



**Complete Streets Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
6/16/2020**

**ATTENDEES:**

Chris Buchanan, Town of Amherst	Rick Katzenberg, Amherst
Julie Chizmas, City of Nashua	Ryan Friedman, NRPC
Chris Costentino, Town of Milford	Matt Waitkins, NRPC
Nelson Disco, Town of Merrimack	Natasha Kypfer, Town of Amherst

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Waitkins called the meeting to order at 1:05pm.

**AGENDA ITEM #1: BICYCLE LEVEL OF TRAFFIC STRESS**

Waitkins and Friedman from NRPC presented information about Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS) analysis. The purpose of the presentation was to give background regarding how BLTS has evolved in NH, the data that is used, how analysis is carried out, and how BLTS can be used in project planning.

Waitkins explained that the development of BLTS analysis methodology in NH has been a collaboration of NHDOT, Plymouth State University, regional planning commissions and metropolitan planning organizations and communities since approximately 2014.

The idea behind BLTS is that of a bicycling network to attract the widest possible segment of the population, its most fundamental attribute should be low-stress connectivity, that is, providing routes between people's origins and destinations that do not require cyclists to use links that exceed their tolerance for traffic stress, and that do not involve an undue level of detour. BLTS is a rating given to a road segment or crossing indicating the traffic stress it imposes on bicyclists. It has to do with cyclist proximity to traffic.

Levels of traffic stress range from 1 to 4; a ranking of 1 is the least stressful (suitable for children), and a ranking of 4 is the most stressful (suitable for the most experience riders). A BLTS rating of 2 appeals to largest % of potential bike riders and is therefore the rating that should be planned for if the goal is to encourage the greatest number of individuals to bicycle in a community.

Friedman explained the road attributes that are used to calculate BLTS.

- ▶ Posted Speed\*
- ▶ Number of lanes
- ▶ Presence of bike lane\*
- ▶ Presence of on-street parking\*
- ▶ Directionality
- ▶ Shoulder width
- ▶ Traffic volume (AADT)

These attributes are contained in the NHDOT GIS road database except for those with an asterisk. the attributes are used as inputs in a GIS analysis to determine BLTS for road segments.

Friedman further explained the various tools that can be developed for measuring the impact of BLTS on the transportation network, including the total miles of road that are BLTS 1 or 2, and the percent of reachable destinations using the low-stress network.

Waitkins concluded by showing how BLTS has been used in planning in the NRPC region during development of a bicycle/pedestrian corridor study of the DW Highway corridor in Merrimack. He also explained that BLTS can be used in addressing Ten Year Transportation Plan project selection criteria. For example, the % of road miles that are BLTS 2 or better addresses the *Mobility criteria*, % of origins connected to a BLTS 2 or better addresses *Network Significance criteria*, and % of poverty population within ¼ mile of BLTS 2 or better addresses *Equity/Environmental Justice criteria*.

Discussion Followed. Disco said that it would be helpful to include in a planning document the list of attributes that go into calculating the BLTS for a given segment of roadway. That way it can be determined the types of improvements that are needed to improve the segment rating. It was agreed that this information should be included in a planning document.

It was also noted that time of day is critical, because BLTS may be at its worst during rush hour and may not be as bad during off-peak.

Minkarah noted that curb cuts/driveways are not an attribute that is considered in BLTS analysis, yet curb cuts add a great deal of stress. It was agreed that this and other attributes should potentially be considered in future model development.

Buchanan acknowledged this is a useful tool and would like to see NHDOT include additional attributes in its data set. He particularly noted that actual speed should be included in the analysis rather than posted speed because actual speed is typically higher than posted speed. Friedman concurred but said posted speed has typically been used because that is the available data. He suggested that in the future “big data” will possibly be used. (For example, cell phone data that includes vehicle speed).

Gamarat said that analysis should be based on worst-case scenario and Chizmas noted that cars may drive faster during off-peak because there are less cars on the road.

It was suggested that a pedestrian LTS be developed. Friedman noted that NRPC did develop pedestrian level of traffic stress for the Nashua Plan for Health project, and PLTS was also completed for the DW Corridor project.

## **AGENDA ITEM #2: NH101A RAIL TRAIL DISCUSSION**

Continued the discussion about the feasibility of developing a rail trail and/or rail-with-trail bike path along the NH101A corridor.

Waitkins said the subcommittee that has been working on developing this idea had recently met and was prepared to report progress.

Buchanan provided thorough documentation of progress he has made developing a corridor profile. The document provides information about ownership of the corridor, trackage rights, railroad companies that operate on the corridor and the businesses along the corridor that use the rail line to ship or receive products.

Buchanan noted that very little freight is shipped along the corridor. The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) rates track on a scale of 1-9, with 1 being the lowest rating. The track in the corridor has a rating of less than 1, meaning that a train is required to travel at walking speed. It would cost an estimated \$2.6 million to bring the track rating up to the minimum of 1. Very little freight is shipped by rail in NH. There is no economic incentive for the owners of the segment of rail that is between downtown Nashua and downtown Wilton to upgrade the track along the corridor.

The next step in developing the corridor profile will be to develop an analysis of how poorly alternative transportation modes (biking/walking) are accommodated along the corridor. It was suggested that BLTS

analysis be conducted along the corridor. Minkarah said that NRPC will discuss the logistics of doing this and report back.

Additionally, Buchanan intends to develop a story map of the corridor that will show length of corridor, width of Right of Way, parcel ownership, adjacent land uses, choke points, public access points, and amenities within ¼ mile walking shed and a several-mile bike shed. NRPC will provide data layers for this analysis to Buchanan.

The NHDOT State Trail Plan (2005) has a table of costs for converting rail lines to rail trails that needs to be updated.

**Next Steps:**

- NRPC will provide GIS data Layers to Buchanan.
- NRPC will attempt to update the State Trails Plan rail trail conversion cost table.
- Matt will attempt to acquire PDF's of NHDOT maps of the corridor from NHDOT.
  - o Hillsborough Branch
  - o Milford/Manchester branch.
- Develop Level of Traffic Stress analysis for the 101A corridor.

**ADJOURN:**

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 2:45

**NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting will be held July 21, 2020