

Newington Safety Lanes

In 2019 the Selectmen received numerous requests for safety lanes to be created in town due to numerous near misses of walkers and bicyclists on Nimble Hill Road and for the safety of the school children on their way to and from home and school.

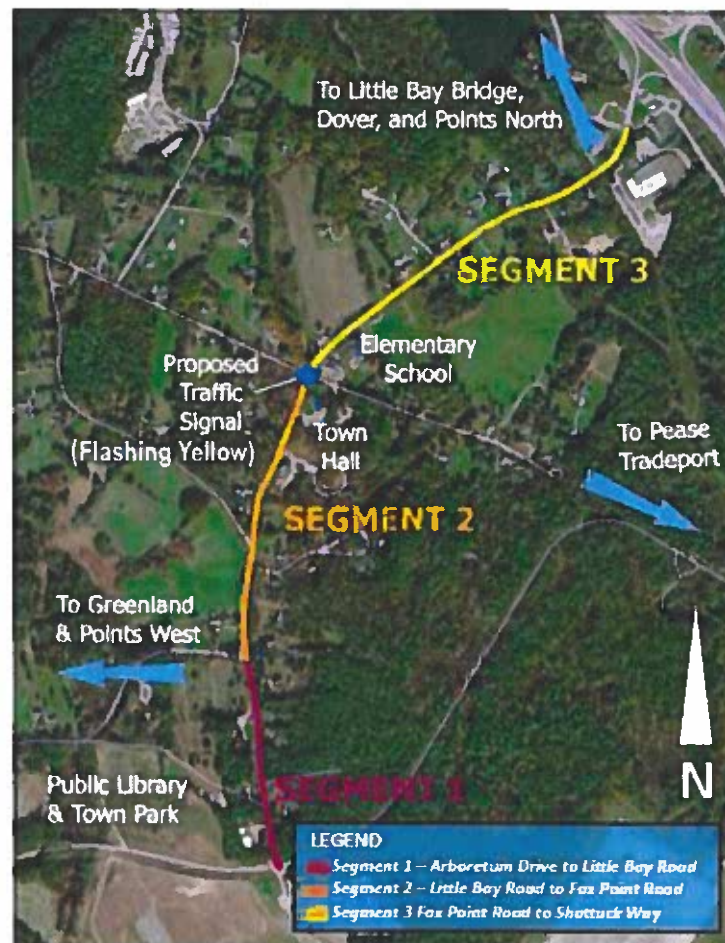
The committee met with members of the Fire department, Police Department, School principal, students, town engineer and other staff to address the issues associated with constructing a safety lane and determine recommendations to present to the Selectmen. The committee talked with residents, reviewed previous town board and committee meeting minutes, and researched lanes and paths in other communities.

In early March 2020 the Committee learned that there was a grant available called the transportation alternatives program that could fund 80% of a safety lane for walking and biking. They also learned that this grant was only available every two years. Given this fact and knowing that they could not put forth a warrant article this late in the budget season it was determined that the best route would be to bring forth an amendment to the town budget at the 2020 town meeting. The amendment was approved overwhelmingly at the 2020 Town Meeting after a lengthy discussion.

The grant application process was postponed into 2021 due to the pandemic. The Selectman decided to place the warrant (Warrant Article #2) once again on the upcoming Town Meeting agenda so all residents will have another chance to voice their opinions on this important matter. The Warrant is unanimously endorsed by the Board of Selectman and all but one member of the Budget Committee.

The warrant does not seek additional funding as the money was approved in the 2020 Town Meeting and has not been spent. If approved once again, the Town will submit the application in mid-March and expect a decision around September. The project could be initiated as early as Fall/2021. A grant award would limit Newington's cost to only 20% and award nearly \$500,000 to the town for the project.

A public opinion survey conducted by Newington's Safety Lane Committee found considerable community support with 75% of the respondents in favor of applying for this grant. Numerous studies show the connection between trails and economic vitality. In addition to improving the safety of this corridor for non-vehicular traffic, this project will strengthen the local economy, help build a sustainable community, and improve our quality of life by creating new opportunities for outdoor recreation and make the village center more accessible for all residents. The lanes will provide safe and enjoyable places for children and adults to walk or bicycle to work, school and to local businesses. It will also encourage physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. The Town is encouraged to include letters of support from residents, businesses, and other regional stakeholders prior to the grant application deadline in mid-March 2021 to help the reviewers determine if Newington's proposal meets the qualifications for the grant. The Safety Lane Committee has prepared a template for the Letter of Support (available upon request at the Town Hall).



If the incorporation of safety lanes for non-vehicular traffic through Newington's town center becomes a reality the town will widen the busy 1.3 mile corridor from Shattuck Way to Arboretum Drive (Nimble Hill Rd). The project would add 3-foot-wide lanes on each side of Nimble Hill Rd from Shattuck Way to the School. The pathway will continue off road from the school and pass in front of the Fire Station to Fox Point Rd. Dual 3-foot-wide pathways will continue along Nimble Hill Rd from Fox Point Rd to Little Bay Road. At Little Bay Rd the pathway will go off-road again along the cemetery and up to Arboretum Rd. The Safety Lane Committee proposed to add traffic calming measures to the plan (e.g., increased police enforcement, digital speed feedback signs, crosswalks, etc.) to complement the Safety Lane design. The new lanes will greatly improve safe access through this section of town that includes the school, town offices, recreation fields and facilities, the Town Forest, the Town Church, the Town Library, the historic district, the cemetery, and provide more convenient access to the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge and local off-road bike and foot paths. Many of these sites are used on a daily basis. This corridor is also an important route for commuters to bike into Portsmouth and the commercial sector of Newington and the Pease Tradeport which employs thousands of people in the region. These lanes will serve as connectors to other regional biking and walking paths in the area linking the communities of Dover (via the Dover Point pathway) and Portsmouth (via the Pease

Tradeport pathways) to Newington NH. The promotion of sustainability is one selection criteria for the grant.

The safety lanes will further instill pride in Newington and inspire residents and their visitors to enjoy our rural town. The Safety Lane Committee is Chaired by Derick Willson. Other members of the volunteer committee include Bill Wright, Bruce Johnson, Laura Wilhelm-Stone, Mike Marconi, Mike Mazeau, Ted Karabinas, Katie Hood and Ken Ernstoff.