

A Walk-Bike Advisory Committee for St. Johnsbury Laural Ruggles, Caledonia & s. Essex Fit and Healthy Coalition 2016

Campaign Goal

Within the next 12 months, the Town of St. Johnsbury will create an official Walk-Bike Advisory Committee with members appointed by the Select Board.

Within the next 2 - 3 years, the Walk-Bike Advisory Board will assist town officials in maintaining St. Johnsbury as a vibrant and active community where all residents can thrive.

Project Background

Communities around the country are making investments in their communities to reap the many benefits of a walk and bike friendly community, including:

Economic:

- Encourages residents and visitors to shop locally
- Helps attract and retain workers
- Enhances real estate values

Health and Well-being:

- Helps address obesity and related chronic conditions by enabling physical activity
- Increases social connections
- Contributes to the quality of life in a town

The St. Johnsbury Town Plan (2011) is sprinkled with references to the benefits of having a bike friendly and walkable town. It is clear that Town Officials and residents understand both the economic and health benefits of making infrastructure improvements that make it easy for residents and visitors to travel and be active by bike or on foot. That said, while recent infrastructure upgrades in the down town included sidewalk enhancements, opportunities were missed to address improvements to crosswalks and to add dedicated bike lanes.

There are precedents in Vermont for a town committee to focus on bike and pedestrian issues and infrastructure. Several towns have the equivalent of a Walk-Bike Advisory Committees as part of their town governance. Morrisville, Shelburne, South Burlington, Montpelier, and Hinesburg (to name a few) all have similar committees. In all these towns, committee members are appointed by town officials.

The main responsibility of a St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee will be to recommend policies and actions by the town that promote walking and bicycling for travel and recreation while providing safe and convenient access to all areas of the community.

Key Partners and Stakeholders

St. Johnsbury Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Planning Commission, Select Board; St. Johnsbury Chamber; Local Motion; Local Motion St. Johnsbury Steering Committee; St. Johnsbury School; St. Johnsbury History and Heritage Center; St. Johnsbury Riverfront Committee; Neighborhood Associations; Northeastern Vermont Development Association (Transportation Planner), RuralEdge (housing).

Fit and Healthy Coalition Members, including NVRH (Community Connections, Medical Offices, Occupational Health), Vermont Department of Health, NEK Council on Aging, Green Mountain United Way, St. Johnsbury Academy/RecFit, NEK Chamber of Commerce, Casey and Associates

Campaign Timeline

Task	Dates	Responsible Partners
Develop pitch to St J Select Board	Sept – Dec 2016	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Attend St. Johnsbury Select Board Meetings	Dec 2016; Jan – May 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Conduct awareness raising bike and pedestrian community events in St Johnsbury	Sept 2016 – June 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Creation of Walk-Bike Advisory Committee	June 2017	St Johnsbury Select Board
Recruitment of members	July – August 2017	St Johnsbury Select Board
Committee work begins	September 2017	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee

Twelve-month Work Plan

Task		
Develop pitch to St J Select Board		
Activity	Dates	Responsible Partners
Discuss and develop role and function, and goals and objectives of a Walk-Bike Advisory Committee	Sept – Dec 2016	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Meet with other potential partners and stakeholders	Nov – Dec 2016	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Write up proposal	January 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Develop presentation	Jan – March 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Task		
Attend St J Select Board Meetings		
Begin discussion about the need for a Walk-Bike Advisory Committee; identify lead contact from town	December 2016	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee; other partners and stakeholders
Present proposal to Select Board	April 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee; other partners and stakeholders

Task		
Awareness Raising Activities		
Kingdom Challenge ½ Marathon and 5k	Oct 2016	Good Shephard School
New Year's Fun Run	Jan 2017	First Night St J
Bike Safety Fair and Pop Up Event	May 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; Local Motion Steering Committee
Walking School Bus	May 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; St J School
St J History Walk	May/June 2017	Fit and Healthy Coalition; St J History and Heritage Center
Implement one permanent bike/ped improvement as identified by the Local Motion Steering Committee	May/June 2017	Local Motion Steering Committee
Garden Walk of St. Johnsbury	July/August 2017	Fairbanks Museum or Weed and Seed Committee
Task		
Create Walk-Bike Advisory Committee		
Vote of Select Board	June 2017	St J Select Board
Task		
Recruit Members		
Use local media to solicit members (Caledonian Record, Front Porch Forum)	June – July 2017	Town of St Johnsbury

Year 2 – 3 Work Plan for the St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee (proposed)

Task		
Activities of the Committee		
Activity	Dates	Responsible Partners
Discuss and develop role and function, and goals and objectives of a Walk-Bike Advisory Committee	Sept – Dec 2017	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee
Review past St J assessments and reports for references to creating a walk and bike friendly community: Charrette, Creative Communities, Complete Streets Assessment, Town Plans	2017 - 2018	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee
Meet with other towns with a Walk-Bike Committee e.g. Morrisville	2017 - 2018	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee
Investigate benefits of Walk Friendly and Bike Friendly designations	2017 - 2018	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee
Conduct a town wide walking and biking initiative	2018	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee; Fit and Healthy Coalition; NVRH
Create a free community bike share program	2018	St. Johnsbury Walk-Bike Advisory Committee; Fit and Healthy Coalition