

**Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Steering Committee Meeting
8/3/26**

Attendance: The following attended that meeting which was held at 6:00 p.m. at the Hartford Town Hall:

Committee Members: Sheila Armen, Alex Belenzs, Toby Dayman, Linda Harvey, Alexis Hudes, Jacopo Montobbio, Carrie Russell, Phil Sargent.

Others: Jesse Pollard.

Staff: Bryan Kovalick and Rita Seto, Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and Matt Osborn, Planner.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Matt Osborn welcomed everyone to the kick-off meeting of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Steering Committee. Matt noted that the first Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan was created in 2009 and included a Pedestrian/Bicycle Steering Committee who worked closely with staff and developed the list of bicycle/pedestrian improvements that has been used to seek federal grants. Matt thanked everyone for volunteering to serve. Introductions were made.

Rita Seto reported that the TRORC received funding from VTrans to update the Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan. There is no cost to the Town. Rita noted that the same funding was used to create the first Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan for Randolph, Vermont which Rita and Bryan worked on. Rita added that the Hartford update started in 2024 and included a community survey, listening sessions, data collection, sidewalk inventory & assessment and collection of traffic volumes.

Jesse Pollard asked about possible pedestrian and bicycle access to the Railroad Bridge between Downtown White River Junction and West Lebanon. Alex responded that a scoping study was completed twenty years ago and concluded that there were many challenges including the issue of access through an active railyard.

Rita stated that staff has talked about developing a bike route map. Matt noted that traffic volumes were collected on several collector roads to identify possible bike routes but noted that many of the best roads are very hilly and may be too difficult for the average recreational rider. Alex responded that with the growth of e-bikes, it may not be an issue.

Jacopo asked about identifying commuter routes.

Rita reported that Route 14 between Sharon and Hartford is being repaved in 2027. VTrans sends draft plans to each town for review and comments. Matt noted that VTrans has increased the shoulder widths in instances such as Route 5 North and Route 5 South repaving projects. Rita noted that there is a good chance that could happen with Route 14 repaving. Matt noted that the West Hartford Pedestrian/Bicycle Scoping Study recommended reducing the travel lanes from 11' to 10' to create wider shoulders. However, VTrans doesn't support that reduction due to the size of large trucks. Rita noted that one of the most important parts of a Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan is to use the vision of the Plan to request state improvements.

There was a discussion about the lack of bike racks throughout Hartford and Downtown White River Junction. Rita responded that we could map bike racks in Hartford as part of the Plan update. Jesse suggested installing bike racks at bus shelters.

Matt noted that Hartford has conducted several bicycle/pedestrian scoping studies that are required for design/construction grant applications. Rita noted that the federal grants require a 20% local match. She

added that the State has a grant program for small projects that consist of only state funds and are more streamlined than federal grants. The small project grants require a 50% local match.

Bryan reported that a community survey for the Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan update was conducted in 2024 and resulted in 238 responses which he characterized as a very strong response. Bryan proceed to go over the results of the survey.

Matt noted that the Town has received several federal grants for sidewalk and bicycle improvements. Matt noted that federal grants have extensive requirements that increase the cost and time to permit and construct. Local projects on the other hand tend to be much cheaper and faster.

Sheila Armen suggested that property owners along Town roads would benefit from a sidewalk and therefore should help pay for it. Sheila asked if there is a way to streamline sidewalk projects. Rita responded not with federal projects.

Matt reported that the Town currently has two large sidewalk grant projects underway. The first is for a sidewalk on Route 5 between Sykes Mountain Avenue and Ballardvale Drive through the I-91 interchange area. It is currently in the design phase and will need additional grant funds to complete the project. The project was delayed since VTrans required that the Exit 11 northbound off-ramp be realigned before the sidewalk could be constructed. The realignment occurred in 2024. The second project is for a sidewalk for Quechee Main Street between the covered bridge parking lot to the Quechee Library and a sidewalk from Quechee Main Street to the Quechee Post Office on the Village Green. Matt noted that a sidewalk on Waterman Hill Road between Quechee Main Street and Route 4 is being planned for an upcoming grant application.

Rita noted that the goal is to have the Steering Committee present a Draft Plan to present to the Selectboard for them to adopt. Matt added that the Draft Plan will go before the Planning Commission before being presented to the Selectboard. He noted that the Pedestrian/Bicycle Steering Committee is a sub-committee of the Planning Commission.

Jacopo asked about reducing the speed limits on certain roads as a way of improving walking and biking safety particularly around schools. Rita responded that VTrans is working on updating their guidance on speed limits.

Next Meeting: Matt noted that he anticipates that there will be 4-6 Steering Committee meetings. He asked the Committee how often they would like to meet. Alex responded that monthly meetings provide enough time for staff to complete work between meetings. Others agreed. The Committee agreed to schedule the next meeting for Monday, September 14th at 6:00 p.m. Rita stated that we can discuss unsafe hot spots in town and create a priority list of road sections for large and small projects. Toby said he would like to see a map of the locations.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.