

PLANNING BOARD
FEBRUARY 7, 2012 at 7:30 PM
TOWN HALL, 41 SOUTH MAIN STREET

In attendance:

Members: Kate Connolly (Selectmen's Representative), Judith Esmay, Joan Garipay, Jim Hornig

Alternates: Mike Hingston, Iain Sim

Staff: Vicki Smith, Jonathan Edwards

Others: See Attendance Sheet

1. **MINUTES:** The minutes of January 10th & 24th were approved.

2. **DISCUSSION WITH THE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST ADVISORY COMMITTEE ABOUT THE *PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN***

Hanover's Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee ("Committee") members were identified as: David Dostal, Scot Drysdale (Chair), Sloane Mayor, Barbara McIlroy, Hugh Mellert, and Carol Weingeist.

Carolyn Radisch, of ORW Landscape Architects & Planners, presented the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, Town of Hanover, New Hampshire, she developed in concert with Lucy Gibson of Smart Mobility.

Data Collection: **The 1990 and 2000 Censuses** list Hanover's combined pedestrian/bicycle mode share (the percent of Hanover residents biking or walking to work) at 43.2% and 36.5% respectively. The State average in 2000 was about 3%. The 2010 Census no longer collects ped/bike mode share data. **A recent traffic study for the Hanover Inn** reported counts of 3,000+ pedestrians and 224 bicyclists utilizing the intersection of Main/Wheelock Streets over an 8-hour period. **A May 2011 study conducted by the Committee** tallied 337 pedestrians and 164 bicyclists utilizing the Park St/Valley Rd intersection. (20% of the riders were noted as utilizing the sidewalk, which is a problem). **A 2009 survey of DHMC employees** found that 36% of the 87 survey respondents were from Hanover & Etna, and 68% of the respondents rode through Hanover. **A June 2009 in-class survey** reported that 9% of Ray School students walk to school, 3% ride their bikes; 6% of Richmond School students walk to school, 2% ride their bikes. These are typical rates for the U.S. Data for High School students was not available.

Safety: The diagram of Bicycle and Pedestrian Accidents, depicted on Pg 1-8, was reviewed. Areas of general concern include: Wheelock Street, around the Green, Park Street, and Thayer Drive.

Pedestrians: Hanover's small block sizes, frequent intersections, and calm traffic are beneficial to pedestrians. Hanover also has trails that connect directly out of the street system. Hanover's 2-lane streets are much easier for pedestrians to negotiate than 3- or 6-lane streets. Issues with Hanover's streets are: missing sidewalks, missing street crossings, and crosswalks at "uncontrolled intersections". Main St was noted as being pedestrian friendly so long as pedestrians utilize the designated crossings.

Bicycles: Hanover needs a vision of a connecting network to get to destinations that can be built over time. In general, weather is not a huge factor for bicycling for towns that have good bike networks. Infrastructure matters. There are fewer bicycle-related accidents in places where there are better biking networks. When riders become drivers, they are more aware/concerned about riders. Most people want to ride out of traffic.

Plan Recommendations:

- Pedestrian improvements in the downtown (depicted on Pg 4-2) including: reduction of travel lanes, establishment of bike lanes, additional pedestrian connections, additional marked and protected crosswalks, curb cut reductions, formalizing existing connections, a Crosby Street/Lebanon Street roundabout
- Central campus improvements including: sidewalk installations on multiple streets; improving existing pedestrian paths (in particular Hovey Ln to South St); adding crosswalks with additional traffic calming measures on Wheelock St hill; narrowing College, Wentworth, and North Main Streets and installing bike lanes
- Bike corridors including: on-street, off-street, trails and bike lanes; 2-way circulation around the Green; off-street bike option on College St from Park to Maynard Streets
- The designation of Primary Bicycle Routes, Local Bicycle Corridors, and primary destinations
 - Consideration within the Capital Improvements Plans for the development of the highest level of bicycle infrastructure on the Primary Routes
 - Improving connections to DHMC, the schools, the Co-Op, Norwich and Sachem Villages
- Raising visibility of bicyclists going down Wheelock St
- Reducing the amount of drainage grates, etc. in the roadway/bike lanes
- Installing sharrows on Lebanon and South Streets
- Better connecting Dartmouth's sporting facilities to Lebanon Street and the downtown
- Creating a shared-use path along Girl Brook and parallel to Reservoir Rd
- Improving the Reservoir Rd crossing at the Ray School entry
- Lyme Road corridor should have bike lanes and a shared use path
- Modifying the fence between Richmond Middle School and Dresden Rd
- Improving connectivity between Gile Hill, Buck Road, and on to Medical Center Dr
- Improving the traffic signal at the Greensboro Rd/Rte 120 intersection to enable riders, pedestrians to prompt the signal
- Providing traffic calming in Etna Village
- Increasing bike lane width along Lebanon Street at the Sand Hill curve
- Installing a shared-use path along Greensboro Rd
- Establishing bike lanes along S Main St to Sachem Village
- Relocating the AT stop on Rte 120 at Greensboro Rd
- Installing a new traffic signal @ Rte 120/Greensboro Rd intersection with pedestrian/bicyclist detection
- Reducing a south-bound travel lane on Rte 120 after Greensboro Rd and installing a shared use path to DHMC
- Adding covered bike parking at Rte 120/Greensboro Rd intersection
- Creating a bike/pedestrian path between Sachem Village & DHMC
- Creating an off-street connection between the Co-op and the end of Austin Ln
- Deterring sidewalk riders on E Wheelock St

It was noted that the City of Lebanon will soon begin improvements to Mt Support Rd that will include the installation of a shared use path from Lahaye Dr to Memorial Dr. A bike

path will then lead from Memorial Dr to Heater Rd. The goal is to continue those efforts from Mt Support Rd to Medical Center Dr and into Hanover.

VT DOT is projecting less traffic in the future for the 1st time in 50 yrs. A shift is occurring and the future does look different than the past in terms of driving.

Bike Parking: It is important to have good bike parking. Bike parking requirements are requested for new developments. The best racks are those that support the body of the bikes. Racks should be located near building entrances and tucked away from pedestrian paths. Sheltered parking in key places will promote year-round use. Bike sharing should be encouraged. Providing places for riders to shower will promote bike use.

Board Comments/Questions:

- The law restricts use of sidewalks by bicyclists that are 13 yrs of age and older.
- Education efforts are needed to get all riders to follow the rules of the road and to keep them from riding on the sidewalks.
- Some bicyclists utilize rural roads as if they are dedicated bike paths.
- Hanover has a loud and constant plea for more parking spaces.
- Must continue to offer a left-turn lane into the Town's DPW site.
- Lebanon's Planning Board and NH DOT are considering increasing the northbound lane from Medical Center Dr to Hanover to two lanes.
- Was consideration given for folks that live outside of the downtown area?
 - Radisch said providing good bike routes on Lyme Rd, Greensboro Rd, and maybe Hanover Center Rd, will promote greater bike use.
- Between crazy bike riders and crazy car drivers, more people prefer designated bike trails.
- There is a general discourtesy of car drivers with bicyclists.
- The Traffic Section of Hanover's Master Plan should be revised to envision leisurely riding.
- What does the Committee see as being most critical?
 - Drysdale said they are working to prioritize their recommendations. His personal opinion is that the Greensboro Rd intersection is most critical.
 - Radisch said connecting to important destinations is very important.
- The draft plan is still heavily weighted toward bikes as opposed to pedestrians. The Board is seeking a more walkable area than is depicted on Pg 4-2.

Staff Comments/Questions:

- Does the Committee feel it is better for bikers to go full speed down Wheelock St hill?
 - Radisch said it depends on the bicyclist.
- Can't we add to existing signs at major town entry points stating that Hanover qualifies as some type of nationally recognized bike/ped town to make motorists aware?

Committee member comments:

- Many bikers ride on sidewalks because they believe it is safer.
- The police must be asked to start enforcing traffic rules for bicycles & car drivers.
- There is some conflict between drivers/bicyclists and bicyclists/pedestrians. Education is absolutely an important part of this. There is a huge component of bad behavior that is perhaps one of the Committee's strongest arguments for better facilities that gives every mode of transit enough space to be recognized and comfortable.

In closing, Radisch and the Committee asked the Board to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian matters into the Master Plan and/or Zoning regulations, to give bicyclists/pedestrians and Advanced Transit riders consideration when hearing cases involving road work or sidewalk improvements, and for bicycle/pedestrian improvements to be added to the CIP.

3. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE *NH ROUTE 120 SUMMARY OF BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT ALTERNATIVES*. [This involved review of Edwards' November 21, 2011 Memorandum to the Board; Subject "Regional Bike/Ped".]

Edwards said a Regional Bike/Ped Planning Group met monthly for roughly 2 yrs to discuss areas between downtown Lebanon and Hanover that ought to have more than automotive connections. They created three categories of non-automotive use: (1) primarily commuter connections, (2) recreation corridors, and (3) those which could serve commuter and/or recreational purposes. From these categories, they identified 22 existing or potential connections in the Rte 120 Corridor and prioritized their improvements as follows:

1. Rte 120 from Etna Rd to Centerra Pkwy: the benefits of improving this connection outweigh the difficulties relative to alignment, construction costs, right-of-way issues, and topography. Lebanon has already committed resources to ramp up the bike/ped capacity on Mt Support Rd, which will relieve some of the urgency of #5 below.
2. Existing bike lanes on Rte 120 (from the Hanover Co-op to DHMC): an off-road alternative on the Rte 120 portion would improve safety. The critical link is near Buck and Greensboro Rds, and along the Sand Hill curve.
3. Connecting DHMC & Centerra: the group discussed various ideas about safely crossing Rte 120 ranging from changing the signal, adding lanes along the Lahaye Dr, and installing a ped/bike bridge by David's House.
4. Connecting Heater Rd (near the armory) to the bottom of Etna Rd: a hotel and convention center are supposed to be built inside a loop there. It makes sense to provide an alternative for peds/riders to not have to utilize that portion of Rte 120.
5. Connection between Sachem Village & DHMC campus: This would have as much recreational appeal as it does commuter appeal. There is a topographical suitable alignment. The property is owned by either the College or DHMC; issues of acquiring right-of-ways are somewhat minimized.
 - Smith said it make sense to have an AT link along there too.
 - Creating an access for motor vehicles here would eliminate the number of cars traveling through Hanover's downtown, thereby making more room for bikes/peds.
6. Connecting Greensboro Rd and the Mink Brook Corridor: Equally meritorious for commuting as well as recreation. There is a popular wish that Greensboro Rd be readily usable for bikes/peds. It is an ancient road and its right-of-way is undefined. There is not sufficient width there for safe auto passage plus room for sidewalks and bike lanes. Staff submitted a proposal for the State's 10 Year Plan to install a bike lane and sidewalk on one side of Greensboro Rd at a projected cost of almost \$2 million. The proposal did not make it through the Transportation Advisory Group of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission.

- There was a lengthy discussion about whether the Town should take over Greensboro Rd from the State. HINGSTON said improvements to that road will not happen in the context of NH DOT and road construction costs will not be any cheaper in the future. He said the function of government is to deal with these problems, not listen to them year after year. CONNOLLY said most people probably do not realize that to improve Greensboro Rd would require the loss of a good portion of many residents' yards. It will take an act of Town Meeting for the Town to take over that road. Smith said the matter should be brought to the neighborhood to decide whether Greensboro Rd should become a major artery, as is its current course, or be narrowed to deter traffic, thereby providing bike/ped safety features. Smith said lacking a vision for this area is misleading landowners about what should be happening there. SIM said the Board has a responsibility to have a long-term plan for Greensboro Rd. Barbara McIlroy agreed it is in the State's interest to unload that road to Town ownership and suggested the State could possibly help to facilitate whatever changes the Town envisions for the road. Drysdale said Greensboro Rd lacks the togetherness of a neighborhood community due to its various types of residences/developments and the road's vast expanse. Edwards noted the area as being one of the most valuable wildlife habitats in the region. Smith said Greensboro Rd planning should be done by way of the creation of a Planning Board subcommittee to bring people together and provide support.
7. Connecting Etna Rd to Great Hollow Rd: This connection has ill-defined and narrow rights-of-ways, and some topographical and environmental issues as well. There are a lot of potential commuter destinations. This could, over time, become a major focus for workforce housing.
 8. Follow the existing regional powerline corridor that runs north-south, from DHMC to the Miracle Mile: This would be costly to build and maintain and would jeopardize plants, wildlife, and wetlands of state-wide significance.

Board Comments/Questions:

- There is quite a bit of overlap between this regional effort and that of Hanover's Bike/Ped Committee in terms of the proposals suggested.
- Was there any discussion to get actual bike lanes around the hospital campus?
 - Edwards said yes, but no contact with DHMC to deal with it.

Edwards said when other issues on Rte 120 are more defined the regional group will reconvene and take more specific action.

4. **OTHER BUSINESS:** ESMAY announced MAYOR's appointment to a study group of The Rte 120 Transportation Innovation Transforming a Corridor into a Community hosted by the Upper Valley TMA and Vermont Law School Land Use Clinic.
5. **ADJOURN:** The meeting adjourned at almost 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Beth Rivard