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Memo from June 28th Traffic Safety Staff Meeting

Background: In 2022 I proposed that the relevant staff participate in a more uniform, standardized, and scheduled process for quarterly review and consideration of both reactive and proactive issues related to traffic and pedestrian safety. This also includes looking at the standards that the Town does or doesn't have, and create a schedule for review of those as well. See memo provided to Selectboard on May 1st.

This memo summarizes the staff discussion and recommendations from our June 28th 2023 meeting. Rather than repeat information here contained in the complaints/requests received, I linked each header below to the original document that was the submitted to us. Please review that document for the original or additional information submitted.

Issues that were reviewed on June 28th 2023:

1. 2023-1: Request to review placement of crosswalk at Dunster-Wyeth
2. 2023-2: Request to review speeding near RMS
3. 2023-3: Request to review speeding on Etna Road
4. 2023-4: Request to review sidewalk placement and plans on Reservoir Road
5. 2023-5: Request to review questions related to complete streets and upcoming milling/paving projects

2023-1: Request to review placement of crosswalk at Dunster-Wyeth

This is not in the UCZ and is not within the town's direct jurisdiction. If it was, we do not have all of the data required to make a determination about if it meets the standards, which I identify below. However, we believe that is appropriate for staff resources to be put towards collecting this data to understand if a crosswalk is warranted at this location, as it *might* be. The criteria that must be met per the Town's policy is below:

- Speed limit 40 mph or less – YES
- Adequate sight distance from all vehicular approaches to both ends - We believe YES - but need to verify
- No other crosswalk within 500 ft - YES
- Vehicle volume exceeds 3,500 vehicles per day (both directions combined) - Yes (6,820 average daily volume from 2021)
- Pedestrian crossing volume exceeds 20 per hour in the highest pedestrian hour of the day (Elementary school age – 12 and under and elderly pedestrians – over 60 - count as 2 each) - TBD
- No parking within 30 feet of approach of crosswalk, except parking is allowed within 10 feet of crosswalk located mid-block with curb extensions. - YES

Again, staff believe that resources should be put towards collecting pedestrian data (using existing bus stop data does not allow us to meet the requirement). To do that, a few things need to be considered:

1. Timing of data collection: We believe that the most accurate numbers will be gotten in September. We proposed the second week of September for the pedestrian counts to be taken, when both k-12 and College are in session, as these for example both represent some of audiences of concern, and without that activities, we may not learn what we need to.
2. Additionally, we need to determine the method for pedestrian counting – manual or with automated equipment. Staff is looking into cost of purchasing automated counting equipment (which we may want to use for other projects). We also request that Jennie as the SB rep, reach out to the UVLSRPC to understand what they may be able to offer.

Lastly, because the intersection is offset, we need to determine how that works, though we suspect if a crosswalk were appropriate for this area, it would go from the North end of Dunster to South end of Wyeth.

This is not a recommendation to create a crosswalk, it is a recommendation to complete the necessary data collection that will enable us to determine if a crosswalk at this location meets town policy. A crosswalk in this instance also requires a rapid flashing beacon installation (RRFB).

If so, because this is not within the Town's jurisdiction, we will ask NH DOT to perform a Safety Audit (their process). If that comes out with a yes, they will pay for the installation (Town will be on the hook for maintenance, town replacement at ~15/ years at cost of \$30k-40k each replacement, and minimal maintenance costs of under \$1,000 per year). If no, the Town can decide to install one at taxpayer expense. Even if the Town were to decide to do it itself, the NHDOT can still deny it.

The gross cost of the installation is approximately \$20,000 - \$30,000 currently, with approximately less than \$1,000/year in maintenance costs. Replacement is approximately 15 years out.

Staff recommendation:

- Collect additional data needed to determine if a crosswalk at this location meets Town policy. If so, send to NHDOT. If not, discuss at next standard review whether Town policy needs update/modification.

- Have discussion about cost/benefit of local ownership of this section of road and/or moving it into the UCZ during the FY25 budget process

Budget impact:

- Data collection and staff work has minimal budget impact
- If NHDOT installs, taxpayers are committed to annual maintenance (less than \$1,000/year) and replacement at 15 years (likely \$30,000 - \$40,000)
- If Town decides to install at local taxpayer expense, there are no funds currently available in FY24 for this. Staff may recommend beginning in FY25 that the Town budget discretionary funds for traffic safety improvements that allow projects to be done sooner than next FY.
- Some impact for staff time/consultants for local ownership cost/benefit discussion
- May be large capital expenses required if there are any future engineering solutions to be considered or local ownership

2023-2: Request to review speeding near RMS

Although staff do not feel as though the available speed data show a significant speeding problem, we do believe there is more generally a traffic and pedestrian issue in this area. This is something that staff have attempted to work on this over the years. Because of how heavily settled this area is and the significant safety issues for pedestrians outside of a school, we do believe there are some steps we can take, though most of it, that we believe, hinges on working out a few details related to how pickup/dropoffs work outside of the school, where cars queue, and a few other things. That will require some stakeholder conversations.

Staff recommendations:

- This section of road is within the Town's UCZ
- Even without the requisite speed data showing speeding, because this section of road is a more heavily settled area with known *significant* pedestrian usage outside of a school, staff recommend looking into lowering the posted speed limit from 30mph to 25mph*
- If that is the case, we also recommend looking into lowering the school zone speed from 20mph to 15mph*
- We don't believe that this will resolve the traffic/pedestrian issues in the area, although it may help. To resolve the issues we request a series of meetings between Town staff, one or two representatives from Bike/Walk, as well as from the SAU/RMS to discuss traffic flow, traffic control procedures, and potential future engineering solutions.

Budget impact:

- Minimal budget impact for switching out signs (Under \$1,000)
- May be some, but likely minimal, budget impact for the SAU in looking at existing and new potential traffic flow/controls
- May be large capital expenses required if there are any future professionally designed engineering solutions to be considered

**We recommend "looking into" because in reviewing the relevant sections of RSA 265:60, there appears to be some inconsistent language and we need legal to look into and confirm that we are able to lower the limits as recommended.*

2023-3 Request to review speeding near Etna Road

This road is within NHDOT's jurisdiction. This has been an ongoing issue for some time. Staff have responded and directed resources especially for targeted enforcement, both reactive to complaints and proactive. A narrow road with limited site distance, narrow shoulders in many places that runs through a more heavily settled section presents some challenge from a traffic and pedestrian safety standpoint, largely because of a lack of space for pedestrians on the existing roadway. Although overall, based on available data, this road appears to be relatively safe, we do believe there is more diligence to do. Although speed data does not support lowering the speed limit or that there is a consistent enforceable speeding problem (though there is definitely some speeding in the area), there are a few things that staff recommend.

Staff recommendations:

- The Town will commit resources over the next quarter to collecting more robust speed data. Although the existing speed data doesn't support significant, enforceable, consistent speeding, anecdotal reports from residents feel there is speeding. Though there can often be a perceptual misalignment, we do believe that more data would be beneficial so that more clear decisions can be made in the future. Over the next three months, the Town will collect speed data at three identified locations along Etna Road: 1) In front of the Etna library 2) near the Etna Country Store, 3) Adjacent to Trescott Road.
- The Town will continue with proactive targeted enforcement as well as continue to be responsive to complaints received
- Have discussion about cost/benefit of local ownership of this section of road during the FY25 budget process
- Through discussion we realize we do not have a standard (local policy) in place to determine if/when a permanent speed feedback device should be placed. We will queue that up for future discussion with appropriate stakeholders to review and create such a standard, which can then be applied to this, if needed, once developed

Budget Impact:

- Minimal impact to collection additional data
- Minimal impact to review and creation of new policy
- Some impact for staff time/consultants for local ownership cost/benefit discussion
- May be large capital expenses required if there are any future engineering solutions to be considered or local ownership

2023-4: Request to review sidewalk placement and plans on Reservoir Road

Staff have existing plans to create some new sidewalks in this area. There are longer term plans to create a MUP and crosswalk, currently they are scheduled for FY27.

Staff recommendations:

- New sidewalk already funded and planned to connect Hemlock Road to Strong Trail, based on the [Safe Route to School Travel Plan](#) (Page 22 or 3-6).
- MUP on the south-side of the area and a crosswalk at Curtis are in the CIP planned for FY27 at this time. This was identified in the [Bike/Walk Master Plan](#) (Page 45).

Budget Impact:

- Both projects identified above do have moderate capital costs associated, but they have been funded or anticipated in existing plans.

2023-5: Request to review questions related to complete streets and upcoming milling/paving projects

There are existing engineering constraints on Lyme Road that limit available options in the short-term, including that the road is not wide enough to have two separate five-foot wide bicycle lanes on either side of the road. However, because there is a 10-ft wide MUP directly next to the road, we are not as concerned, as cyclists and other riders have the option of using the full lane on one side of Lyme Road, or using the MUP. We will increase signage and have several other options for short-term.

Similar there are constraints at W Wheelock, and a bike box is not appropriate at this location because it is not signalized. Staff intend to add dotted line to provide left-turn access from W Wheelock onto Old Tuck Dr.

Staff Recommendations:

- Lyme Road: Because of the road width, we can't create two five-foot wide bike lanes (inside of paint to curb). Staff recommend that we place signage on Lyme Road that identifies that cyclists have a right to the full lane. Cyclists have the option of using the full lane, one full-width bike lane for uni-directional travel, or the directly adjacent MUP that allows bi-directional travel.
- Lyme Road: Staff are working on possibly improving lane markings on the MUP in the future as well, potentially in collaboration with Dartmouth College to foster safer bi-directional travel.
- Lyme Road: Additional engineering solutions may be considered in the future, but those will come at significant capital cost and may or may not be possible.
- W Wheelock: Staff agree that there should be markings that allow for safer left-turn access traveling east on West Wheelock and turning onto Old Tuck Drive. Bicycle boxes present some issues, and because this is not a signalizing intersection, it's not recommended. We do recommend, and plan to create a dotted turn-transition paint treatment to more clearly mark the left-turn lane from W Wheelock onto Old Truck Drive. Final design solutions will be developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including property owners on W Wheelock.

Budget Impact:

- There is a minimal cost to additional signage on Lyme Road
- There is minimal/moderate cost to the potential additional treatment on the MUP, but that is further out and there may be cost sharing
- There is minimal cost to paint treatment on West Wheelock
- \May be large capital expenses required if there are any future professionally designed engineering solutions to be considered