

**Southwest Region Planning Commission**

**Transportation Advisory Committee**

**Minutes**

**January 8, 2024**

**Present:** Kendall Lane, Chair, *Keene*; Frank Sterling, Vice Chair, *Jaffrey*; Susan Ashworth, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services*; Brian Barden, *Town of Dublin*; Sara Carbonneau, *Town of Winchester*; Leslie Casey, *Town of Sullivan*; John Kallfelz, *New Hampshire Department of Transportation District 4 (NHDOT)*; Lucy St. John, *Bureau of Planning & Community Assistance (NHDOT)*; Alfred “Gus” Leraudeau, *Town of Swanzey*; Cheryl Mayberry, *Town of Walpole*; Leandra MacDonald, *Town of Peterborough*.

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

**Guests:** Don Lussier, *City of Keene*; Michael Branley, *Town of Swanzey*; Brent Rusnock, *City of Keene*; Dave Smith, *NHDOT (remote)*.

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

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

**II. Minutes of November 6, 2023**

**Motion: To approve the minutes of November 6, 2023 as presented.**

Motion by Sara Carbonneau, seconded by Gus Leraudeau. Approved by unanimous vote.

**III. Transportation Program Updates**

J. B. Mack referred TAC members to the Transportation Program Updates memo that was included in the agenda packet. He explained that SWRPC had received four proposals from engineering firms in response to the Request for Qualifications (RfQ) for on-call engineering services to assist SWRPC in evaluating Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) project nominations and help municipalities develop project concepts and cost estimates for other programs. He then provided an overview of the process by which SWRPC would review the proposals and make a selection.

J. B. Mack provided an update on developments in the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) 2023 Complete Streets Implementation Grant program. He explained that the MAST Steering Committee provided awards as follows:

**Commented [JA1]:** I did not catch what Dave Smith's role/title is. I tried to look him up on the DOT website but there are 4 Dave Smiths that work for NHDOT.

- Town of Marlborough: to construct pedestrian infrastructure improvements on Route 101 including the installation of a rectangular rapid flashing feacon and crosswalk.
- Town of Swanzey: to address gaps in sidewalk and crosswalk infrastructure in West Swanzey.
- Towns of Alstead, Antrim and Temple: to develop municipal complete streets policies.

Chairman Lane asked about the handout that was attached as a reference to the November 6, 2023 minutes comparing Southwest NH projects in the 2023-2032 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) with the draft 2025-2034 TYP released for the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) public hearings. He observed that a majority of projects shown on the list appear to be pushed back by 1 or 2 years. He asked if there was a reason for these delays and if this issue was disproportionately affecting the Southwest NH Region or was occurring statewide. J. B. Mack responded that the causes of the delays tend to be on a case-by-case basis. He cited the Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT (12210D) project as an example of how obtaining right-of-way for Hinsdale, NH -Brattleboro, VT (12210C) resulted in a delay to that project. He also noted that the construction company working on the project had faced a workforce shortage and had trouble hiring new workers for the job. John Kallfelz noted that the right-of-way issue had held Project 12210C up for over a year, but that it had since been resolved. J. B. Mack also referenced Keene-Swanzey (40666) as an example of public engagement taking longer than expected and causing overall project delay. Lucy St. John stated that there are many reasons for the postponements and that she does not believe the issue is unique to the Southwest Region. Frank Sterling said he is not aware of what is causing the Jaffrey (16307) project to extend to three construction years, but that he is concerned that the longer it takes, the more expensive it will become. J. B. Mack and Lucy St. John offered to look into more specific information about project delays associated with the other projects on the list and report back to the TAC.

#### **IV. Keene-Swanzey Project #40666**

J. B. Mack introduced Don Lussier, Keene’s City Engineer, who gave a presentation (Attachment #1) on the Keene-Swanzey 40666 project to reconstruct Route 10/Winchester Street/West Swanzey Road from the existing roundabout on NH Route 101 south to the traffic lights at the entrance of the Market Basket plaza. Don Lussier explained that this is a joint project between Keene, Swanzey and NHDOT. He stated that much of the engineering study phase is complete and the report would be submitted by the end of the month. The project team held listening sessions in Keene and Swanzey and met with the City of Keene City Council and Town of Swanzey Select Board to confirm a preferred alternative.

Don Lussier went on to clarify the purpose and need for the project. A primary objective is to create a complete street and make the roadway amenable to pedestrian activity. It will also address congestion caused by turning movement conflicts stemming from traffic from side streets and parking lots. He noted that the bridge across Ash Swamp Brook needs to be replaced and widened and is part of the project. He noted that participants of the listening sessions highlighted the need for safer pedestrian accommodations on the corridor as well as the issue of speeding in the area.

Don Lussier reported on the results of a traffic study that was conducted to understand current and projected traffic conditions associated with the project. Traffic counts and turning movement counts were conducted along the corridor and a land use analysis was conducted on Krif Road to determine the likelihood of additional development and traffic generation. Based on NHDOT’s projections, most of the project area will require 2 lanes in each direction to manage the projected traffic levels until 2045. The proposed action is to reconstruct the corridor into a 4-lane street with a raised center median from the NH Route 101 roundabout to Matthews Road. The median will prevent left-turning traffic from delaying traffic. Over this stretch of highway, the plan is to include a sidewalk on the west side of the corridor and bike lanes on both sides of the corridor. Two new roundabouts are proposed including one at the intersection of Krif Road and another at the intersection of Matthews Road and Magnolia Way. The roundabouts will provide

motorists with the opportunity to reach destinations on the opposite side of the street since a center median will prevent left turns. South of the Matthews Road/Magnolia Way roundabout, the roadway will consist of 2 traffic lanes with a third center turning lane, bike lanes on both sides and sidewalks on both sides from the Market Basket entrance to Lucinda Terrace. The existing traffic light at the entrance to the Market Basket plaza will remain in place.

J. B. Mack asked if feedback has been received from the numerous merchants located along the corridor. Don Lussier said that the project steering committee advising Keene, Swanzey and NHDOT had a good deal of business representation. He mentioned that some parties had concerns and that the project was not unanimously supported, but this was the plan the City Council had chosen to pursue.

Michael Branley spoke on behalf of the Town of Swanzey and stated that their main priority for the project is pedestrian improvements. The traffic light in front of Market Basket would remain there because it works well for managing traffic and could provide a traffic buffer for the roundabouts further up the street.

Don Lussier announced that construction was currently scheduled for 2025 but would realistically take place in 2026. He stated that there are some right-of-way issues to overcome due to the fact that the project area touches about 50 individual parcels.

Chairman Lane asked if the raised median that restricts left turns would be implemented along the entire stretch of the roadway or just in the northern section. Don Lussier answered that it will extend from the existing roundabout to the newly proposed one at Matthews Road, but not through the southern section to Market Basket. Chairman Lane asked if the project is encountering any issues with wetland or floodplain restrictions. Don Lussier replied that there are a few but not enough to require mitigation at this stage. Chairman Lane then asked if Don Lussier was able to provide some of the traffic count numbers that had been collected. Don Lussier said that peak hour traffic was close to 1,000 vehicles an hour, and that the engineering study would be published soon which would provide that data in greater detail. Leandra MacDonald inquired about the inclusion of a crosswalk at the Market Basket traffic lights, to which Don answered that there will be.

#### **V. Keene Project #41590 and the Transportation Heritage Trail Project**

J. B. Mack introduced the Keene #41590 project, which involves the reconstruction of Route 101 from the intersection with Optical Avenue east to Branch Road, and the inclusion of the City of Keene's project #43737 to construct the Transportation Heritage Trail that is proposed to close the gap in the Cheshire Rail Trail between Eastern Avenue and Swanzey.

Don Lussier provided TAC members with a presentation on the proposed Transportation Heritage Trail (THT) (Attachment #2). He explained that a request to expand the scope of the Keene-Swanzey #41590 project to include the THT has recently been submitted. The project is in the preliminary design phase and includes extending the existing rail trail 4,100 feet from Eastern Avenue to Route 101 followed by the installation of the Prowse Bridge over Route 101 to connect with the existing Stone Arch Bridge. Don Lussier informed the TAC that the City aimed to take advantage of the opportunity to combine the projects to speed-up the implementation process and prevent an extended period of construction on the roadway. Addressing pedestrian and bicycle safety and expanding connectivity and access are the shared goals for each project. The total cost to construct the Prowse Bridge is projected to be \$3.99 million and the City is exploring potential funding sources.

J. B. Mack introduced Dave Smith, Project Manager of Project #41590, to speak about NHDOT's perspective about incorporating the THT into the NH 101 project. Dave Smith summarized the purpose and needs and scope of work concepts for Project #41590 project and stated that NHDOT is committed to

working with the City of Keene and will exclude any project activities that would make the installation of the Prowse Bridge unfeasible. He noted that NHDOT is in the process of developing a response to the City of Keene re: its request to include the THT in the NH 101 project.

Chairman Lane asked if the decision to combine the projects will be up to GACIT. Don Lussier replied that they had drafted their proposal after GACIT had last met, so it will be up to the New Hampshire Legislature. Leandra MacDonald asked about extending safety railings from the Prowse Bridge onto the Stone Arch Bridge which currently has none. Don Lussier noted that safety improvements to the Stone Arch Bridge will be necessary before it can be used for the intended purposes and that there is a plan in place to include safety railings.

**VI. Other Matters**

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

**VII. Next Meeting: March 4, 2024**

J. B. Mack announced that the next meeting of TAC is scheduled for March 4, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

**VIII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Ahern  
Associate Planner