



# Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes

PO Box 765, Portsmouth, NH 03802

[www.seacoastbikes.org](http://www.seacoastbikes.org)

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November 10, 2011

William E. Watson  
NHDOT Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance  
John O. Morton Building  
7 Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH 03302

Dear Mr. Watson,

I am writing on behalf of Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes (SABR) and its membership around the Seacoast to respectfully urge the NH Department of Transportation to maintain its commitment to promoting the safety of all users of our state's transportation system, and not implement the disproportionate cuts to funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects proposed in the Draft 2012-2033 Ten Year Transportation Plan.

SABR is a regional non-profit bicycle education and advocacy group focused on communities in the greater NH-ME Seacoast area. SABR partners with the NHDOT annually on events to promote Commute Green NH, and works more broadly with regional partners to promote bicycle safety education and safe accommodation of bicycle riders and pedestrians in the region's transportation system.

We share the Department's concern at the prospect of a 30% across the board cut in federal transportation funding, coming on the heels of the recent cuts to the State Highway Fund by the State Legislature.

However, the Department's proposal to cut an additional 50% from the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program, resulting in an overall loss of nearly 70% to the major source of funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in New Hampshire, is unwise and inconsistent with stated Department goals around promoting safety for all users of our transportation system.

The TE program funds critical safety improvements for bicycle riders and walkers of all ages. According to statistics from USDOT, 7.6% of all traffic fatalities in New Hampshire in 2010 were bicycle riders or pedestrians (FARS 2005-2007). About 8% of all trips are taken on bike or on foot in New Hampshire (National Household Transportation Survey 2001). However NH spends only about 3% of its transportation funds on bicycle and pedestrian safety. (Statistics reported by NHDOT to FHWA and compiled in the Alliance for Bicycling and Walking's 2010 Benchmark Report). The proposed cuts to TE would dramatically reduce this already limited investment in bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Beyond safety, communities around the state have used TE funds for trails projects and downtown sidewalk improvements that support local economic development. Downtown Newmarket is an excellent example of how TE funding for sidewalk improvements has laid the foundation for major downtown revitalization, including new business recruitment and rehabilitation of the remaining mill into commercial and residential space.

Trail projects not only provide citizens of all ages with a safe place to exercise, they are valuable economic engines. The State of Maine recently completed a study of the economic impact of bicycle tourism that found that bicycle tourism contributed an estimated \$65 million per year to the State's economy. NH, and especially the Seacoast region, is even better situated to develop bicycle tourism given our proximity to Boston.

We recognize the difficult situation faced by NHDOT, attempting to keep up with maintenance and rehabilitation of deteriorating bridges, while responding to legislative pressure to complete I93. However, mortgaging the state's future ability to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety is not the answer.

We routinely spend millions of dollars to shave minutes (or even less than a minute) off of automobile trips. At a time when mode share for bicycling and walking is increasing in New Hampshire, we should be investing in bicycle and pedestrian safety at a level that better reflects that mode share, and that is commensurate with the share of traffic fatalities who are killed while walking or bicycling on our state's roadways.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Ten Year Plan. We urge the GACIT and the Department to restore funding to the Transportation Enhancement program; and not only maintain but expand our State's commitment to safety for all users of our transportation system.

Sincerely,



Joshua Pierce  
SABR President

CC: Governor John H. Lynch  
Christopher Clement, NHDOT Commissioner  
Christopher T. Sununu, Executive Councilor, District 3  
Daniel St. Hilaire, Executive Councilor, District 2  
Nancy Stiles, NH Senate, District 17  
Amanda Merrill, NH Senate, District 21  
Fenton Groen, NH Senate, District 6  
Russell Prescott, NH Senate, District 23