



SWRPC

Southwest Region
Planning Commission

US Route 202 North Corridor Virtual Meeting
Held to inform SWRPC's update to the *Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan*
Wednesday January 4, 2023 6:30pm

Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) held a virtual meeting on Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at 6:30 pm focused on the US Route 202 North Corridor. This corridor runs from Peterborough to Antrim and also includes the Towns of Hancock, Bennington, and Greenfield. The corridor is one of eight major transportation corridors in the Southwest NH Region as depicted in the *Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan*. This was the seventh meeting in a series of eight that SWRPC is holding in 2022 and 2023. Each meeting will focus on one of the regional transportation corridors. The purpose of this meeting (and future meetings) is to share information about the corridor with local communities and to collect public input for the *Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan*.

The following people attended the meeting: Riché Colcombe (Hillsborough), Danica Melone (Peterborough), Keith Nason (Bennington), Tyler Howe (Hancock), Jim Creighton (Antrim), Andrew Smeltz (SWRPC), Lisa Murphy (SWRPC) and Jon GrosJean (Hancock).

The following information was covered and discussed (more detailed information is available by viewing the presentation at: <https://youtu.be/KIR80H0mYBk>):

- The Route 202 North Corridor is one of eight major transportation corridors in the Southwest NH Region, facilitating north-south traffic movements between Peterborough and Antrim. In addition to Route 202, this Corridor also includes portions of Routes 31, 47, 123, 136, 137 and Peterborough Road in Hancock. Five towns are a part of this Corridor - Peterborough, Hancock, Greenfield, Bennington and Antrim. It is a highly trafficked corridor that is important for commuting, tourism, commerce and other reasons.
- Between 2011-2020, there were 18 serious vehicle crashes on the Route 202 North Corridor. Four crashes involved a fatality, 11 crashes involved a serious injury, three crashes involved a non-motorized fatality or non-motorized serious injury. Sixteen out of the 18 crashes occurred on Route 202.
- Peterborough has a municipal complete streets policies and design guidelines to guide future safety improvement projects for the benefit of all road users. This includes pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities, emergency responders, freight providers and users of public transit, in addition to motorists.
- New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) has several projects from the Route 202 North Corridor included on their 10-Year Plan for FY 2023 - 2032 that are in various phases of implementation. This list includes bridge replacement projects, intersection reconstruction and

the removal of an abandoned rail trestle. Upcoming projects are planned for Peterborough, Antrim and Bennington.

- Between 2012 and 2019, significant increases in traffic volume were measured on the Route 202 North Corridor. The most significant increase in traffic volume occurred in Hancock where there was a 16.8% increase on Route 137 (Bennington Rd) at Moose Brook, a 15.7% increase on Route 123 west of Route 137 South and an 11.7% increase on Route 123 (Forest Road).
- Approximately 5,901 commuters per day enter the corridor from outside towns. 3,257 people live and work on this corridor. 4,748 people live on this corridor and commute to outside towns. The top commuting destinations for residents of the Route 202 East Corridor are: Peterborough, Nashua, Concord, Manchester, Milford and Greenfield.
- Although limited, this corridor contains some transportation alternatives to the personal automobile. Alternative transportation options include: sidewalks, bike lanes, trails and other pedestrian infrastructure as well as a volunteer driver program operated by Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC).
- The population of the corridor increased 4.3% between 2010 and 2019. During this time period, the greatest increases in population were in Peterborough (6.6%) and Greenfield (5.7%). Population projections predict that the Corridor population will increase 3.7% by 2040.
- The Grove Street Parking Lot, owned by the Town of Peterborough, hosts two public electric vehicle charging station and a bus shelter that could be utilized for transit.

The following safety concerns and suggestions were shared by participants at the meeting:

- Tyler Howe, DPW Director for the Town of Hancock, stated that three intersections on Route 202 in the Town of Hancock are dangerous due to line of sight issues. These include: the intersection of Route 202 and Forest Road, the intersection of Route 202 and South Elmwood Road and the intersection of Route 202 and Elmwood Road. The intersection of Route 202 and Forest road was modified by NH DOT in recent years by removing elongated granite curb islands from the intersection and by removing a passing lane from Route 202 (northbound). This intersection remains hazardous due to line of sight issues that have not been corrected.
- Mr. Howe also stated that the intersection of Routes 202 and 31 in Antrim is dangerous because of the shape and direction of the right-of-way. Mr. Howe stated the issue could be corrected by adjusting the shape of the intersection.
- Jim Creighton stated that recent investments in the Crotched Mountain Ski Area have caused traffic in Bennington to increase. Crowds headed to and from the ski area have generated increases in high traffic volumes on Route 47 in Bennington. Increased traffic makes it more difficult, and at times hazardous, to travel between the ski area and Routes 202.
- Mr. Creighton stated that a mill building is being developed into high-density housing on Route 202 (Main Street) in Antrim. This development will increase pedestrian and automobile traffic.
- Mr. Creighton stated that the intersection of Routes 202 and 31 in Antrim is hazardous. A traffic light is a possible solution to slow traffic and make the intersection safer; however, a traffic light would cause traffic to back up into the gas station parking lot located at this intersection.
- Mr. Creighton stated that, in his observation, road accidents and fatalities increased on Route 202 while it was being paved. Route 202 was repaved recently over the course of multiple years, and during this time period, accidents on Route 202 increased in Mr. Creighton's opinion.

- Keith Nason, Emergency Management Director for the Town of Bennington, stated that the Main Street section of Route 202 in Antrim is hazardous for several reasons, including narrow right-of-way, lack of road shoulder, and poor visibility.
- Mr. Nason stated that the intersection of Route 202 and 31 in Antrim is hazardous due to the shape of the intersection and because of traffic turning in and out of the gas station at this corner.
- Mr. Nason stated that the speed limit on Route 202 in the area south of the Antrim Village is 50 miles per hour. Since there is no turn lane, high vehicle speeds make it hazardous for vehicles that are turning on to and off of Route 202.
- Mr. Nason stated that there is an abandoned railroad trestle that passes over a one-lane section of Antrim Road in Bennington near Monadnock Paper Mills, Inc. This section of road can be extremely hazardous. NH DOT plans to remove railroad trestle in the future to improve safety.
- Mr. Creighton stated that widening the intersection of Route 202 and Antrim Road in Bennington would be beneficial for improving safety. This intersection is located near the entrance to Monadnock Paper Mills, Inc., which is used frequently by trucks.
- Danica Melone, Peterborough Town Planner, reiterated previously stated concerns about safety on the Main Street section of Route 202 in Antrim. Ms. Melone emphasized that street signs and pedestrians are difficult to see while driving, because they are blocked by on-street parking.
- Ms. Melone also stated that the intersection of Routes 202 and 101 in Peterborough is hazardous for pedestrians and difficult to cross. There is a shopping plaza located to the south of this intersection that many people access for work and shopping. Creating a better pedestrian crossing at this intersection would improve safety.

The following concerns and suggestions were shared by participants at the meeting about transportation options in the corridor.

- Danica Melone commented that many people use Route 202 for commuting and that some areas of the road have a poor road shoulder or conditions that are otherwise dangerous.
- Tyler Howe commented that providing transit options to the Monadnock Community Hospital in Peterborough would be an opportunity to improve health outcomes from individuals who do not drive.

The following concerns and suggestions were shared by participants at the meeting about transportation infrastructure in the corridor.

- Jim Creighton stated that the Hillsborough Recreational Trail, which runs parallel to Route 202 in Hillsborough, Deering, and Bennington, provides excellent opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians. A half-mile section of trail is too sandy to ride a bike. This area would benefit from maintenance or improvement.
- Keith Nason stated the area of the Hillsborough Recreational Trail, mentioned above, is difficult to use for walking and biking for the reasons stated by Mr. Creighton. Mr. Nason also stated that this area of trail is used frequently by off-road vehicles, which also makes it difficult to use by bikers and pedestrians.

No concerns and suggestions were shared by participants at the meeting about resiliency of the transportation network in the corridor.