Sykes said he likes the idea of a light as a temporary solution but that the Committee should look at better options for cyclists because traffic will get worse and bikes are also increasing in numbers. He is inclined to choose a short-term option like a light but recommends continuing to study other alternatives for the long-term. He does not see the displayed diagram with the proposed realignment as a way to get us to where we need to be.

A Motion by Mr. Below to extend the meeting to 9:20pm.

Seconded by Mr. Heisted.

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

The meeting was extended at 9:05 PM.

Chair Smith concluded that he did not think the Committee would reach consensus tonight and wants to look at next steps and at bringing the topic up again at the next meeting. Mr. Schnur responded he thought there was consensus on the addition of lights as a good option.

B. AARP Grant – West Lebanon Pop-Up Project

Mr. Belenz shared slides and an introduction to a proposed project for temporary streetscape improvements, including a parklet. The concept is proposed to be located on South Main Street in West Lebanon and has received a motion of support from the West Lebanon Revitalization Advisory Committee (WLRAC). Mr. Belenz is assembling an application for funding through AARP's Livable Communities grant and he asked if LPAC was in support of the project. Members expressed significant enthusiasm for the proposal, noting that similar ideas were presented by planners years ago, and that the successes of pop-up bike lanes have been in recent mainstream news. There was discussion of ideas like live music from the UV Music Center, food trucks and ice cream.

There was a Motion by Ms. McCormick that the Lebanon Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee expresses its official support for, and willingness to assist with the implementation of, the West Lebanon pop-up project, and further authorizes Chair Smith to work with Planning staff to prepare a letter of support.

Seconded by Mr. Heisted.

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

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

C. Ped-Bike Amendments to Development Regulations
No discussion based on limited meeting time remaining.

5) OTHER BUSINESS:

A. City and NHDOT Projects
See above regarding Miracle Mile, Mechanic Street and Hanover Street projects.

B. Tunnel Grand Opening
Ms. McCormick noted that May is Bike to School Month and that the 2021 Bike Rodeo may be moved from its traditional June date to coincide with the tunnel opening on July 8th.

C. Quarterly Report to City Council
No discussion based on limited meeting time remaining.

6) FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & FOLLOW-UP NEEDS:

- Share Rotary grant project ideas (all)
- Share bollard and bike friendly storm grate ideas with DPW (all)
- LebNews – draft May and June 2021 communications
- Special Assessment District project update (Ms. Owens)
- Review of Bike Friendly Community designation, due in 2021 (working group)
- 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 (Ms. Owens)

7) ADJOURNMENT:

A Motion by Mr. Below to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Heisted.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 PM.

Prepared by Rebecca Owens, Planning Staff