

Draft Minutes

Present: Alan Grigsby, Dennis Osgood, Jr., Tom Ford, Lisa Paquette and Steve Picano

The minutes of the January 9, 2009 meeting were approved by acclamation.

A report of traffic counts done in Claremont from 2000 to 2007 from the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission were reviewed and the chief observation made was that overall there appeared to be little change. Several places increased and slightly more appeared to decrease. The committee assumed that the counts were done in a way that enabled comparisons, i.e., the same time of year, for the same period of time, and same traffic patterns.

Then, a new statistical analysis of the Claremont Master Plan survey administered by the University of New Hampshire was reviewed. The proximity of residents to highways was rated as important as well as the importance of downtown development. There was divided opinion on whether streets and roads were adequately funded, but more people felt recreational trails were supported adequately. And, opinion was split on whether there was adequate funding for road maintenance, pedestrian walkways and downtown parking.

It was agreed to include diagrams from other master plans in the state in our report which demonstrate road development that promotes good traffic patterns, i.e., fewer cul de sacs and hammerheads and more connected back roads and traffic calming techniques such as narrowed roadways near crosswalks.

Regarding sidewalks, it was agreed to advocate for sidewalks being built within the walking radius of public schools and in developed neighborhoods where there are none. Such a program would promote the safety of children and the concept of a walkable community.

It was decided to solicit the views of Public Works Director Bruce Temple regarding the contents of the transportation portion of the Master Plan at the next meeting. Then, the group decided to ask the Claremont Traffic Committee the same thing. That body is made up of Mr. Temple, the police chief, fire chief and city attorney.

The group decided that Master Plan Advisory Committee Chairman Scott Pope will be asked if the entire committee shouldn't meet with City Manager Guy Santagate to ask for his views about the Master Plan.

Washington Street was selected as a focus for our report for several reasons. Left hand turns across two lanes of traffic were seen as a cause for many accidents and the deadend design of side streets as adding to traffic on Washington Street. Reducing curb cuts was seen as an important objective. Another problem was the possibility of an accident at the North Street or Winter Street intersections isolating that part of town from emergency services. Such an event could also prevent Newport area ambulances from reaching the hospital in Claremont. And, last, a route to remove truck traffic from downtown could involve a Washington Street connector road which would address several of these issues.

The ability to move ahead with planning to create a "shovel ready" project in case funding became available or the need critical was seen as important. The same principles should be applied to other arteries where similar development is taking place such as the Charlestown Road.

Since the Master Plan Survey showed a high value for downtown development it was decided that city development of parking for daytime and overnight use was important. The belief is that by making more parking available there will be more reuse of buildings, increasing their assessed value and thereby increasing the tax return from the existing investment in infrastructure such as water, sewer, roads, and lighting.

A schedule for writing the report was discussed with a timeline of an outline in March, a draft in April that would be reviewed by the committee, and a final report in May for review by MPAC.

Adjourned at 10 a.m.

Next Meeting: Friday, March 6, 2009, 8 a.m. in the conference room at:
Community Alliance Transportation Services
940 John Stark Highway
Newport, NH 03773

Respectfully submitted by:
Alan Grigsby, chair