



GREATER LOWELL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Advisory Committee Meeting #3 Summary

Date: September 15, 2025, 6:00-7:30pm

Location: Virtual (Via Zoom)

Prepared by: Amanuel Regassa, Transportation Planner II

Attendees:

- George DeLuca
- Liz Ivanov
- Kyle Parker
- Ethan Yang
- Robert Klinkhammer
- Aubrey Brown
- Josh Warhurst
- Wendy Jepson
- Ray Tice
- Douglas Chandler
- Andrew Jennings
- Kelly Lynema (NMCOG)
- Amanuel Regassa (NMCOG)
- Chris Hayes (DIY Lowell, NMCOG)

Purpose of the Meeting

The third Advisory Committee meeting advanced the Greater Lowell Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (GLBPP) by presenting key findings from the Existing Conditions Assessment and the first phase of public engagement, while also discussing opportunities and challenges for network expansion. The meeting provided a forum for committee feedback on infrastructure gaps, safety priorities, and destination connections, setting the stage for development of the draft regional network.

Key Themes of the Meeting

1. Existing Conditions Infrastructure Assessment

- The Toole Design team presented the Existing Conditions report, which establishes the baseline for the GLBPP.
- Content includes:
 - Region-wide maps of sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and trails.
 - Summaries of municipal policies, Complete Streets adoption, and planned improvements.
 - Crash analysis identifying high-injury corridors, drawn from the Greater Lowell Vision Zero Plan.
 - Appendices with municipal-specific conditions maps.
- Data updates: Chelmsford and Westford sidewalk inventories will be added for improved accuracy.

- Committee members acknowledged that the analysis demonstrates broad alignment with local and state Complete Streets priorities.

2. Active Transportation Plan Findings

- Safety: Over the last five years, 11 fatalities and 68 serious injury crashes involving people walking or biking were recorded. Intersections and higher-volume corridors were identified as areas of concern.
- Infrastructure Backbone: 16 miles of shared-use paths serve as a foundation for future expansion. Popular examples include the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and towpath segments.
- Demographics: Roughly 8000 households (about 7% of the regional population) do not own vehicles, underscoring the need for safe walking and biking access.
- Travel Demand Data: Replica and Strava datasets highlighted corridors with high pedestrian and cycling activity, providing additional context for prioritization.

3. Public Engagement Results

- Phase 1 Engagement Activities:
 - 15 community events across 7+ municipalities, with an estimated reach of 300–2,000 residents.
 - Activities included participatory mapping exercises, multilingual surveys, and a pedestrian walk audit in downtown Lowell.
- Survey Results:
 - 445 completed surveys, capturing a broad range of input but with overrepresentation of white respondents.
 - 80% of respondents reported walking at least once a week, largely for recreation. Only 6% cited walking as their primary mode.
 - Infrastructure priorities included sidewalk repair/installation, trail improvements, safer intersections and traffic calming.
 - Residents reported feeling safer walking than biking, citing inadequate infrastructure and driver behavior as key barriers to cycling.
- Mapping Feedback:
 - 724 mapped points were collected, documenting safety concerns, missing connections, and desired destinations.
 - Themes emphasized cross-municipal connectivity, improved intersection design, and accessibility for people with disabilities.

4. Network Gaps and Destination Connections

- The Committee discussed emerging ideas for the draft network plan:
 - Trails: Potential expansions such as the Trolley Line Trail in Westford and connections to the Bruce Freeman/Yankee Doodle Trail in Billerica.
 - Corridors: Addressing missing links such as the Middlesex Turnpike gap.
 - Destinations: Incorporating hospitals, major medical clinics, cultural venues (e.g., Lowell Memorial Auditorium), recreational facilities, preschools, job centers, and neighborhood/village centers.

- Members emphasized the importance of designing both recreational and utilitarian trips, ensuring equitable access for residents who depend on walking and biking.

5. Challenges and Considerations

- Measurement Issues: Difficulty in assessing sidewalk and roadway widths consistently; suggested using categorical ranges for accessibility ratings.
- Equity: Engagement findings highlighted disparities in infrastructure quality and access between Lowell and surrounding towns.
- Cultural Barriers: Some suburban communities continue to view biking as recreational rather than utilitarian, affecting support for infrastructure investments.
- Maintenance: Winter clearance and ADA compliance remain ongoing concerns.
- Policy Barriers: Institutional constraints, such as utility corridor access and design standards limiting mid-block crossings, were flagged.

Next Steps

- Committee Feedback: Advisory Committee members submit comments on the Existing Conditions report by Friday, September 19.
- Destinations: Members send additional destination suggestions for inclusion in the network analysis to Amanuel Regassa.
- Document Revisions: Toole Design to update the Existing Conditions report with comments and newly provided data.
- Draft Network Plan: Toole Design to prepare the first draft of the regional walking and biking network for presentation at the October Advisory Committee meeting.
- Public Engagement: NMCOG to schedule fall workshops and additional walk audits to refine recommendations.

Conclusion

The 3rd Advisory Committee meeting provided a comprehensive review of the region's current walking and biking conditions and reinforced the need for safer, more connected, and equitable infrastructure. Through robust engagement findings, technical analysis, and local insight, the committee identified both pressing challenges and promising opportunities. This input will directly shape the draft network plan, which will be the focus of the next Advisory Committee session.