

## Southwest Region Planning Commission

### Transportation Advisory Committee

#### Minutes

March 4, 2024

**Present:** Kendall Lane, Chair, *City of Keene*; Frank Sterling, Vice Chair, *Town of Jaffrey*; Brian Barden, *Town of Dublin*; Sara Carbonneau, *Town of Winchester*; Michael Kowalczyk, *Monadnock Region Rail Trails Collaborative*; John Kallfelz, *New Hampshire Department of Transportation District 4 (NHDOT)*; Alfred “Gus” Lerandeau, *Town of Swanzey*; Cheryl Mayberry, *Town of Walpole*; Leandra MacDonald, *Town of Peterborough*; Ed Smith, *Town of Hinsdale*; Ruth Ward, *Town of Stoddard*.

**Staff members present:** Tim Murphy, *Executive Director*; J. B. Mack, *Assistant Director*; Henry Underwood, *Senior Planner*; Jack Ahern, *Associate Planner*.

**Guests:** Bill Lambert, *NHDOT Traffic Safety Engineer*; Corey Spetelunas, *NHDOT*; Amanda Joe Zatecka, *NHDOT*; William Rose, *NHDOT (remote)*.

#### I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Lane called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m., welcomed those in attendance, and asked for introductions from attendees.

Chairman Lane gave thanks to Tim Murphy for his work at SWRPC as Executive Director and congratulated him on his planned retirement.

**Motion: To include Tim Murphy’s congratulations in the record.**

Motion by Gus Lerandeau, seconded by Ed Smith. Approved by unanimous vote.

#### II. Minutes of January 8, 2024

**Motion: To approve the minutes of January 8, 2024 as presented.**

Motion by Gus Lerandeau, seconded by Brian Barden. Approved by unanimous vote.

#### III. Transportation Program Updates

Chairman Lane asked the committee if they had any questions about the transportation program updates memo in the meeting packet. There were no questions.

Frank Sterling announced to the TAC members that the NHDOT will hold a public information meeting on Tuesday March 19, 2024, at the Jaffrey Fire Department to inform the community of the status of Route 202 final design and construction in Jaffrey (Project 16307).

J.B. Mack informed the TAC that SWRPC is still negotiating an agreement with the on-call engineering firm, VHB. He then made note that SWRPC is preparing to send out Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) project solicitations to member communities in an attempt to begin the solicitation process earlier than the previous cycle.

#### **IV. Presentation: NHDOT Highway Safety Activities**

J.B. Mack introduced Bill Lambert, NHDOT Highway Safety Engineer, to the TAC to give a presentation on the NHDOT's highway safety related programs and projects (attached).

Bill Lambert explained the evolution of the NHDOT's highway safety efforts. Prior to 2007, highway safety was overseen by a safety surveillance team and guided by regional safety conferences. In 2007 the federal government passed new legislation mandating that state DOTs adopt Highway Safety Improvement Programs (HSIP) and create positions for highway safety engineers. Bill Lambert noted his primary role is to oversee the program and move toward reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries. The HSIP includes infrastructure projects, selected through a data-driven approach, as well as public outreach. The NHDOT set a goal of reducing the number of fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2025 and to reach zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050. Crash statistics have remained flat since the goal was set and are trending upward post-pandemic.

Bill Lambert explained that the NHDOT's strategic highway safety plan was composed of several critical emphasis areas and key action items developed to address them. At intersections, the goal is to increase conspicuity and educate drivers on new forms of traffic control being deployed on roadways. At roadway departures, they plan to systematically install centerline and edge line rumble strips and improve horizontal alignment warning signs. To combat distracted driving, they will build relationships with and support their law enforcement partners. Speed and aggressive driving will be addressed by setting credible speed limits and adopting new road designs. Occupant protection will be pursued by advocating for seatbelt use and other vehicle safety standards. Community transportation initiatives will be bolstered to support older drivers. Education and outreach in high schools and through driving instructors will be used to promote teen traffic safety. Vulnerable road users will be identified through vulnerable road user assessments and protected by the adoption of state level complete streets policies.

Bill Lambert discussed the NHDOT's 2023 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. The plan includes updating staff training, improving data acquisition for shoulder widths and other roadway safety elements, developing relevant design guidance and more specific performance measures, improving bicycle and pedestrian volume data collection, and pursuing new funding for non-motorized modes of transportation. Mike Kowalczyk asked if NHDOT subscribes to any of the traffic data collection services offered by private companies. Bill Lambert responded that they are trying to identify which services are most reliable and best suit their needs, but they do currently have a subscription with TomTom.

Bill Lambert then discussed the implementation of Vulnerable Road User (VRU) assessments, which became a federal requirement under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021. VRUs are defined as non-motorists and fall into the categories of pedestrian, cyclist or equivalent. The assessments are a data driven process to identify areas of high risk for vulnerable road users by engaging stakeholders at the local level and following the principles of a safe system approach based on understanding human behavior and being proactive. He made note that redundancy is a critical element of safe road design and that overlapping measures function best. Federal regulations mandate that states identify areas of elevated risk for VRUs as

part of the assessments. This is done by developing a High Injury Network which identifies specific locations or corridors where a disproportionate number of severe and fatal traffic injuries occur. NHDOT can then provide technical assistance to local entities to adopt the use of best practices to improve VRU safety.

Bill Lambert described Road Safety Audits and explained that they are applications submitted by municipalities that evaluate a specific safety concern and aim to develop short-, medium- and long-term countermeasures. This process also helps identify and prioritize future transportation projects.

Bill Lambert shifted focus to challenges and opportunities for the NHDOT in coming years. He noted that challenges include shifting motorist behavior, overcoming decades of car-first design practices, balancing limited resources and demand, and improving the quantity and quality of data being collected. Opportunities include the adoption of a state level complete streets policy, tighter collaboration with law enforcement, utilization of AI and data services, and innovative design in transportation infrastructure.

Bill Lambert opened discussion on road safety to the TAC members. Leandra MacDonald asked if crash data is still collected on local level municipal roads. Amanda Joe Zatecka responded that local police departments are required to submit all crash records to NHDOT, but that it is often incomplete or in a form that cannot be easily used. Leandra MacDonald stated that US Route 202 North in Peterborough is much wider than necessary and encourages speeding. She asked if there is an opportunity to narrow lanes and add complete streets elements to make crossing safer.

John Kallfelz noted that people aren't always familiar with new geometries of roadways. He suggested there be a means of educating people on how to properly use roundabouts and other road design features.

Sara Carbonneau brought-up the aging population of the region and how that plays into road safety. Elderly drivers are only required to pass an eye exam, the results of which are largely up to DMV staff discretion. Older drivers with limited visibility and reaction time will be a growing issue for the region. John Kallfelz suggested being cautious about that issue, noting that aggressive and reckless driving affects all age groups and older drivers may only be a small part of the problem. He also noted how prevalent an issue texting while driving has become, and how it is primarily a problem among younger drivers. Chairman Lane stated that as he has aged, he drives slower, but other drivers get impatient and speed around him. John Kallfelz touched on the general phenomenon of drivers being desperate to get in front of other cars even when the speed limit is already being exceeded. Bill Lambert stated that some drivers' behaviors cannot be changed, but defensive driving courses can mitigate the number of drivers who adopt those mentalities.

J.B. Mack asked Bill Lambert to speak about NH Route 12 as a potential corridor for the implementation of rumble strips. He noted that it was important to avoid the issue that arose on Route 9 in Chesterfield where the rumble strips were placed too close to lane markings. Bill Lambert responded that Charlestown, just north of Walpole in Sullivan County, had reached out about implementing rumble strips along their stretch of NH Route 12 due to the occurrence of fatal accidents. This has raised the priority of this potential measure for NHDOT, which would apply the strips to the entire roadway including the section in the Southwest Region. J.B. Mack asked if implementation would be segment specific or follow the entire corridor. Bill Lambert replied that NHDOT guidelines follow a specific protocol and avoid rumble strips in certain areas.

Tim Murphy touched back on the issue of older drivers, mentioning that they make up 30% of VRU fatalities and are the fastest growing age cohort of the region's population. Only 1% of roads in the region are served by transit, which is identified as the action item targeted to older drivers. He made note that transit is something desired by both younger and older people and a key element in attracting people to the region. He suggested that it could be another opportunity area for the NHDOT.

Chairman Lane thanked Bill Lambert for the presentation and opportunity to discuss highway safety.

**V. Other Matters**

No other matters were brought before the TAC at this time.

**VI. Next Meeting: May 6, 2024**

J.B. Mack announced that the next meeting of the TAC is scheduled for May 6, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

**VII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Ahern  
Associate Planner