

Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire
July 2025 Podcast Transcript
(Transcription completed by AI)

00:09

Amanda Gourgue

Hi and welcome to the Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire podcast, Pedals and Paces, where biking and walking safety meets for fun chats. I am your host, Amanda Gourgue and I am the Executive Director. Today we are happy to share our second podcast with you. Our goal for this podcast is to enhance our mission of educating, advocating and celebrating all things related to bike and pedestrian safety while doing it in an entertaining way. In this podcast we are excited to have Emma Smith who recently biked the East Coast Greenway. She will share her journey with us then. Our second guest is Paul Sitak who worked with the town of New Boston and the state of New Hampshire to install ten three foot pass signs. Now you might be wondering how are these two guests related to each other? Motivation.

01:10

Amanda Gourgue

Emma and Paul wanted to accomplish something and worked at it until the task was completed. I hope that after listening to their stories, you feel motivated to take action on something that is important to you. Enjoy their stories. The Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire sponsors the Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire Pedal and Paces podcast. Are you a regular listener who loves our content? Do you also believe in creating safer, more accessible communities for walkers and bikers right here in New Hampshire? Then we need your support. The Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire is dedicated to championing active transportation across the Granite State. But we can't do it without you. Every donation, big or small, directly fuels our mission. Advocacy for safer routes. We work tirelessly to ensure roads and trails are safe for everyone.

02:19

Amanda Gourgue

Community engagement with we organize events and programs that promote healthy, active lifestyles, education and awareness. We empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate our communities safely. Your contribution helps us pave the way for a healthier environment, stronger communities, and a more walkable and bikeable New Hampshire for all. To make a tax deductible donation and become a vital part of our movement, visit bwanh.org today. That is bwanh.org thank you for helping us make a difference one step and one petal at a time.

And welcome, Emma, to our podcast. I really appreciate you being on. So, everybody, this is Emma Smith. Emma, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

03:29

Emma Smith

Yeah. So I grew up in southeastern New Hampshire in Plaistow, which I always like to tell people. It's kind of the town that you drive through to get to Maine or from Maine, you. So that's where I grew up most of my life. But I was born down in the Carolinas and in that way I was.

03:49

Amanda Gourgue

Led back there for college, which one?

03:52

Emma Smith

Graduated from about a Year ago I got a degree in outdoor leadership and psychology. And those have been like my major interests kind of in my work life. And I really love being outdoors and going camping, rock climbing, biking, just being outside and being connected with nature. So that's a lot of the work that I've done is like kind of get connecting kids with the outdoors. And that's been kind of fueling my life for a

while. And now I'm kind of in part of my life where I'm going on a lot of adventures and working and just to be able to kind of pay for those adventures and to grow. And that's pretty much it.

04:34

Amanda Gourgue

That's so funny. Now, working with kiddos, like, how did you come about wanting those two degrees? Because you don't usually think outdoor adventure or recreation or management. Outdoor management and psychology. How did those two come about?

04:50

Emma Smith

So I kind of went into college not knowing what I wanted to do and kind of figured that I would. I don't need a degree in outdoor recreation to work in that field. So I was kind of against that. But as I went I thought, well, this is something I'm really passionate about, so I really want to do this. And then I'm a bit of an overachiever. And so I kind of figured, well, I can handle one degree. Why don't I get a double? Why don't I double major? And then after taking intro to psych, I was kind of like, boom. I really like this. Psychology is awesome. So a bit. Some of my interests are different in terms of what I like for psychology and what I like for the outdoors.

05:29

Emma Smith

But of course psychology kind of relates to everything when you think about it or talk about it. And yeah, it's definitely. They've been overlapping more and more as I. The more I get interested in both fields professionally.

05:43

Amanda Gourgue

That's amazing. So what do you do with your degrees right now?

05:47

Emma Smith

Right now I have been working with KROKA Expeditions just during their summer and I last year I worked in their fall as well. And they are based in Marlow, New Hampshire and Southwestern New Hampshire. I've been working with them for some years now in the summers while I was in college. And I participated in a lot of their programs when I was a student. They do like summer programs that are anywhere from a week long to three weeks long. And they also do school programs and semester long programs which I kind of did their summer programs and then participated in their semester long programs. So I did my junior year with them. They offer high school credit and college credit. So I've come back to work for them and been doing that.

06:34

Emma Smith

This is my fourth season working for them, and that's what I've been doing right now, while kind of exploring many other places, trying to travel and maybe about. Maybe gonna go back to school at some point for psychology. But for now, we're really working in the outdoors is where I've what I've been putting my energy towards.

06:52

Amanda Gourgue

That's awesome. I love to hear that. That's exciting. What a cool life you got, right? Let me just be honest. I'm a little jealous. This is awesome. Now I found you. Actually, I think it was your mom, but I found your story on Facebook. I don't remember who posted it, but you just did an amazing adventure. Can you tell us a little bit more about this?

07:16

Emma Smith

Yeah. So, starting March 4th, me and a friend, we began biking from Key West, Florida, from the southernmost point of the US and we biked from there to the border of Canada in Calais, Maine. And we did it over about 74 days. It was true adventure. It was really great. We were on our bikes and living off of our bikes and camping and staying in different people's houses, traveling all on bike and not getting in any, like, cars or anything. Though I will say we did get in a few ferries. But that was the recent adventure. Yeah, that was along the East Coast Greenway. Forgot to mention. Yeah, the East Coast Greenway was mainly what we were following.

08:04

Amanda Gourgue

That's amazing. Now, how did you come up with idea like, what drove this passion?

08:11

Emma Smith

Yeah, so I was in my final year of college and I had always kind of thought it would be really cool to bike across the country. I'm not. I wasn't much of a biker beforehand.

08:21

Amanda Gourgue

I've always loved the outdoors and I've.

08:23

Emma Smith

Always loved going on long adventures and expeditions. But I have some chronic pain that I struggle with in my knees and back. And so backpacking is kind of out of the question. But I really wanted to do some long distance traveling under my own power. And so biking seemed to be the most accessible form for me. And I'd done it a couple times before with bigger groups, but not on my own. And I've been really motivated to create a personal trip that I'd be really proud of. And then my mom, who is a big supporter of my adventures, found the East Coast Greenway on social media and sent it to me and was like, this is really cool. It's right near us. And so I kind of saw that and saw that they have a trail along the whole coast.

09:10

Emma Smith

And I said, well, that's pretty nice and flat. So that would be a lot more of a beginner. A little more of a beginner trip for me compared to going across the Rockies and across the whole US So yeah, then I started planning it and kind of was casually planning it and putting a casual date that I would do it in the spring of 25. And then I fully committed to it in January of 25. I was planning to do it alone because my original Viking partner wasn't going to be able to participate for multiple reasons. And yeah, but then I got lucky and I found someone, a friend that was interested in doing it with me. And then I kind of just evolved from there.

09:57

Amanda Gourgue

That's amazing. So how much time did you need to plan out the trip?

10:02

Emma Smith

I would say it took about two months to for of intensive planning. I had been kind of pulling together ideas and gear lists and maps and knowledge for about a year beforehand. But that was pretty casual because I was in school still and I was working for six months after school and I finally finished that intensive work, which was with Croak Expeditions. I finished that in December. So the end of the year and I got back to my parents house and thought it over. And then once I decided to really do it, the intensive planning, yeah, took around

two months of pulling together maps and pulling together gear and fixing my bike. And I was kind of working casually part time. And so I had a lot of time on my hands to do it.

10:55

Amanda Gourgue

Funny. So did you have to train? I mean, how many miles is it?

11:02

Emma Smith

Yeah, it was. We were estimating it would be around 3,000 total. We did a little bit less because at times we would deviate off the east coast greenway to take a quicker route just because I did have a sort of deadline for the trip and were trying to fit that in. So I did not train. Neither of us did actually. So were both pretty sedentary for a couple months beforehand. But which was not the intention. But the winter up here was pretty. Was pretty intense this year. So I did not get the chance to really bike around in like the 10 degree weather and in the snow. So we kind of showed up there both being pretty like just couch potatoes and started the trip off pretty slow so that we could build up our strength through the trip.

11:55

Emma Smith

So the mileage started out pretty small and by the end of the trip it was. It had gotten to be like a lot more. We got to do a lot more mileage each day.

12:05

Amanda Gourgue

Amazing. You must have incredibly sore at the beginning. So Talk to me about logistics. First of all, what kind of equipment did you have for the trip?

12:17

Emma Smith

Yeah, so I did a lot of research online. I have this bike that I had bought from the organization that I work for now, one of their retired mountain bikes, which is a surly, which is a big name out there in the bike world, a really good bike, a really durable frame. So that was a whole thing because that bike I had to fix up. I had to change the brake pads, and I wanted to change the tires to be a little smaller because they were kind of fat tires, which isn't really what you want in the road. And I basically needed to outfit the whole bike with the ability to carry all my stuff. And that was the biggest thing of. I bought a lot of stuff from Rockbros.

13:04

Emma Smith

I found their site which online recommended by people, and they served me pretty well. I bought their rack that I put on the back of my bike to carry my two panniers, which are kind of big bags that clip on to that carried the majority of my stuff. And I got a front loader as well that went on my handlebars from them. And then otherwise I kind of just stuck other stuff around and on top of the rack. And yeah, and I both my friend and I bought these really fancy bike saddles. Maybe you've heard of them, but it's Brooks which. They're these like, leather saddles from England, which seems really uncomfortable. And they are for the first 500 miles. But once you break in, break them in, they are pretty much mold to you and become very comfortable. And so we got those.

13:55

Emma Smith

And. And yeah, a lot of the equipment I also had from my work and from other adventures. So my little pocket rocket, stove and fuel, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, tent. A lot of those major items that would have been big purchases are things that I already had as well as, like, outdoor gear and clothing that was good for activity. But yeah, that was. That was like a lot of the gear. And the gear was definitely a big thing. I had

multiple renditions of packing lists where I would make a big packing list. And then I'd be like, okay, I can take these things out.

14:33

Emma Smith

And then I would do it again, and then I would take more things out, and then I'd do it again and take more things out because I was used to being able to carry a lot and I was had to eliminate weight because you really don't want to be weighed down when you're trying to bike up a hill.

14:47

Amanda Gourgue

Now, how did you get everything if you started in Florida. How did you get everything down there?

14:51

Emma Smith

Yeah, that was a fun time to figure out. I really wanted to not have to pack my bike in a box, so I was going to try to take a train down and take a ferry or a bus, but that didn't work out. So I ended up flying down. And you can pack your bike in a box with a bunch of cardboard and packing materials. And it's really scary because I was really nervous about my bike, but. But packed her in a box. And I packed all the rest of my gear in another checked bag, and I checked that at the airport and flew with it. And I got a direct flight from Boston, which was pretty lucky. And that just meant that I had to reassemble my bike once I got down there and unpack everything, and.

15:38

Emma Smith

Which just took maybe an hour or two after landing.

15:43

Amanda Gourgue

That's amazing. I would never.

15:45

Emma Smith

Not that you'd want to go round.

15:46

Amanda Gourgue

Trip, obviously, but it's. You hear horror stories with luggage. I can only imagine flying with a bike is challenging.

15:55

Emma Smith

Yeah. I was definitely worried that would be my first time, like, getting my bags lost or something. But it was helpful that I had a direct flight. It was a little less worrisome.

16:03

Amanda Gourgue

Oh, totally. Okay. So as you know, Bike Walk alliance, We are a. A 501c3 nonprofit that is all about bike and pedestrian safety and education and advocacy. So I want to throw that hat on, that helmet on for a second, and talk about, you know, what kind of safety gear did you have for this? Was there anything in place? Like, what was your safety plan?

16:30

Emma Smith

Yeah, that was definitely. I had some skills from the past and other things were planning on figuring out as went. Main things that are pretty common that I think day bikers use as well were front, light, and backlight, though we would only take them out in the dark because we didn't want to use up the batteries too quickly since we were camping and didn't have access to batteries often. And helmets, of course. And we both had reflective. So I had reflective tires. I had. There was a reflective ring on my. My tires so that they were pretty easily seen in the dark, at the very least. And we had reflective jackets that either we would attach to our bike or put on ourselves. What else? Let's see.

17:18

Emma Smith

We both had our phones with us and had people tracking us in case there were any sort of. Yeah. Issues or anything. And in terms of also, not just biking equipment, but traveling equipment, we had. We bought pepper spray at a certain point, and just to be wary of Any animals or people that would engage with us. But yeah, our main things on the road were the. Any reflective gear that we could get and helmets and lights.

17:50

Amanda Gourgue

All good things. So you're on a trail and in my head, I didn't even think about it. You would be riding in the dark because daylight savings hasn't happened yet. It was, what, March 13th, 14th. Something around there, right? You would be riding in the dark. How. I mean, tell us about the actual trip. Like, how did your actual ride go?

18:10

Emma Smith

As went along, we tried to mitigate riding in the dark, so we got a lot more efficient waking up in the morning. And since we started out with pretty small mileage, we'd normally get to camp around 4pm or 5pm and once the. Once daylight savings time came around, that got a little easier and were able to make it to camp before dark. And anytime it was dark, that would definitely. In a way, were more visible and it was almost felt safer at times, depending on the area we were in. We did end up on the. On a lot of really busy roads. Thankfully, the East Coast Greenway is working very hard at making a safe route from top to bottom, but it's only about a third done.

18:54

Emma Smith

And so there are sections that they identify as high risk, high stress, and I had a lot of those labeled. And also the only way onwards is kind of forwards. So we would ride pretty close to each other when possible so cars could pass us. And if it was ever a really sketchy section, sometimes we take our bikes and walk on the sidewalk, though it was pretty slow to walk, to ride on the sidewalk, sometimes we would be taking a little bit more of a risk and biking with the cars. We tried to just make ourselves as visible as possible. And yeah, we rode a lot on Route 1 in Florida, which was very busy and very touristy. Thankfully, most cars were very kind to us, but were pretty large and unavoidable and definitely frustrated some cars, some people driving cars.

19:50

Emma Smith

And we didn't have any super close calls, thankfully for any drivers. But some people did get a little close to us and others just. We would. They would pass us and we would be like, whoo. That was very. That was fast and close. There was one time we were biking up a bridge in Georgia and the semi truck comes up and is going very fast and was pretty close to us and almost knocked us over with the wind, with the tailwind from the truck. And that time was definitely. I think we stopped for a moment and there was no shoulder on the road. So we were like, whew. That was. Yeah, we stopped once we've gone the other side of the bridge. But a lot of the areas with zero shoulder people were.

20:36

Emma Smith

Would give us a really wide berth, which was mainly on Route 17 through Georgia and South Carolina, which the Greenway suggests to not ride on. And we decided and took the risk and decided to ride it. And we're grateful that we were able to make it through. But it was definitely, at times we were like, what are we doing here on the side of the highway basically with all this trash in the shoulder where we can barely bike and people aren't moving anywhere to the side. So, yeah, and some of our night rides were going into cities which weren't ideal either. So some of it was a little bit of our decision making that was lacking or necessity that required some sketchy movement of ours.

21:22

Emma Smith

And then other times, yeah, there was a lot of spots that the infrastructure just wasn't there for bikers or that it was maybe broadcasted that it was there, but it was insufficient and still pretty worrisome.

21:37

Amanda Gourgue

So I'm like writing things to ask you as you're talking. So you mentioned trash. I mean, that's so first of all, I'm glad that nothing happened to you. That's very important and I'm glad to hear that close calls suck. So I'm sorry for that. But at least everything, you know, you're here talking to us. So clearly everything worked out. Each state must have been different and unique in the way that you can ride or the roads. I don't want to generalize, but were there some states that were better than others? Like, talk about that.

22:13

Emma Smith

Yeah, there definitely were. You could tell which states were prioritizing bike lanes and it would be as sudden as right over the state line would be significant differences. Florida was kind of half and half with their bike lanes and busy roads with a lot of tourists. And the Key west was really beautiful, but a lot of the pedestrian bridges and bike bridges have gone into decay. So were biking with the roads on the only on the bridges that were the only way to get between islands. So we really loved Florida. It was absolutely beautiful. But were mainly on pretty busy roads that were pretty overstimulating at times. And Georgia and South Carolina, we knew were going to be pretty stressful for us and they weren't as bad as we had originally thought they were gonna be, but they were definitely.

23:13

Emma Smith

We were always on our guard. Yeah, there were no. I think the only bike trail we got on was a Tiny section in Georgia that was like a mile long. And a beautiful 8 mile section in Charleston, South Carolina that was pretty beautiful, but limited compared to how difficult it was to get in and out of the city. It wasn't ideal. And North Carolina, we made a different choice and decided to hop to the Outer Banks. And that was absolutely beautiful and wonderful. And definitely we really loved that. The roads were pretty like fine for us. We didn't struggle too much with them and they had at least a minimal shoulder the whole time. So we enjoyed that area a lot. And I think as we got north, we noticed more pedestrian and bike resources as went. So we.

24:09

Emma Smith

I knew, I also knew since being here, being from here, that we would encounter more rail trails and more of those converted paths. So I was very excited for that. So as we entered Virginia, we both loved Virginia because of the rolling hills and the more empty roads, less infrastructure. We fell in love with the Capitol Trail which was going into Richmond. And that was. We spent about 80 miles on that trail. Yeah, were very impressed with infrastructure in D.C. and Maryland was a little bit more of like limited shoulder on the side, but it was depended like on the sections. There were some rail trails and some paths that were really nice. Yeah. And so I kind of, as we entered New England, it got a lot more like trails and roads. And we loved Rhode island and we loved Delaware, Pennsylvania.

25:08

Emma Smith

Finally, as we entered New England into Connecticut after New York, that's when we went through states very quickly. Getting into Connecticut was really beautiful. We really loved Connecticut. The hills kind of kicked our butts, but it was really beautiful. Same with Rhode Island. Massachusetts was really good. When we were on trails and were off of them, it was pretty horrific. But we all know about Massachusetts roads.

25:37

Amanda Gourgue

Take a little dig at them as we as our neighbors. Sorry, Mass bike. I can totally get that. So I live off of the Seacoast Greenway. I'm on the Seacoast. I'm familiar with the, you know, Portsmouth and Hampton and how we just opened up and the stark contrast between the Hampton version of it and the Portsmouth version because they're not done with it yet, obviously. And then heading into Maine right at that very strip. It's pretty busy. So like how did it, how did your trip end? Like, what did you do? Was there a big celebration? Did y' all like, was it anti climatic and you're like, oh, we're at the end. Okay, like now what?

26:11

Emma Smith

Oh, it was really wonderful. We fell in love with Maine. I mean, and it was really lovely. To have a homecoming in New Hampshire. So I think it was a nice, really good buildup going from Boston. We stopped at my house and stayed for a couple days and left some gear. And that was like a beautiful, like, first end of the trip where it was like, wow, this is an amazing checkpoint. And then onward to the last week of travel. And we, yeah, we loved Maine. There weren't too many trails in the first bit, but it was just beautiful countryside, beautiful woods, beautiful coastline, kind of celebratory. We stopped in Acadia and camped there for two nights as a prep to kind of get ready to go for our last stretch.

27:01

Emma Smith

And for our second to last day, we decided to do a century, which we had attempted a couple times already and failed. And so we knew that this section was going to be like a little less elevation gain than the rest of Maine.

27:17

Emma Smith

And that we had the downy Sunrise Trail to kind of use if it gets dark to be able to hop off the road. So. And we knew that trail was huge. It was like over 80 miles of our. Of our trek. So we decided to kind of do this. Yeah, celebratory century. We like, woke up at like 5am and got really excited and got moving and finished 50 miles before lunch. And so we felt really good. Yeah. And it was really cool to see this. This trail that they're developing wasn't that great for us just because our bikes kind of sunk in the sand and so weren't on it the whole day. But really suggest that trail for any. Anybody who wants to get out there. Yeah, our end was really beautiful. We just had 30 miles after that long day.

28:04

Emma Smith

And my parents drove up a couple days before to. To get an Airbnb and be able to meet us at the border to celebrate with us. And the people that I had connected with the Sunrise Trail Coalition and the Greenway kind of had all connected. And so the town of Calais found out about our end and some people from the town met us at the end and were interviewed by the newspaper and the city paid for our dinner. And so that was really sweet and felt really lovely to kind of finish out that day and cross the Canadian border, which is where we stayed that night, to kind of feel even more dramatic about it.

28:50

Amanda Gourgue

Gotta go international. I love that. Oh, that sounds. I'm, like, tearing up. This is such a beautiful story. Thank you for sharing that. I'm so happy that you're ending and like your last week was so wonderful. Like, I'm sure you're smiling like I can feel like, as you talk about it, question for you is, did you see anybody else on the ride? Was there anybody else who you could commiserate with or be like, hey, we're doing that trail too. Was there anyone on the route with you?

29:19

Emma Smith

Yes. So when we were in the south, we mainly met a couple southbounders that were kind of coming from various points. There was someone who was coming from D.C. and heading down to Key west, and there was a couple people we didn't get to talk to. There was a guy, someone from UK that was heading the same direction as us, but was going probably five times faster because he had half the amount of gear and he had a deadline. So he was like, we got to see him twice because he passed us one day and then he took a break and then we got to see him another day, a couple days later. So that was pretty sweet and shared some good inside information. Otherwise, we found out about a couple who started about two weeks later than us.

30:10

Emma Smith

They're also from the UK and they were doing it for. They're actually finishing soon. They're doing the whole thing as well. And they're in their 50s and are doing it for charity. And it's our first bike trip ever and it's really exciting. But they've been following behind us and taking more, taking their time more, staying multiple days in places and kind of doing whole tours of cities and yeah, just a really lovely British couple. And so they were falling behind and I would be texting with them on Instagram and saying, oh, you should stay with this person or go through this trail or giving tips as to the weather and kind of supporting each other through that journey. So that was a really sweet thing to kind of feel like we had a partner in this.

30:59

Amanda Gourgue

Yeah, I love that. And with that said, like, were you able to keep, like, a journal or take photos or, like, did you. Were you able to. I mean, obviously you've got your warm memories, but is there anything that you were able to, like, physically do? Because when you're on a bike, taking a photo is dangerous and, you know, not easy. Did you stop a bunch to, like, to take photos? And at night, did you write a journal of everything that happened? Like, did you do. Did you capture anything? I did my best.

31:30

Emma Smith

I wanted to journal and I did, and it kind of petered out, but kind of what took its place was that we would kind of record every day on Strava, the fitness app, and I started to kind of put photos in each day and put a more lengthy Description as to how the day went. And so that kind of became my journal. And then I was posting on social media as I went as often as possible, which would typically include a pretty detailed description of kind of what went on during those days. And so that kind of served as another journal. So have some photos and then kind of some information of how that went because there were some people who were following along and so that kind of helped a lot.

32:17

Emma Smith

And we did take a lot of photos and would stop and look at really beautiful places. And I also had a GoPro with me, sometimes I would be able to take videos while I biked. Though a lot of that content, I'm kind of waiting to develop it and hopefully maybe to make like a YouTube video so that people who want to do this can kind of have some more information and eyes on what the roads look like.

32:45

Amanda Gourgue

That's a really good point. Just as an educational moment that would be super helpful. I wonder if there's

other footage out there and you guys can collaborate and create. You know, I don't want to say do it yourself, but like informational how to's kind of to do this incredibly long ride. And with that said, I'm curious, did you get any like lessons, anything you would do differently or things that you learned along the way and I guess most importantly, would you do it again or would you recommend. Recommend people doing this ride?

33:19

Emma Smith

Yeah, I. I mean it was such a beautiful journey and mainly because of the people. Getting to meet the people along this journey were just invaluable. We were traveling in a way that people would come up and talk to us. Every time we stopped and would. Every gas station, grocery store were at, people would say who are you? What are you doing? And then tell us about their lives. And that was so special. And we also stayed with a lot of strangers because we were using the Warm Showers app and website, which is really wonderful. I highly suggest that tool for anyone who's going to travel on a bike. Very just life saving saved us in multiple situations and we met the most wonderful people. So I think really like there we experienced so much kindness and generosity on this journey.

34:16

Emma Smith

And I think I left that journey, finished it kind of with the idea that yeah like it restored my faith in humanity and I think telling people about it and being like this should restore your faith in humanity. All these people, when seeing us in this vulnerable state with either needing a place to stay or needing food or water or just being a little bit lost or whatever, just being in this vulnerable Traveling state, people treated us with the utmost kindness and it was just a very beautiful way to travel and meet people. And onto that, I did have a deadline because I have this work in the summer and that I started two weeks ago.

35:02

Emma Smith

And I wish that I didn't have a deadline and I wish that I could have spent more time and had flexibility to stay a little longer and stay a little longer in places and meet people longer and have people show us the cities and their favorite bike trails and do the touristy things and take our time a little bit more because we did do it a little fast and that's great and all. And the valuable part of the trip wasn't just like the biking, it was the meeting the people along the way. And yeah, like, I think I've lived in New Hampshire almost all my life and getting to bike along our beautiful 17 miles of coastline was just magical and a very different way to experience it. And that was just a very different way of viewing the world.

35:57

Emma Smith

And so, yeah, I would highly recommend this trip. I mean, there's many ways to do it. You can be on an electric bike, you could be on regular pedal bikes like us. You can do it alone, you can do it with other people, you could do a 20 mile section of it, or you can do the whole 3,000 miles like we did. And I definitely plan to do more bike trips in the future. I don't know if I'll do the East Coast Greenway again, but I would love to do the west coast of the US or go across the US or travel internationally. This type of travel is extremely valuable and very grateful for the journey.

36:35

Amanda Gourgue

Steven, you answered my last question. I was going to say, what is next? So I mean, is there. You must have a list of places and things you want to do. I mean, you keep talking about going cross country and is there something you're hoping to do next or, you know, like, do you have your bucket list? Like, is there a trail that you really want to do or somewhere you really want to see?

36:57

Emma Smith

Yeah, there's a lot of. There's a lot. New Zealand is another one that I'd really love to do and I have family in that area. And my life right now is pretty spontaneous and so I don't have what I want to do next, but maybe South America. I have friends that have been trying to get me to get down there and come visit them and bike around Ecuador and Peru and Patagonia, and that's definitely a step up from the lovely flats of Florida, but that might be what's next potentially. We'll see. Or.

37:35

Amanda Gourgue

Yeah.

37:35

Emma Smith

This stuff takes so much prep and I just know that I want to start prepping more and more saving because we did it pretty low budget, but it's nice to have a cushion, especially if you're traveling internationally. So right now it's working here until August. And then I plan to just kind of try to be a presence on social media to be able to kind of show what's going on in my life and my. The adventures and just. I don't know, I think anyone can. Anyone can do whatever adventures they want to do. I've been lucky to be taught by so many amazing, spectacular people, which has helped me learn how to do this and how to prep for this and how to push myself in these ways. And so I.

38:18

Emma Smith

If I'm lucky enough to inspire someone to do something like this, then I've already. Yeah, I've done all I have wanted to do.

38:25

Amanda Gourgue

Amazing. And you did mention, you know, you're on social media. Are you okay with people reaching out to you? What's your handles tell us how we can get in contact with you?

38:35

Emma Smith

Yeah, I definitely, if anyone reaches out to me, that's awesome. Very happy to receive any messages and happy to give any advice if someone is looking to do this route or any part of it. My Instagram is emmaquests. I'm also on Facebook and that is bookworm851. Yeah. And that's right now. That's kind of all for socials, I think. I think I'm also on TikTok, but it's not super developed yet. And that's Emmaquests as well. Very happy for messages and just to hear anyone else's journey as well. And any suggestions too. I mean, we kind of figured it out as went as to how to be safe and how to travel and when and what to carry and so definitely still learning. And I know there's a lot of experienced bike tours out there.

39:24

Amanda Gourgue

Definitely. Is there anything else that our listeners should know? Any tips, any tricks, anything you want to leave them with?

39:32

Emma Smith

I don't think so. I mean, if anything, I have a book recommendation that is by Robin Wall Kimmerer, who is an indigenous biologist and mother and she's an amazing writer. I took one of her books with me on this trip and not knowing how much it would kind of explain everything that was going on and be a beautiful way of expressing kind of my gratitude. It's a. It's called the Serviceberry, which is like a bush that also called Shad Bush. That is really in the New England region, mainly. Yeah, it's called the Serviceberry. It's a really small little book, but it's a lot about generosity and kindness and the gift economy. And I think we really experienced the gift economy on this trip.

40:16

Emma Smith

And anything that can involve you in that, whether it's being a part of a nonprofit or building a little book library or a food pantry or, you know, supporting your local cyclists or pedestrians or travelers or neighbors, is kind of being a part of that economy. Yeah, it's a really beautiful book and inspired me a lot. So. Yeah. Yeah, I think. I think that's all that is a lot.

40:44

Amanda Gourgue

You have shared a lot of. A lot of stuff that I'm like, now I'm inspired. Let's just say. What's my next thing? I hope others feel that way after listening to this. I just want to say, Emma, thank you so much for being here and talking to us about your journey and look forward to seeing following you on the socials and seeing what's next in your world. So thank you again for being here.

41:11

Emma Smith

Thank you so much for having me. It was lovely to chat.

41:15

Amanda Gourgue

Definitely. The Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire sponsors the Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire Pedal and Paces podcast. We hope that you are enjoying the podcast so far. As I mentioned at the beginning of this podcast, motivation is tying these two interviews together. Are you feeling motivated yet? Are you passionate about making New Hampshire a safer and more accessible place for walkers and bikers? Do you believe in fostering vibrant, healthy communities? Then the Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire needs you. We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help us champion active transportation across the Granite State. Whether you're a seasoned advocate or just looking to contribute your time and skills, there is a place for you on our team.

42:16

Amanda Gourgue

From assisting with community outreach events and education programs to helping with administrative tasks and fundraising, your efforts will directly impact our mission to create a more walkable and bikeable New Hampshire for everyone. Every hour you dedicate helps us pave the way for safer routes, stronger communities, and a healthier environment. Join the movement to learn more about volunteer opportunities and how you can get involved, visit bwanh.org today. That's bwanh.org make a difference, one step and one pedal at a time. Thank you all for joining us. This is the second segment of our second podcast and I want to thank Paul for joining us. This is Paul Citak from New Boston. Paul, tell us a little bit about yourself.

43:26

Paul Citak

Oh, thanks, Amanda. Thanks for having me. Well, I'm speaking today to the folks at the Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire. So with that, I can speak of my cycling background. I've been living in New Hampshire for better part of 50 years, almost since 1974. I was a teenager and had been riding the area around New Boston and Gosstown, Manchester for many years in various forms. I live here with my wife and my three children who are grown. We live in New Boston. I guess I've been an avid cyclist the entire time. Ever since I remember, I've had a bike, I guess in background sense a military background. I work in the telecommunications industry. I travel about New Hampshire and New England for my job.

44:20

Paul Citak

And I see a lot of beautiful roads that we have in New Hampshire and have been out in some of these areas.

And, and I just want to bring some attention to the rules and courtesies and respect for cyclists and motorists both sides with the talk today.

44:40

Amanda Gourgue

I love that. Awesome. So let's just. I feel like that was a cliffhanger. So let's talk about why you are here today. You did something pretty amazing. You got signage in New Boston. Tell us about the signage and why you wanted to do that.

44:59

Paul Citak

Several reasons, Amanda, that I thought the signs would be helpful. First of all, New Boston is a very rural community and it's got some beautiful scenic roads which are traveled by motorists, cyclists, motorcyclists, there's even horses that travel some of the dirt roads in here and around the town. And as I traveled around the state for my job, I've noticed in some of those other towns there were signs posted regarding, you know, the New Hampshire laws for motorists who give minimally three feet to pass the cyclists. And having ridden in and around my town and my community, there's been times where, you know, I feel that my safety was at stake with motorists that didn't give space, whether they knew they should or shouldn't.

45:54

Paul Citak

So I, you know, with these signs that I've seen around the state, I looked into trying to figure out how to get them placed in town. And our town has four state maintained roadways. So with that, I had to work with the town and state to work out a plan to get the signs in town.

46:17

Amanda Gourgue

Very cool. So was. So you said these signs already exist. You didn't have to design them, you just kind of had to order them.

46:25

Speaker 2

Right.

46:25

Amanda Gourgue

Like, tell us, go through the process of getting the approval, getting the signs set up. Like, how did that all happen?

46:33

Paul Citak

Well, the signs actually did exist. There were two, it was two different signs. That I had, that I had seen in the state. For example, in, I think I've seen some on the seacoast and in the Newport Clermont area. They're rather large signs that gave reference to minimum distances at certain speeds. For example, I think the law states it's 3ft at 30 miles an hour and an additional foot for each additional 10 miles an hour over that. But there were signs that had shown 30, 40, 50, 60 mile an hour, you know, with distances that were recommended. And come to find out that sign was not a sign that the state was using those were signs that towns had put up, those.

47:23

Paul Citak

So the signs that we needed to put up in our town on the state roads were just a sign saying 3ft minimum to pass a cyclist. So I had initially met with our town administrator who at the time was our police chief because were in between and I knew that he was also a cyclist. So I kind of thought that I might have had,

you know, some initial support for the signs and him being a cyclist and a police chief, you know, wanting, you know, everybody to be safe. So at that point he was on board with me working through the process. And I contacted the New Hampshire State. And I think there was a couple of different departments I had to kind of work my, navigate my way through to find the right person to talk to.

48:13

Paul Citak

And once I had made that contact, we all we really needed to do was work out, you know, the idea that the town would maintain the signs. I don't recall whether or not there was cost to the town for the signs itself, but between the chief of police and myself and the town road agent, we determined we would get 10 sign for entrance to the town from each of the state roads. It was, it was a simple process, but just took time because went through two other town administrators during that, I guess three year, three or four year period. So I didn't feel that I was wanted to pressure anybody too much to keep pushing a project when they had other things in town they were working on.

48:59

Paul Citak

But I just kind of kept checking in and eventually, you know, it's like the new town administrators like, oh, we have this, the signs are here, let's put them up and boom, they were done.

49:11

Amanda Gourgue

Oh my gosh, that's amazing. So that took a, a lot of persistence. It sounds like if it took three to four years of probably constant follow up, I mean, you got a new town administrator within that time frame.

49:24

Paul Citak

We're on our third, we're on our Third. Since then? Yes.

49:28

Amanda Gourgue

My goodness. Okay, so. And then you got 10 signs and that's great. And you don't remember, was it that the, you don't remember the cost of the signs or that was the cost of maintaining those signs?

49:43

Paul Citak

I'm not particularly sure of the, of those details. That was kind of, you know, the town agreed to do it, whatever. I think they had to pay for the signs, you know, and then they'll, they'll maintain them, you know, for the time that they're going to be up. So if they need to be replaced, they'll get a new sign. So.

50:03

Amanda Gourgue

Yeah, that's wonderful. So you didn't have to do any fundraising?

50:06

Paul Citak

No, I don't even think that it. A lot of the things in small towns, you know, have to go before committee and all sorts of stuff, but I, I don't believe there was any real issue. I think the town administrator was able to, you know, pull some money off a line item in the road department budget or something for put the signs in.

50:30

Amanda Gourgue

That's terrific.

50:32

Paul Citak

I kind of, I kind of walked away from that at that point. It wasn't really something I needed to stay on top of just asking them. Once they got approval it was great. Just wait. Good to see them.

50:43

Amanda Gourgue

So did the select board. I'm guessing New Boston is a select board. Did they have to approve the signs or was it just the OET approving it? Like do. How do you remember that process going?

50:55

Paul Citak

Yeah, to be honest with you, I think that they probably did. I can't say with great certainty that the select. I wasn't informed of any of the process other than the town needed to work with the state. And I say in the background it just magically happened.

51:16

Amanda Gourgue

I wish that's how it was with everything. I love that. So if you, what would you suggest if somebody else wanted to do this in their town and they say a small town, not necessarily a city like Manchester, but a smaller town, how would they go about doing this?

51:33

Paul Citak

Well, I'd certainly be, I still have all of the original emails from the contacts that I had with the state and I really just started right at the, you know, in our town administrator and I guess that would be a place to start is, you know, with any town that has that type of government.

51:53

Paul Citak

I guess we, most of the towns in New Hampshire do and just bring to the attention that the idea that the town has multi use roads and I think it helped me to express the concern being a cyclist and having lived Here in this town for as long as I have, and observing and activity in town with cyclists, maybe following conversations on social media where it seemed as though the public weren't really sure what the rules of the road are, you know, and not sure where to look for information. So having that information in my back pocket per se and talking town administrator, it seemed like a no brainer for the most part to put up a sign to help educate everybody. The New Hampshire State Department of Transportation has a department that handles roadway signs.

52:55

Paul Citak

I don't have the information handy, but I know I could provide it if anybody wanted to reach out either through your newsletter or, you know, another way. I mean, I'm certainly happy to provide information that I have.

53:08

Speaker 2

That's wonderful. Yes.

53:09

Amanda Gourgue

If anyone is interested, feel free to reach out to Bike Walk alliance and then we will get the question over to Paul. And as he mentioned in our last newsletter, Paul did write a great article talking about his process and

the signs themselves. So this is an addendum, I suppose, and it's just verbally telling your story versus it being on paper or on someone's computer screen. So appreciate you bringing your story to life. And so I guess my next question is, have you seen any positive, negative, anything that has to do with the science? Has anyone said anything? Have you seen any comments about them, like what happened after they got installed?

53:56

Paul Citak

That's a great question. And I think that I may not have noticed any feedback one way or the other, but I took the opportunity to thank the town administrator, the highway department, the folks at the state, you know, and I put a picture of the sign and I posted it on our town Facebook page. And I. And it wasn't like trying to pat myself on the back. I just wanted to thank them and also make people aware. That's a short paragraph just to say this is why they're there. And I think for the most part the feedback was positive. You know, I think people were understanding of the need to, you know, make our roadways safer.

54:44

Paul Citak

Not that they, not that I think that they were not safe, but the potential was there, you know, to at least give people the idea that the town is committed to making a safe community for, you know, cyclists and runners and horseback riders, because we have a lot of dirt roads in town. On the other hand, there were still, I think there was still a handful or so negative comments, which I find almost in any forum, whether it's in, you know, any state or in the United States, it seems that there's enough negativity. And I think it's that I feel as though that people just don't understand that everybody has a right to be on the road to some extent, but it does require respect with both cyclists and cyclists, pedestrians, walkers, runners, joggers, and motorists. It goes two ways.

55:55

Paul Citak

I mean, we, as a cyclist, I know we get tossed into a broad spectrum of bad behavior. If one does it, we all must do it mentality, and that's not the case. And I know many times I used to just get angry, and now I just try to educate as much as I can. That takes two seconds to be safe and courteous to. To give someone space to go around. You're not. It's not the end of the world. Wait 5, 10 seconds or so to get around somebody.

56:27

Amanda Gourgue

How do we get that on a sign? I mean, I know the DOT does, and, you know, it's important to push over and save a life, and their messaging is exactly what you're talking about. But it's not just for first responders. It's for anyone who's on the road. Right. We all want to get to our destination safely, so this has been. This has been great. Is there anything else that you want to share about your process or anything else that has to do with the signs?

56:56

Paul Citak

I think that overall, I just. I want people to feel that they don't have to get off the road and ride somewhere else that are. There's a lot of scenery on our open roads, and. And I want people to want to be out there. And I also want the motorists to understand that, you know, we have a right to be there and the words are easy enough to understand. Share the road.

57:28

Amanda Gourgue

Yeah, and that's a good. That's a good way of ending it there. It's important to share the road. I have seen one of your signs in person, and when I went by it, I actually thought of you and made a little.

57:42

Speaker 2

I don't want to say girly, squeaky.

57:43

Amanda Gourgue

Noise, but that's kind of how excited to see it. I was on so part of the New Hampshire, the tour to New Hampshire. We were at the Hillsborough Fairgrounds, and I had to be on River Road. As I came into New Boston, I saw one of your signs and I did think this is a lovely road, like, because it goes against. It's along that river. And I just thought this is a very appropriate place to put the sign because I could see both pedestrians and bikers and cars sharing the road, sharing that road in particular, and the fact that it's curvy and it's scenic. So when I saw it I thought this was very appropriate and it was nice to see it. So I know I can say just as kind of a fan of yours. Thank you very much for doing it.

58:32

Amanda Gourgue

I do like how it is, hopefully an educational piece for people. So maybe if they didn't know there was a three foot law, maybe your sign has helped somebody realize that. For I guess me and anyone else with Bike Walk Alliance, I just want to say thank you for doing that. It's a wonderful initiative and hopefully others will take from your example and do it in their own community.

58:55

Paul Citak

Thank you. I appreciate those kind words and again, I kind of felt the same way because I didn't know when they were going up and I happened to be driving back into town one day and went, hey, there's my side. So it was a nice feeling.

59:09

Amanda Gourgue

You know, I again, I appreciate, Paul, that you joined us. Thank you so very much for your initiative, your drive, your motivation and I appreciate you sharing your story with us today.

59:23

Paul Citak

Well, thank you. It's been a pleasure to talk with you.

59:35

Amanda Gourgue

We hope that you have enjoyed this episode. We want to thank you for listening. Please help us spread the word about the Bike Walk alliance of New Pedal and paces. If you've enjoyed our episodes, please consider sharing them with your friends, family and colleagues. A simple share on social media or a quick mention to someone you know can make a huge difference in helping us reach more listeners and continue creating content that you love. Also share your stories with us. We want to hear how petals and pieces have impacted you, what topics resonate the most, and even suggestions for future episodes. Your voice matters and your experiences enrich our community. Send us an email@infoanh.org or leave us a voicemail at 603-410-5848. We can't wait to hear from you. Thank you for being part of our growing community.