



Simsbury Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting #2: Meeting Summary

Time and Place:

Monday, November 13th at 5:00 PM, Simsbury Public Library, 725 Hopmeadow St

Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Adam Kessler	Town of Simsbury, Engineering
Al Kodet	Resident
Anita Mielert	Simsbury Main Street Partnership (SMSP)
Camilla Thompson	Resident and Bicyclist
David Pena	Town of Avon
David Rodney	Simsbury Free Bike
Debbie Thibodeau	Simsbury Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
Diana Moody	Simsbury Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
E.J. LaMontagne	Simsbury Aging and Disability Commission
Jack Jorgensen	Governor's Bridge Homeowner's Association - Tariffville
James Rabbitt	Town of Simsbury Planning & Zoning
Joe Townsley	Resident
John Lockwood	Simsbury Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)
Laura Russotto	Squadron Line School Safe Routes to School Coordinator
Lauren Devin	Simsbury Police Department
Mark Scully	Ensign Commons
Matt Naughton	Town resident / bicycling and walking advocate
Patrick Zapatka	CTDOT
Pattie Smith Jacobus	Simsbury Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC); Simsbury Free Bike
Paul Mikkelsen	Valley Cycling Group
Sarah Nielsen	Simsbury Main Street Partnership (SMSP)
Sheree Landerman	Tariffville Village Association, former Simsbury Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Steven Antonio	Antonio's Restaurant (133 Holcomb Street, Simsbury)



Suzanne Zupin	Town resident / bicycling and walking advocate
Walter Rochefort III	The Bicycle Cellar; Pedego Electric Bikes Simsbury
Wanda Colman	Town resident
Tom Roy	Town of Simsbury Public Works Department
Marcy Miller	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Mary Miltimore	Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.
Eric Weis	Cogent

Meeting Summary:

Tom Roy, Director of the Public Works Department for the Town of Simsbury and the Project Manager for this project, began the meeting by welcoming all attendees and thanking them for their participation in the Advisory Committee. Each attendee briefly introduced him or herself and their interest in bicycling and walking in Simsbury. Tom then reviewed the purpose behind this study and the Committee's role. He also emphasized the important role the final product will play in acquiring funding to implement the Plan's recommendations. He explained that they will be much more likely to attain funding if a Plan is already in place that has the community's support.

A full copy of the presentation that was shown at this meeting can be found at:

<https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/simsbury-pedestrian-and-bicycle-master-plan>

Meeting Presentation

Marcy Miller gave a presentation that began by recapping what was covered in the previous meeting, including the introduction of the project and the mapping activity during which attendees identified key destinations and preferred bike routes in Simsbury. She also reviewed the visioning and goals activity during which attendees were asked to describe what they want for the future of walking and biking in Simsbury and what steps they want to take to achieve that vision. She explained that the project team created a draft vision, mission, and set of goals based on the input received.

Draft Vision

The Town of Simsbury will have an expanded and ADA-accessible network of sidewalks, greenways, trails, and on-street roadway connections linking people to job, schools, destinations, adjacent communities, and each other. Through improving upon the existing infrastructure, residents will enjoy improved quality of life, public health, and economic opportunity.

Draft Mission

Simsbury is committed to active lifestyles that includes walking and bicycling for transportation, recreation, exercise, and overall quality of life.

Draft Goals

1. Improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety for all community members, regardless of age, ability, and experience.
2. Improve connections to and between key destinations for employment, education, culture, recreation, and shopping within town and the overall region.



3. Educate all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, on how to safely share the road.
4. Capture the economic benefits for local businesses that result from accessibility and an active, mobile community are sparked by an increase of pedestrians and bicyclists.
5. Foster the development of a cohesive Town brand that promote the culture of active transportation through coordinated and consistent designs, including signage.
6. Identify and maintain necessary infrastructure and resources to provide comfortable, attractive, and safe amenities for pedestrian and bicycle use.

While no meeting attendees provided comments on the draft vision or goals during the meeting, they were encouraged to reach out with their feedback in the coming weeks. She explained that the project team will then update the draft vision, mission, and goals based on their feedback before finalizing them.

Outreach Update

Marcy provided an overview of the two pop-up outreach events that occurred. The first was on October 28th at the Simsbury Spooktacular Chili Challenge and the second was earlier in the day on November 13th near the entrance to Fitzgerald's Foods. She stated that there will be one additional pop-up outreach event in the coming weeks and that the purpose of this pop-up series is to "bring the meeting to the community" and engage the public about what would encourage them to walk more in Simsbury. Participants have been encouraged to write their responses in a designated space on a poster or draw on a map to indicate where they would like to walk more. Marcy explained that the pop-ups have focused on walking since the project team has already received a large amount of input on issues and opportunities for bicycling in Simsbury. Both pop-ups have also provided an opportunity to tell the community about the project and encourage them to take the online survey.

Marcy also reviewed a snapshot of the responses from the respondents who have completed the online survey thus far. An attendee stated that she did not find many opportunities to reference a specific road in their responses to the online survey questions. Marcy responded that to keep the survey relatively brief, specific questions were not included. However, the pop-up outreach events and Advisory Committee meetings provide opportunities for the project team to expand on the survey questions and discuss more specific information, such as roads that need improvements.

Education and Enforcement

Marcy stated that in the upcoming weeks the project team will begin to assess the potential opportunities for educational programs and increased enforcement of existing laws. She explained that the project team need guidance from the Advisory Committee to ensure that the team focuses on the things that most effectively meets the community's needs. Marcy then polled attendees on key questions regarding education and enforcement. The questions and the attendees' responses are summarized below:

***Question 1:** Do you feel that additional school programming for walking and bicycling safety and skills is an important focus for the next 5 years? 10 years?*

- The majority of attendees voted yes. An attendee who responded yes explained that they felt that existing school programming for such skills was not enough.
- One of the 18% of attendees who voted no stated that she was considering the limited number of resources available and had wanted more resources to be dedicated to all community members, including those without children in school and /or the elderly.



Question 2: *More specifically, is this school programming for walking and bicycling safety and skills as important as enhancing the sidewalk network in key areas of town?*

- While 35% of attendees voted yes, the majority voted no. An attendee stated that they felt that sidewalks were the most crucial, basic component of improving safety for all and should be prioritized.

Question 3: *Do you feel Simsbury can benefit from a public relations / marketing campaign directed towards drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians on how to share the road?*

- With 74% of the vote, most attendees voted yes to this question.
- One of the 11% of attendees who voted no explained that he felt people's habits were very engrained already and doesn't feel that a public relations campaign would be sufficient to encourage people to change. This attendee also described the persistent confusion that exists among all the roadway's users about how to share the road.
- The remaining 15% of attendees were unsure whether or how much Simsbury would benefit from such a campaign.

Question 4: *Do you think bicyclist traffic violations should be better enforced by police in Simsbury?*

- Most attendees, 74%, voted yes in response to this question.

Signage & Wayfinding

Eric Weis thanked attendees for their time and began this section of the presentation by providing an overview of signage and wayfinding that explained how signage is regulated both on roads and on shared-use paths as well as the various types of signage. Signage and pavement markings for streets and shared-use paths are regulated by the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*, which specifies guidelines that shall be followed, that should be followed and that may be followed for three main types of signage: regulatory signs, warning signs, and guide signs. There are many different signs in each category pertaining to bicycle routes, including pavement markings.

Eric explained there were other manuals that provide additional guidance and inspiration, which can be considered supplemental to the MUTCD. One example is the *National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide*.

Eric explained that it was important for the whole project team, including the Committee members, to have an understanding of the national signage guidelines within which Simsbury can develop its own signage system for pedestrians and bicyclists. He highlighted results from the online survey that indicate that signage is an important issue for community members. He then explained that wayfinding signage serves the purpose of either following a route or finding a destination, and provided examples of each as well as examples of existing wayfinding signage in Simsbury.

In response to the examples of existing signage within Simsbury, attendees described some of the existing issues they think exist.

- An attendee stated that trails in Connecticut lack signage that provide an awareness of where a trail user is relative to the surrounding area. This poses a safety risk if a trail user is injured and needs to call for help but cannot describe where medical personnel can find the injured party.



- Another attendee described examples from the Midwest where signage along trails describes activities, restaurants and shopping opportunities that trail users can discover as they travel.
- In response to an attendee's question about trail signage height, Eric stated that signage along trails were required to be a distance off the trail. Overhead sign minimum clearance is 8 feet and for trailside signs the minimum clearance is 4 feet.
- In response to a question, Eric stated that MUTCD does not include any guidelines on pedestrian signage design (aside from shared walking-bicycling paths) but such signage could be incorporated into shared-use path signage.

Next, Eric polled attendees on key questions regarding signage and wayfinding. He also emphasized that the polling activity, and its results are meant to provide the project team with guidance and to spark discussion. It should not be considered formalized and final voting. The questions and the attendees' responses are summarized below:

Question 5: *What type of local signage do you prefer? (Option 1: standard green design; Option 2: local design that has unique colors chosen by Simsbury; Option 3: grassroots, temporary designs)*

- Most attendees chose Option 1 to indicate that they preferred traditional signage design that is in line with MUTCD.
- An attendee who voted for Option 2 clarified that they didn't necessarily like the color scheme in the example but liked the idea that Simsbury's signage could be used to develop a town brand.
- Another attendee who chose Option 2 stated that they had chosen it because it appeared more economical as different pieces of the signage were not connected and would be easier to update.
 - Eric clarified that the green, standard signage design could also be designed with multiple signs on the same post so that it could be easily updated
- An attendee stated that consideration should be given to altering the standard signage design to indicate parks and trails.
- An attendee described how important they think it is to include an icon of a bicycle on bicycle signage so visitors do not confuse bike trails with road that permit vehicular traffic.

Question 6: *Regarding the on-street signage, much information do you want on your local signage? (Option 1: destination name; Option 2: destination name and mileage; Option 3: destination name and bike icon; Option 4: destination name, mileage, and bike icon)*

- Most attendees voted for the Option 4, which includes the maximum amount of information on the signage.

Question 7: *Which do you prefer? Option 1 – town logo on local signage or not? Branded?*

- Most attendees, 70%, chose Option 1 to indicate that they would like to see the town logo included on local signage design.

Question 8: *Is it important that trails in Simsbury are called out as a part of a greater system?*

- All attendees agreed that yes, this is very important.

Question 9: *Which do you prefer in terms of how Simsbury marks the East Coast Greenway (ECG)?*



- Most attendees indicated that they would prefer to collocate national and regional brands on a single sign assembly. Eric explained that this is typically how ECG signage is designed across its route from Maine to Florida.

Question 10: Do you think commercial signage should be regulated on the trails?

- Tom explained that a local sign ordinance already does exist and that off-site advertisements is prohibited in many ways in Simsbury. For example, signage is permitted to indicate “Restaurants this way” but are not allowed to specify a specific restaurant. Tom acknowledged that some establishments have not adhered to this ordinance.
- Most attendees voted yes in response to this question to indicate their support for the existing local sign ordinance.

Question 11: What do you prefer? (Options range from the current scheme that doesn’t specify individual establishments on signage to an “anything goes” system in which businesses are permitted to put up whatever signage they would like.)

- 58% want current scheme in which signage directs people toward a general area of town where restaurants can be found but does not include information on a specific establishment.
- An attendee stated that while she had voted for Option 1, she still felt that there should be a way for a sign to meet the requirements of the local sign ordinance while also letting people know they are nearby a local business, such as a deli.
- Another attendee stated that the commercial businesses in town deserve to be represented on the bike trail in some respect.
 - Tom also highlighted that Simsbury has a key opportunity to serve the surrounding communities that have little commercial options. However, to do so, Simsbury needs to inform people of nearby retail and dining options.
 - Tom also discussed the town’s longer-term vision to develop a town center area where dining and retail would be clustered.
- An attendee stated that signage should be permitted for a business like the Bicycle Cellar to enhance safety along the trails since they provide roadside assistance.
- Attendees discussed the possibility of building off of the online mapping project and booklet that the Simsbury Main Street Partnership (SMSP) developed.
 - Another attendee suggested the possibility of building off of the brochures that provide information on local establishments that are already available at the bridge entryway.
 - Other attendees emphasized that when they use the trails, they want to relax and enjoy the natural surroundings. They would prefer not to be forced to look at their phones to determine where local businesses are and think that information should be incorporated into signage.
- Tom stated that there is likely a balance to strike between promoting businesses and explicitly including their names on signage.
 - Attendees generally agreed that there is a need to retain Simsbury’s local charm and natural resources by avoiding too much signage, but also consider ways to promote local economic development.



- An attendee stated that there was too much unnecessary signage and much of it should be considered for removal. She described a series of signs about historic building locations that had been posted years ago but had since deteriorated and were in poor condition. She also cited examples such as instructing a user not to pick certain flowers or to clean up after their dogs.
 - Eric explained that this is commonly referred to as sign pollution and it causes visual clutter. When the issue becomes severe, it can often lead to signage blight and obfuscate important and necessary signage while also diminishing the charm of the town.

Question 12: Do you feel the following features would encourage people to walk or bicycle more in Simsbury? (Option 1: shade or shelter; Option 2: water fountains; Option 3: both; Option 4: neither)

- Most attendees, 73%, indicated that they think both shade and shelter as well as water fountains would encourage people to walk more.
- Numerous attendees also stated that it would be useful if the water fountains were design to allow people to fill up water fountains.
- Another attendee stated that these types of amenities can also serve as destinations and places for people to meet and gather.
- Tom reminded people that amenities such as water fountains present some difficulties with regard to maintenance.
- Another attendee stated that there is a need for public restrooms along trails and pointed out that these could also serve as a key destination.

Question 13: How should Simsbury handle interpretive signage? (Option 1: current approach; option 2: National Park Signage; option 3: not sure)

- Most attendees voted for Option 1 to indicate that they preferred the current approach.
- An attendee stated they voted for the current approach after Eric had explained that while the NPS signage is beautifully designed, it is difficult to maintain and significantly more expensive.

Next Steps

Marcy closed the meeting by thanking all attendees for their attendance and involvement in the Master Plan. She reminded attendees to keep getting the word out about the survey before it closes on Friday, December 1st, after which the project team will conclude the data collection and existing conditions analysis. She announced that the next Advisory Committee meeting will be on Monday, January 22nd and that a formal email invitation will be sent out.