



**NCC Transportation Advisory Committee
Lincoln Town Hall, Lincoln, NH
Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2019
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

Members: Doug Grant (Randolph); Clayton Macdonald (Stratford – TAC Chair); Carl Martland (Sugar Hill); Raymond Gorman (Colebrook); Eric Grenier (Berlin); Donna Laurent (Jefferson); Rosalind Page (Lisbon); Joe Chenard (Lincoln)

NCC Staff: Alex Belenz (Planner); Michelle Moren-Grey (Co-Executive Director & CEO); Danica Melone (Associate Planner)

Guests: Phil Goff (Alta Planning & Design); Andrew Dorsett (Littleton Town Manager); Brian Bresnahan (Congresswoman Kuster); Chuck Henderson (Senator Shaheen); Nancy DeCoursey and Will DeCoursey (Friends of Presidential Rail Trail); Abby Evankow (Gorham); Angela Figallo McShane (Friends of Profile Trails); Carole Bont (Lincoln Town Planner); Dave Harkless (Littleton Bike Shop); Jeff Schall (Gorham); Mark Shea (Gorham Town Manager); Marianne Borowski (Cross NH Adventure Trail)

Call to Order: Mr. Macdonald called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM and introductions were made.

1. Statewide Bicycle Plan

Mr. Goff introduced himself and his company, Alta Planning + Design. Alta Planning + Design assists with strategic bicycle and pedestrian transportation planning on state, regional, and local levels, with offices all around the country.

Alta was selected as the consultant for NHDOT to develop a Statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, to be completed by the end of 2019. The project is focused primarily on improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity along state highway corridors. A project website (www.nhpedbikeplan.com) provides all project-related meeting notes, materials, presentations, and includes a variety of options for public participation. The development of the plan will be overseen by a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of the NH Complete Streets Advisory Committee, plus some additional representations. The PAC will be meeting monthly to steward the project.

Mr. Goff described how to use the interactive map-feature on the project website, which may be used to identify current and proposed bike and pedestrian areas. Users can drop a pin on the map and leave suggestions or comments regarding bicycle and pedestrian conditions in that specific location.

Mr. Goff reviewed the month-by-month project schedule for public engagement events which are to be held around the state. There will be a second public meeting in Lincoln April or May. The statewide public meetings will focus on developing the vision and goals of the project; present the results of some of the analysis of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure gaps; a look at the preliminary bike network

recommendations; and some next steps including preliminary evaluation criteria. Mr. Goff explained the concept of “Meetings in a Box” which is essentially a kit for regional planning commission to be able to reach out to municipalities to hold smaller meetings and educate on the public on the project.

The next step of the project will be analyzing existing conditions related to bike and pedestrian infrastructure. The project team will also be reviewing pertinent state, regional, and local projects, plans, and studies for guidance. Alta will also be analyzing the level of traffic stress on roadways in order to identify the roadways ability to accommodate bike & pedestrian users. Mr. Goff added that the level of stress would also help identify priority locations for improvements.

Mr. Goff presented a draft technical memorandum describing potential statewide goals and policies for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity. Mr. Grant noted that in the Goals section of the memorandum, some goals don’t quite fall-in-line with the needs of the region – adding that they may fit for more urbanized areas in southern New Hampshire. Mr. Grant added that mountain biking trails in the region should be included in the scope of the project. Mr. Goff noted that identify the locations of mountain bike trails is important in understanding gaps and opportunities for connections; however, the scope and budget of the project directs the focus primary to on-road/paved facilities. Mr. Goff added that there would be an economic impact analysis as a component of the project.

Mr. Martland asked if NHDOT had asked Alta Planning + Design to look at state roads only, or any additional roads that would be contenders for having improved bike/ped infrastructure. Mr. Goff responded that they will primarily look at state highways but will also be looking at secondary roadways that provide safer alternative routes to state highways.

Mr. Shea asked if the economic analysis would be broken down by region – by county or by regional planning commission region. Mr. Grant added that he felt it was vital to break down the economic analysis by region because the economic landscape and characteristics vary greatly across the state. Mr. Grant added that it would help to break down the North Country Council planning region even further to better look at the difference among the three counties. Mr. Goff replied that he would have to reach out to his economist to better understand how the economic analysis would be carried out, but he would take this feedback into consideration.

Mr. Goff continued to add that the next steps for February-March would be meeting with all the RPC Transportation Advisory Committees; data collection and base mapping will continue; monitoring the website for feedback; and more.

Mr. Goff described the importance of public input to the development of the plan. The mapping and survey tools included in the project website will help NHDOT understand priority connections and alternative routes.

Mr. Grant suggested that Mr. Goff add dirt roads to the map as they are also desirable to use for bicycling. Ms. Borowski discussed where she bikes and how some roads may be safer while others have better connectivity, and asked how the ranking system of roads would work. Mr. Goff responded that there will be a strategic analysis of how roads are prioritized, including looking at the local and regional goals within master plans; crash and fatality records; and the cost to renovate or build the infrastructure. Mr. Goff reiterated that that local roads would be looked in terms of alternative routes to state highways.

Mr. Goff noted that his email is philgoff@altaplanning.com and he is open to receiving comments on the vision, goals, objectives, as well as the project maps.

Mr. Martland stated that it was important for Alta to segment their analysis to better fit the needs of the region, and that considerations should be built in for all levels of users, from children to experience cyclists. Mr. Martland added that there are well-known local bike routes in each town – understanding these connections will be important for the economic considerations as not each town has a major state highway corridor. Mr. Goff explained that there will be policy and program recommendations, as well as design guidelines, that can be utilized by NHDOT, communities, and RPCs for when it comes to road improvements. The mapping tools on the project website will be very useful in identifying local routes.

Mr. Macdonald noted that there is no definition for “bicycles” in the memorandum. Mr. Macdonald noted that 4 feet should be the minimum shoulder width. Mr. Goff added the language regarding design guidelines has been revised to suggest shoulders be at least 4 feet but, if absolutely necessary, may be lowered to 30 inches.

Mr. Dorsett asked if there was a way for the public to make comments on the website and Mr. Goff responded that they can fill out the survey, put comments onto the interactive map, or submit private comments to Mr. Goff himself.

Ms. Borowski discussed that she plans her bike trips where she can spend a week biking through a scenic area, and added that there isn't infrastructure for trips such as that in New Hampshire. Ms. Borowski added that she felt locals could help identify those key routes that could help develop multi-day biking trips.

Mr. Macdonald inquired if the plan would address use of trails by OHRVs. Mr. Goff responded that they would not be covering OHRV use. Mr. MacDonald asked if shared-use trails in the plan would then exclude OHRVs. Mr. Goff noted that paved paths built for use by bicycle and pedestrians typically do not permit OHRVs. Mr. Belenz added that projects built using federal bike-ped funding are typically not allowed to have OHRV access; however, there are examples where trails are shared in the region (e.g., rail trails). Mr. MacDonald also asked about the use of electric assist on bicycles and how that would factor into the plan. Mr. Goff responded it would not be considered but there is currently some legislature consider e-bikes apart of the plan.

Mr. DeCoursey asked if the plan would alleviate the need for individuals to approach their town and then their town to approach the state to ask for improvements such as shoulders. Mr. Goff responded that some of the policy recommendations (e.g., 4-foot shoulders) could lead to these improvements being incorporated into future projects. Mr. DeCoursey added that lack of signage is a challenge for regional bicycle travel. Mr. Grant agreed with Mr. DeCoursey that signage was lacking.

Mr. Grant noted that Plymouth should not be included on the map as it was no longer apart of the North Country Council planning region. Mr. Belenz asked if there was any further comments and there was none, the group thanked Mr. Goff.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes of the November 20th, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously by motion of Grant/Laurent.

3. Regular Updates

North Country Council Updates

Mr. Belenz provided a list of updates from North Country Council's transportation planning program:

- Congressman Pappas recently hosted a round table with transportation staff from all RPCs to get perspectives on what can be changed at the state or local level and how he may assist. Mr. Belenz participated and highlighted some of the region's transportation needs.
- NCC has developed a series of transportation planning guides for communities in the region. The first two guides are related to natural hazard resiliency and bicycle and pedestrian planning. NCC will be producing additional guides as well. If there is a topic or subject that your community would like covered, let NCC know.
- NCC staff will be meeting with NHDOT in March to discuss NHDOT's review of proposed Ten Year Plan project from Berlin, Littleton, Gorham, and Shelburne.
- NHDOT has announced funding awards through the Transportation Alternatives Program. Northumberland was awarded \$800,000 to improve sidewalks in Groveton Village. Nine projects were selected statewide out of 38 applications.
- There has not been much progress regarding the working group for the Franconia Notch parking situation due to the partial federal government shutdown.
- NCC, NH Fish & Game, White Mountains Community College, and the Androscoggin Watershed Council will soon begin meetings with communities in the Androscoggin River watershed to communicate the results of the watershed-wide stream culvert assessment project.
- NCC will be applied for 5305e planning grant funds through the Federal Transit Administration in order to fund an update to the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan for the region. The plan is required to be updated in order to transportation service providers to access certain federal grant funds that support volunteer driver programs and other transportation services (e.g., 5310). Mr. Grant noted that there have been challenges with the current 5310 grant round due to additional compliance requirements being enacted by NHDOT. There are current discussions ongoing regarding who will be the lead agency in applying for these funds.
- NCC has been working with the other RPCs towards creating a statewide CommuteSmart challenge. The RPCs would work with regional employers to build teams of employees who would compete for prizes for the month of June by "commuting smart" (e.g., carpooling, walking, using transit). More information is available at www.commutessmartnh.org or by contacting Danica Melone at dmelone@nccouncil.org.

North Country Scenic Byways Update

Mr. Martland noted that the North Country Scenic Byways Council (NCSBC) is promoting the region's byway trails in order to help increase awareness and draw in more people to experience the region's scenic beauty. The primary needs of the byways system are improved infrastructure (e.g., pull-offs, signage) and promotion. The next NCSBC meeting is on Thursday, February 28 in Conway and all are welcome to attend.

Ms. Borowski asked if the NCSBC is concerned with shoulder width for bicycling. Mr. Martland discussed that he was in favor improving infrastructure to improve enjoyment by all users of the road. Mr.

Martland noted that there used to be a federal scenic byways program that could fund these types of improvements.

Community Updates

Mr. Gorman noted that some roads near the Balsams Resort have been proposed to be discontinued by NHDOT. Mr. Macdonald suggested that Mr. Gorman provide any information he has to Mr. Belenz, and that a more detailed discussion could be had at the next TAC meeting.

Mr. Macdonald asked if it was a pre-established policy that if the road be discontinued, that NHDOT should update/maintain the road prior to turning it back over to the town. Mr. Belenz noted that he would have to look into NHDOT policy, but that it was typical for some improvement (e.g., repaving) to be done. The 2015 NCC Regional Transportation Plan includes a policy statement describing NCC's position that roads should not be turned over to communities without some form of improvement.

4. Regional Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Belenz noted that letters are being to all of the region's select boards and planning boards to requesting input for the Regional Transportation Plan. NCC's preference is to meet with communities, but written feedback will be accepted. Mr. Belenz added that the Tillotson Foundation has provided NCC with funds so that they may provide refreshments at public outreach meetings. Mr. Belenz added that he and Ms. Melone are gathering demographic data to supplement the feedback that is received from communities.

Mr. Belenz added that the 2015 Regional Transportation Plan includes a number of policy statements that he would like the TAC to review for their current applicability. Mr. Belenz asked members to review the Bicycle and Pedestrian policy statements.

Mr. Chenard noted that he had heard that there are roads up north, near Milan and further north, NHDOT is proposing to tear up the asphalt, grind it down, and repave roads with the reconstituted asphalt. Mr. Belenz responded he would reach out for more information on the matter.

The floor was opened up for feedback on the Bicycle and Pedestrian policy statements. Ms. Figallo McShane noted that it would be great to have bike racks on school buses, particularly in rural areas where students may have to walk up to a mile to the bus stop and also offers access to their downtown areas after school. Mr. Belenz indicated he would look into examples where this has been accomplished.

Mr. Belenz added that he would be reviewing and revising the statements and would present them at the next TAC meeting. Ms. Figallo McShane added that if schools provided trails and routes where students could access their school safely, it could improve the desirability for families to move to the area. Ms. Laurent added that she frequently sees people biking to work and felt improved infrastructure would help in attracting businesses and employment. Ms. Laurent noted that the only means of transportation to work in the region is driving for the vast majority of residents.

The TAC adjourned at 5:02 PM by motion of Gorman/Macdonald.

Respectfully submitted by Danica Melone.