

**PORTSMOUTH  
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING  
8:00 a.m. – Thursday, March 13, 2008  
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Councilor Ken Smith, Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 8:05 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL: Members Present:**

Councilor Ken Smith, Chairman	Ted Gray, Member
Steve Parkinson, P.E. Public Works Director	John Connors, Member
Capt. Janet Champlin	Jonathan Bailey, Member
Assist. Fire Chief Achilles	Christina Westfall, Member
	John Howe, Member
	Brendan Cooney, Member

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

**IT WAS VOTED** on a Motion made by Ted Gray to accept the minutes of the January 10, 2008 meeting. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

**III. NEW BUSINESS:**

- (A) **East Coast Greenery Committee** – Presentation on Bike Route Signs – Scott Bogle, Senior Transportation Planner with Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) updated the Committee on the New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway, New Hampshire segment of the East Coast Greenway and plans to install group markers signage on the interim on-road route for the Greenway. The East Coast Greenway envisions an off-road multi-use trail extending the East Coast from Maine to Key West Florida referred to as the Appalachian Urban Trail to connect coastal cities and towns up and down the East Coast. The project nationally is 20% complete, another 20% being programmed in other states and in NH there was an initial planning effort back in the late 90's undertaken by the NH Chapter of East Coast Alliance. A planning grant was received by RPC from the NH DOT to undertake a conceptual design and implementation of the plans. A Technical Assistance Grant from the National Parks Service, Rivers and Trails Program. The process is projected to be completed early July of this year and as interim on-road routing for Greenway mainly following Rtes. 1A and 1B has been identified with a brief diversion in Rye south of Wallis Sands State Park. Received a \$5,000 express grant from NH Charitable Foundation to cover installation of route markers signage to mark the route and improve awareness of project. Met with DOT and worked with them developing a design for the signage and DOT has agreed to install and maintain the signs on portions of the routes where they have jurisdiction. There are two areas they do not have jurisdiction, one is the detour in Rye and the other is within the Portsmouth Urban Compact area extending from Memorial Bridge down to New Castle Ave. Riders would enter NH north across from the Memorial Bridge and would turn right on Scott Ave. at Harbor Place, under bridge next to Prescott Park left onto Marcy St.. Northbound riders would come in on 1B and come up to Prescott

Park taking left onto Court St., right onto Atkinson and right onto State proceeding across Memorial Bridge. DOT indicated they will install the signs in May and at this point not certain about City of Portsmouth. June 7<sup>th</sup> is National Trails Day and hope to hold a ribbon cutting then.

Steve Parkinson stated the Scott Ave. Bridge construction begins in 2009 with some work being done this April and the State is making provisions to traverse people from one end of the bridge to the other via vans during the period the bridge is closed to vehicles and pedestrians.

Ted Gray referred to the amount of signs being 13-15 and concerned with sign proliferation as we have too many signs now and asked how many people will use this and suggested using a road map. Along 1A is dangerous as bicyclists feel they own the road, all over the road with no consideration for auto traffic. Sounds like a good idea but feels it's over kill.

Scott Bogle responded they had counted 120 people heading northbound as they headed southbound on a Saturday and this route is already used by a lot of bicyclists and feels the use will increase once signs are in place. DOT is starting process of adding shoulders on Pioneer Rd and agrees there is a need for all users of the road to be considerate of other users of the road, either bicyclists, drivers or runners.

John Howe asked out of the 120 people, how many were locals as opposed to through bicyclists and that there is a pinch point on Marcy from Prescott Park and Pleasant St. Have you considered any re-routing in this area? Suggested using Mechanic St.

Scott Bogle responded that because it is narrow there, drivers and cyclists tend to use extra caution there and DOT recommends "Share the Road" signs in these areas. Feels the idea was to have this follow the already designated state bicycle route and scenic byway and to have this run next to as many different cultural and natural resources areas as possible such as Strawberry Banke and Prescott Park. Scott will ask Debbie Finnigan and Peter Britz to go back out to look at this.

Christina Westfall asked for clarification of signage at Memorial Bridge at Scott Ave.

Scott Bogle apologized that it is not marked on the plan. There is a telephone pole on the right side of the road on that island where a sign will be placed.

Ken Smith asked about looking coming straight up and onto Junkins and down to State St. as there are already bike lanes painted and designated there and might alleviate the pinch point at corner of Marcy and Pleasant Sts. We have bicyclists along this route already but we have different bike races, runner races, etc. Take a left onto South to Junkins Ave. to State St. to Memorial Bridge.

Scott Bogle will take this up with Debbie and Peter.

Assist. Fire Chief Achilles asked Jonathan Bailey, who is a bicyclist, what his thought is of this trail.

Jonathan Bailey thanked Scott for the tremendous amount of work that has gone into this and appreciates getting it to this point. There is already a lot of traffic and groups coming through on fund raisers, 150 people already using this route, it's there, it works and is pretty effective, there are pinch points on Marcy but for this kind of usage it is more dispersed than necessarily an event that will put everybody there on the same day. Feels an undue burden would be placed on them to make any changes at this point, it's already here and is working, let's stamp it, sign it and make it part of a national thing and go with the work that has existed.

The Chair stated that if we find it does become a safety issue at some of these choke points how do we go about having it altered at a later time?

Scott Bogle responded that their organization structure will continue to work on implementing this and operating this and each municipality would be represented on this and if a route needs to be changed it can be redone. Whatever is signed now is not set in stone and signs can be moved.

**MOTION** made by Jonathan Bailey to accept the proposed routes. Seconded by Assist. Fire Chief Achilles.

Scott Bogle asked that the following be included in Jonathan's Motion and would like to ask that once we establish the routing that is preferable that Public Works install the signs this spring.

Steve Parkinson asked if Scott Bogle was expecting Public Works to install the signs? That this was not part of the motion that Public Works is going to install them.

Scott answered if possible, yes.

Steve Parkinson stated it is not within the purview of this Committee to assign work duties to Public Works.

The Chair stated we would need City Council approval as monies would have to be expended to put up signs and the Motion would have to be amended to read "to move to City Council".

Steve Parkinson stated to have the City Council authorize the City Manager to approve coordination of installation.

**AMENDED MOTION** made by Jonathan Bailey to approve the routes and move the City Manager to manage the installation. Amended Motion seconded by Assist. Fire chief Achilles. Motion passed. Ted Gray opposed.

- (B) Maplewood/Cutts at Rte.1 By-pass** – Speed Control - Request for increase of "Slow Down" signage – Steve Parkinson stated this is a problem area for traffic. A resident requested that the Traffic & Safety Committee take a look at increasing signage within the area to slow down traffic as it approaches the intersection. Suggested this be referred to Public Works Department's Traffic Engineer to study this particular section of the corridor to see if there is anything to basically slow traffic down making it a safer intersection.

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to refer this to Public Works Department's Traffic Engineer to study this particular section of the corridor to see if there's anything that can be done to basically slow traffic down making it a safer intersection. Seconded by Christina Westfall. Motion passed.

The Chair asked to add to have the Police Department provide accident reports and incidences that have occurred at that intersection for a report back.

Capt. Champlin stated that the Police Department also supports additional signage there, it is a dangerous intersection and have had issues there and a fatal accident a few years ago.

The Chair stated there is a flashing yellow light there that is old and hard to see.

- (C) **Market Street Sidewalk Project** – Expansion – David Desfosses explained the upgrade to Market St. downtown area project which is scheduled to commence 5 weeks from now and is intended to be complete before Market Sq. Day. There are several facets to this project. The goal of this project is 1. pedestrian oriented creating a mirror of what was done on Congress St. last year, sidewalk upgrades, period lighting, general sprucing up; 2. slow down traffic to make it even more pedestrian friendly. The project narrows the street to 16ft allowing us to expand sidewalk width on both sides of the street. There were public meetings with Market St. people giving them three design options. The overall configuration is the loss of only one parking space in the reorientation, we picked up another loading zone, maintained both the taxi and police space and have shown one-15 minute space on the street that whether it stays or not depends on how much loading we have. We have created an extra loading zone near the flower shop and Fat Belly's. The loading zone geared more toward flower pickup and UPS type trucks. The new street width will not physically allow double parking, it is not wide enough. Will be finishing the brick sidewalks on Ladd St. as part of this project.

Christina Westfall asked if the lost parking spot is on the corner by the Hanover St. lot?

Dave Desfosses responded that the existing handicap space was not utilized and there is one two-hour metered space we are losing. The handicap space will be located if we see the need in the Hanover St. lot and the Hanover St. lot is the appropriate place to load and unload handicap people. We will keep an eye on this.

Christina Westfall stated it is difficult for someone in a wheel chair to navigate the current configuration there and wider spaces might be increased in the future.

Captain Champlin confirmed that the Police parking space is shifted across the street from the present location.

The Chair asked if Department of Public Works needed to go before the Taxi Commission for the shift in their space.

Assist. Fire Chief Achilles referred to the corner of Hanover St. the right-hand turn and asked if that was designed so a tractor-trailer can make that right hand

turn? His concern is they have a few vehicles that cannot articulate and concerned that the tower or ladder truck trying to make right turn from Hanover. Dave Desfosses responded it is a generous radius, actually it is a pretty big sweep.

Brandon Cooney asked if all the spaces were to be pay and display. Dave Desfosses responded “yes”, essentially there will not be any parking meters on Market St., one meter will be installed as part of this project.

The Chair stated he liked the bump out coming out of Ladd St. and referred to the relocation of the fire hydrant.

Dave Desfosses responded that is how we picked up a space, we actually lost two when creating the loading zone.

The Chair referred to newspaper boxes and asked if areas were to be designated for the boxes so they don't start encroaching back on the sidewalk. Dave Desfosses responded there is plenty of room and it's appropriate to do that.

The Chair asked if there would be room for the smoking ashtrays. Dave Desfosses responded “yes”

John Connors commended Dave for all the work he's done, he does an excellent job in planning and overseeing these projects. John Connors referred to restaurants taking over the section in front of Fat Belly's as they do in the square and asked if anyone had given thought to having some type of benches there for public use.

**MOTION** made by John Connors to accept as presented. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (D) **Woodbury Avenue** – Reconstruction – Dave Desfosses presented the Committee with drawings of the area of the second major project. The City Council authorized a one million dollar bond for traffic improvements to the residential Woodbury Ave. corridor. Department of Public Works has been actively working on Market St. and now back to working on this project. There were two public hearings with the neighborhood group and abutters were notified with good turnout and positive feedback. This project is starting at Granite St. eventually heading all the way down to Bartlett St. Woodbury Ave. is very wide, was constructed by the state back in the 20's and 30's as part of a federal program. Woodbury Ave constructed in concrete and Maplewood Ave. about the same time. The original road constructed by the state was about 26 ft. wide and at some point through time extra width was paved and it is the position of this Dept. that that pavement is excessive and leads to problems. This project has two very large components and the third large component and the majority of the work is literally sawing that pavement off and removing it as it is excessive, unneeded and leads to speed. Starting at Granite St. going to Maplewood Ave. we are providing a 32 ft wide street, no parking on one side of the street and we'll be carving off between and 4 up to 15 ft of pavement removal. The overall travel width will be 26 ft., two 12-foot lanes, two one-foot shoulders and parking where needed. We determined with the public where we needed and did not need parking. We are planning a 3-way round-a-bout for the intersection of

Maplewood/Woodbury Ave. Dave Desfosses referred to four different drawings showing the various areas of St. Catherine's, St. Catherine's to Rte. 95 overpass, and Bartlett/Dennett Street area. Although we didn't get the traffic signal at New Franklin Drive feels the rest of the plan flows together well as a package and they are much needed improvements.

Asst. Fire Chief asked if there was another option on the guardrail. Likes the idea of the sidewalk and what could you have instead of the guardrail that would also protect those houses. Also likes the fact it was narrowed from Rockingham heading up and from Dennett heading down.

Dave Desfosses responded it is not a good idea to put hard obstructions within 8 ft of the travel way and assuming the likelihood someone hitting that, is proposing corten steel, it's a little nicer looking but still provides protection. Also, when coming past Rockingham to the intersection going to the traffic circle, the access road on the right, it's not really a turn lane, (Exit 6).

Dave Desfosses stated it is striped that way because of the bike route.

Brendan Cooney referred to the little leg of Woodbury after the turn, the parking in there is tight and asked if those spaces would be affected.

Dave Desfosses responded "no" we are providing an 8 ft parking lane and showing a 14 ft. travel lane, (12 ft. lane and 2 ft. shoulder) and still have an extra foot and a half.

John Howe referred to Cottage St. as it relates to By-pass and asked if you have taken into account the large increase in traffic? .

Dave Desfosses responded that when you come down Cottage St. you'll have to stop fully then proceed, not quite so open as it is now. There are crosswalks at all major crossing points and will be replacing them and didn't see any need to add crosswalks as we have them where needed. All crosswalks that are there will be preserved.

The Chair asked about the center point of Rockingham going across, there is a crosswalk there, is there a way of doing a bump out there as it is an entrance to that area and really shows slow it down.

Dave Desfosses stated there is a dual bump out there.

The Chair asked is the same thing at Dennett, to squeeze down the traffic.

Dave Desfosses responded "yes, on the farther side of Dennett St., the other side is the truck route, trucks need to make that corner.

The Chair referred to the round-a-bout at the far end, received a lot of phone calls from residents of the neighborhood being concerned about the trees as well as it seems to be so much pavement. Is this an essential part of it, is there another way to work on that.

Dave Desfosses responded there is a lot less pavement under this new plan than there is out there now. The trees that are there, the birch tree can stay. The tree is in the middle of the island and the island is in the same spot and doesn't believe any trees will be cut.

Ted Gray commended Dave Desfosses on his job for both these projects and his fairness to the residents as well as the City.

Kate Mallen Woodland Circle for 39 years and grew up on Woodbury Ave. asked if an island would be placed in front New Franklin School.

Dave Desfosses responded there are striped islands there now.

Ms. Mallen asked are there only some parts that are going to have curbing or all parts?

Dave Desfosses responded there are four things we want to do: saw off pavement, building round-a-bout, fixing the end down at Dennett St., and curbing. With available money we will be able to provide curbing where we need it the most.

Ms. Mallen is glad that the island and tree will stay there.

Ms. Mallen asked about Betty's Dream, not having heard anything being addressed and how it will effect their access to Woodbury Ave. How will they cross? Betty's Dream is at Woodlawn and Hillcrest. There is a striped lane on Woodlawn all the way to Woodbury and if they want to go left to the mall or Rite-Aid how will they cross that traffic circle? She is concerned about a gentleman who sits on the sidewalk part of the traffic island, the neighbors all know it and does not want to see him lose that and how do you plan for residents in wheelchairs out and about a lot, how will they cross the traffic circle? Wants to advocate to keep in mind the prettiness and beauty of it. Also the hedges around the tree on the island, if the island and tree stays there, she volunteers to mow the grass.

Dave Desfosses addressed her concerns and hopes it will look a lot better than it does now, no trees will be cut down and the island will stay more or less where it is now and that tree should be able to stay. The existing sidewalk was built mainly for handicap people. The crosswalk that's there will stay and across the street from them we are building a handicap ramp.

Lenore Weiss Bronson, Woodbury Ave. suggested having another neighborhood meeting. Referred to the crosswalks that are there that might as well not be there. The crosswalks need to be designated somehow to make it clear those crosswalks are there. There needs to be some sort of curbing to prohibit vehicles from going onto residents' lawn. Ms. Bronson suggested speaking with the Director of Betty's Dream who was unable to be here today. Ms. Bronson asked how trucks, UNH buses, and Betty's Dream residents and vehicles negotiate that circle? Suggested considering stop signs in the future, not necessarily to slow people down, but for safety, so people at crosswalks can cross.

The chair asked Mr. Desfosses if he has an opportunity to go out to the neighborhood groups and address their concerns?

Dave Desfosses responded he can handle that.

The Chair asked Dave Desfosses to come back if there were any major changes to the drawings.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to accept the project as presented. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

- (E) **NHSA Annual Highway Safety Program** – Steve Parkinson reported this is an annual safety grant program that the City has obtained various items dealing

with Traffic & Safety such as receipt of variable message boards and recently have not been successful in getting additional items we'd like to get and trying once again by rewording. One of the requirements of this program is that the Traffic & Safety Committee approve what we are asking for. This has been done in the past with a vote from this Committee.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to authorize Public Works Department to apply for this Grant. Seconded by Captain Janet Champlin. Motion passed.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,

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Elaine E. Boucas, Recording Secretary