

From: **Jim LaBelle** <jlabelle@aristotle.dartmouth.edu>

Date: Mon, Jun 28, 2021, 2:23 PM

Subject: input on cycling signage

To: <l.shen@thetfordvermont.us>

Cc: Sue Fritz <sefritz58@gmail.com>

Li, I'm sending this to you, hoping you can share it with the board. Feel free to put in the minutes, or wherever. Thanks for considering my input, Jim

Dear Thetford Select Board,

As one of Thetford's regular bike commuters, I ride from East Thetford to Hanover using multiple routes virtually every day of the year including Winter. I also ride a lot recreationally, and I'm familiar with cycling all of Thetford's roads. I urge the selectboard to take advantage of the grant that was awarded us to increase bicycle warning signage on our roads.

In our area, motorists need to drive expecting cyclists (or tractors, pedestrians, or animals) around every bend and behind every hill. Simple yellow diamonds with bicycles in them are important to post around our town to encourage awareness. There is a lot of signage in town, but adding one or two dozen bicycle signs to the existing stock of thousands is a negligible increase, and these are important signs to add. If they can be combined with existing signs, that would be great. Thetford currently has far fewer bicycle warning signs than neighboring towns (e.g., Norwich). The complaint that people don't notice the signs seems specious; psychology studies on subliminal advertising suggest that motorist behavior may be influenced even if people don't always consciously take note of the signs.

Academy and Tucker Hill Roads are generally pretty safe, Tucker Hill less so than Academy. I often ride the length of Academy without encountering a car and have never felt unsafe on it. The dangerous part of Tucker Hill is not so much the bridge, which is so short you can see who's approaching it from either side; it's the section over and to the south of the height of land. On the south side southbound cars drive too fast. Northbound cars also drive too fast, and over the height of land, cyclists are forced into the middle of the lane due to road damage in both directions, particularly northbound. Sight lines are bad, particularly northbound. Yellow warning signs approaching the height of land from both directions would be helpful.

The idea to put signs along the re-paved section of Route 132 is a good one; do not neglect the section between Tucker Hill Road and the Strafford line which is on the Northern Tier TransAmerica route and has many narrow sections.

Another trouble spot in town is Route 5 for the quarter mile north of Rabbit Road, especially southbound. 50 mph is too high a speed limit for the bend in Route 5 where Rabbit Road comes in; safest would be to reduce the speed limit on this section but yellow bicycle signs before the section in each direction would help. This is a busy cycling route in Summer when the Hanover-East Thetford loop is popular with bike tourists.

Rush-hour motorists descending Route 113 between the interstate and East Thetford tend to drive too fast and too close to bicycles; signage might help there.

The other unsafe section in town is the entire length of Route 113 between Post Mills and Thetford Center. Sightlines are bad and car speeds high. I avoid cycling this stretch, but other cyclists, especially those from out of town, undoubtedly use it. I don't know what to do for them---perhaps signs would help. One could also think about some kind of placard or kiosk at each end informing cyclists of alternate routes.

Recent exchanges on the Thetford list serve revealed that a lot of citizens are misinformed about where and how cyclists should ride, and how motorists must act when they encounter cyclists. It's worth considering ways to disseminate correct information.

These are some of my thoughts on some of the places where attention to bicycle safety is needed. I certainly urge the town not to turn away funds they've been awarded to address this.

Respectfully,

Jim LaBelle
East Thetford

From: "Barbara E. Knauff" <Barbara.E.Knauff@dartmouth.edu>
Subject: Bicycle safety signage
Date: July 2, 2021 at 4:59:36 PM EDT
To: "lshen@thetfordvt.gov" <lshen@thetfordvt.gov>

Hi Li,

I just wanted to add my voice to the discussion around bicycle safety signage – I understand that the town has obtained a grant for that, but that there is discussion around whether to actually accept the grant/put in place the signage, or not.

I've been a pretty serious cyclist for over thirty years, both for pleasure and utility. I've been bike commuting to Dartmouth for much of the year going on two decades now; usually biking along route 5. After tens of thousands of miles on local roads, I have had plenty of close calls, and one pretty harrowing incident, when an on-coming left-turning vehicle drove straight into me: I was thrown onto the hood and into the windshield. Thank god for helmets, but one of my shoulders has a permanently interesting scar pattern from all the glass that went in there. And this was a pretty lucky outcome – it could have been much worse. All this by way of saying that bicycle safety is not just a theoretical concern for me, but that I've personally experienced what can happen when a bike and a motor vehicle collide: it's never good news for the cyclist.

I do everything I can to enhance my own safety: I wear hi-visibility yellow; I've stuck reflective tape onto my bike and helmet; I use flashy lights; I ride defensively. But I am also a big proponent for any measure that promotes a more bike-friendly infrastructure, including signage which might alert drivers to the presence of cyclists, and remind them that cyclists have a right to the road. Sharrows do this pretty well. So do the diamond-shaped yellow signs pointing out the potential presence of cyclists.

I fail to see the disadvantage of applying this signage: it doesn't change anything about the driving experience, other than – hopefully - alert drivers to other traffic participants. We are not talking about affecting speed limits, or about rebuilding roads in more traffic-calming ways. The scenic impact of signage is negligible; I'd argue that we have already

wrecked the view by constructing massive asphalt and concrete arteries throughout our landscapes! We just don't "see" that impact anymore...

In my opinion, turning down this grant also sends an unfortunate message: that we collectively don't care much about the safety of everyone traveling our roads; and that we don't take even simple measures to promote sustainable modes of travel or recreation, even as we see the impacts of climate change.

There is a lot of cycling activity in Thetford. I just had a look on Strava, which is an app allowing cyclists to log and map their routes. It showed almost 4000 individual trips from Thetford Center up Thetford Hill over the past few years, for example. This is just one of many such apps which people use to track their rides— and the majority of cyclists don't log their trips at all. So this is arguably just the tip of the bike activity iceberg. I'm attaching a screenshot of a map of Thetford with Strava's cycling heatmap overlaid – it gives a good idea of what the most biked-on roads are (the more rides, the more white-hot the color).

I do hope we can do something with this grant to increase driver awareness of cyclists on the road. If it saves just one person from going through a windshield, or worse, it's worth doing!

Thanks for listening –
Barbara

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From: Will Meglathery <will.meglathery@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: **Bicycle Signage - Selectboard seeks to return money**
Date: December 3, 2021 at 11:08:45 AM EST
To: Lilian Shen <lshen@thetfordvt.gov>, selectboard@thetfordvt.gov

Dear Selectboard and Li,
I will be able to make Monday's meeting about sharrows on Tucker Hill Road and Thetford Academy. My opinion is stated below:

As a person who lives on Tucker Hill road and bikes on TA and Tucker Hill roads I would like to find middle ground here. I know that it detracts from the rural feel of those roads. However, letting motorists know that there is slower traffic on the road would help with safety and these three roads definitely get higher bike traffic than other roads in the Upper Valley due to a national bike route that uses the road and local recreational traffic. I would suggest using sharrows minimally on Tucker and TA roads and strongly support share the road signs at both ends of Tucker Hill and TA roads or something that would let motorists know that there is bicycle traffic on these specific roads.

Thanks,
Will Meglathery

From: "Barbara E. Knauff" <Barbara.E.Knauff@dartmouth.edu>

Subject: FW: Bicycle safety signage

Date: December 6, 2021 at 3:22:25 PM EST

To: "lshen@thetfordvt.gov" <lshen@thetfordvt.gov>

Hi Li,

In preparation for tonight's selectboard meeting, where the "Sharrows Grant" is on the noticed agenda, I wanted to re-send a letter to the selectboard which I had sent this summer, in order to express my strong support for more safety signage to remind drivers that cyclists might be present, and have a right to the road. See below.

Despite my strong commitment to bike commuting, I drive a lot more than I bike – like most Thetford residents. Whenever I drive in a place I haven't been to before, and see sharrows on the road, here's what I think, roughly in this order:

1. Look out for bikes!!!
2. Possibly pedestrians and dogs around as well – let's slow down a bit...
3. Oh wow, this community cares about alternative modes of transportation!
4. Enough so that the community made sharrows on the road happen!
5. I already like it here....

I do hope that Thetford ends up accepting and implementing the sharrows grant. I see so much good in it, and no harm – I'd be devastated if we as a community were to turn it down.

All best,
Barbara

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