

**Moretown Sidewalk Study Update**  
**Local Concerns Meeting Minutes**  
**April 29, 2010**

Introduction:

Stephanie Venema, Select Board Vice-Chair, opened the meeting with an introduction of the sidewalk study update that is in progress. She said the town has received assistance from Steve Gladczuk of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission to update the 1996 sidewalk conceptual analysis, and thanked him for all his support of the town. Dubois & King was selected to complete the update. Evan Detrick and John Merrifield of Dubois & King were introduced. Participants were asked to sign-in and complete a comment form to share their concerns in writing if desired. (Note: Comment forms will be available at the Town Clerk's office – please complete by May 27<sup>th</sup>).

Safe Routes Plans:

Stephanie introduced Dara Torre, Moretown Elementary School parent and Safe Routes to School coordinator, who provided a brief overview of the planning study completed last year. Dara described an upcoming infrastructure grant opportunity from Safe Routes (due 5/14/10), which funds up to \$250,000 in infrastructure improvements in towns participating in the Safe Routes program (no matching funds required). She noted the town is receiving assistance from Dubois & King with the research and preparation needed for that application. The main focus of the application is traffic calming, including the installation of radar speed feedback signs, which alert drivers of their speeds. More expensive improvements, like new sidewalks, may be applied for in the future, pending the outcome of the current Dubois & King study update.

Dara said that the Safe Routes team is assessing the safest way for students to access the school when walking or biking to the school, which will guide the decision on whether and where to construct additional sidewalks at the school. Last spring, students were encouraged to use the historic front door by the crosswalk to avoid cars in the parking lot, but security issues came up (quiet hallway out of view of the office). For this spring, the new principal, Debbie Lesure, has suggested that students use the existing crosswalk and walk along the south side of the school to the back entrance, which receives better supervision. If this works well, the school may wish to seek funding for a sidewalk on that side of the building. At the same time, the school will test alternative access to the parking lot, and will try closing off the narrow north driveway (by the church) to vehicles for one week (May 17-21, Valley Walk and Roll Week/Way to Go Week) during the school day. The school did a similar closure during construction last fall. Diana Costello recommended that parents be given a lot of advance notice, and wondered if the Town Clerk driveway were really wide enough for buses and cars. Evan commented that he believes it is,

and could accommodate a sidewalk. Diana also recalled that at one time the north driveway was one-way, and wondered when it became two-way. Depending on the outcome of the trial week, the school and town may wish to consider a sidewalk on the driveway next to the Town Clerk, in which case an additional crosswalk would be required.

#### Overview:

Evan of Dubois & King described the process, goals, and deliverables of the sidewalk study update. He introduced John Merrifield, who will be the project engineer. Evan began by showing an aerial ortho map of Moretown Village, from Pony Farm Road to bridge #4 by Dickerson Road, which shows main buildings and location of wetlands. (Note: This map will be available for view at the Town Clerk's office.) He described the project's three main parts - updating the 1996 sidewalk study, addressing safety at the Moretown Mountain Road intersection, and assisting with the Safe Routes to School application. He will be providing more details to the 1996 study, with resource mapping and gathering right-of-way, historic, and archaeological information required for federal grants. To begin the process, a local concerns meeting is held, at which townspeople share their concerns and priorities for improvements. Next, he will develop a purpose and needs statement, which will answer the question of why public funds should be used/how goals will be achieved through the project. Third, he will compile alternatives and cost information, which will be presented at a second public meeting. At the end of the project, the town will receive a final scoping study, which includes recommendations on next steps.

#### Public Discussion:

- **Radar Speed Feedback Signs.** There was a lot of support expressed for the use of radar speedback signs to slow traffic. Evan said they are becoming widely used, are programmable, with LED technology that requires little power (estimated \$100 per year in electricity costs). Solar-powered signs are another option. Someone questioned whether photographs of license plates are a feature of the signs, like in England; Evan said that type of sign is not available at this time.
- **Lack of speed enforcement.** Concern was expressed over the lack of sheriff time policing the village. It was noted that the radar signs also capture data on speeds, and could be helpful in pinning down when speed enforcement may be most needed. Evan said the radar signs would need to be placed within 700 feet of the school if funded by Safe Routes. The town may wish to consider having signs placed further out to slow speeds sooner. However, it was noted that the natural curves at either end of the village slow speeds, and that it is on the straightaway that speeds pick up.
- **Dangerous Intersection/No Sidewalk.** Eliza Cain shared that her greatest concern is the inability to access the village from the lower village safely because of the lack of sidewalks at the Moretown Mountain Road intersection. Several participants discussed the growing numbers of children

living in the lower village, estimated between 25 and 30, who live between Dickerson Road and the Town Hall. Eliza noted that there is a level area where a former path existed below the guardrail on the Tham's property, and wondered if a walking path or sidewalk could be constructed there. There was strong support for this idea. Sharon Evans inquired about the Cutler house at the intersection, and whether the town had any plans to improve the visibility there. Stephanie replied that she has been giving the family time after Mrs. Cutler's passing, and that she intends to speak with the family soon. Dara wondered if the house was vacant, and whether it would be possible for student bikers on the Mountain Road to cut behind the house and avoid the intersection. It was noted that use of a path in this way could create right-of-way precedent issues. Some discussion occurred about the few number of collisions that actually occur at the intersection, perhaps because the curve has a traffic calming effect.

- **Increased truck traffic.** Concern was also expressed about increased truck traffic through the village, and that a bypass was proposed years ago to address this problem.
- **Curbs/Parking.** To improve the safety of the existing sidewalks, Evan asked whether adding curbs would be desirable. Someone noted a decrease in parking on the sidewalks at the St. Patrick's church, but commented that the Fire Department volunteers use the sidewalks for parking on Tuesday nights. The majority of those present were in favor of curbs, even if it would limit parking. Evan said that granite and concrete are the two curbing options, and noted that the cost for granite has come down and is comparable to concrete. He added that curb maintenance would be the responsibility of VTrans; the town would be responsible for maintaining the sidewalks themselves. Sarah Zschau wondered if it would be advantageous to have sidewalk on one side of the road only, with a green space between the road and sidewalk. Evan observed that having a sidewalk right next to the road, as is the case now, helps slow speeds as it creates a more urban feel. Evan commented that in the 1996 study, on-street parking was proposed. He inquired whether that need still exists. Several people expressed their support for on-street parking in front of the post office and Village Hair only.
- **Crosswalks.** There were concerns that the existing crosswalk in front of the school has poor sight distance when approaching from the south, and is poorly maintained (faded paint). Frank Piazza inquired about the possibility of a raised crosswalk, that works like a speed bump. According to Evan, the Vermont Department of Transportation (VTrans) would not allow that on a state highway. He did suggest, however, the possibility of a patterned in-laid pavement, which could be filled with a more durable epoxy paint (examples in Bethel and Swanton). Evan also suggested that the school crossing signs may be located too far away from the actual crosswalk.

Evan asked whether an additional crosswalk at the Town Clerk's office would be desirable. He mentioned that a trial run could be done using down signs (no paint). If at least 20 people in an hour are documented to use it, the town could request a painted crosswalk. Several people commented that it feels safer to cross at that location (better sight lines).

- **New Sidewalks.** Stephanie inquired about regulations for widths of sidewalks. Evan replied that we would need 15 feet from the center line to the start of the sidewalk, plus 5 feet for the sidewalk. The state right of way is 25 feet. We would have 4 feet left for a green strip, but 5 to 8 feet is recommended for street-scaping. Evan asked whether there is any need for sidewalks south towards Pony Farm. The geographic limitations (ledge) were discussed. Several people commented that they drive over to Pony Farm Road instead of walking from the village to avoid that area. Previous plans to hook up to the Mad River Path was mentioned, possibly on Austin property. Evan inquired about the priorities for sidewalks.

The group consensus was to prioritize new sidewalks in the lower village (ADA-compliant walking path, Staymat gravel, on one side only), followed by adding curb to the existing village sidewalks, followed by adding one-side of sidewalk south of Hurdle Road. Interest was expressed in pursuing an informal walking path soon (with landowner approval).

- **Survey.** Stephanie mentioned the possibility of conducting a town online survey to gather additional town input. Dara offered to assist with this.

Evan suggested that everyone mobilize their friends and neighbors to attend the second public meeting, and to reach out to the select board. The study update is due for completion in September.

#### Questions:

- If we were able to get funding for these projects, when could we expect them to be completed? After receiving town approval for matching funds at town meeting, it would take 2 to 3 years, optimistically, to be ready for construction.
- What would costs be? Curbed sidewalk costs about \$150-200 per foot. The 1996 study proposed \$1 million. Possible sources would be a combination of Transportation Enhancement grants (require 20% match – 10% in kind, 10% cash – maximum of \$385,000 total) and Safe Routes funding (\$250,000/no match). A really great source would be earmarks. Stephanie mentioned that the Byways grant may be applicable to sidewalks in the future. Someone inquired whether ADA funding exists that could be tapped; Steve suggested the Center for Independent Living as a contact, but said he was not aware of any resources.