

**City of Keene
New Hampshire**

ROADWAY SAFETY PLAN COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 22, 2024 **4:00 PM** **2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:
J.B. Mack, Chair
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Autumn DelaCroix
Ockle Johnson
Erin Roark
Frank Linnenbringer
Fred Roberge (remote)
William Lambert

City Staff Present:
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Brett Rusnock, Infra. Project Manager
Amanda Palmeira, Assistant City Attorney

Other Staff Present:
Michelle Marshall, FHWA
Frank Koczalka, VHB
Phil Goff, VHB
Eric Tang, VHB

Members Not Present:
Councilor Bryan Lake
Reagen Messer

1) Call to Order

Mr. Lussier called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM. The goal of this Committee is to develop a Roadway Safety Action Plan (RSAP) with both specific and general recommendations to improve safety for Keene’s road network, including both City maintained roads and those maintained by NH Department of Transportation (DOT). Ultimately, the goal is to have this plan in place and adopted by the City Council so the City can apply for Federal grants for safety improvements.

2) Roll Call

Roll call ensued.

3) Welcome & Introductions

Consultants from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) were in attendance in-person and remotely: Eric Tang (Safety Lead), Frank Koczalka (Project Manager), and Phil Goff (Engagement Lead). Michelle Marshall, Federal Highway Administration Liaison, and Amanda-Joe Zatecka, Senior Highway Safety Engineer for NH DOT, were also present.

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Committee members introduced themselves:

- Councilor Laura Tobin was not yet officially appointed to the Committee. Councilor Tobin does not drive, so this topic was important to her, as she had been a pedestrian in Keene for 15–20 years.
- Ockle Johnson is a professor emeritus at Keene State College (KSC), with long-term experience trying to cross Main Street on his commute to/from work.
- Erin Roark is a teacher at Symonds and Franklin Elementary Schools, and she walks throughout the City daily.
- Frank Linnenbringer is the Assistant District Engineer for NH DOT, District 4.
- Autumn DelaCroix serves on the City’s Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC) and is a full-time cyclist commuter.
- Fred Roberge serves on the Governor’s Commission for Disabilities and was appointed to this Committee to ensure mobility and access/coordination of services for people with disabilities. He was Vice President of Transportation for Easter seals for 42 years, and he also served on: NH State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation, Alliance for Healthy Aging Transportation Committee, and more.
- William Lambert is the NH DOT Highway Safety Active Transportation Administrator, and he previously served 23 years as a NH Traffic Engineer.
- Joshua (J.B.) Mack is the Assistant Director of Southwest Regional Planning Commission and has been a transportation planner for 20 years.
- Elizabeth Dragon is the Keene City Manager.

Ms. Dragon said that this Committee’s work would be an important effort to consider Keene’s transportation system holistically. She thanked the Committee members for agreeing to serve.

4) Committee Charge

Mr. Lussier read the Committee’s charge:

“Oversee the development of a comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the City of Keene. Provide guidance and general direction to City of Keene staff and engineering consultants as they collect and analyze roadway safety data and generate draft work products. Ensure that the plan development process provides for the equitable representation of all roadway users and stakeholders, and that the final document addresses the diverse needs of those groups. Assist in the development of specific roadway safety improvement priorities and recommendations. Ultimately, the Committee will make a recommendation to the City Council with respect to adoption of the draft plan and a roadway safety performance goal.”

The members appointed to this Committee were chosen to ensure representation from as many stakeholder groups as possible. Ultimately, this Committee will make a recommendation to the City Council on a roadway safety performance goal and for how to adopt a draft plan. Over the next 6 months, the consultants from VHB—with this Committee’s guidance—will develop the

72 draft plan that this Committee will recommend that the City Council adopts. Additionally, this
73 Committee will recommend to the City Council a goal for the long-term improvement of
74 roadway safety performance in Keene. These goals could include metrics like ‘reducing roadway
75 accidents by X percentage per year’ or ‘eliminating roadway fatalities by 2050’, for example.

76

77 **5) Formalities**

78 **A) Rules Governing Public Bodies – Assistant City Attorney**

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80 The Assistant City Attorney, Amanda Palmeira, explained important things for the Committee to
81 understand from NH’s Right to Know law RSA 91-A. Specifically, this law provides the
82 requirements for open meetings and open records. For example, the meeting room door should
83 not be completely closed, so that the public know they can enter. Notifying the public that an
84 open meeting will occur is a part of the requirement. A public meeting occurs when a quorum—
85 5 members for this Committee—is present and discussing official business. Without a quorum, a
86 meeting cannot occur, and no official business should be discussed. Also required for a public
87 meeting is that the Committee must be able to communicate contemporaneously, meaning that
88 the law extends beyond just the Committee present in a room. If the Committee discusses official
89 business by email, that counts as communicating contemporaneously, and therefore technically
90 becomes a meeting. Thus, the Committee should always avoid using “reply all” for Committee
91 emails, as doing so constitutes an unnoticed quorum; staff emails to members will use “bcc” to
92 avoid this issue. For this reason, emails should always be sent via a City Staff member—Mr.
93 Lussier or Mr. Rusnock. Also importantly, topics within this Committee’s jurisdiction—per its
94 official charge—should only be discussed during a formal, publicly noticed meeting. If a quorum
95 of this Committee was together at a social gathering, for example, they should not discuss any
96 Committee business. The Committee members should understand that there are enforcement
97 mechanisms that could invalidate certain public bodies’ actions, so the Assistant City Attorney
98 urged caution. There are some exceptions to when a meeting must be held in public, but such an
99 instance was not anticipated for this Committee. Certain documents the Committee works with
100 are also public records and a member of the public could request to review that record; things
101 like personal notes are exempt. To meet the requirements of RSA 91-A, this Committee has an
102 assigned minute taker to produce minutes that the Committee must vote to adopt.

103

104 If Committee members have any questions about NH’s Right to Know law, they should contact
105 the Assistant City Attorney, Amanda Palmeira (apalmeira@keenenh.gov), or the City Attorney,
106 Tom Mullins (tmullins@keenenh.gov).

107

108 Mr. Roberge questioned whether he could report on this Committee’s work to the Governor’s
109 Commission on Disabilities. Ms. Palmeira said that was fine as nothing in these meetings is
110 secret or privileged. Still, if a quorum of this Committee was present at a Governor’s
111 Commission meeting, that would trigger a formal meeting of this body. The Right to Know
112 restrictions are to preserve the sanctity of this public body in a formally noticed meeting.

113

114 **B) Rules of Order**

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116 The Committee reviewed the draft Rules of Order. A brief discussion led Mr. Lussier to include
117 a “new business” section on future agendas to ensure an opportunity for public input. Mr. Lussier
118 mentioned that remote participation is allowed if there are no objections from the Committee.
119 Remote participation is only allowed if there is a quorum of the Committee at the physical,
120 advertised meeting location. So, if anyone needs to attend remotely, they should alert Mr.
121 Lussier, so he can ensure there is a quorum at the meeting location.

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123 A motion by Mr. Mack to approve the Rules of Procedure as presented was duly seconded by
124 Mr. Lambert and the motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

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126 **C) Election of Committee Chair & Vice Chair**

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128 The City Manager nominated J.B. Mack to serve as Chair. The nomination was seconded by Mr.
129 Lambert and on a roll call vote, the motion carried with six members voting in favor. J.B. Mack
130 and Autumn DelaCroix abstained.

131
132 The Committee chose to defer electing a Vice Chair until the next meeting.

133
134 **6) Overview of VHB’s Scope of Work**

135 **A) Stakeholder Engagement**

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137 Mr. Goff discussed stakeholder engagement, including public input over the next 5 months,
138 which would be a significant portion of the ultimate RSAP.

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140 **i) *Monthly RSPC Meetings***

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142 This Committee would meet on the 4th Monday of each month for 6 months.

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144 **ii) *Technical Advisory Committee Meetings***

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146 This Technical Advisory Committee would be comprised of additional City Staff (i.e., Fire and
147 Police Departments)

148
149 **iii) *Stakeholder Listening Sessions***

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151 VHB consultants planned a total of 8 stakeholder meetings. These stakeholder listening sessions
152 would be additional opportunities to gather data. For example, consultants would meet with KSC
153 staff, administrators, and students to understand key issues for them regarding walking, biking,
154 traveling, and safety on and around the campus. For example, the consultants hope to meet with
155 SAU administrators to better understand what is/is not working for the Safe Routes to School
156 program. The Keene Housing Authority would also be a key stakeholder. The consultants also

157 want to learn more from the BPPAC that Ms. DelaCroix represents. The Committee also
158 recommended meeting with Pathways for Keene.

159
160 Mr. Koczalka mentioned that equity would be a critical focus of the RSAP. Including the needs
161 of underrepresented communities (e.g., those without access to a car) would be essential to this
162 effort. He mentioned the commitment to Keene’s Complete Streets program and the national
163 Safe Streets for All grant program. City Staff would share the Safe Routes to School plans with
164 the consultants, though Chair Mack mentioned that many may be outdated.

165
166 When looking at the list of stakeholders, Councilor Tobin expressed concern that many people
167 she knows did not fall into any of the listed categories. For example, she urged making the
168 distinction between trail bike advocates and those who use bikes as a mode of transportation and
169 commuting, like getting to work. She said the trail bike users have access to services and
170 flexibility in where they are coming/going from, whereas commuters need their bikes to get
171 where they must go each day. Councilor Tobin urged the distinction between biking/walking for
172 recreation versus necessity. Mr. Goff noted that there was some flexibility built into the plans to
173 meet with various neighborhood groups. He hoped they would reach some Keene Housing
174 Authority sites. He also suggested coordinating with some of the larger employers in the City to
175 invite their employees to talk about safety. Mr. Lussier agreed with Councilor Tobin’s
176 suggestion that it could be more useful to have separate meetings for recreational bikers and
177 commuting bikers. Councilor Tobin said recreation means that a biker has flexibility in their
178 timeline and path (e.g., can shift to the other side of the street), whereas those who bike to
179 commute have less flexibility; it is a matter of function versus mode of transportation.

180
181 Mr. Johnson said—as someone who walks and bikes a lot—that he has different concerns about
182 where it is safe to walk versus where it is safe to ride. He agreed with the need to maintain the
183 distinction of those who bike for recreation versus necessity.

184
185 Ms. Roark noted that there is small population of professional road cyclists who also choose that
186 mode of transportation to get to work. She wondered if these stakeholders should be included in
187 the “A” group. She thought it was important to distinguish advanced cyclists.

188
189 When thinking about complete streets, Mr. Goff also mentioned the homeless population. He
190 said the consultants would be meeting with Keene Housing Authority and other social service
191 agencies like Monadnock Family Services, Southwestern Community Services, Home
192 Healthcare Services, and the Community Kitchen. Chair Mack also suggested Hundred Nights,
193 for which Mr. Johnson sits on the Board.

194
195 Ms. Zatecka (of NH DOT) urged caution regarding corridors with active cyclists who are
196 commuting. She suggested not only looking at those corridors that cyclists would use, but to also
197 think about the future and how to open more, safer routes for cyclists.

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199 **iv) MSFI Committee Meetings**

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The consultants would have 3 presentations before the City Council’s Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee in advance of a final presentation to the City Council in early June.

v) Project Website

The project webpage—hosted on the City of Keene website—would go live in the next 2–3 weeks. The webpage would be a resource for City Staff and the public to learn more about the RSAP. The website will be a significant resource for the consultants and Committee to understand the roadway conditions that members of the community are experiencing for the various modes of transportation.

vi) Online Survey & Input Map

The consultants have been working on a 14-question online survey. They were narrowing those down to the 4–5 most critical questions that would be sent to community members as a FlashVote survey, which would soon be open to the public. The City Manager mentioned how community members could submit their input on other City initiatives regularly shared using FlashVote on the City’s website.

Mr. Koczalka explained that the online survey would be important for the consultants to fully analyze the roadway situation in Keene. While the crash data will show specific issues, it would also be important to gather anecdotal details from the community on things like near misses, which might not be easily or clearly assessed in the crash data.

Mr. Goff demonstrated how the online survey would be embedded within an online input map to gather data on specific intersections or roadways. The survey user could use the map to indicate locations in the City where there are barriers or challenges to various modes of transportation. These details would show the consultants what to assess further and how those assessments should contribute to subsequent recommendations.

B) Data Collection & Analysis

C) Determine Priorities

Mr. Tang explained that all the stakeholder engagement, data collection, and analysis would help with determining priorities for Keene’s RSAP.

Mr. Tang said that determining priorities would allow for the biggest impact. This would aid in finding locations in the City where proven treatments could be effective (the Federal Highway Administration has 28 effective measures). There are funds available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for behavioral safety measures. Collectively, the consultants would

242 analyze infrastructure and non-infrastructure treatments that could improve safety in the City's
243 priority areas.

244
245 Mr. Tang displayed a map of Richmond, VA, to demonstrate how a City map could be overlaid
246 with things like high injury networks, for example. Doing the same for Keene, the consultants
247 would be able to focus on car crashes for a strategically focused analysis. Still, this is a
248 somewhat reactive approach, and the goal was to be proactive through activities like community
249 engagement. Through a comprehensive but strategic review of different roadways in the City, the
250 consultants would assess whether there are common characteristics among crashes in Keene to
251 allow for more proactive planning. Mr. Tang used the map to again demonstrate the importance
252 of equity, noting that some roadways create challenges to accessing healthcare, for example.
253 Socio-economic data will help to determine underserved and disadvantaged neighborhoods (e.g.,
254 households with 0 cars). Identifying comprehensive and strategic priority locations allows for
255 short-, medium-, and long-term mitigation. Overlaying socio-economic and crash data could
256 prove insightful. At the Federal level, the goal is to prioritize 40% of funds to serve
257 disadvantaged census tracts. When Keene applied for this grant in the first year, only certain
258 census tracts were identified. In the second year of the grant, the definition was refined further
259 with additional metrics, resulting in a more robust tool. The third round of applications was
260 anticipated to open 2–3 weeks after this meeting, and would align with this Committee's
261 timeline. The consultants would continue monitoring any changes to those census tracts as there
262 had been some ongoing modifications. The consultants would carefully read the notice of
263 funding opportunity to understand all changes and nuances. Mr. Tang added that there were a lot
264 of planning dollars available to encourage localities to consider potential demonstration (i.e.,
265 pilot) projects. The City could also choose to pursue additional studies that could complement
266 this RSAP.

267
268 In terms of being proactive, Chair Mack asked if the consultants were aware of Keene's
269 Complete Streets Policy and Complete Street network typology, which could be helpful in
270 proactively prioritizing funds for safety improvements. Mr. Koczalka agreed that one of the
271 consultants' tasks was to assess both City of Keene and NH DOT policies. VHB helped to create
272 the NH DOT Strategic Highway Safety Plan, which included language on complete streets and
273 equity. A brief discussion ensued about the various possible funding streams for these projects.

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275 **D) Develop Improvement Recommendations**

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277 The efforts listed above to analyze data and prioritize improvements would lead to
278 recommendations at both the specific project level and general policy/standards level.

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280 **E) Action Plan Development**

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282 The Action Plan will provide a roadmap to success, with equity interwoven.

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284 **7) Project Schedule**

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286 The consultants noted that the project was a bit behind schedule. A Federal notice of funding
287 opportunity (NOFO) was moved up to February from April and the end date was not yet known,
288 though 90–100 days was anticipated. The consultants were working with the data to develop
289 strategies and countermeasures. Mr. Lussier was pushing the consultants to be ready to apply for
290 new grants when they become available. That said, Mr. Lussier was more interested in having a
291 good plan, which can be referenced and used as the basis of funding requests for years to come.
292 For example, the NHDOT’s 10-year plan includes Highway Safety Improvement Program
293 (HSIP) funding for certain projects, but the City needs a solid plan of what it wants to
294 accomplish first. Mr. Koczalka noted that once Keene has a RSAP in place, there would be a
295 process in place to incorporate new data once VHB is no longer on this project; this can help
296 with City Staff turnover.

297
298 Councilor Tobin mentioned the City of Keene’s SeeClickFix software/app that allows residents
299 to report issues, like a downed tree, to the Public Works Department. She wondered if roadway
300 safety concerns could be reported there too. Mr. Lussier said that system was developed and built
301 more so for Public Works tasks. Still, it could be used to report more general safety concerns
302 even though that is not what it was built for. The City Manager thought there might be a way to
303 dig further into the SeeClickFix data to identify street safety reports.

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305 **8) Open Forum Discussion**

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307 The Committee engaged in an open discussion to brainstorm the following 4 questions about
308 general roadway challenges, goals, and concerns.

- 309
310 **A) What are your key goals for the RSPC?**
311 **B) What are the challenges for roadway safety in Keene?**
312 **C) Who are the communities of concern in your daily work?**
313 **D) Which agencies or partners do you believe should participate in this plan?**

314
315 In terms of goals, Mr. Tang noted that NH Strategic Highway Safety Plan has a goal to reduce
316 fatalities and injuries by 50% by 2035, and working toward 0 fatalities by 2050. Keene could
317 have more aggressive goals depending on what works for the City.

318
319 Councilor Tobin suggested creating pathways where different modes of transportation can
320 coexist. For example, how could someone safely get from east to west Keene without a car. The
321 pathways do not always have to be alongside the roadway. She thought bikes would align with
322 some sections of the City but not others. She was also interested in identifying barriers to these
323 pathways, including seasonally, when snow plowing might create additional barriers, for
324 example.

325
326 Ms. Zatecka mentioned NH DOT’s Vulnerable User Plan, which was developed after many
327 bike/pedestrian crashes in transition zones (i.e., rural to urban).

328
329 Mr. Linnenbringer wondered if increasing safety for 1 mode of transportation could decrease
330 safety for other modes of transportation (e.g., cyclists and raised curbs). Ms. Roark mentioned
331 that in Sweden, everyone bikes for every reason, with safe and accommodating lines on every
332 sidewalk to accommodate bikes and pedestrians. Ms. DelaCroix spoke in favor of raised
333 crosswalks, which remind drivers to be attentive to pedestrians sharing the space; there was
334 general agreement about the safety of raised crosswalks, though there was one mention that they
335 could potentially damage a bike. Mr. Linnenbringer mentioned vehicle speeds as a concern, for
336 which he hears many complaints. Ms. DelaCroix noted that when bikes are at sidewalk grade, the
337 sidewalks would be wider, which would better allow the City to plow sidewalks. The City
338 Manager added that any new sidewalks built in the City should be wide enough to be plowed.

339
340 Councilor Tobin questioned whether there could be a way to develop accountability so that
341 people constantly driving through crosswalks with pedestrians are compliant. For example, the
342 City could enforce failure to yield infractions. The City Manager said that level of enforcement
343 for vehicles is challenging because by the time it is reported, they are gone. As a part of the
344 downtown reconstruction project, the City was contemplating bike lanes at sidewalk grade,
345 including rules and enforcement. The City Manager said rules are important, but enforcement is
346 equally important, as is a realistic expectation of enforcement. Mr. Koczalka added that public
347 outreach and input is particularly important to gain insight into issues for which there is no data,
348 like near misses.

349
350 Regarding communities of concern, Mr. Johnson said he was retired from KSC but still on the
351 Board and well connected there. He is also on the Hundred Nights Board. He added that another
352 community of concern is the elderly and Keene Senior Center, whose experiences with safety
353 would be important to consider.

354
355 Ms. DelaCroix said that if we are relying on enforcement, then we have already lost. There are
356 many practices, for example, like narrowing intersections or sharpening corners, which slow
357 traffic and force drivers to acknowledge that they are entering an unusual space. Mr. Lussier
358 added that such engineering solutions would deter 85% of drivers, but there would always be the
359 15% who do not follow rules. Still, Mr. Johnson mentioned that crossing Main Street to/from
360 KSC is much safer now than 10 years ago, when there were no flashing lights at the crosswalk.
361 Ms. DelaCroix also encouraged a focus on newer forms of transportation, like electric bikes.

362
363 Chair Mack added that community youths are important stakeholders. He works with a non-
364 profit that developed a youth transportation service. For example, there are dangers for kids
365 riding scooters down West Street in the dark during winter. He thought youths were often
366 overlooked as people who cannot generally afford or drive a car. When talking about Safe
367 Routes to School, he mentioned the 5 Es: education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation,
368 and engineering. He wondered if these factors would be important in creating the RSAP or if the
369 Plan would be more focused on infrastructure. Mr. Tang said they would absolutely be
370 important. Such an effort involving the youths of Keene could be a good demonstration/pilot

371 project. Mr. Tang added that the RSAP will ultimately reflect the safe systems approach, which
372 focuses on 5 elements: safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads, and post-crash care.

373

374 **9) Next Steps**

375

376 The next steps include:

- 377 ▪ Schedule stakeholder meetings
- 378 ▪ Distribute the public survey to community members
- 379 ▪ Data analysis results
- 380 ▪ Set goals and targets
- 381 ▪ Set strategies and countermeasures
- 382 ▪ Develop the project website

383

384 This Committee will have 6 meetings, intended to each be 1.5 hours. The next meeting is
385 Monday, February 26.

386

387 **10) Adjournment**

388

389 There being no further business, Chair Mack adjourned the meeting at 5:35 PM.

390

391 Respectfully submitted by,
392 Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
393 January 29, 2024

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395 Reviewed and edited by,
396 Donald R. Lussier, P.E., City Engineer

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398 Adopted on February 26, 2024 on a roll-call vote with 8 members in favor and Debbie Bowie
399 abstaining and Ockle Johnson absent.