

Bicycle-Pedestrian Stakeholder Meeting #4 – June 15, 2021

Public Feedback

Note: Staff looked into some of the specific suggestions that were made below and added comments.
Last update: June 28, 2021

June 10, 2021: Peter and Barbara Shaw (via e-mail)

We're out of town but I'll try to tune in ZOOM on 7/15.

I want to alert you to a safety need that I have twice written to ME DOT about.

At the intersection of Rt. 1 and Rt. 88 (Forside Road), bikes entering Rt. 88 from Rt. 1 (to ride NE up 88) cannot see SW bound traffic on 88, nor can the SW bound traffic see the bikers as they enter the road from Rt. 1.

A convex mirror should be placed at that intersection to enhance safety and prevent potential accidents. Please mention this suggestion at the meeting.

Peter K. Shaw, MD

7 Heron Point Rd, Falmouth

Response from Theo Holtwijk:

Thank you for writing and your suggestion.

I have copied the Town Manager and Town Engineer. We will look into it. Perhaps the Town can install this instead of MaineDOT.

Response from Justin Early:

I have reviewed this location with our Public Works Director and can see the limited sight distance from the 10' path where it connects to Route 88. Public Works does not recommend a mirror be installed on Route 88. We have concerns that the oncoming vehicles may not be fully visible in the mirror and will give bicyclist a false sense of security to rely solely on what is seen in the mirror instead of looking for vehicles with the naked eye. Public Works will look into trimming the vegetation to help with sight visibility.

After visiting the site, we also question the existing bicyclist traffic patterns at the interchange and whether it would make more sense to direct bicyclist to stay on the road and navigate the intersection as a vehicle does. This would require removing the bicycles signage and symbology from the 10' paved path and adding shared lane or "sharrows" to the road paving. We are currently reviewing this option with the original design engineer and will provide additional updates as we learn more.

June 14, 2021: Anne Lively (via e-mail)

I can't make the ZOOM meeting, but I'd like to add a few thoughts via email.

I have hiked Falmouth's trails for years. I especially love the Blackstrap Hill Trails. Our property abuts them, so I can just walk through our woods and be on the trails. I rarely go there anymore except in winter because the number of mountain bikers have made it unsafe for those on foot. I've had some close calls with bikes coming airborne over the hill crests when I was hiking up. One biker wiped out to avoid hitting me. (Neither of us was injured.) For awhile I wore a whistle and blew it when going up hill

or around blind curves, but that wasn't conducive to a pleasant hike. And I've had bikes come up from behind and fly by without slowing down to allow me to get myself and my dogs off the trail. One came up behind me and yelled, "Move! Move! Move" and never slowed down.

I understand that there is a short section of hiker-only trail along the pasture near the Hurricane Rd. trailhead. I would like to see more hiker-only areas. Since the Hurricane Rd. trailhead is the most popular with mountain bikers if cars with bike racks are an indication, I would love to see the Happy Cats trail and Bobcat Trails reserved for hikers. I know that there is nobody to monitor the trails but signs could be put up just as they are for dogs.

I know that the mountain bike clubs has put a substantial amount of money toward those trails and it would be hard to make changes, but we hikers were there first.

Response from Theo Holtwijk:

Thank you for writing, Anne. I can see how this issue affects your hiking experience.

I have copied various staff members, so they are aware of it, if they aren't already. Perhaps your suggestion can be implemented in some manner.

FYI, you will be able to watch the meeting on demand afterwards, if you would like to. Just check the website in a day or two after we post a link.

FORUM COMMENTS

1. Stephen Hayes

Suggestion for Pleasant Hill/Allen Ave Extension sidewalk improvements to better connect with Portland

Response: *Allen Avenue Extension is not on sidewalk list, but Town could take a look at it to see what is involved as this is an important connection.*

2. Sean Curran

There is a lack of bike racks at commercial businesses. Can we have more of them?

Response: *Town purchased a number of bike racks a few years ago, but a limitation of the project funding was that the racks had to be located on public property, such as Town Hall and Library. Staff is not sure if bike racks are considered as part of Planning Board review of new development projects and will check that out.*

Response from Justin Early:

I spoke with Dawn Emerson, Town Planner, who explained bicycle racks is something that they look for however it is not a specific requirement in the general site plan review ordinance. The only ordinance standard currently in place is in the Village District Zoning Ordinance where one bike rack is required per each public access location

Bike racks shall be provided at a minimum of one at each customer entrance of a building and be placed so to minimize bicycle-pedestrian conflicts. Bike racks may be placed in a public right of way with permission of the Town.

3. Helena Hollauer

I am very happy with all of the trail development. I have worked with Boy Scout groups on trail clean-ups.

4. **Stephen Hayes**

I think that the Rails to Trails project is a great opportunity to link our trail systems with other towns.

5. **Marna Miller**

I agree with the suggestion to have more bike racks. The library has a rack for just two bikes. There is rack at Walmart. I support the work to promote East Coast Greenway for recreation and commuting.

6. **Bonnie Esposito**

I am very happy with all the work being completed as part of this project. Great presentation tonight. Installing bike repair stations and bike racks sends a message that Falmouth is encouraging and is supportive of cycling.

7. **Ronald Scorsone**

I am happy with the great progress that has been made. I agree that bike repair stations and bike racks would send a message that Falmouth supports bike use. We need to look to the future. I think that there is an opportunity on Route 100 corridor (Hannaford) and at Route 1 (Shaw's). Also, there are no bike racks at Town Hall.

Response: *Thank you for Rt 1/100 suggestions. There is a bike rack in front of Town Hall, but we agree we could use more racks and larger racks.*

8. **Paul Rudenberg**

I congratulate the Town for excellent work being done. I do feel that pedestrians are not benefiting from some small-scale sidewalk projects. We need more resident involvement in that. I will give you some examples: (a) There is a curb and narrow breakdown lane on Middle Rd near OceanView and Presumpscot Bridge that was a problem, (b) There is a new sidewalk going into library, but there is no crosswalk across Lunt Road, and (c) I cannot access the sidewalk going onto Middle Rd from Lunt Rd. at OceanView but have to go up to get around stone wall.

Response: *The Town will likely add a crosswalk on Lunt Road with flashing beacons when the other sidewalk improvements are completed there (of bringing upgraded sidewalk to new bridge). At OceanView and Middle/Lunt Road there were some grade issues to contend with. Each situation has their own challenges that staff needs to pay careful attention to.*

Response from Justin Early:

In addition to Theo's response above, I offer the following response to example (a): The curb on Middle Road was installed as protection to the sidewalk where it is in close proximity to the road at that location. It was initially installed in the road shoulder where it conflicted with

bicycle traffic. This was an unintentional conflict that was quickly corrected by removing and reinstalling the curb outside the road shoulder.

9. **Michelle Lamb**

I congratulate the Town on all the work being completed. I think that bike repair stations are a good idea, as they would help people feel less intimidated with biking. If you build it, they will come. I note that not many long-term projects have started yet. It would be great to address some of the longer-term priorities now.

Response: *The Town cannot work on all 48 items at once. We have started on four of the ten long term actions, but those are scheduled to take place in 2026-2035. We do try to seize on opportunities that may arise, such as a road that is being repaired. That may be a good time to add a sidewalk if such was planned.*

10. **Sue Wall**

I ride with the Portland Wheelers around Oceanview. There is one impassable driveway crossing, at the Mason-Motz facility on Middle Road. Can that be fixed?

Response: *The Town is right now working on a design and funding to fix that location. A tree has been cut down that was in the way.*

11. **Amanda Henson**

Regarding Route 88 project, I think it is great that crosswalks will be added at Skillins and Johnson Rd. Hopefully there will also be a flashing crosswalk light, because cars drive very fast in that area. It would be great to do something about the speed on Rt 88.

Response: *For those interested, Town staff is scheduled to give the Town Council an update on the RT 88 project on July 26.*

12. **Emily Hinman**

I appreciate all the work that has happened. Can we prioritize making the school campus more accessible for bikes and pedestrians to encourage that habit at a young age? I am thinking of Falmouth Rd and Woodville Rd.

Response: *Falmouth Road has been targeted for bike lane and sidewalk improvements. It is not an easy or inexpensive project with the narrow right of way there and possible impacts on trees. The 2016 Plan also has actions pertaining to educational opportunities, such as safe bike riding programs that could be sponsored by the School Department. The school was quite supportive of that. The Town Parks and Community Programs Department organizes bike rodeos and cycling safety programs to make young riders more familiar with what is involved with bicycling.*

13. **Paul Rudenberg**

I noticed a lot of joggers around the schools. I too feel that Falmouth Road should be a priority for sidewalk improvements. Has the Town done any private partnerships with citizens, where private financial contributions are collected as a match to pay for sidewalk improvements?

Response: *Staff does not know of any sidewalk partnerships but can inquire about that. The Town has done private trail partnerships, especially with maintenance.*

POST FORUM

June 15, 2021, Peter Hall (via e-mail)

Thank you for the update tonight. As a daily walker and cyclist in our town this is a topic near and dear to me.

I would like to say I am thrilled about how the town is addressing this problem.

If I [were] to make two comments I would say:

1. Bike repair stations are not something that will change my habits. As a long time cyclist including 2 cross country trips these bike repair stands are not something I have ever used.
2. I do have concerns about the issue of hedges/bushes limiting the line of sight at intersections. For example I jog daily out to Mackworth Island. There is a hedge that totally blocks drivers' line of sight as they turn to go to Mackworth Island. I have been jogging out there for over two decades and have seen numerous close encounters as pedestrians walk from Mackworth onto the sidewalk on Route 1. The same scenario happens as you leave Reg Roc to get onto the sidewalk on Route 1.

I am not sure the town has the power to tell people to cut their hedges down, but I am convinced they represent a problem not only for walkers but cyclists and drivers as well.

Once again I am so appreciative of the efforts and progress Falmouth has done on bike/ped issues.

Response from Theo Holtwijk

Thanks, Peter. I will share this with the team. We will look at the hedge situation.

Response from Justin Early:

Public Works can trim vegetation where it falls within the Right-of-Way. We can also try and talk to the property owners about proper maintenance of vegetation that falls on private property. I also noticed an old utility pole at the intersection of Reg Roc Road and US Route One that is interfering with sight distance. We will work on getting CMP to remove that pole.

June 18, 2021: Emily Bugbee (via e-mail)

I had hoped to attend the recent meeting.

Pedestrian safety, as a runner, biker and walker, is of great importance to me. Thank you for soliciting feedback.

As a runner I find most bike riders uninformed or not concerned with runner safety. It is the occasional rider that will make room for a runner. There seems to be an expectation that runners can jump to the side even if it means jumping into the dirt, a ditch or onto someone's lawn.

Along route 88 it seems that motorists believe that there is an amazing bike/pedestrian lane therefore no need for them to make room if a bike and runner end up trying to share a lane, especially if there is a car in the road. When a bike rider is cruising at 25-30 mph they have more in common with a car than a walker or runner or jogger.

It is worse on some of the other roads where drivers believe the pedestrian or biker should have enough room therefore they drive very close to rider for what reason?

I have been hit head on by a truck cutting a corner too tight (short neighborhood street in Falmouth) and hit by a car (back wheel I almost managed to avoid him, cottage road in south Portland) because of drivers that don't expect to see a bike rider.

People driving north on rt 1 that don't understand bike speed turn onto Johnson road right in front of me forcing me to slow down. Of course if you ride I expect you have plenty of your own stories.

Repair stations are an interesting approach to bike safety, awareness. It won't address motorists' behavior.

Building out sidewalks will be great. Have you considered something like the path along shore road in cape Elizabeth? It is not next to the road most of the way. The end result is that the amount of room for bikes remains the same, it is a safe trail for kids and pedestrians, and the path is visible to motorists. There is no question about the importance of safety.

That's cape where the road infrastructure is completely different. Rt 77 is no 295 or 95 or rt 88, rt 100. There are many places where running or riding feel unsafe.

What I'm saying is that more is needed to create motorist and bike awareness. Instead of investing in repair stations perhaps the money can be used for signs to remind motorists about bikes at key intersections, densely populated areas and near commercial properties.

Perhaps bike and pedestrian awareness messages out on social media, sign posted outside town landing market, skillins, town hall and in the voting area at the high school. Other locations grocery stores.

Most of these signs will not cost much money. I don't think a repair station will resonate with many drivers. It assumes the driver will be paying attention to the side of the road. I love it however I think we aren't there yet. Road safety must be addressed first.

I will make a large effort to attend the next meeting.

Response from Theo Holtwijk:

Thanks for your detailed message. Ongoing awareness and education is an essential element of having a good system in Falmouth.

I have reviewed the Shore Path report from Cape Elizabeth and wondered where we might be able to do something like that in Falmouth.

I will share your message with the bike-ped staff team.

In case you want to catch the last meeting, here is a link: <https://www.falmouthme.org/bicycle-pedestrian-project/pages/stakeholder-meeting-4-june-15-2021>

June 21, 2021, Emily Bugbee

Consider a path along an area that is unexpected, beautiful and will solve an unmet need...the beginnings of which are in place along rt 1 through the commercial area. I suggest that because there is so much traffic, a great way to enter the town to send a message...perhaps middle road or even Woods Rd for those that travel from one side of Falmouth to the other.

June 21, 2021, Emily Bugbee

One more thought paint stencils of bike and walkers in the lane. Simple and inexpensive. A reminder to all what to expect while driving etc.

I picked Wood rd because it was what I rode my bike on to get to school when I was a teenager! It connects the town and is pretty busy. It might be a nice improvement? Tough sell because of landfill?

Response from Theo Holtwijk

The issue with many roads is right of way width. If improvements cross private properties that adds impact and cost. We were lucky with Route 1 that we had 100 feet wide ROW. Most roads have ROW width of 50 feet.

Another issue with the path is amount of vehicular traffic. The Cape path worked as there was little vehicular traffic as I recall.

I thought Route 88 might be a good one, but limited ROW width may be an issue there as well. Good topic to explore though.

June 21, 2021, Emily Bugbee

Right. It was a massive effort to get private owners on board. The Robinson family sent their NYC lawyer, once more than one, speaking in opposition. You may recall it took years, more than one attempt, to get it approved. Jim Tasse when he was with Bike coalition of Maine, was very interested in the completion of the trail. He recruited me to become involved with the coalition because I was attending council meetings and speaking in favor of the trail. I am willing to reach out to him for more information/perspective since he now lives in Cape and has for several years. My guess is that you know him...:)

It can be done, with patience and a few key partners.