



**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Wednesday, May 3, 2007 at 7:30 a.m.**  
**City Hall Conference Room A**

The Safe Routes to School Committee met on Wednesday, May 3, 2007 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall Conference Room A.

Present were John Bohenko, City Manager, City Council Representatives Ken Smith, Chairman of the Traffic & Safety Committee, Christine Dwyer and Ned Raynolds and Ken Smith, Debbie Finnigan, Traffic Engineer, Chris Cummings, Police Department representative and Clay Hayward, School Board representative and Christina Westfall and Jonathan Bailey, Traffic & Safety Representatives. Also present was John Corrigan, State Department of Transportation, on the State Wide Safe Routes to School Coordinator.

The City Manager brought the meeting to order at approximately 7:45 a.m.  
The Committee members introduced themselves.

The City Manager presented the Committee members with a list of members prepared by Kelli Barnaby, City Clerk showing voting members and non-voting members, stating there may be changes.

Councilor Raynolds has recommended to the Mayor that two public members be added to this Committee. This is a City Council decision and will be addressed Monday night.

**II. Election of Officers**

Councilor Dwyer stated that they had just learned that other members are proposed to be added and is not suggested delay, but suggested election of officers at the next meeting and do a pro tem for this meeting.

The City Manager suggested Councilor Dwyer.

Councilor Smith stated that during the City Council vote it was stated that a City Councilor would not be Chairman.

**MOTION** made by Councilor Smith nominating Christina Westfall as Chair pro tem. Seconded by Councilor Dwyer. Motion passed.

The City Manager stated that Debbie Finnigan will be doing a lot of coordinating with the Committee as well as Elaine Boucas our Secretary.

### **III. Scheduling of Meetings**

After discussion it was decided that the second Monday of each month at 7:30 – 9:00 a.m.

**MOTION** made by Councilor Smith to schedule the meetings on the Second Monday of each month at 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. to be held in Conference Room A. Seconded by Councilor Dwyer. Motion passed.

The next meeting will be May 14, 2007 at 7:30 a.m.

### **IV. Presentation of Safe Routes to Schools**

John Corrigan, State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Safe Routes to school Coordinator gave a power point program on the Safe Routes to School Program. The overall objective is to encourage students from kindergarten through eighth grade who live within approximately 2 miles of school to either walk to school or ride their bike. The program is designed to decrease traffic congestion and to improve fitness. Advantages are physical fitness, reduce traffic congestions, clean air, improve air quality, and a fun way to get to school. Safe Routes to School is a Federal Program administered by the NHDOT and is funded under federal legislation known as Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). It is 100% federally funded, no requirement for a local match. There is only one million dollars per year for the next five years for the state of New Hampshire.

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Taskforce is what makes this program work is the concept of the SRTS Taskforce which today's meeting will be the first step in developing this. People at the local level will identify barriers and figure out why kids are not walking or riding to school and to come up with solutions. People involved would be from schools, municipality, parents, children or any community organizations interested in fitness, environment or general community development. When the task force is organized they work with a concept known as the 5 "E's".

Education – Safety, rules of the road, crossing streets safely, use of helmets.

Encouragement – Public relations elements within schools to encourage riding and walking, such as assemblies, events, something that creates excitement about the program.

Enforcement, Evaluation and Engineering, Police Department enforcement

Evaluation – Schools to be aware of the total number of students, number who live approximately 2 miles, number arriving by school bus, number already walking or riding bikes and number arriving by a single occupancy vehicle (SOV).

Engineering – Signs, road markings, repair of sidewalks, establishment or repair of bike paths.

The 5 "E's" are broken into (1) infrastructure and (2) non-infrastructure. Between 10 - 30% federal money has to be reserved for non-infrastructure projects and a minimum of 70% federal funds will reimburse local communities for so-called infrastructure projects.

The creation of "Walking School Buses" and "Rolling Bike Trains" escort programs where adults oversee groups of children bicycling or walking to and from school are two concept programs dealing with fear of crime and traffic hazards so children are not walking/biking alone.

The funding is competitive and anticipating putting out a Request For Proposal (RFP) at the end of May or early June. 70-90% of the yearly one million dollars will be spent for New Hampshire and will be spent on the infrastructure projects and 10-30% will be spent on the non-infrastructure, the education and encouragement project.

Mr. Corrigan stated that they encourage communities to put together an entire package that may involve some other kinds of funding and referred to the Transportation and Enhancement Program, which is 75% federal and 25% local. If a community has a SRTS program in conjunction with another program will be looked at favorably. The SRTS funds cannot be used as the match itself.

The City Manager asked about eligibility of the leverage that million is 10 million dollars worth of projects through encouragement of local government. Mr. Corrigan responded this would be eligible.

There are 7 and 8 communities that are organized. It is anticipated that the first round of grants there will be more applications for more money than they actually have and as more communities learn about the programs there will be more.

The scoring criteria is set up to heavily favor communities that put together the task force and a comprehensive plan, points are given for having a comprehensive task force in place. You can apply for funds, but if you don't have the task force or a plan, chances of winning a grant are much smaller.

Ned Reynolds referred to the capital plan stating the City is spending some of City money on infrastructure such as sidewalks, bicycling proposals. Thinks what the City Manager was asking was the community is already putting its own money on the table, are we more likely to be competitive for money than a community that is asking for 100% funding. Mr. Corrigan responded yes, if you can show that the community is already paying attention to the issue, are willing to put up money for sidewalks, will put you in a much stronger position.

Mr. Corrigan suggested reaching out to school people, principals and health educators.

The City Manager stated the City Council wanted the Committee a certain size and then invite people in as needed. The Superintendent is interested in sitting on this Committee. Mr. Corrigan stated that wider representation will score extra points with funding.

Mr. Corrigan stated that people in the local communities will recognize what needs to be done and come up with their own solutions.

Mr. Hayward stated that they have a program set up established about 4 years ago, there are names of certain individuals in the community that also keep an eye out for kids as they walk to school. Mr. Hayward referred to creative solutions and asked if anyone thought of a creative program done through the school system where awards are given out to students who do ride,

Mr. Corrigan responded this would be considered an encouragement program. There is a program run by walk NH whereby people who walk or bike fill out a card and the mileage accumulates by walking the width of NH and the length of NH. The program will pay for minor prizes such as bike helmets, flashlights, etc.

Mr. Corrigan stated (he doesn't feel it would apply to Portsmouth) that the Federal program does require they give special us special consideration to communities with limited resources. The criteria that will probably be developed will be county by county and will be determined by median household income. Portsmouth will probably be competing on its own merits.

Mr. Corrigan asked the members what they see as major issues in Portsmouth.

Ned Reynolds responded that a lot of traffic congestion around schools comes from parents driving kids to school. Thanks Councilor Ken Smith putting this forward, it's an exciting day for him that Portsmouth is becoming a more bicycle/pedestrian friendly community. Stated he attended last year in DC the New England American Friendly Bicycle Community Program, Bike Summit run by a non-profit, one bicycle friendly community is Brunswick ME.

Councilor Dwyer referred to the Woodbury Ave. improvements and feels this has great potential as there is a school there, has not yet been designed, is new to everyone and is something we could look at. Secondly, the location of the Middle School, one thing that has come up repeatedly as a problem with renovating Parrott Ave. is congestion that occurs during drop-off. Whatever is done with the Middle School there will be kids there for a couple of years and wonders if this might be a place where we can identify some ways to make some changes there. Thirdly, is the education and there is poor modeling of adult bicyclists. Adult bicyclists help younger bicyclists learn the rules of the road. There is nothing in the community that exercises interest like dogs and wonders about walk your dog, walk kids to school program. Sees more people walking dogs than walking kids to school and related to this is education.

Jonathan Bailey stated one of the strongest arguments heard from parents is that there is no walking or riding to Jones Ave. everybody will have to be bused. The opportunity to take this time while we still have the Middle School here to demonstrate is a great idea. The program ends at Grade 8 why are we ending at Grade 8, is there some gain we can get back at the high school level as well? Younger kids are not just looking at adults but looking at older kids.

Councilor Ken Smith stated it seems to lead by example to do adult bicycle education as well as the high school, the younger students will do as the bigger kids do as they think it is "cool". Also referred to the paths coming from the schools, it is important to get the neighborhoods to the school, but it is really from the schools out to the neighborhoods. Also concerned with paths, we have bicycle walking paths that come out to Little Harbor to New Castle Ave., one at the high school, Dondero, and New Franklin and would like to look basically from the school out. It is also not just the public schools, there is St. Patrick's School and possibility of another school.

The City Manager suggested taking 5 schools and actually have meetings at the schools and sit with the principal at 7:30 a.m. and other staff and at that time, Debbie Finnigan could create a map for each school and suggested Dondero might be a good model as neighborhoods surround it as there is not substantial amount of traffic going through these side streets, maybe something you want to consider starting in the fall setting up meetings at those schools. Clay Hayward could arrange this with the superintendent.

Mr. Hayward felt this would be a great kickoff and with the Superintendent's help and principals can do something in each school having the kids involved.

Mr. Hayward asked if he could have all the information in the state on this program and feels this could be big in our community and the kids will grasp this strongly.

Councilor Dwyer stated that a school in Maryland that has this program and 4 children had been killed walking or getting dropped off. One thing they did was to take photographs in the morning of what ended up as being highly dangerous situations and one of the most dangerous is the kids getting out into traffic or getting out of the car and walking in front of another one. The photographs were the stimuli in more community involvement. Suggested before school got out

this year is to have photographs of the congestion issue and particular problems that illustrate helping people to see what the problems are.

Christina Westfall asked you're wanting to kick this off in the fall, should we be presenting this to the schools now in order to write the proposals or the proposal be written without that information?

Mr. Hayward stated needing to gather all information we can get from the state and also the leaders in this room, will take time to put it all together and feels the best thing is to present it during the next school year.

The City Manager's thought was that they would go out and gather the information, this will be an on-going thing. Get their perspective and the key staff members, resource officer at the school.

Christina Westfall understood that the meeting with the teachers and principal should not occur now as opposed to the fall?

Mr. Hayward thought the meetings could be held now. Felt the meetings should be held soon with the principals to gather information, the sooner we work on this the better, so at the next school year we will be well planned and have a well established kickoff and wants all bases covered and have all the answers.

Christina Westfall asked who organizes the meeting with the schools?

The City Manager suggested for efficiency to start to have Clay Hayward arrange for all Principals come in to your meeting then branch out from there in the fall.

Mr. Hayward stated there is another individual that I would like to talk with the Superintendent about having her get involved with this Committee as she is involved with safety with the children riding bikes to school.

Ned Reynolds referred to a brochure from a conference stating there is a one day workshop aimed at school officials and perhaps convene at a one day workshop on what the program is. Referred to Dan Stuart and there is a bike coalition in Maine, bike rallies, etc. and suggested a workshop next door free.

Councilor Smith asked if there is a bicycle education happening at the elementary school level and if so, is it starting now with bicycle here, and one idea is a bicycle rodeo which seems something simple that we can do sooner than later and at the end of the school year have a competition amongst the schools. Is there already in the school curriculum a bicycle safety course being taught?

Detective Chris Cummings of the Police Department stated there is a whole program that is taught all year long to the elementary schools, covering a host of things. Detective Cummings goes in for an average of 4 or 5 weeks to every single class throughout the elementary school system including St. Patrick's school. Every year they get to summertime safety and gets incorporated into everything as well as all the rest of the lessons they have learned throughout the year are touched on again. Bicycle safety does get touched on towards the end of the year but more of a bonus program that we get to if we can. It may take to June before we get to everybody. There is a set designated curriculum that we teach throughout the year.

Councilor Smith asked Detective Smith to bring the bicycle portion of that curriculum to the next meeting.

Debbie Finnigan asked what the criteria is for the grant, when will we get the information and what is the deadline?

Mr. Corrigan responded they are anticipating issuing the RFP either late this month or early June and there will be a 6-8 week period for getting the applications in and then they will be scored and the awards will be announced probably late summer early fall and is anticipating probably a second round for RFP sometime in the fall.

Mr. Corrigan stated it is a good idea to have informal task forces established in each of the schools so they can come up with plans specific to that school and involving the people from that school and parents. Important that focus is placed on one school and a two mile area around it.

Christina Westfall stated it seems we are in a fact finding information gathering mode now and looks forward to the next meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 in Conference Room A.

## **V. Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted

Elaine Boucas  
Recording Secretary