

Public Comments: Main Street Forum

Henniker, NH April 23, 2024 6:00pm

The following is a summary of public comments from the forum on Main Street improvements for safety.

- East of Maple Street feels safe for crossing, West of Maple Street does not feel safe for several reasons such as people not stopping for pedestrians.
- Visibility of pedestrian for drivers is an issue.
- Safety for all ages is important to the community. Henniker has kids with their parents using the park, pre-teens and teenagers riding bikes and walking without parental supervision, and other users of the Main Street area.
- Signage, crosswalks, and other pedestrian focused designs that improve safety are supported.
- Safety for children specifically was mentioned several times.
- What are the requirements for installing a crosswalk? Is it possible to start with a demonstration?
- Crosswalks and road crossing safety improvement town-wide, including near the college, were important to the group.
- Vehicle speeds are an issue for residents despite the recorded speed average of 23mph during the study period. The hill leading into town from Old Concord Road seems to promote a faster rate of travel due to the rural feel that quickly becomes a downtown environment.
- The crosswalk by “Daniels” is unsafe and has poor visibility for pedestrians and drivers.
- Henniker is expanding and growing with new residents. East and West of Main Street need to incorporate safe design for pedestrians as the town grows. More tourists seem to come every summer so their safety needs to be considered.
- The concert series runs from June to September and numbers grow as time goes on. The numbers collected in June by CNHRPC may not be representative of pedestrian traffic during July-September.
- Signage to slow drivers is needed.
- Directions to parking and signage to slow drivers is important.
- Western Ave/Maple St intersection is terrible for drivers and pedestrians. Can a traffic calming demo be done there?
- Lots of kids and families in Henniker that are around Main St.
- Henniker is a safe town where kids can go out on their own at times. Need to ensure the roads are safe for them.
- Support for a traffic calming demonstration.
- Westbound downhill entering town brings concern due to travel speeds.
- Is 30mph too fast for the main street speed limit?
- Old Concord Road Truck traffic... is there any way to prohibit truck travel on this route?

The following are suggestions and comments from emails following the Main Street Forum. Full emails can be found below. These comments have been edited for conciseness.

- Relocate events like concerts and craft fairs from Community Park to an alternative town location, specifically the Town Common near the Town Hall.
- Support for a crosswalk between the town park and SuperScoops.
- Install a median strip from Ramsdale Road to shortly before the Main Street intersection.
- Add a crosswalk from the village green to the area of Scoops and Daniels Restaurant. Extend the sidewalk to the Henniker Bed and Breakfast.
- Concern regarding the safety of pedestrians and vehicular traffic at the intersection of Western/Main and Rte. 114
- Concern about the amount of logging truck traffic using Maple Street and Main Street to come and go from their various sites. It seems it would be much safer if they used the Old Concord Road access from Rte. 202.
- Some towns don't allow the use of engine brakes within the village centers.
- A crosswalk at Super Scoops isn't going to help, if anything it might make it more dangerous, especially for children crossing alone who assume cars are going to stop.
- A five way stop on Route 114/ Main Street and Western Avenue would be the best and most economical way to make that intersection safer.
- Main Street pedestrians would be safer if you raised the three crosswalks on the street and the one in front of the school too.
- I am in favor of adding a crosswalk on Main Street, as well as dropping the speed limit on Main Street between State Shed Road and Route 114 to 25 mph. Alerting drivers with a lit sign and additional paint markings between State Shed Road and Ramsdell Road also seems sensible as they enter downtown while going downhill.
- Consider the addition of the yield to crosswalk signs on the centerlines of the road between the lanes.

The following comments were collected via email following the Main Street Forum, names have been removed for privacy.

- [NAME] has previously expressed his opinion about relocating events like concerts and craft fairs from Community Park to an alternative town location, specifically the Town Common near the Town Hall.
- Hi Diane. I am unable to make it to tonight's forum, but I'm hoping you can relay my support for a crosswalk between the park and SuperScoops. [Removed ID], I've watched countless pedestrians cross at this location. It is mostly young children running across the street for ice cream, and often darting out into the street from between parked cars. I've witnessed many near misses. Please convey my most sincere support for this proposed crosswalk.
- Thanks Diane for being our town administrator. I just wanted to add my thoughts on the crosswalk. It's about families and kids crossing safely and not about losing two parking spaces ...
- Thanks to you, your staff, the Town's Planner, and the regional planning agency for all the work that went into last evening's Town Forum. I would like to propose that the Town install a

median strip from Ramsdale Road to shortly before the Main Street intersection. This would definitely help to slow down traffic. I would suggest that, like downtown Keene, there would be appropriate places for pedestrian crossings as well. This would bring an ambiance to the downtown area that would support local merchants and encourage folks to gather in the vicinity of Main Street.

- First, thank you for providing this forum for residents to express their concerns and ideas for improvement.

We are supportive of adding a crosswalk from the village green to the area of Scoops and Daniels Restaurant, as well as extending the sidewalk to the Henniker Bed and Breakfast. All seem to be good ideas.

[Name] and I, along with many others, enjoy walking along the Contoocook River on the trail just off of Water Street, crossing the Norton Bridge and continuing on the other side of the river on Ramsdell Road and back to the center of town. It is a beautiful scenic walk and anything that can be done to improve the safety for pedestrians on this circular route would be very appreciated.

My wife, [NAME], and I would like to also voice our concerns regarding the safety of pedestrians and vehicular traffic at the intersection of Western/Main and Rte. 114 (Maple St). Something has to be done, it is very dangerous.

Another concern we have, [removed ID], is the amount of logging truck traffic that we have observed that uses Maple Street and Main Street to come and go from their various sites. We doubt those trucks could be restricted from travelling on Main Street though the center of town to access to Rte. 114, or vice versa, but it seems it would be much safer if they used the Old Concord Road access from Rte. 202. The other problem with the trucks is their use of the jake (engine) brakes. They are extremely loud. There are some towns that don't allow the use of these brakes within the village centers.

Again, as with our first letter, thank you for your consideration.

- Here are my thoughts on how we could make Henniker safer for pedestrians.
 - (1) In my opinion a crosswalk at Super Scoops isn't going to help, if anything it might make it more dangerous, especially for children crossing alone who assume cars are going to stop.
 - (2) Did the company doing the study note how often cars didn't yield to pedestrians in crosswalks?
 - (3) The most dangerous intersection on Main Street is crossing 114, that's where the fatal accident occurred. A five way stop on Route 114/ Main Street and Western Avenue would be the best and most economical way to make that intersection safer.
 - (4) For the most part Henniker's sidewalks south of Prospect Street are relatively safe except for the area of 114 at New England College from Davis House past the Library where there is no curbing protecting you from traffic.

(5) North of Prospect Street the sidewalks (if you can call them that) are not safe. On Rush Road from Prospect Street to Village Green the only thing protecting you is a white line. This includes the area outside Rush Square. On 114 it's okay up until you cross over to the side of the road by the Fire Station then once again you are only protected by a white line.

Walking from the east side Prospect Street to the post office you must cross Route 114 three times.

(6) Main Street pedestrians would be safer if you raised the three crosswalks on the street and the one in front of the school too. This would serve two purposes, it would make the crossing safer and slow traffic down too. This would also make crossing in front of Super Scoops safer. I know that this would be expensive.

(7) Off street parking, there are no signs directing people where to park. If you were to find the Riverside lot, you are greeted by a sign that says, 'Warning no overnight parking is allowed without a permit and that your car will be towed". Signage would help.

- [Removed ID]. While I do not live downtown, I listened with interest to the first 45 minutes of the hearing with the regional planning commission regarding downtown traffic speed and pedestrian safety.

I am in favor of adding a crosswalk on Main Street, as well as dropping the speed limit on Main Street between State Shed Road and Route 114 to 25 mph. Alerting drivers with a lit sign and additional paint markings between State Shed Road and Ramsdell Road also seems sensible as they enter downtown while going downhill.

I did not hear mentioned a relatively simple traffic calming solution, which is the addition of the yield to crosswalk signs on the centerlines of the road between the lanes. One of these signs appears to be a near-permanent feature on Western Avenue, and I believe it successfully slows traffic on that stretch of road. If those were added on the crosswalk near Main and Ramsdell, and even potentially on 114 near to where the crosswalks connect Western Avenue and Main Street, that could provide a clear, reflective, and very visible signal to vehicles to slow down. Traffic may have to navigate around these signs, and they might prove particularly difficult for trucks when at an intersection, but I consider it potentially a low cost (perhaps lower cost than even painting a new crosswalk) way to quickly slow traffic, particularly as it enters town from the east on Main Street.

Thank you for your time, energy, and attention!