

**Warner Corridor Committee  
Findings and Recommendations Report  
June 6, 2023**

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## Section 1 – Overview

Since the development and completion of the Exit 9 roundabout project, there has been ongoing consideration of a non-motorized access corridor connecting the village of Warner with the Exit 9 area, deemed “the Intervale”. In 2021, after three attempts dating back to around 2014, principal funding of such a project became available through a New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant, which requires a 20% town funding match. That is, 80% of the project’s final cost could be covered with federal funds administered by NHDOT. Several Town warrant articles in support of this project, establishing Capital Reserves and the seed funding of same, passed in the interim. A contentious discussion of the project at the 2022 Town Meeting resulted in the request for a Corridor Committee to be established. This committee was convened in late 2022.

- Committee's purpose – Selectboard Goals:
  - Proposal to the Selectboard of a course of action for the use of funding that is currently set aside by the Town for the corridor.
  - Propose definitions so that the Town has a consistent understanding of what is being discussed.
  - Provide a recommendation to the Selectboard on how/if to move forward with making a pedestrian/bicycle connection between the downtown and the Intervale commercial district.
- Corridor Committee Members:
  - Tim Blagden
  - Darren Blood
  - Michael Brown (corridor resident)
  - Christine Frost – Selectboard representative, Chair
  - Casey Milender (corridor resident)
  - Sam Milender (corridor resident)
  - Faith Minton
  - Rhonda Rood
  - Carol Anne Sims (corridor resident) – stepped down Jan ‘23
  - Chris Bailey – Alternate
  - Arlon Chaffee – Alternate – assumed Sims’ place
- Corridor Committee Overview:
  - Met weekly (except Christmas) from December 5, 2022 – 8 meetings.
  - The committee was assisted throughout by the Central NH Regional Planning Commission
  - All meetings were public, minutes are available on the Town Web site.
  - Researched related previous warrant articles and funding.
  - Developed community survey with over 500 participants (15% of town population).
  - Survey results are published on the Town web site.

- Met with the Central NH Regional Planning Commission to specifically discuss the Local Public Agency (LPA) process – LPA is required for federally-funded municipal projects.
- Met with Tim Allen, DPW head, to discuss sidewalk inventory, maintenance schedule, maintenance costs, construction costs, funding, and other related topics at the committee’s January 9, 2023 meeting (details in available minutes).
- Developed a set of definitions for Corridor project related terms.
- Developed a set of recommendations for consideration of the Corridor project.
- Presented an overview and recommendations in a presentation to the Selectboard at their January 31, 2023 meeting.

## Section 2 – Definitions

To develop a consistent understanding of the potential project and what is being discussed, some definitions are helpful:

- **Multiuse Path/Shared Use Path** – A paved path separated from the roadway intended for two-way use by a variety of non-motorized users with a width of no less than ten feet (10’).
- **Sidewalk** – A paved surface adjacent or separated from the roadway intended for two-way pedestrian use with a minimum width of five feet (5’). If adjacent to roadway, a seven inch (7”) vertical curb is incorporated.
- **Improved shoulder** – The roadway shoulder with five feet (5’) or more, with width measured from center of the white “fog line” to the edge of roadway pavement or face of curb. Five feet is the minimum acceptable for bicycle travel adjacent to traffic and a vertical curb.
- **Intervale Overlay District** – The interchange at Exit 9 of I-89 and NH Route 103 area, (see 2011 Master Plan: [https://warner.nh.us/tow/downloads/zoning/2015\\_Zoning\\_Map.pdf](https://warner.nh.us/tow/downloads/zoning/2015_Zoning_Map.pdf))
- **Master Plan** – The Warner Master Plan, a document developed by the Planning Board to “aid Town officials, boards, and committees in guiding future development of the community” with a purpose to “set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development.”
- **LPA – Local Public Agency** – For the purpose of the corridor project the grantee of the Transportation Alternatives Program grant required to manage the project, the “Project Sponsor” who applied for the grant.
- **LPA Project** - The formal process required study, evaluate, design,

and construct a Federal grant funded Transportation Alternatives Program project that has a Design Process including an Engineering Study with Local Concerns Meeting(s), Public Information Meetings, Alternative Analysis (including no-build), definition of the Right-of-Way, vetting and feasibility of alternatives, environmental, archeological and cultural resource investigations/documentation, cost estimates, public presentations, a proposed action, preliminary design, final design, contract documents.

- **No-build** – An alternative considered during the engineering study phase of the LPA process used to compare and consider options. A baseline alternative, the “do nothing” alternative.
- **TAP Grant** – Transportation Alternatives Program Grant is a federally-funded grant administered by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation used to supply choices for non-motorized users that are safe, reliable, and convenient.
- **Corridor Committee** – as constituted by the Select Board December 2022

### Section 3 – History

In 2004, as part of Warner’s planning process around Exit 9, a two-day Design Charrette was conducted that involved public listening sessions with 120 Warner citizens who brought dozens of ideas and concerns to the table for consideration. The goal was to develop a comprehensive plan for the rapidly growing commercial district around Exit 9 such that it becomes an integral part of the whole and builds, rather than distracts, from Warner’s rural character, its unique sense of place and its classic village center. Warner’s Exit 9 Design Charrette. Ultimately, the Design Charrette called for the addition of pedestrian sidewalks and crossings between the downtown and Intervale district along Route 103 to allow safe passage for residents not using vehicles to access the commercial district for grocery shopping and other needs. It also suggested bicycle lanes. The inclusion of these alternate forms of travel to reach the commercial district will help to reduce local vehicular traffic and enhance pedestrian and biking safety. Warner’s Exit 9 Design Charrette.

The need for sidewalks and bicycle lanes is also addressed in the town’s Master Plan which is updated periodically. Town of Warner Master Plan, adopted May 16, 2011, amended August 6, 2018, sections 7.9 - 7.10.

*Residents of Warner value the rural and historic character of the town, yet there is a threat to that atmosphere from the increasing numbers of cars on the road and their associated speed, especially in the residential neighborhoods and the village core. Pedestrian facilities, such as paved sidewalks and gravel walking paths are critical features for roadways with high volumes of traffic or high speeds. The primary purpose of sidewalks is to improve safety for pedestrians*

*by separating them from travel lanes of roadways. In addition to this, sidewalks can also serve as a source of recreation for residents, a non-motorized mode of travel, serve to beautify an area, or stimulate economic activity in rural and village settings. Master Plan Sec. 7.9.*

*Similar to the provision of pedestrian infrastructure, planning for a bicycle network requires a different approach from that of motorized transportation planning. Bicyclists have different needs from those of motorists, including wider shoulders, better traffic control at intersections, and stricter access management. Often, roadways are designed solely with motor vehicles in mind and Warner is no exception to this. New Hampshire law indicates that it is illegal for adults to ride bicycles on sidewalks, yet without the proper bicycle infrastructure in place, those who wish to travel by bicycle are forced to do so illegally on the sidewalk or unsafely in the travel lanes. Master Plan Sec. 7.10.*

Consistent with the cultural and public safety needs of the community, at the March 17, 2018 Town Meeting, Article 21 was presented relative to “Transportation Improvement Grants From State & Federal Agencies” which established a capital reserve fund for the purposes of setting aside town funds to use as “matching funds” for transportation improvement grants from state and federal agencies “as well as funding repairs and improvements to town walkways.” Article 21 appropriates \$5000 to be placed in the fund. Town Report (2017). At a Budget Committee hearing leading up to the town meeting, final edits were made to the Article’s language to remove restrictions that “could limit grant possibilities” and to make the Article “more flexible.” The Article as amended was approved by the Budget Committee. Budget Committee Minutes, Feb. 16, 2017. At Town Meeting Article 21 was discussed and passed on a voice vote. The minutes to the Town Meeting indicate that the reserved funds were intended to demonstrate to the State that the town was “serious” about the project and taking “steps in that direction.” Comments made state that the project was “strongly supported” and that the funds would be used for “seed money.” Both the Budget Committee and the Selectboard recommended passage. The Article was voted on by voice vote and passed. Capital Reserve Funds of \$5,000 were set aside for the project. Town Report (2018).

Similar to what occurred in 2018, another Article 21 was presented at the 2020 Town Meeting. Town Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2020. This time the Article required capital funds to be used “for engineering design and plan of a sidewalk connecting the downtown village district to the Intervale District and to appropriate “\$10,000 to be placed in that fund.” As explained by selectman Clyde Carson at the January 30, 2020 Budget committee meeting, “the goal is not to spend all town money but to get a grant to help with the planning... the state would pay 80% and we would come up with 20% of the money. The first part would include an engineering study to determine the best route and come back with other alternatives for the town to consider before the next step.” Budget Committee January 30, 2020.

After a robust discussion, both the Budget Committee (6-1) and the Selectboard (3-0) recommended passage. Budget Committee Minutes, January 30 and February 5, 2020. At Town Meeting, Article 21 passed. Town Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2020.

At the May 1, 2021 Town Meeting, Article 19 was presented at Town Meeting asking for \$10,000 to be placed in the previously established “Transportation Improvement Grants Matching [Capital] Fund. This Article was again recommended by the Budget Committee (5-1) and the Selectboard (3-0). At Town Meeting, a motion was made to move the Article, discussion followed and the Article passed. Town Meeting (2021).

In 2022, a Warrant Article 16 advancing the project and requesting \$95,111 appropriated funds was immediately amended to reduce the appropriation to \$5000 and called for the establishment of a study committee instead of going forward with the project. The amendment passed but the Article as amended failed. Town Meeting (2022)

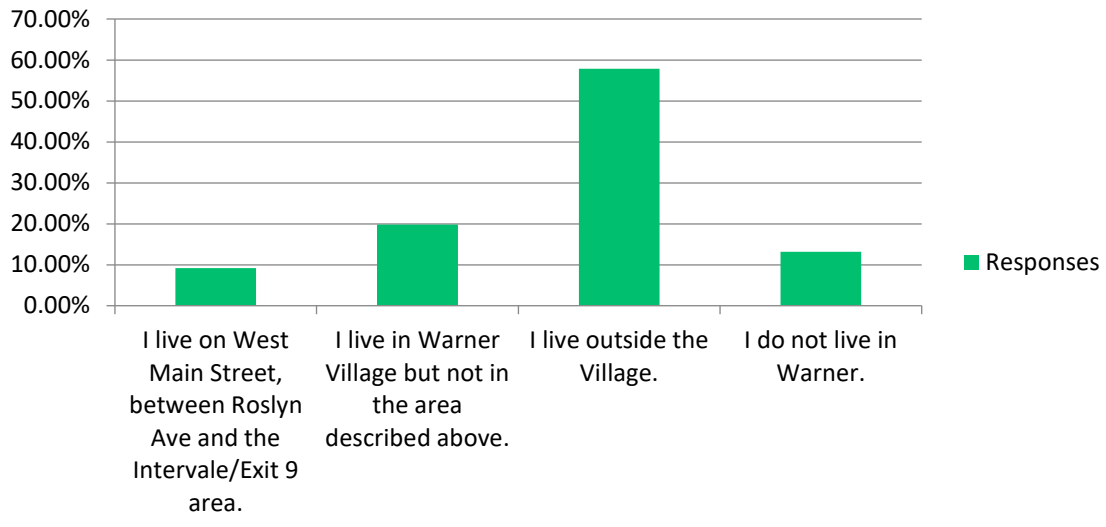
As a result of three town meetings over the course of 4 years, the citizens of Warner voted to approve \$25,000 in capital funds and approved going forward with the project each time. Their actions were consistent with what their fellow citizens asked for when the 2004 Design Charrette was developed, with their town’s Master Plan and consistent with the cultural and public safety needs for our community.

Also, since about 2014, the Town has applied to NHDOT for a TAP grant related to this project, with increasing success. While the first two attempts failed, the 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt, in the 2021 grant round, resulted in the project placing 4<sup>th</sup> out of 34 projects statewide. Based on their scoring criteria, NHDOT considers this project favorably. See Section 5 for a more complete description.

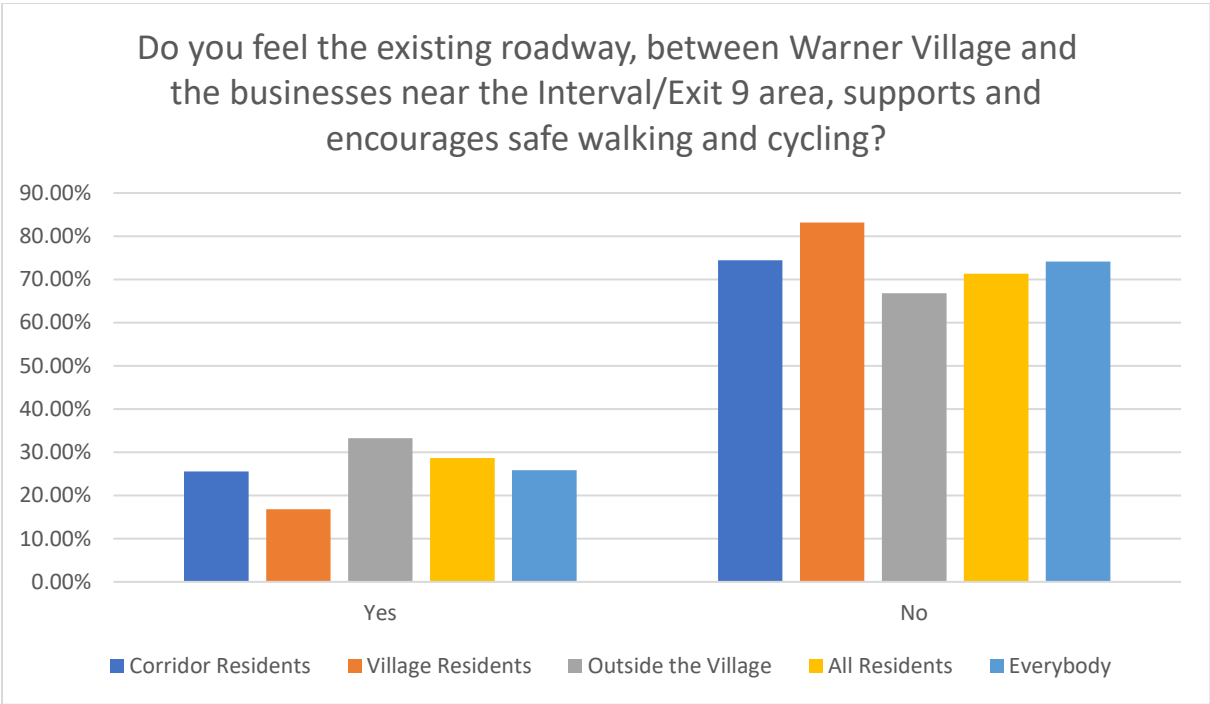
#### **Section 4 – 2023 Community Survey Results**

In January 2023, a community survey was conducted, requesting input and comments related to a corridor connecting the village of Warner with the Exit 9 area, deemed “the Intervale”. Over 500 participants responded, answering the survey questions and providing more than 1,000 comments. See complete results for the survey [here](#) or on the Town web site, a summary with analysis follows.

## Which of the following best describes where you live in town?

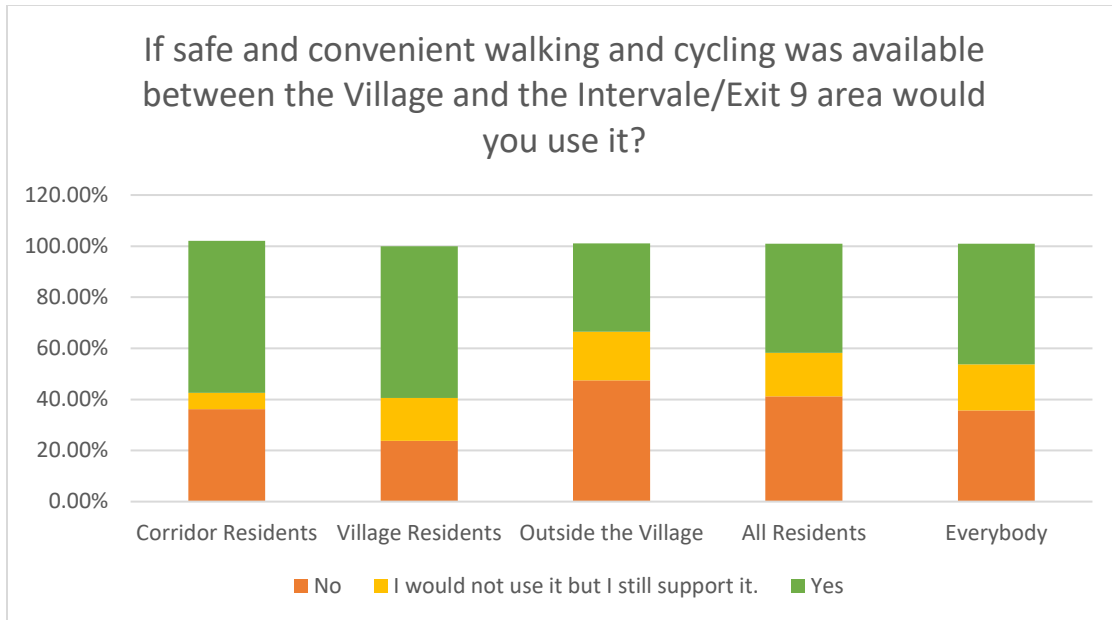


47 responders live along the corridor.  
101 live in the village, but not along the corridor.  
295 live outside the village in Warner  
67 responders do not live in Warner

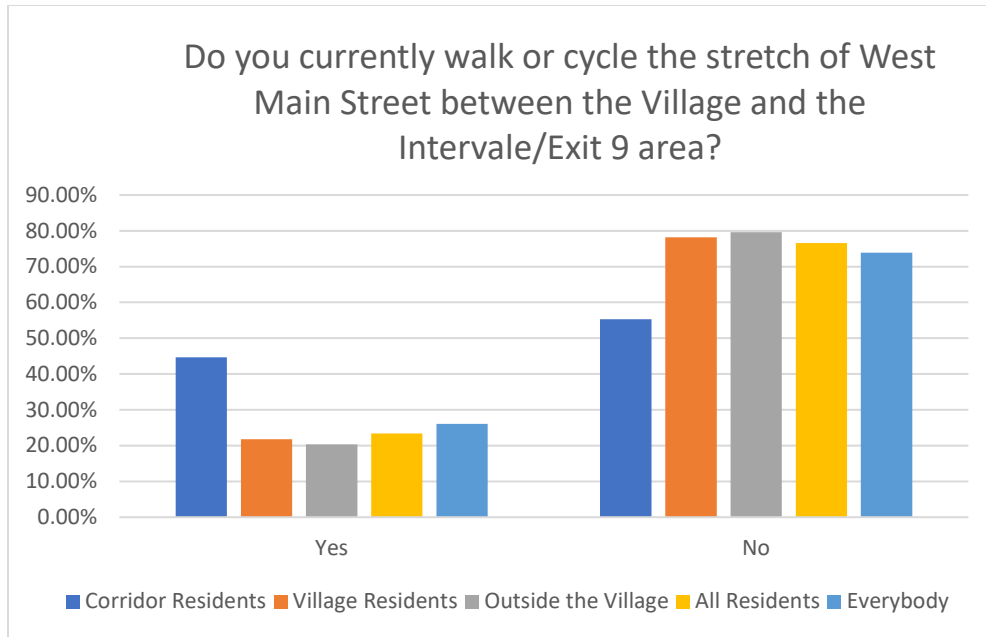


No matter where people live, most people clearly recognized the current roadway does not support and encourage safe walking and cycling.

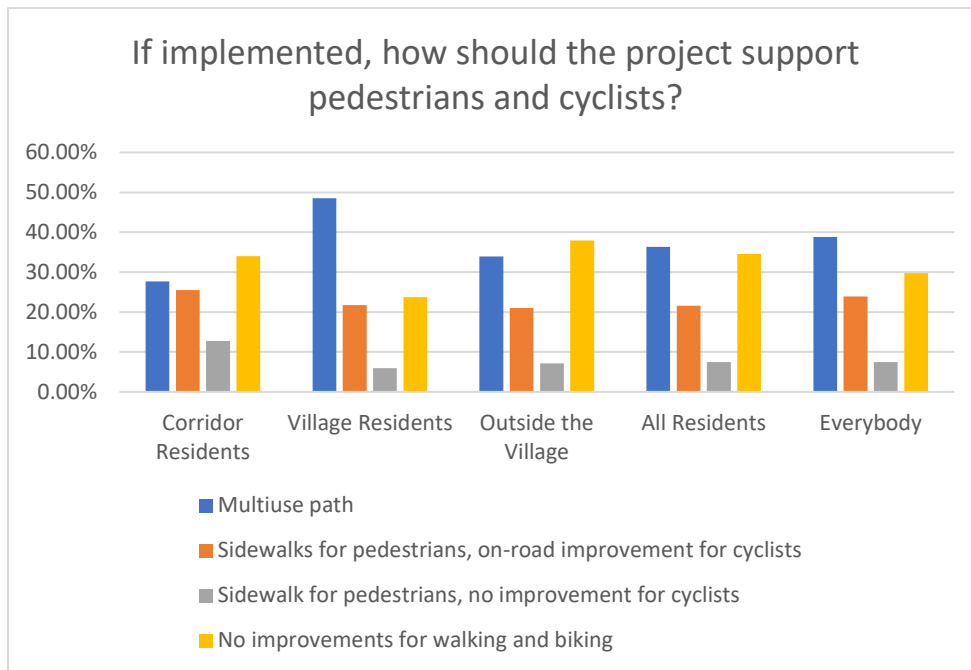




41% of all residents said they would NOT use safe and convenient walking or cycling along the corridor if it existed.  
 59% of residents said they would use it or support it. The use and support was strongest among village and corridor residents.



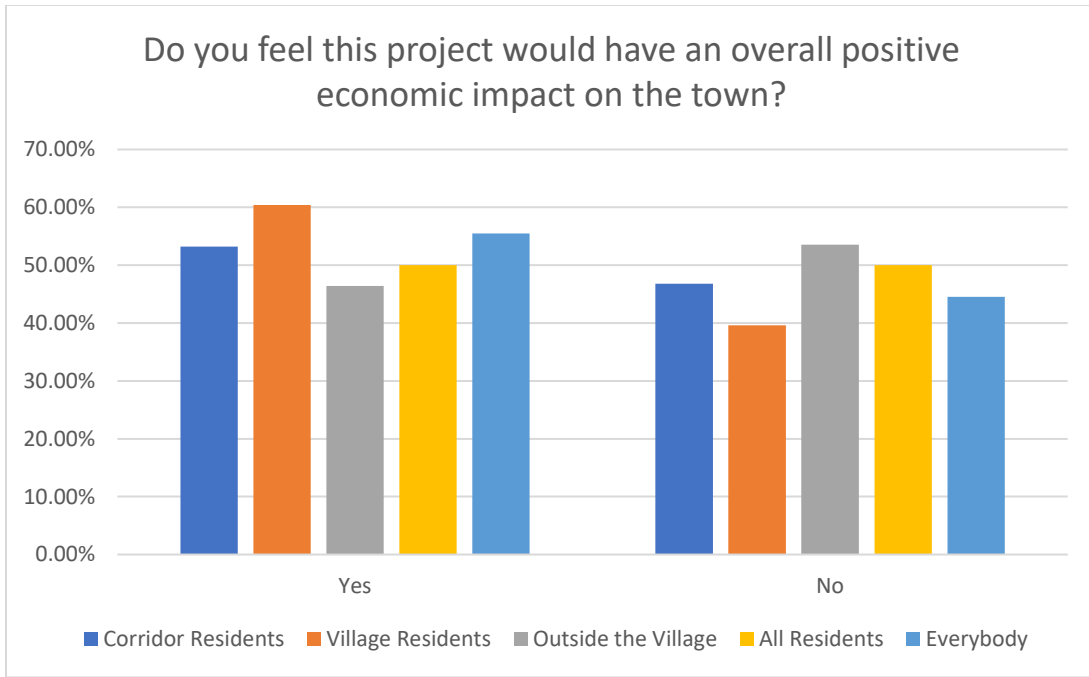
As you would expect, people living along the corridor do walk or bike along this corridor at higher rates than people who live elsewhere. But the previous graph showed high interest from village residents if conditions improved.



A majority of corridor residents supported improvements for both walking and biking, but they were split on whether that should be a multiuse path or sidewalk & on-road improvements.

Village residents had a strong preference for multiuse path and overall the greatest desire to improve both modes.

Even a majority of residents outside the village supported improvements for both modes of travel. But clearly a higher minority of the residents living further from the project did not support it as they are the least likely to use it.



Residents along the corridor and in the village thought this project would have an overall positive economic impact.

Residents outside the village did not think the project would have a positive impact on the town.

Taken together, the residents were evenly split.

It's worth noting that out of town respondents thought it would have a positive economic impact.

## Section 5 – Available NHDOT Transportation Alternatives (TAP)

After 2 failed attempts to secure a TAP grant for the project, the town was successful in the 2021 grant round. In fact, for the 2021 round, NHDOT ranked the project 4<sup>th</sup> out of 34 projects statewide. Ranking of these proposed grant awards may be found [here](#).

The original grant size for the Warner was \$1,051,110 as shown on the application that that appears on the NHDOT website can be found [here](#). The current grant size for the project is \$1,207,699 as shown on page 192 of the NHDOT's Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan 2023-2032 and can be found [here](#).

NHDOT is currently adjusting the TAP grant for inflation as they do for all their projects. If Warner moves forward with the project and if NHDOT has funds available, they will continue to offer an 80/20 cost share. But if NHDOT is not able to find available funds to cover the inflation then more of the cost would fall on the town.

As of this writing, the grant award remains on the books at NHDOT and NHDOT continues to believe it is a worthwhile project from a transportation point of view.

## Section 6 - NHDOT LPA Process

The Town of Warner submitted a competitive grant application to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for 80% federal funding for the development of a non-motorized path connecting the village to the exit 9 area in “Round 4” of the grant cycle in 2021.

The Local Public Agency (LPA) process is required to qualify for, design, and execute a grant-funded project. The process has been used to successfully deliver federally funded projects through the NHDOT for municipalities and other public agencies throughout New Hampshire. It is important to note that this process provides for public consideration and deliberation along the way.

The NHDOT [LPA Manual](#) offers a complete explanation of the process.

Once a grant application is scored and selected for funding and possible development the following project development steps apply:

### Award Notification Letter

This step of the project represents official notice from NHDOT to Sponsors (municipality) that the proposed project application has been selected for funding. This notice will include details as to the approved project scope, the amount of funds awarded, and other details regarding the fiscal year funds have been programmed at NHDOT and an indication of next steps.

The notification will also include the contact information for the Sponsor’s project contact at NHDOT.

### LPA Project Agreement

The next step in the project process is the LPA Project Agreement. The LPA Project Agreement sets the terms for the funds awarded, the amount of local match required as well as federal funds awarded and the project limits of the project.

### Scoping Meeting

The Sponsor is required to attend a meeting with the assigned NHDOT project manager to discuss the project scope, budget, and schedule. The meeting must occur before issuance of any notice-to-proceed (NTP) for any project phase. This meeting also presents an opportunity to discuss any questions regarding the approved project.

### Notice to Proceed with QBS Process

The first notice-to-proceed (NTP) that is issued for a project will be for the start of the Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) process. This allows for the solicitation for qualifications to be considered potentially eligible for reimbursement – provided those expenses have been previously approved by NHDOT. The approval occurs after the project schedule and budget are fleshed out in the project-scoping meeting.

### Consultant Selection Process

The Sponsor will conduct the reviews of the submitted statements of qualification by the local selection committee, host interviews as appropriate, score the qualifications of interested firms, and identify the preferred firm.

### Approval of QBS Process and NTP with Scope and Fee Negotiations

A summary of the QBS process used by the Sponsor, along with identification of the ranking criteria and a request to begin negotiations on a scope and fee with the preferred firm are submitted to NHDOT for review and approval.

### Approval to Execute Contract

Once the Sponsor and a consultant have arrived at agreement on a project scope and fee, a copy of the proposed contract is sent to the NHDOT project manager for review and approval. The length of this step could be greater or lesser depending upon how closely the negotiated contract is to the budget discussed at the Scoping Meeting, and whether the proposed scope and fees are justified by the Independent Government Estimate (IGE).

### NTP with Engineering Study

Approval of the proposed engineering contract will be accompanied by a NTP for the first step of project design, the Engineering Study.

The Engineering Study phase will include multiple public meetings to garner input from users, abutters, and the public to inform the consultant on the needs and want of the project. A “No-build” alternative is included as the base for comparison. The study process will yield alternatives and consider feasibility, impacts, estimated costs, and constructability of the proposed options.

### NTP with Preliminary Plans

The Engineering Study for the project will be submitted to the NHDOT project manager for review.

### NTP with Plans, Specifications and Estimate (Final Design)

Following review and approval of the preliminary plan phase of the project – NHDOT will issue a NTP with the development of the plans, specifications and estimate (PS&E) package for a project.

### NTP with Final Plans and Bid Package

This step of the project design involves the development of final plans and a project estimate, along with a bid package.

### NTP with Bidding

Upon approval of the PS&E and authorization of funds for construction requested as part of the PS&E submittal, approval will be granted to begin advertising for bids on the project.

### Approval to Award Construction Contract

The project sponsor will need to submit a letter requesting to award to the lowest responsible, responsive bidder. The letter will summarize their bid review and analysis and include an itemized tabulation of all bids and the engineer's estimate.

If the requested amount of the construction contract is equal to or less than the amount of the construction phase funds approved in the PS&E phase of the project, the approval from NHDOT is received more quickly. If substantial changes need to be made to the project or the funds approved in the PS&E phase, the process will take longer due to federal funding authorization requirements from FHWA.

#### Pre-Construction Meeting

Once the advertising period is over, bids have been reviewed, the lowest responsive bidder has been identified, the bid tabulation has been prepared, and NHDOT has approved the proposed contract, a pre-construction meeting should occur with all pertinent parties – including NHDOT to discuss the project and requirements of federal funds.

#### Final Reimbursement and Project Closeout

At project close, all NHDOT forms and the final reimbursement request will be submitted and paid.

### **Section 7 – Recommendations**

At their January 31, 2023 summary presentation to the Select Board, the Corridor Committee put forward the following recommendations regarding the corridor between the village center and the Exit 9/Intervale district.

Recommendations:

- Based on the research, educational speakers, discussions, and a survey answered by over 500 people, the Corridor Committee recommends pursuing the NHDOT TAP Grant and continuing to pursue the implementation of some sort of alternative transportation accommodation.
- It is not recommended at this time to put forth any warrant article for Town Meeting in March 2023 concerning the corridor/sidewalk/multi-use path.
- It is not recommended to make any changes at this time to the funds that are currently held in the 2 Capital Reserve Funds for transportation alternative projects.
- It is recommended that the Selectboard and the Corridor Committee hold a joint public meeting to provide the findings of the Corridor Committee, survey results to the public and to inform the public about other transportation alternative projects and how they will coordinate with each other.
- It is recommended that the Corridor Committee continue to work until recommendations have been made for Town Meeting 2024.
- Should a warrant be considered, it should include all necessary and sufficient funding for both matching funds and the project.
- And, should the project move forward in 2024, the entire project should be

included in the warrant article to include the full match necessary to secure 80% of the funding from Federal Highway sources.

- Recommended that the Corridor Committee come back to the Selectboard at a future meeting to provide a more robust report on findings and presentation of data and survey results.
- It is recommended that the Selectboard, following the future report by the Corridor Committee, assist with next steps and public engagement about the process going forward.
- It is recommended by the Corridor Committee that should the project move forward, that the project study process have significant public input in the development of the project and contain all options for the project including 'no build' alternative and a charrette so that people can have visual concepts of streetscapes to understand impacts more fully.

### **Section 8 – Epilogue**

Despite the overwhelming demonstration of need and support this project garnered over the past two decades, at the 2023 Town Meeting, petitioned Warrant Article 6 narrowly passed 104 – 96 “to cease pursuit of development of sidewalk/multi-use path on route 103.”