

The Town of Fairfield
Sidewalk Scoping Study

Task E Summary – Potential Alternatives



Submitted by:
Broadreach Planning & Design

In conjunction with

EIV Technical Services
Heritage Landscapes LLC
University of Vermont Consulting Archeology Program

August 15, 2011

A. INTRODUCTION

1. OVERVIEW

The Town of Fairfield received an enhancement grant to examine the potential for adding sidewalks in Fairfield Center and East Fairfield. The project study areas cover the main intersection of Fairfield Center and the core of East Fairfield along Vermont Route 36 (Route 36). **Figure B-1** in the Task B Summary shows the location and approximate extent of the two study areas. The Town is assisted by a Project Team being led by Broadreach Planning & Design.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Fairfield Sidewalk Scoping Study project is to:

- Provide a secure, easily used means for pedestrians and bicyclists of variable ages and abilities to travel between the post office, senior housing, Fairfield Town Hall, the entrances to Fairfield Center School, the Bent Northrop Memorial Library and St. Patrick's Church in Fairfield Center and along Route 36 in East Fairfield between New Street and the few houses to the west of Mill Street before the drop in the road;
- Increase the mobility of pedestrians and bicyclists in and around Fairfield Center and East Fairfield without significant increases in ongoing maintenance costs for the Town,
- Address the sight distance issues associated with pedestrians crossing at the intersection of Route 36, North Road, Minor Road and South Road, and
- Provide physical change to the roadway to help slow vehicular traffic on Route 36.

The need for the path can be seen in:

- The number of existing pedestrians using the narrow area at the side of the existing roads in Fairfield Center or the parking areas along the road in East Fairfield;
- The reported speeds of vehicles on Route 36 significantly higher than the posted 35 miles per hour;
- The minimal distance between the travel lane and existing guard rails on South Road and Route 36;
- The presence of school children walking to and from the Fairfield Community School;
- The prohibition by numerous parents in the area of using the Route 36 South/North Road intersection by students going and coming from school;

- The difficulties experienced by day care operators on Route 36 in walking children to the nearby play ground;
- The difficulties experienced by seniors in the Chester Arthur Apartments to get to the nearby store or post office; and
- The minimal space for bicyclists outside of the travel lanes on existing roads.

B. INITIAL LIST OF POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES

After studying existing conditions in the field and reviewing local issues with residents, the BRPD Team in conjunction with the Town's Project Steering Committee, developed a list of possible pedestrian and/or bicycle improvements to enhance mobility in Fairfield Center and East Fairfield and address the issues raised during the initial study tasks. **Figure E-1** shows the location of the numerous different alternatives that were initially considered; **Attachment 1** includes a description of each alternatives. This list and accompanying figure served as the starting point for the development of a more refined list of viable alternative.

The first review of the complete list of possible alternatives revealed significant, potentially insurmountable problems or impracticalities with several of them. These alternatives were eliminated from further consideration in the first round of review. **Attachment 1** includes more information on the basis for these initial eliminations.

C. REFINED ALTERNATIVE REVIEW

1. OVERVIEW

The initial review resulted in several viable alternatives. **Figures E-2a** and **E-2b** show the location of the viable alternatives that emerged from the initial review.

During a second round of review the BRPD Team, in conjunction with the PSC, examined the remaining alternatives in more detail to refine them in preparation for public discussion. **Tables E-1a** and **E1-b** present initial comparative reviews of the alternatives along with do nothing alternative.

The BRPD also prepared a survey of the roadways in the two study areas. **Figures E-3a** and **E3-b** show the surveys and **Figures E-4a** and **E-4b** show the surveys with the Alternatives. (NOTE: THESE FIGURES ARE NOT INCLUDED WITH THIS FIRST DRAFT.)

2. FAIRFIELD CENTER

ALTERNATIVE 1 – ROUTE 36 SOUTH SIDE SIDEWALK

Alternative 1 would add a sidewalk to the south side of Route 36 from close to the intersection with North and South Roads to the general vicinity of the post office. At the western end, the sidewalk would need to either run below the existing cement porch in front

to of the Florist/general store, removing the existing parking spaces, or the project would need to include the removal of the cement porch so that the sidewalk could run adjacent to the existing on-street parallel parking.

East of this property, the sidewalk would run over or as an extension of the existing sidewalk in front of the second building east of the intersection. It would lie on the south side of the existing single row of parallel parking spaces directly adjacent to the road. There would be driveway access points across the sidewalk to allow access to the additional existing parking spaces in front of the structures on the properties. It appears as if no parking spaces would need to be lost with the addition of the sidewalk.

In front of the fourth property east of South Road, the sidewalk would maintain a separation from the road; it would be situated at the bottom of the small slope at the edge of the roadway. The sidewalk would continue east along the side of the road, maintaining at least a five foot separation from the edge of the pavement.

At the western edge of the paved area around Menard's Market, the sidewalk would either continue across the existing pavement as pavement markings or would be incorporated into a new curbed area that would begin to provide better definition to the market's entry points. The new curbing would still allow parallel parking in front of the market along Route 36.

ALTERNATIVE 2 – ROUTE 36 NORTH SIDE PARTIAL SIDEWALK

Alternative 2 creates a short sidewalk on the west side of Route 36 from the small paved walkway linking the Town Offices to Route 36 and the vehicular entrance to the lower parking area on the east side of the building. Because of the slope, the sidewalk will need to cut back and forth across the rise so that it can meet ADA requirements.

ALTERNATIVE 3 – NORTH ROAD EAST SIDE SIDEWALK

This alternative would create a sidewalk on the east side of North Road from Route 36 to the intersection with Church Road. Starting near Route 36, the sidewalk would link with either Route 36 or the end of the new sidewalk described in Alternative 2. It would head north adjacent to the edge of the Town Office parking area, which would include dividing the existing garden area at the existing utility pole.

The sidewalk would either replace the existing asphalt at the entrance to the Town Office parking area and Chester's Bakery with concrete or would be delineated by striping on the existing pavement. Additional signage would need to be added to these parking areas to make sure that motorists pulled far enough into the property to not cover the pedestrian sidewalk. Some redesign of the parking area may be needed to make circulation of motor vehicles more predictable for both pedestrians and other motorists.

North of this parking area, the path would continue north, separated from the roadway by at least a five-foot wide green strip. There may need to be a small amount of cut and fill as the ground rises towards the old Town Clerk's office so that the sidewalk meets ADA

requirements. In front of the old Town Clerk's office, the parking would be redesigned as parallel parking adjacent to the road with the sidewalk running between the parking and the front of the building. Parking bumpers may be needed to keep vehicles from parking on the sidewalk area.

The sidewalk would either end at the southern side of the Church Road intersection or continue north to the other side of the intersection.

ALTERNATIVE 4 – MINOR ROAD PEDESTRIAN WAY

This alternative would route pedestrians along Minor Road between Route 36 and South Road. The northern end of the Minor Road at Route 36 would be closed, making it a dead end roadway with an entry from the south. The very northern end of the road where the gravel has been washed away would be paved to stabilize the surface and make it more receptive to challenged pedestrians. The grade could remain the same because the walkway would be installed on an existing roadway.

Other than this paving, the rest of the roadway would not be further improved. At the southern end, the road may be widened slightly to make sure that vehicles can make the U-turn from Minor Road to northbound South Road.

ALTERNATIVE 5 – SOUTH ROAD WEST SIDE PARTIAL SIDEWALK

Alternative 5 would create a sidewalk on the west side of South Road between Soule Drive and Park Street. The sidewalk would be separated from the roadway by approximately 8 feet of green space, to allow parallel parking along the side of the road when the sports fields are in use.

The sidewalk would also run along the south side of Park Street between South Road and the existing sidewalk around the new Bent Northrop Memorial Library.

ALTERNATIVE 6 – CREEK TRAIL

This alternative would create a narrow walking/mountain bike trail along the north side of the un-named tributary to Fairfield Creek as well as the west side of the Creek itself. It would link Minor Road with the Fairfield post office. The exact routing of the trail would need to be done in the field following current trail design guidelines for creating sustainable trails that do not create erosion problems.

ALTERNATIVE 7 – UTILITY ROW TRAIL

Alternative 7 would create a five foot wide ADA accessible trail along the right-of-way of the over head utility lines that run between the Chester Arthur apartments and North Road. The path would most likely be constructed with a stone dust surface. The trail would require some cut and fill work along its alignment to meet ADA standards. The western end at

North Road would either link to the edge of the North Road pavement or to the end of the possible North Road sidewalk described in Alternative 3.

ALTERNATIVE 8 – PAVED SHOULDERS

This alternative would use marked paved shoulders of various widths along the sides of existing roads for improved pedestrian and/or bicyclist mobility.

The specific recommended width of the paved shoulders varies by roadway. **Table E-2** provides a quick look at the minimum recommended width of paved shoulder and how much wider the existing roadways would need to be to provide the recommended widths.

Table E-2: Recommended Paved Shoulder Widths

Road	Recommended Travel Lane	Recommended Paved Shoulder	Existing Width	Required Widening Each Side
Route 36	11 FT	3 FT	26 FT	1 FT
South Road	10 FT	2 FT	22 FT	1 FT
North Road	11 FT	3 FT	30 FT	0 FT
Church Road	10 FT	2 FT	20 FT	2 FT

The minimum shoulder widths are based on the Vermont State Standards and take into account the known or estimated Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT), the speed limit and the width of the travel lane.

The wider shoulders could be extended further north on North Street to Chester Arthur Road and then to the intersection with the future Lamoille Valley Rail Trail to facilitate bicycle travel between Fairfield Center and the Rail Trail.

ALTERNATIVE 9 – CROSSWALKS

This alternative includes several crosswalks at key locations within the study area. Not all of the crosswalks may be necessary or jointly possible. The suggested crosswalks are located on:

- Route 36 in line with the existing walkway from the Town Office parking lot to Route 36,
- The west side of the access drive to the Chester Arthur Apartments to a new curbed area in front of Menard’s Market,
- South Road on the south side of Soule Drive,
- Across Park Street near the intersection with South Road,
- Across North Road either on the north side or the south side of the intersection with Church Road, and
- Across North Road at the south side of the entrance to the Town Office.

PEDESTRIAN ZONE

This option would create a pedestrian Zone along Route 36 from the intersection with North and South Roads east to the bridge over Fairfield Creek, along South Road from Park Street north to the intersection with Route 36, continuing north on North Road to the intersection with Church Road.

3. EAST FAIRFIELD

ALTERNATIVE 10

Alternative 10 would extend the existing sidewalk in front of the Catholic Church west to the western end of Stone's Shell. The installation of the sidewalk would be accompanied by the addition of several small curb sections in front of the Shell station to better define where motor vehicles would enter and exit and to give pedestrians safe locations between these entry points.

ALTERNATIVE 11

Alternative 11 would create a sidewalk on the northern edge of the green along Route 36. The sidewalk would be located at least five feet away from the edge of the pavement, separated by a green strip.

ALTERNATIVE 12

This alternative would convert the lower, outside five feet of the existing paved area along the south side of Route 36 to a pedestrian area. Bumpers, bollards or other easily installed barriers would be installed to keep cars from parking on this area. Ideally, the utility poles would be relocated to allow a constant five-foot wide pavement area devoted to pedestrian mobility. Parking on the remaining pavement would be allowed but it would be very tight and potentially not suitable for anything but smaller cars.

ALTERNATIVE 13

Alternative 13 would add a five-foot wide sidewalk to the edge of the existing pavement on the south side of Route 36. The sidewalk would not be separated from the existing pavement by a green strip. The existing postbox and flagpole in front of the post office would need to be relocated.

ALTERNATIVE 14

This alternative would create a walking/mountain bike/ATV path from New Street to the rear of Stones Shell. The path would formalize an existing, informal path now used by pedestrian, bicyclist and ATVs. There may need to be a more designed crossing of the close

to the rear of Stones, depending on how much stormwater flow the ditch carries in the spring and fall.

ALTERNATIVE 15

Alternative 15 would create a pedestrian path along a former roadway alignment from the western bend in New Street to Route 36 close to the intersection with Bridge Street. The path would cross the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail at grade and provide a link from the rail trail to the surrounding neighborhood.

ALTERNATIVE 16

Alternative 16 would create delineated paved shoulders along Mill Street, from Route 36 to the intersection with Bridge Street. The paved shoulders would be at least two feet wide with ten-foot wide travel lanes. The shoulders would be narrowed as needed to maintain the two ten-foot wide travel lanes on the Mill Street bridge over Black Creek.

ALTERNATIVE 17

Alternative 17 would add crosswalks at certain locations within the study area. Most likely, not all of the crosswalks on Route 36 included in this alternative would be possible. Crosswalks considered as part of this alternative are on:

- Route 36 on the east and west side of the intersection with Mill Street,
- Route 36 on the west side of the intersection with School Street,
- Route 36 on the east and west side of the intersection with New Street,
- Route 36 just to the west of the intersection with Bridge Street,
- Route 36 where it intersects with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail on the north side,
- Mill Street at the intersection with Route 36,
- School Street at the intersection with Route 36, and
- New Street at the intersection with Route 36.

ALTERNATIVE 18 a & b

Alternative 18a would create a sidewalk on the north side of Route 36 between the western edge of the pavement at Stone's Shell and the third house to the west. The sidewalk would be directly adjacent to the roadway, but separated from it by a new curb.

Alternative 18b would add a slightly wider shoulder along this same section of roadway.

ALTERNATIVE 19

This alternative would convert the existing paved area on the south side of Route 36 going west from Mill Street to the driveway for the third house west of Mill Street to a pedestrian area. Bumpers, bollards or other easily installed barrier would be installed to keep cars from parking on this area. Ideally, the utility poles would be relocated to allow a constant five-

foot wide pavement area devoted to pedestrian mobility. Parking on the remaining pavement would be allowed but it would be tight.

ALTERNATIVE 20

Alternative 20 would add a sidewalk to the western and southern side of New Street from the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail to approximately 350 feet west of the first turn in the road from Route 36. The sidewalk would be located directly adjacent to the roadway.

ALTERNATIVE 21

This alternative creates a short sidewalk along the west side of New Street from Route 36 to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. The sidewalk would be located directly adjacent to the building on the corner and then angle slightly towards New Street beyond the corner of the building. One or two of the informal parking in this area may need to be eliminated to add this sidewalk.

PEDESTRIAN ZONE

This option would create a pedestrian Zone along Route 36 from the eastern end of the crossing of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail to the top of the rise on the west end of the Study Area approximately 150 feet west of Stone's Shell.

4. TRAFFIC CALMING

In both study areas, no matter which alternatives are selected, there are certain traffic calming features which would be appropriate for consideration. They include:

- Additional street trees along the roads in the study areas,
- Narrower travel lanes,
- Share the road signs,
- Curb extensions (bulb outs) in East Fairfield,
- Gateway treatments, and
- Angled striping along the fog line.

D. DISCUSSION

1. CROSSWALKS & PEDESTRIAN ZONE

Crosswalks are specifically designated locations where pedestrians have the right-of-way to cross a roadway. Motorists are required by law to stop for pedestrians when they are crossing the street in a crosswalk. Crosswalks carry an implied level of safety for pedestrians which is, unfortunately, not always there. Motorists frequently do not stop for pedestrians in crosswalks in many locations around the country, although the level of compliance with the law is observed to be much higher than average in Vermont. The limiting factor for

crosswalks is that they require pedestrians to cross the road in just the designated places. This often requires pedestrians to walk well out of their way along the side of the road to reach a crosswalk, which often encourages pedestrians to abandon the use of crosswalks that are not conveniently located to crossing the road in more opportune locations. This in turn increases the risks associated with crossing a road on foot.

A pedestrian zone attempts to address this issue by eliminating the use of crosswalks in specific locations and instead by notifying motorists that they can expect pedestrian to be adjacent to and crossing the street anywhere within the pedestrian zone. Additionally, it places more responsibility on pedestrians to be aware of the presence of motorists on the road and to cross when conditions are conducive to safe crossings. While motorists are expected to stop for pedestrians in pedestrian zones, pedestrians should not assume that this will always be the case.

2. TRAVEL LANE WIDTHS

Eleven-foot travel lanes on Vermont State roads are now being considered acceptable more frequently within the State. They provide an adequate area for large vehicles to travel, although sometimes at slower speeds than can be accommodated by wider travel lanes. The ability to encourage slower speeds in those areas where slower speed are desirable is seen as a significant advantage of eleven-foot travel lanes.

Ten-foot travel lanes have not yet gained similar acceptance. They are still considered by many transportation experts to be too narrow for many larger vehicles. Ten-foot travel lanes on busier roadways can lead to more regular incursions over the fog line into the paved shoulders or bicycle lanes by larger vehicles, creating hazardous conditions for bicyclists or pedestrians that may be using the shoulders. The opposite viewpoint is that the ten-foot narrow lanes, when used in conjunction with other design measures to induce slower motor vehicle speeds, encourage even slower travel for motorists. Ten-foot travel lanes have been used or recommended in rural and neighborhood areas as a means of encouraging slower speeds that are safer for non-motorized travelers.

3. SIDEWALK SURFACE

Concrete sidewalks are more permanent than hard packed gravel paths and provide adequate surfaces for a wider array of users. Both hard packed gravel and concrete surfaces comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when installed properly. Concrete typically has a higher installation cost and a lower maintenance cost, while the reverse is true with hard packed gravel. The variation in initial and ongoing costs, along with the larger number of safe users for concrete is the primary difference between the two surfaces.

4. OFF ROAD FACILITIES

The possible off road trails that may provide additional means for pedestrians to safely navigate between points in the Study Areas would offer a direct route for only a small

number of pedestrians. Consequently, based on experiences in other similar situations, it is expected that if they are installed, many pedestrians and bicyclists would continue to use the roadway for travel rather than walk or bike along the longer, and for most trips, less direct off road trails. The off road trails would be a good addition to the Town's recreational trails, especially given the plans to reinstall a recreational trail around the nearby school. They would not be a significant addition to the Town's non-motorized traveler's transportation system. Even so, they have been included as a viable alternative for this study, so that the community can decide if they should be included as part of the final recommendations for future consideration as a minor addition to the transportation system and a significant addition to Town recreational facilities.

Attachment 1 Initial Alternatives

Town of Fairfield

Attachments

August 15, 2011