



**Amherst Bicycle & Pedestrian  
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED  
July 12, 2022

1 Meeting attendees: Chris Buchanan – Chair, Wendy Rannenberg, Judy Shenk, Chris Shenk,  
2 Michael Merra, Rick Katzenberg [7:10pm], Patrick Daniel (remote) and Tom Christensen  
3 (remote)

4 Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote)  
5

6 Chris Buchanan called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. He noted that there was participation  
7 from Committee members both in-person at Town Hall and remotely via Zoom.  
8

9 Wendy Rannenberg stated that four benches have arrived in Town. These will be put together  
10 shortly. She will work with DPW Director Eric Slosek on placement of the approved benches.  
11 She will need to discuss where to place the fourth bench with the Board of Selectmen. Plaques  
12 will also be ordered for the benches.  
13

14 Tom Christensen stated that he has been riding the Amherst Street sidepath almost every day.  
15 He has been collecting small amounts of trash and will analyze the amounts of this at the end  
16 of his three-month ride period. He noted that someone is willing to pay for signs placed at  
17 each end of the sidepath regarding not littering.  
18

19 Chris Buchanan stated that the DPW is working on small signs to place at either end of the  
20 path. He will discuss these items with the DPW.  
21

22 *Rick Katzenberg entered the meeting at 7:10pm.*  
23

24 Chris Buchanan introduced a new member of the Committee, Michael Merra.  
25

26 Chris Buchanan stated that the multimodal counters, which will be used to count the number  
27 of pedestrians and cyclists along the Amherst Street sidepath, donated by the Bean  
28 Foundation, have been delivered and will be installed along the sidepath at a future date.  
29

30 **1. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program**

31 Chris Buchanan explained that the grant has a deadline of September 15, 2022. The purpose is  
32 uniquely aligned with the Shared Streets project in Town and is to retrofit or create  
33 infrastructure for all users. He spoke with Bill Watson at the DOT and also with NRPC to  
34 discuss the grant. All involved seem in agreement that the Town is aligned well for this grant.  
35 Extending a sidepath from Boston Post Road to Birch Park, along with installation of a box  
36 culvert, was supported by the State. The State indicated that it would send a letter of support  
37 with the grant application and provide the Town resources in the grant application process.

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The State noted that it believes retrofitting and rebuilding of infrastructure to pursue the proposed Safe Streets design would be covered under the grant. The implementation portion of this grant opportunity has a \$5M minimum project size. The Town will need to decide what items to include in the application for these funds.

• **Budget discussion, Sam Fortier**

Sam Fortier, civil engineer, explained that the Boston Post Road sidepath extension toward Birch Park with a culvert to get underneath Baboosic Lake Road, is estimated to cost \$1M. Flexibility in terms of truncation of this project due to potential construction costs will be important. The Baboosic Lake Greenway trail that extends from Amherst Street down to Merrimack Road is estimated to cost \$3M. This does not include purchase of rights of way. Two proposed roundabouts are indicated on the plan, one near Country Mansions and one near Wilkins School. The Amherst Village Shared Streets section's cost will vary on what the public wants to see. The Jones Road and Mack Hill Road portion includes a painted shoulder on New Boston Road and a paved sidepath on Mack Hill Road and Jones Road to link to the sidepath near Wilkins School. All of these projects total approximately \$12M.

Chris Buchanan explained that the purpose of this exercise is to produce a flexible and adaptive budget plan to use for the grant application. This is not a prescription for exactly what would happen in each section. Much of the information needed for this project will come out of the Village Engineering project.

In response to a question from Tom Christensen, Sam Fortier explained that construction cost, design engineering, construction engineering and right of way are items which will need to be populated for the grant application.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that the potential for a new school on the Wilkins School site will need to be taken into account.

Chris Buchanan noted that, if the grant is received, the Town's matching cost will be 20% of the estimated costs as shown.

Sam Fortier noted that the Committee should include any long stretches where right of way is not a concern. Also, trying to save on the rail trail portion and focusing more on the proposed box culverts could be a good idea. However, connectivity to other trails is also important to consider.

Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee needs to discuss prioritizing the items to submit to the Board of Selectmen for review. If approved by the Board, the Committee can continue to pursue the grant application to submit for September. Last night, the Board awarded the bid for the Village Engineering planning item to Mobycon.

Sam Fortier asked about public input on the Village Streets project and how they might impact the grant application. Chris Buchanan explained that he believes a grant application for

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a Shared Street treatment project could be kept vague with a generous budget, in order to allow for different options. The Board of Selectmen noted that they do not wish to move forward with the Village Streets project until public input is received, and outreach is completed.

In response to a question from Tom Christensen, Chris Buchanan stated that he does not believe the Town being awarded this grant this year for some of the proposed options would disallow future grant awards for similar options.

In response to a question from Mike Merra, Chris Buchanan explained that the bid awarded last night by the Board of Selectmen to Mobycon will allow for an engineering study of the Village streets which will shortly be up for reconstruction to incorporate design features that allow all users to use the space. It is based on a Shared Streets concept. This proposal will make cars the guest in the space, to allow for safer travel for all users.

- **Notice of Funding Opportunity review, Mike Merra**

Mike Merra explained that there are certain items which count toward the 20% match for the Town. These include funds in the bank, money set aside for the sidepath, and already funded in progress engineering work such as that approved for Mobycon. There are seven requirements for this match, one being Federal CFR 200.306, Cost Sharing or Matching. The Town cannot use other federal funds awarded toward the match. The match must be trackable and verifiable. The projects will need to be determined to be allowable for the grant proposal.

Chris Buchanan stated that the streets in question for the Shared Streets project, and part of Amherst Street, are already in the DPW's budget and the intention is to leverage the approximately \$700,000 estimated for reconstruction of these streets toward the 20% match. These roads are already slated for reconstruction and the proposal is to use the grant funding to make them safer while leveraging the money already set aside for them. If this funding cannot be used to put toward the 20% match, the project scope will likely need to be changed.

Mike Merra stated that he would reach out to DOT to get an answer on this item. He noted that volunteer services furnished by third-party professionals or consultants can be used as cost-sharing or matching.

Chris Buchanan explained that the notice of funding opportunity for this grant discusses eligible items. It is unclear if a rail trail qualifies. The Federal Highway Administration has expressed that this information will be relayed if an applicant applies to the grant program. The only entities eligible to apply for the grant are those with an action plan in place. The State and NRPC believe that the Multimodal Plan is adequate for this.

In response to a question from Wendy Rannenberg, Chris Buchanan explained that the bid awarded to Mobycon includes a general high-level look at the whole Village, and a more specific look at most of the proposed options the Committee is discussing this evening.

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Wendy Rannenberg suggested that the grant application should include the Amherst Village Shared Streets project and Mack Hill/Jones Hill Road project. Chris Buchanan explained that this would cost approximately \$5M and be the focus of the grant application. However, it would be advantageous to complete a sidepath extension from Amherst Street to the Baboosic Greenway as it would include State involvement in the grant process. It is also not very expensive, in terms of the other items proposed.

Judy Shenk stated that she believes getting the culvert near Route 101 will be a key item.

Chris Buchanan suggested that the application include the side path extension, Shared Streets project, crossings, and additional box culvert along the rail bed. The Route 101 embankment issue will not be solved without federal funds or a TAP grant. The side path extension to Baboosic Greenway is estimated to cost \$1.55M, the Amherst Village Shared Streets project is estimated at \$4.725M, the Jones Road/Mack Hill Road loop is estimated at \$455,000; a box culvert under Route 101 can also be included, estimated around \$675,000. The total cost for these projects is estimated at \$7.125M, with a local match of \$1.425M. \$700,000 is already accounted for in the Town's budget for road reconstruction, and the remainder of the match would be spread over seven years.

**Wendy Rannenberg moved to include the sidepath extension, Amherst Village Shared Streets project, the Jones Road/Mack Hill Road loop, and the box culvert at between Route 122/Boston Post Road in the grant application. Seconded by Judy Shenk.**

**Roll Call vote: Tom Christensen – aye; Patrick Daniel – aye; Rick Katzenberg – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Judy Shenk – aye; Chris Shenk – aye; and Mike Merra – aye; unanimously approved.**

- **Next steps: BoS approval, grant application, deadline September 15<sup>th</sup>**

Chris Buchanan explained that he would work to put together the grant application, which will be presented to the Board of Selectmen for approval on July 25, 2022. All are welcome to attend in case the Board has questions. He will inform DOT and NRPC after the Board approves this item.

- **Grant application assistance available from DOT and NRPC**
- **Consider watching webinars on application and implementation:**  
<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A/webinars>

## **2. Long term planning**

- **Ten-year plan projects**

Chris Buchanan explained that the State of NH has a process every other year to approve projects eligible for 80% for bike/ped infrastructure items. He has met with NRPC to review projects previously in the 10-year plan and discuss new projects to include. He suggested including the length of the Baboosic Lake Greenway, from the Bedford town line to Birch Park, down Amherst Street, with a midblock crossing, to Souhegan High School, ending at

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Buck Meadow. This would be split into approximately 25 segments. All of this is currently in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, but only one segment is currently in the 10-Year Plan. This is due August 5, 2022.

The Committee agreed with the suggestion to request to include the Baboosic Lake Greenway in the 10-Year Plan. The Board of Selectmen will be the ones submitting this request to NRPC.

- **CIP Process**

Judy Shenk agreed to help Chris Buchanan update the CIP items for the Committee.

- **FY2024 budget conversation**

Chris Buchanan explained that last year the Committee asked the Board of Selectmen to increase the DPW's budget by \$100,000 for annual multimodal infrastructure improvements. That funding was proposed to be used for the Village Streets project, and the Board then suggested it be placed on a warrant article for the Town to vote on. Now that the warrant article has been approved, the Committee is back in the same place in terms of considering requesting \$100,000 in the annual budget. These funds would be available every year and must be spent by June 30, 2022. This cannot be placed into an account to accumulate, so long-term projects still need to be funded by a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF). The Committee cannot afford surveying, engineering, grant assistance, counters, modest improvements to crosswalks, or incremental increases to annual road reconstruction projects to include modest multimodal improvements. To be a sustainable organization, there must be a budget behind the case.

Chris Buchanan explained that funds could also come to the Committee from LUCT fund amounts, which would take money from the Conservation Commission, or from some amount of car registration fees, which would also require approval through a warrant article.

Wendy Rannenberg stated that the Board of Selectmen likes a very lean budget. The Ways & Means Committee might support this request, as it has supported requests from the Committee in the past. The Town previously slashed the road budget by so much that it has needed to add money back into the budget over the last number of years.

Patrick Daniel asked if this request might hurt the Committee's transparency to the Town. Chris Buchanan noted that this is a transparent request. This meeting, the Board of Selectmen's meeting and Ways & Means Committee's meetings at which it will be discussed are all public. The process of working through the budget and voting on the budget is a public, transparent process.

**Judy Shenk moved that the Committee request to the Board of Selectmen to add \$100,000 to the DPW's budget for multimodal improvements. Seconded by Chris Shenk.**

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**Roll Call vote: Tom Christensen – aye; Patrick Daniel – aye; Rick Katzenberg – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Judy Shenk – aye; Chris Shenk – aye; and Mike Merra – aye; unanimously approved.**

**3. FY2023 Congressional spending updates**

**• Letter to Senator Shaheen**

Chris Buchanan stated that he would like to write a letter to Senator Shaheen thanking her for selecting the Town’s proposal for congressional funding. Rick Katzenberg stated that he will write the letter on behalf of the Committee.

Chris Buchanan stated that a letter should also be sent to the Bean Foundation thanking them for the counters. Mike Merra agreed to help write this letter.

**4. Approval of Minutes – June 14, 2022**

**Tom Christensen moved to approve the meeting minutes of June 14, 2022, as submitted. Seconded by Judy Shenk.**

**Roll Call vote: Tom Christensen – aye; Patrick Daniel – aye; Rick Katzenberg – abstain; Chris Buchanan – aye; Judy Shenk – aye; Chris Shenk – aye; and Mike Merra – abstain; 5-0-2, motion carried.**

Rick Katzenberg stated that he had a productive meeting today regarding combining the Committee’s plans with the SAU’s plans for future development.

**Rick Katzenberg moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55pm. Seconded by Wendy Rannenberg.**

**Roll Call vote: Tom Christensen – aye; Patrick Daniel – aye; Rick Katzenberg – aye; Chris Buchanan – aye; Judy Shenk – aye; Chris Shenk – aye; and Mike Merra – aye; unanimously approved.**

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: September 13, 2022