Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Steering Committee

November, 2017 5:30pm Brick School Meeting Room

In attendance: Rick Katzenberg, Chair; Gordon Leedy, Community Development Director; Simon Corson, Planner, Community Development; Patrick Daniel, Recreation Commission Chair; Judy Shenk; Chris Shenk; Jared Hardner, Amherst Conservation Commission; Chris Buchanan, Lieutenant, Amherst Fire Department and Historic District Commission; Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner, Nashua Regional Planning Commission; Susan Durling; Anthony Ciampoli, Support Division Lieutenant / Prosecutor, Amherst Police Department; Carolyn Mitchell

Rick Katzenberg began by asking for introductions. The attendees introduced themselves. Rick discussed closing a section of Middle Street to create pedestrian walkway. Gordon interjected that making a section Courthouse Road into a one-way road might create a safe path for pedestrians and cyclists. There was discussion about how to provide safe passage for multimodal users in the village.

Rick and Susan shared that they took a drive around Town to better understand the challenges of pedestrians and cyclists, especially children who travel without a car. They expressed safety concerns related to the use of Boston Post Road in particular.

Gordon provided an overview of the trail, pedestrian and bicycle master planning process, and encouraged the group to think expansively about multimodal access and connectivity in Town. Gordon explained that having a clear plan for multimodal transportation helps position the Town for potential funding opportunities.

Matt agreed with Gordon that having a vision and set of objectives is helpful when preparing to apply for funding. Matt explained that the Nashua Regional Planning Commission can provide assistance through counting cyclists and pedestrians as well as mapping services. Matt spoke about the importance of having a political contingency that supports an articulated vision.

There was discussion about a trail that would connect the village with the Middle and High School through the repurposing of an old Boston and Main railroad route. Several mentioned that they were aware of the idea. Chris Shenk shared that there has been some opposition to this idea in the past. Chris Buchanan asked where the resistance comes from. Chris Shenk replied that his neighbor has expressed concerns related to personal privacy and safety.

Buchanan proposed that the group focus on the sections of the trail that do not face opposition first. Perhaps, if a portion of the trail were completed and opened to the public, the benefits of the trail would be better understood.

Anthony Ciampoli suggested the group invite local opposition to the table early in the planning process to ensure their concerns are heard and that they feel included.

There was overwhelming agreement that the Steering Committee should be as inclusive as possible.

The group expressed an interest in seeing a sketch of the discussed rail trail.

Simon offered to make a map that includes the Nashua Regional Planning Commission’s trail, parcel, and building footprint data, all Town pedestrian infrastructure data, and the conceived location of the rail trail.

The mission statement of the group was discussed. Several share what they believe to be important components of the statement. Matt encouraged the group to take some time to think through creating a mission statement that reflects the goals and responsibilities of the Committee.

As part of the conversation about the mission statement, Jared discussed the difference between the Amherst Conservation Commission’s Trail Subcommittee and the Steering Committee. He noted that the Trail Subcommittee talks about developing trails for the purposes of land management, and/or as an educational resource. Whereas, the Steering Committee is focused on providing connectivity to the overall transportation network.

The group discussed having a meeting in a couple of weeks and decided on December 5th at 6pm. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.