

NHDOT Statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and Economic Impact Study

Complete Streets Advisory Committee/Project Advisory Committee Meeting #4

Meeting Date: 24 April 2019

Notes Issued: 7 May 2019 by Alta Planning + Design



Attendees: Craig Tufts, Maddie Dilonno, Adam Hlasny, Dave Topham, Greg Bakos, Tim Dunn, Simon Corson, Stephanie Verdile, Will Schoefmann, Scott Bogle, Phil Goff, Erica Wygonik, Larry Keniston, Sally Gunn, Elizabeth Strachan, Alex Belenz, Colin Lentz, Matt Waitkins (call-in), Leigh Levine

Statewide Pedestrian/Bike Plan Discussion

Phil Goff provided a brief Powerpoint presentation that included the project schedule. The RPC TAC meetings were completed in March.

Five public meetings – one in each Executive Council District - had been originally envisioned for late April and May with a final presentation in October. The public meetings are intended to be standard public meetings designed to present an overview of the planning effort and gather public input for the Plan. The public meeting format will be 2 hours and include: 1) slide presentation, 20-25 minutes at beginning, 2) General Q & A, then 3) break into small groups with up to 4 staff for 4 tables with maps for people to mark up. Focus of that region, but will have rest of state too. At end, we reconvene for a report back.

The Project Advisory Committee questioned the geographical basis for the meeting locations and indicated a preference for a public meeting to be held in each planning commission region. Subsequent to the meeting, therefore, Alta agreed to a public meeting in each of 8 planning commission regions (Lakes, Nashua, North Country, Rockingham, Southern, Southwest, Strafford and Upper Valley Lake Sunapee) with the meeting in Central NH RPC to be held in Concord toward the end of the project. After this new schedule is confirmed by NHDOT (PENDING, but likely in September), Alta will reach out to the respective RPCs and key municipal staff in order to schedule the event and select the meeting date and venue. Alta will coordinate with NHDOT, the RPC's, municipalities and members of the PAC to publicize the meetings, after approval from the Department's Front Office. Each public meeting will be staffed by two members of the consultant team, with anticipated support from two RPC staff.

Planning Commissions may hold supplementary meetings in RPC regions at various types of venues using the "Meetings in a Box" materials developed by Alta. The Meetings in a Box will occur within the same general September timeframe as the public meetings. The Meetings in a Box will be run by RPC staff and Alta developing the materials - PowerPoint and flyer, PDF of maps and handouts to print locally and brought out to communities. Alta will use comments coming out of the Meetings in a Box to inform the Plan recommendations.

Toward the end of the project, Alta will hold a 9th public meeting in cooperation with the Central NHRPC. This meeting will likely occur in November at the NHDOT headquarters and present the Plan's draft recommendations. Alta will broadcast this meeting statewide via a webinar link. Several planning commissions have already identified potential Meetings in a Box venues for their regions and CNHRPC is confident about using the Meetings in a Box in lieu of a standard public meeting that would be timely enough to gather public input for the Plan before the public meetings.

Dave Topham asked about public engagement, what type of attendance is expected at public meetings and how does word get out to draw a crowd? Phil explained that a lot depends on how much outreach promotion is done, as we might tend to get people who are within 5-10 miles of meeting site. Alta will do some outreach through website and social media but will primarily rely on interested and passionate folks such as are on the Committee to get the word out.

Colin noted that SRPC's TAC shared thoughts on Vision/Goals and thought the Vision was too wordy. They wondered why Goals and Objectives were created at outset, rather than part of the participation process. Colin asked if the vision and goals would be subject to group discussion, whether the vision and goals are broad enough to be universal and asked if any additional detailed input about the vision and goals would be possible. Phil agreed that it makes sense to discuss vision and goals in break out groups. Colin agreed to compile the thoughts about Vision/Goals that came out of his region's TAC meeting again, in a formal email. Sally Gunn added that NHDOT would look at the draft vision and goals and send their comments.

Phil explained that RSG is looking at project development process toward providing recommendations for how to incorporate more complete streets elements and provide consistency between projects. Issues to take on include: lane and shoulder-width issues, what is the right triggers for sidewalks, and ped crossings across state highways. Phil asked RPC folks to contribute some examples from the last 5 years when working with NHDOT could have been done more consistently or logically to improve pedestrian and bicycle transportation access and safety.

Scott Bogle noted that the LPA process is a challenge. Part of problem is that funds are lost from CMAQ/TAP, projects get held up getting through LPA, get flexed out of CMAQ/TAP and never go back in. Southern looked at LPA process in other states, found lots of areas, hurdles present in NH LPA not present in other states, presumably not requirements of FHWA. Perhaps we could get that info from Nate submitted? Seeing impact of how LPA structure does in terms of delays in projects, and funds lost. Leigh noted that federal aid requirements are not pinned to one particular reauthorization act. Federal aid requirement to LPA project, same requirements apply to state managed projects too.

Greg noted that the NHDOT highway design manual is under revision and there may be an opportunity to add check points along the way, in terms pedestrian and bicycle access and safety. Inserting complete streets checklist like VT has would be great, especially in the early stages of project development. A simple thing to add to the check list would be: *is this on state bike route?*

Scott used Rt 108 Durham-Newmarket as example. From beginning, it was to be 4' shoulders, in mind of project engineers. However, the 4 feet doesn't meet AASHTO recommended bicycle lane width next to curb and guardrail where shoulders should have been 5 feet wide. Larry noted that Lebanon came forward very late in the design process on Route 4: 12' lane with 4' shoulder became 11' travel way with

5' shoulder. This not only allowed for the minimum AASHTO bicycle space next to rail but the narrower traveled lanes will moderate traffic speeds.

Stephanie mentioned maintenance of pedestrian facilities and winter maintenance of sidewalks in particular. It's hard to put that on community of 3,000 people. US 3 in Pembroke includes sidewalks but snowbanks force children and people in wheelchairs to walk in the road. It is understood that the State does not maintain sidewalks and that Towns sign agreements but this perpetuates a faulty process. Scott suggested that someone needs to absorb costs and responsibility is on both sides. There needs to be more local advocacy and the question of maintenance has to be dealt with since the longer it goes on, the more opportunities to include safe facilities are lost.

Craig noted that Grappone had to put in an expensive PHB (aka HAWK signal) along NH 3A in Bow. A more feasible refuge island, which could have just been paint if necessary, would make pedestrian crossings more feasible and likely increase the will to construct crosswalks generally. NHDOT doesn't maintain midblock crosswalks, bike lane symbols or triangle yield bars for crosswalks. When asked to shift the travel lane closer to a raised median in order to designate more shoulder space, NHDOT wouldn't paint the line closer than 2 feet to the median because of access issues for the paint truck.

Connectivity (Gap) Analysis Map Discussion

Phil said that Alta received comments from RPC TAC meetings, also made some tweaks ourselves. Alta is at 95%...these gaps in the next phase of planning work will become the project recommendations, in essence THE network. There needs to be some point where there is hierarchy developed in state roadway system, knowledge of destinations where communities are. Comments from online input map helpful too.

Tim D: are you considering dirt roads in all of this? Or just paved? In Carrol, Old Cherry Mountain Road is dirt. (Phil: all of the above. I don't imagine there are too many dirt roads we'd include as part of network. If state road that is unpaved, that's legit.)

Alex: for NCC area, the section of NH 3 is a major truck route. We were happy with what saw here. We'd like to see CT River Byway added, as it is a federal byway, basically all of NH 135 continues on Rt 3 to Canadian border. NH 135 has narrow shoulders and poor pavement condition. Northern section of US 3 has poor pavement condition. It is scenic the whole way with lots of recreational access.

Colin: Do the gaps reference infrastructure conditions? Shoulder widths, some incorporation of user comfort level. Experienced riders and family with kids will not be rating the gaps in the same way

Phil: at this point, identifying gaps doesn't account for type of rider, it is really all about identifying corridors to connect communities and destinations. In the next phase, we will develop a recommendation for each corridor, i.e. what else could be done in the short/medium/long term, to improve as wide a range as possible? We recognize that in many cases, the recommendation may not make many roads safe for families with little kids and beginners but in special cases—ie. connections to future rail trail, to popular state beach, etc.—the recommendation will be for “all ages/abilities” facility like a side path.

Greg: similar questions, what constitutes a gap: Looking at roadway typology? Speed volume? Trucks? Surprised to see Rt 16 past Pinkham Notch, which has great shoulders, not sure what else you can do?

Phil: some gaps work pretty well for a lot of cyclists, others don't. We are staying agnostic as to how they function right now, for different types of cyclists. We want to establish hierarchy of roadways network throughout the state. Some already work well, so maybe recommendation is just maintain "as-is", and add branded signage. Another gets something that would be more aggressive longer term, require tap funds, be on TIP, to make part of network.

Greg: make sure study report includes how gaps are identified.

Sally: if shoulders are wide enough, why is it a gap?

PHIL: we are trying to articulate the recommended network for state. Maybe 'gap' is not ideal word. In scope it is called 'connectivity analysis' and only references 'gap'. We will call it 'connectivity analysis' for now on.

TD: Are you taking into account dangerous, skewed railroad crossings?

Phil: If we know where these are, we can address them.

Sally: NHDOT widened shoulder to make perpendicular crossing. No other way to change it and be MUTCD compliant as far as we know.

Phil: we'll include what is possible in MUTCD, with sign. This will be in the design guidelines.

Sally: Regarding the discussion at the first meeting I attended, DOT GIS layers for shoulder width. Show an average or number that's not what shoulders really are. What did you end up doing?

Phil: we found that all GIS data related to shoulder width was not accurate. Best we can do that is reasonable is to spot check every handful of miles along each roadway corridor that is part of network, and create a recommendation, based on spot checks along each corridor. This will help us make an estimation on the prevailing shoulder width from end-to-end if possible.

Craig: Amy helped us in our LTS work and we have a certain subset of roads collect data on. Data for Tier 1 and 2 roads pretty good overall.

Tim D: Tier 1 are all interstate. Tier 2 are major corridors - can be US routes, state routes, probably 1 or 2 unnumbered routes. Tiers are based on traffic volume, intent of road and how the road connects regions of state. Up north, Rt 16 and 3 all tier 2 roads, for example.

Scott: roads identify as having shoulders 4' or wider.

Colin: if combo gravel & shoulder look at, then the gravel portion of the shoulder should not be counted.

Scott: recommendation that actual shoulder width data collected, so not just a default. Several hundred thousand dollars more, as percent of total data collection budget. it would be useful to have actual data in road layer, not assumed placeholder data.

Tim D: new data-collection van contract starting 2020, collected by consultant. One issue is that the data-collection van isn't run by Planning Bureau, its run by Materials and Research. They're focused on pavement condition, not pavement width.

Alex: regarding UVLSRPC – NH 118, green woodlands mountain biking, expanded ski network to Dorchester, put in machine-built mountain biking. It is the next great outdoor destination.

Phil: With Bear Brook State Park as an exception, we generally don't consider one MTB destination as significant enough to warrant designating a connecting road as a gap.

Sally: will changes to the connectivity analysis maps be added to after public meetings?

Phil: Public meeting comments will be focused on the network recommendation, so working backwards, they will be added to connectivity analysis map updates for the final report.

Liz: my suggestion is when presenting to the community, you should say: "this is what we are thinking for the network....what do you think?" I like idea that the public will get a sense of what we want to do and not just rehash of analysis.

Will: regarding comments in Monadnock Region: you might hear something about Rt 12A from the cycling clubs, they use that as a loop to Gilsum. I would probably either send part of that presentation in a box to them, for input, or solicit input from them separately, make sure they make that meeting. I will have to get you the Wantasticut-to-Monadnock trail route...it goes form Hinsdale to Monadnock and uses combo rail trail and roads. I will get you info on that. Trail takes you into Pisgah State Park into Keene, Cheshire rail trail, near Troy cuts over to Monadnock State Park.

Craig: Regarding Merrimack, I have better bike lane data, I can send shapefile fill in spots in Concord. In Canterbury, layer had railroad on it, but no plans for rail to be a trail, just north of Concord and parallel to I-93, in layer I sent. Not really a proposed bike route, just a rail line. 132 is the route people use. My other comment: its awesome that previously proposed rail trails are shown, but if that means there isn't a gap shown parallel to it, wouldn't rail trail itself be a gap?

Phil: any of the light green planned, funded, proposed will ultimately show up on list of project recommendations as part of the plan. Therefore, anything shown as light green or orange, it will be a project that is listed in the master database of projects for each RPC region.

Craig: Suncook Trail is a 30-year long term project. Do not rely on that long-term corridor. Same with trail through Henniker and Hillsborough that parallels 202...we need a short term on-street improvement in the immediate vicinity.

Sally: it makes sense to reach out to regions for one final review at level Craig just discussed. Otherwise, the recommendations may be really skewed. (Phil: OK, we will forward map attachments to one rep from each RPC, and give a deadline.)

Alex: Note that some trails are maintained by bureau of trails, because of OHRV. Some fine for walking/biking, but some not because of use levels.

Colin: Rt 108 listed as previously proposed/planned route. NH 108 is a complete streets project and ongoing, Dover-to-Rochester. I am confident it is not going to be bike lanes painted across entire project. Still being decided but it will be a complete street and includes transit & freight.

Scott: NH 1A includes two places where the designated on-road greenways cuts inland - Jenness state beach and just south of Wallis Sands. The goal is to have the entire route along 1A including parking at beaches include shoulders, so that is a factor. For the long interim, include both the "loop arounds" and staying on 1A as designated route for ECG would ideally be on Rt 1A if it can get fixed.

Phil: PAC will next meet on June 26 - taking May and July off as the project is waiting to catch up on NHDOT review, public meetings and the LTS analysis.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm

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Sign-In Sheet

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