

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Bicycle and Pedestrian Stakeholder Meeting, November 19, 2019

## Public Feedback Notes

### IN-PERSON FEEDBACK ON NOVEMBER 19, 2019

1. **Meredith Farnum** asked if a bicycle symbol be added to the shoulder on Middle Road?

*Jay Reynolds, Public Works Director, said that the portion of Middle Road that the Town added the 6-inch fog line striping to is from Woods Roads north to the Cumberland town line.*

Ms. Farnum said that she was referring to the section of Middle Road south of Lunt Road heading towards the Presumpscot River (Depot to Pleasant Hill).

*Mr. Reynolds said that project was paved this year by MaineDOT and the Town. In order to add the bicycle symbol, the shoulder must be a minimum of 5-feet wide. The shoulder there is not currently 5-feet wide. So technically speaking, it is not a bicycle lane, and the Town is not allowed to designate it with the symbol.*

Ms. Farnum asked why the lane could not be expanded to 5-feet? She felt it was a highly trafficked bike area.

*Mr. Reynolds said it is part of a MaineDOT project and its plan was to only repave the existing pavement. It did not involve widening the roadways.*

Ms. Farnum said that was too bad.

*Mr. Reynolds said that going from repaving an existing road the existing width to widening and redoing the edges of the road requires tearing out everything that is there and putting down new gravel, all of which is more expensive.*

*Theo Holtwijk said that the Town always strives to get official 5-foot wide bike lanes on its roads, but that it is sometimes hard to do because the additional widening of the road to fit in a 5-foot bike lane significantly increases the project cost. If it is a state project, the issue is that the state needs to fix many other roads, so it often is not able to spend any additional money. Staff has had similar conversations with the Council about Blackstrap Road and whether or not to construct a 5 feet bicycle lane there.*

2. **Brad Burns** of Merrill Road said that he and his wife are very active walkers. He was glad to see recognition of the value of wide shoulders. He felt that in many cases wide shoulders are better for walking than sidewalks. The Town only has reasonably good weather for about half of the year, but there is high possibility of ice the other half of the year. He said that the sidewalk at the end of Merrill Road going north on Falmouth Road towards the Bucknam Road intersection is useless during the winter. He said that the pedestrian traffic on those roads is largely exercise walkers. He said that the shoulders were almost always clear of ice in the winter. He felt that

shoulder on Middle Road near Lunt Road was very nice. He urged the Council to look at the bike/ped plan. He felt that building a sidewalk on Falmouth Road from Gray Road to Route 1 is a waste of money.

3. **Elizabeth Ehrenfeldt** said that she worked on these plans over 20 years ago. She is a serious cyclist and was very excited about the wider shoulder on Blackstrap Road. She liked Route 1 going into Route 88 with the buffered bike lane. She has been increasingly using the sidewalk on Route 1. She appreciated being separated from the cars. She is impressed with everything the Town is doing and encouraged the Town to do more.
4. **Bryan Leary** of Pleasant Hill Road said he is a cyclist. He said that in 1980, he cycled from Bend, Oregon to Portland, Maine. He said that Oregon was advanced in its promotion of cycling and hiking. He said it was good to see that Falmouth is catching up with bike/bed improvements. He noticed that the 3-foot bicycle lane signs are effective in surrounding towns and thought that they would be even more effective with the passing of the hands-free law. He asked Lieutenant Soule if he had seen any results of the new law.

*Lieutenant Soule said there was a lot of awareness created around the law when it came out. He did not have statistical results, but said anecdotally that the number of traffic stops and accidents related to texting while driving seem to have decreased.*

Mr. Leary said he noticed less people honking at the stop lights.

*Lieutenant Soule said it was a long overdue issue that needed to be addressed and he felt that the awareness ahead of time made a big difference.*

Mr. Leary asked if there were any plans to add bicycle lane signage?

*Mr. Reynolds said that is one of the strategies included in the plan. There is another strategy about putting in "sharrows," which are arrows in the vehicular travel lanes. The Town has been cautious about implementing those strategies, but it is looking at the 3-foot state law signage specifically in talking with MaineDOT about Blackstrap Road. He said that Middle Road seems to be a heavily biked route as bike groups use Middle Road often. The Town is strategically figuring out the best place to put signage.*

*Mr. Holtwijk clarified that the signs that Jay was talking about were signs that say that there needs to be at least a three-foot separation between vehicles and cyclists, which is a Maine law.*

5. **Paul Rudenberg** of Clifton Road near Pleasant Hill. He asked what was the best way for the community to communicate with the Town about bike/ped projects.

*Mr. Reynolds said if it is a physical issue with the roadway or striping issue, people should contact the Public Works Department. Public Works can refer issues regarding state roads to MaineDOT. For speed, traffic, or enforcement type issues, people should contact the Public Safety Department (police).*

Mr. Rudenberg asked if there was a way to find out about ongoing projects either online or at Town Hall?

*Mr. Reynolds said that such information is available on the Town website and the Falmouth Focus newsletter. He said that the website was probably the best option. The capital improvements budgets, which list projects, are located on the public works page and the finance page.*

*Mr. Holtwijk said that Town staff recognizes that it is not always easy to find this kind of information on the website and is happy to walk people through where to find things. The bike/ped information is posted on the website under "boards and committees." He described the new Falmouth Focus newsletter. He said that the Town is increasingly using social media. People can also subscribe to receive e-alerts.*

Mr. Rudenberg said that the Middle Road bridge over the Presumpscot River is narrow and unsafe to walk across.

*Mr. Holtwijk said that Town staff is aware of a MaineDOT project to improve the bridge.*

6. **Matt Pines** of Underwood Road appreciated the effort to connect community park and the school campus. He felt that the fact that kids do not have cars is often ignored. He asked how the action items were prioritized. He said the items related to Route 88 were ranked the lowest priority.

*Mr. Holtwijk said the 2016 plan development process included three different types of outreach: 1) meetings with experts, 2) small group meetings, and 3) an online survey. That was done in two rounds. In the second round, the ideas from the first round were prioritized by all respondents. The items related to Route 88 just did not rank as high as some of the other projects. The plan appendix outlines the detailed ranking calculations. He said that Town staff is trying to actively work on all items, but there is only so much money to go around. He felt it was a well-considered process. The results between the three groups were remarkably consistent.*

Mr. Pines asked if there was considerable feedback saying that Route 88 is a high priority, if the prioritization list could get changed.

*Mr. Holtwijk said the list of priority might get changed, but that ultimately it is a budget question for the Town Council.*

Mr. Pines asked if any of the process considered user data, such as that from Strava.

*Mr. Holtwijk said that Town staff used Strava data when developing the plan.*

Mr. Pines asked if there were any plans to install a pedestrian-activated light at the intersection of Route 88 and Johnson Road.

*Councilor Kuhn said that there will be a forum held on the intersections of Route 88 and Johnson Road and Depot Road on December 11 at 7 pm where this will be discussed.*

*Lieutenant Soule said that the Police Department will be putting its speed sign board on Route 88 soon. Town staff reviews the sign board data on a regular basis. Route 88 is a very heavily traveled road. The Police Department will be gathering data in advance of the forum on December 11.*

7. **Elizabeth Rudenberg** of Route 88 has lived there 20 years. She came from Middle Falmouth. Her neighbor in Middle Falmouth used to complain that Route 88 got all the attention. She felt that Route 88 has been lucky to have a bike-ped lane for a long time. She asked if there were any traffic calming measures planned at the Town Landing Market crossing. She said that there used to be a crosswalk at the intersection of Route 88 and Depot Road. She said that there was no crosswalk from Underwood Park to Ramsdell Road where a lot of kids come to meet the bus.

*Mr. Reynolds said that a lot of those items will be addressed at the December 11 forum. The Town has hired a traffic engineer to provide technical assistance. He said that Town staff are considering installing delineators at the two Route 88 intersections.*

8. **Bill McKenney** thanked staff for holding the forum and for preparing a well thought-out plan. He mentioned that there is a plan to put a sidewalk in on Route 88. He felt that the wide shoulders on Route 88 work well. He said that there is a section of sidewalk between Ramsdell Road and Town Landing. He said that he tends not to use it and instead stays on the shoulder. He said that in the winter the sidewalk tends to be icy and it is expensive to plow the sidewalks separately. He said that installing sidewalks is expensive. He felt that instead of putting money into Route 88, add sidewalks along Route 100 and Route 1 and along the major East/West connectors like Lunt Road and Bucknam Road as well as roads without wide shoulders such as Pleasant Hill.
9. **Todd Kelly** asked if there had been consideration regarding moving the I-295 off and on ramps from Bucknam Road to Route 1 behind Foreside Tavern.

*Mr. Reynolds said he had seen MaineDOT's previous studies. It completed a I-295 corridor plan in 2008. The study proposed some fairly radical changes in some places, but did not make changes to the northbound ramps. Mr. Reynolds said that the Town has advocated for a new "Exit 12" in Cumberland to get the heavy volume of vehicles from that area on the highway. Unfortunately, that idea has not gotten any traction with MaineDOT. The study did look at the southbound exit ramps on and off I-295, bringing those around the railroad tracks and down on to I-295 heading southbound. He had not heard anything about the study in last 10 years. He did not think the study had any traction. He said that when the Town and MaineDOT discussed the intersection at Bucknam Road and the I-295 northbound lanes, MaineDOT had a public meeting two years ago and it heard some concern about getting onto I-295 heading north as the ramps or merge lanes were not long enough. That brought some attention to that issue on the highway side.*

Mr. Kelly said he was thinking that the two could be merged. He liked the school campus/community park connection.

10. **Bonnie Esposito** of Sherman Drive thanked staff for all the work that is going into this. She is a cyclist and a fitness walker. She appreciated what has been done so far. She said that the improvements on Middle Road were fabulous, and that the Lunt Road Bridge had turned out nicely. She said that she moved back 12 years ago after living out west. The Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was important to her and her husband when deciding to move here. She said that Mr. Holtwijk mentioned making work connections in his introduction. She said that efforts by the Town to close any missing links in terms of bike lanes added a ton of value. She said that she had participated in the stakeholder meetings. She said that, at the first stakeholder meeting, there was a discussion about communities potentially working together to extend bikeable roadways. She asked if anything has materialized around that.

*Mr. Holtwijk said that Sue Ellen Bordwell's attendance at the meeting reflects that as she was from Yarmouth. Falmouth, Cumberland, Yarmouth, and Freeport are working together on a regular basis. He said that a good example of this collaboration is the Route 1 Complete Street Project. He said that by working together, towns are often more successful in getting grants. As funding is tight, grant-giving entities look for cooperation amongst municipalities. He said that part of what makes Falmouth a great town is the great school system, moderate taxes, low crime, and safe walking. Town staff is always working to make improvements in all these areas, but recognizes that it is not possible (or even desirable) to put a sidewalk on every street in Falmouth. The Town needs to be very strategic in figuring out where there are connections that need to be made. Public feedback is useful in helping staff understand how best to improve the system. It is an ongoing conversation.*

11. **Mr. Rudenberg** expressed concern that people said that the shoulder is often a better place to walk than the sidewalk. He felt that it indicated a safety issue. He felt that there should be more sidewalks around the schools on Woodville and Falmouth Roads.

#### EMAIL FEEDBACK AFTER THE MEETING

1. **Matt Pines**, 96 Underwood, 11/20/19-Thanks Theo, appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the plans, and pass along some feedback. I'm impressed by the volume of work already accomplished by you and the town staff. Let me know if there is any way I can help support this work.
2. **Brad Burns**, 18 Merrill Road, 11/20/19-On 11/19/2019 my wife June and I attended the public meeting at the Elementary School Cafeteria to update people on the bicycle and pedestrian plan for Falmouth. I spoke briefly at that meeting against the scope of the planned sidewalk expansion as I did several years ago. The gist of my unhappiness with aspects of the plan is largely two-fold: first, some of the plan is very financially wasteful both in the initial cost and in

the long term maintenance. Second, there are few if any benefits to what I feel are unwarranted expansions of the sidewalk system. In addition to the wasteful financial costs these expansions will harm the current and historic rural nature of the areas through which they are planned. The plan to extend sidewalks from the Gray Road along the Middle Road and then down Merrill Road is the part that I am most opposed to. My wife and I are daily exercise walkers and have been for the entire 30 years that we have lived on Merrill Road. Both Merrill Road and all the cross-town area of Middle Road are too far away from any shopping areas to ever see any foot traffic as an alternative to vehicle or bike traffic. It is well beyond rare to see anyone walking on this road except as part of a real exercise program there is just no pedestrian foot-traffic coming and going along this road. If you drive along and look at this road you will see that it is entirely made up of houses that are quite far apart from each other. Many of these homes are old farms that still have barns attached to them. These are not neighborhoods where people will routinely walk to each other's homes as they might in really compact community or city. I think that most people that live along this area – like my wife and I – chose it because of its rural nature. The sidewalk would take away from yards all along the route and leave the town with miles of useless sidewalks to maintain perpetually. If the town wants to provide a benefit to the real pedestrian users who in this case are the exercise walkers and joggers who regularly use these roads, then the best one you could offer would be a wide shoulder like the one we now have on the Middle Road. Sidewalks take up space that could be used for wider shoulders. The wide shoulder is more beneficial than the sidewalk for two reasons: 1. In the long Maine winter many of the sidewalks, even after being cleared, are too slippery to walk on safely. In some years like the winter of 2018/2019 this condition lasted almost all winter. Safe walking on winter sidewalks is often the exception and not the rule. On the other hand, when the road is salted and plowed the shoulders are not only scraped down, but the salt works over to the edges and these areas are kept virtually ice free. That is where we walk in the winter or even on frosty mornings as early as October and as late as April. Walking in the shoulder allows you to view oncoming traffic, and to move over an extra amount for a vehicle that is driving too close to you. While vehicles jumping the curb and coming on to the sidewalk are rare, it can happen, and you would never know until it was too late. That is why exercise walkers don't like to move with the traffic. I do not dislike sidewalks, but they are part of an urban setting and belong there. I think that everyone realizes that many of these agendas are pushed by a relatively few people. I feel quite confident that the residents of the area I am talking about would prefer not to have sidewalks encroach on their yards and to pay extra in taxes for a public works project that no one is really going to benefit from.

3. **Peter Hall**, 18 Justamere Road, 11/20/19- Although I did not get up to speak last night I would like to state I am incredibly pleased with your work on Bike/Ped issues. As a former board member of The Bike Coalition of Maine and an avid cyclist myself I can tell you that our town is way ahead of the vast majority of communities. I have been living in Falmouth for the last 20 years and the amount of positive change I see is impressive. So once again thank you so much and I appreciate these updates on what is happening.
4. **Vicki Swerdlow**, 8 Oasis Landing, 1/9/2020 – Dear Councilors,

I write to you today to advocate for a sidewalk on Route 88 from the Cumberland line to Route 1.

My family and I are 30 year residents of Falmouth, the last 25 years of which we have lived off Route 88 on Madokawando Landing. Over the years, we have seen many changes to all parts of our town, including the Foreside, and we are grateful for the leadership role you and your predecessors have taken in making Falmouth a desirable and safe place to live.

My family members are regular pedestrian users of Route 88. It of course remains our automobile access to the world, but it is also the road where we walk to reach the Village Center or Town Landing Market for shopping, ride our bikes for exercise and pleasure, and walk to visit friends, the bay at Town Landing, and the woods in the Preserve. We lived on Madokawando when the road was improved and the pedestrian shoulders added to Route 88 in the 1990s - significant improvements for that time, but not enough today.

We have observed rising automobile and pedestrian traffic over the last two decades. The automobile traffic moves at higher speeds and more erratically, as distracted drivers try to multi-task. Because there are also more pedestrians, there are more opportunities for pedestrian-automobile interactions. Some drivers are careful and gracious, but most are focused on their passage along Route 88 to other destinations.

As one small example, allow me to point out the intersection of Madokawando Landing (north entrance) and Route 88. A driver coming south on 88 may have already reached a significant speed in the section between Town Landing and Madokawando. If that driver encounters another automobile stopped in the roadway awaiting its opportunity to make a left turn into Madokawando, the driver will often swerve on to the pedestrian shoulder in order to pass the stopped vehicle on the right. Unfortunately, given the curve of the road, it is not possible for the driver to see any pedestrians or bicyclists on the shoulder ahead of him/her, nor is it possible for any pedestrians or bicyclists to see the on-coming driver. In my opinion, it is only time until we have a serious automobile-pedestrian accident at this location - and this is only one of several such intersections.

My family and I are grateful that the Town Council is revisiting pedestrian access on the Foreside, and we would urge the installation of a sidewalk on at least one side of Route 88 from the Cumberland line to Route 1.

Please be in touch if you need more information on this topic.

Sincerely, Vicki Swerdlow

Draft notes by Marguerite Fleming