

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

**00:00**

Amanda Gourgue

Hi and welcome hi and welcome to the Bike Walk alliance of New Hampshire podcast Pedal and Paces, where biking and walking safety meet for fun chats. I'm your host, Amanda Gourgue and I'm also the Executive Director. Today we are happy to share our third 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 diving into the world of New Hampshire transportation with Gerry Bedard, the active transportation Engineer for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Gerry shares his unique journey into this role from civil engineer to teaching and even being a stay at home dad, all while embracing active commutes.

**01:00**

Amanda Gourgue

We'll explore the ins and outs of the New Hampshire dot, the exciting initiatives of the Complete streets policy, the state's pedestrian and bike plan, and how we all can contribute to more accessible communities. Get ready to rethink your commute and discover the future of active transportation in the Granite State. Enjoy the episode 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.

**02:04**

Amanda Gourgue

We work tirelessly to ensure roads and trails are safe for everyone. Community engagement. 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](http://bwanh.org) today. That is [bwanh.org](http://bwanh.org) thank you for helping us make a difference one step and one petal at a time. Today we are so excited to have Gerry Bedard join us. Gerry works with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and today will be all things transportation. So thank you Gerry for joining us. Can you tell everybody a little bit about yourself?

**03:23**

Gerry Bedard

Hi Amanda, thanks. Thanks for having me. So I'm the active transportation engineer for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and I guess I'll have to get into that a little bit more later, but I was born and raised in New Hampshire. I got my civil Engineering degree from Merrimack College. I worked for about 15 years for a private consulting engineering firm in Manchester. And then after my daughter was born and because my wife had a kind of a demanding job, I tried something different and taught high school for a couple years. And

then when my wife finished her professional training, we moved to Dallas for two years, at which point I became a stay at home dad living in Dallas, which was interesting.

#### **04:13**

Gerry Bedard

But even though we were in Dallas City, I can remember I had a trail bike and I used to bring my daughter to daycare on the trailer bike, which was kind of fun. We moved back to New Hampshire in 2001 and I have another child, a son, and when he entered middle school, I started looking around to go back to work and I ended up at the New Hampshire Department of Transportation in 2013. The funny thing is like within the first or second week of working at the Department of Transportation, because I was biking to work then. The then pedestrian and bike coordinator, and that was the name of the position back then, was Larry Keniston, and he invited me on like a seacoast bike ride with a group of bike advocates to review different things in that area.

#### **05:03**

Gerry Bedard

So I got to spend the workday biking from like Durham to Portsmouth and back. I thought, wow, what a great job. And although I really enjoyed highway design, my interest in active transportation continued to grow to the point where I actually applied for a lower position under then active transportation engineer, Nick Sanders. And soon after moving to the active transportation section, I call it a section, there was two of us at a time. Nick Sanders moved down to a new position in the Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance. And then I became the active transportation Engineer in early 2023. I always biked to work mostly in the summer, but in the last few years it's been more often. And just this past year, I included some winter biking. And if I couldn't bike, I would often walk to work.

#### **06:01**

Gerry Bedard

I've mentioned to you on other occasions that I listened to a lot of different podcasts, and until I started learning about other people who biked all year or do not have a car, I didn't even give it a thought about biking or walking to work in the winter. Like, who would do that? But once I learned about it, oh, I could do that. And I love my commute to work when I'm biking and walking, it's just a great part of the day. How many people can say that about their commute to work, you know?

#### **06:30**

Amanda Gourgue

Well, so let's pause there for a second. How far away do you live from work and what are your conditions? Like from your house to your office? Like what kind of roads or trails? Like, can you dive in a little bit more about your commute?

#### **06:44**

Gerry Bedard

Yeah, I'm pretty lucky, I guess. So I live, I live in Concord on what is the west side. I guess if you're familiar with Concord. It's next to the Concord High school and it's 2.6 miles away from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation office on Hazen Drive. So I would say maybe three quarters of that is I just cut through quiet neighborhoods. It's enjoyable. I see people I know, I say hello. And then I get one of the more major streets in Concord, Loudoun Road, and I have to go under Route 93, which traffic is so slow because of the traffic lights

there. A lot of people said I'll never do that, but I don't mind that too much. And the funny thing is there's no shoulders when I go under 93, the lanes are like very narrow. They're 10ft lane.

**07:38**

Gerry Bedard

So in those cases I have to take the lane, get in the middle of the road, and it hasn't been an issue. It's pretty easy to do there. But then as they continue on and go uphill up Loudoun Road towards where the Department of Transportation is, there's a stretch there that's the only bad stretch, I'd say, where even though there's like a four foot shoulder, the car is going up the hill. It's a multi lane section of the road, go very fast and it's just, it's a little, it's the least comfortable part of the commute, let's say. So, yeah, no, it's not bad. I, again, I've been doing it and if it's raining, I sometimes walk. So no, it's a fine commute, you know.

**08:19**

Amanda Gourgue

Yeah, you're very lucky. I don't know if a lot of people have that option and I know eventually we will in this podcast, talk about the week without driving. But first, before we dive into that, can you tell me and everybody else what is dot, Department of Transportation? What is it and what do y' all do?

**08:40**

Gerry Bedard

It's a big agency. So, you know, I work in this one small section. So I'll do my best to talk about the whole agency. But. So it's the state agency responsible for planning, developing and maintaining the state transportation network. Now, that network consists not just of highways, but also railroads, air service and airports, some of the smaller airports throughout the state. And it Also coordinates a lot of the transit that we have in different the larger cities really. There are five divisions for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. There's Policy and Administration, Aeronautics, Rail and Transit Finance, Division of Operations, which includes maintenance. And what probably most people think of when they think of maintenance is the winter plowing and that's in there. Also under operations is the Bureau of Traffic.

**09:34**

Gerry Bedard

And the Bureau of Traffic, among other things, handles all the highway signs, roadway signs, and they do the pavement markings on the state highways. Then there's the Division of Project Development, which I'm most familiar with because that's where I worked for like 10 years. This is where new and reconstructed projects come from. It includes bridge design, Bureau of Bridge Design, which is pretty obvious. That's kind of a safe thing. We want to go over a bridge that's not going to fall down. It has the Bureau of Right of Way, which determines where property lines are. And then they negotiate with the property owners if some of their land is needed for highway expansion or some of the, maybe some of the treatment measures. I say treatment water quality.

**10:24**

Gerry Bedard

When the water runs off the roadway, it's often has droppings and pollutants from cars, so that has to be treated. So sometimes we need to design a swale or a basin to more or less treat

that roadway run off. So that's what the Bureau of Right of Way does. And we have a Bureau of Environment and they make sure that the projects avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to the natural, cultural and social, economic resources. And they also help with the coordination of permits. I don't think you can't do much without hitting a wetland or impacting water quality. So they coordinate the permits. We have a Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance and they, among other things, they coordinate the development of the ten year transportation plan, which is on a two year cycle and currently in that cycle now.

### **11:23**

Gerry Bedard

So there'll be public hearings this coming fall to review the state transportation plan. And also down in that bureau is the Transportation Alternative Program. And that's Tom Jamison is the person who coordinates that program. And it kind of handles small community grants on a two year cycle specifically for active transportation projects. So sidewalks and bike paths and that type of thing. There's also the Bureau of Materials and Research and among other things, they have pavement design engineers. People don't think about the pavement as being a structure that needs to be designed, but it is. They use projected traffic volumes, including heavy trucks and what the underlying surface is, and they design the thickness of the different layers of the pavement. The sand, the gravel, crushed gravel, and the pavement itself. Also in that bureau is. I said it was Bureau of Materials and Research.

### **12:27**

Gerry Bedard

So I'm hoping to tap into the research wing of that bureau to help obtain some bike volume data using. I'm sure most of the listeners know, but STRAVA data. Not everyone uses Strava, so we're looking for a way to maybe make some adjustment factors to get an idea of how many people are out there biking based on how many STRAVA users there are. The other bureau is Bureau of Highway Design, which was my bureau. Basically, engineers are given a problem, typically a congestion problem or a safety problem, and are asked to solve it. Engineers come up with a layout, number of lanes, maybe a number of turning lanes, and make sure that layout can accommodate all the types of vehicles that can use the road. So that's the geometric design. And then I've already mentioned the drainage.

### **13:15**

Gerry Bedard

And it's not just getting the water off the road, but it might be treating that water and also making sure that it doesn't flood a property downstream of the roadway. We're always trying to minimize the impacts to abutting properties, environmental resources like wetlands. If there's a hazard, if there's an object in the road that if a car went off the road and hit, or if there's a steep embankment, then guardrail is needed. So we have some people whose specialty is just that, designing guardrail. And even the. The end sections of guardrail, the technology or the treatment is constantly changing. So they're always trying to keep up with that. And once the design is complete, the engineer has to more or less package it up with instructions for a construction contract to bid on and then to be able to build it.

### **14:01**

Gerry Bedard

And the last bureau in project development is the construction bureau. And they basically make sure the contractors follow the instructions that are in the design plans. And when

things come up, which they always do in construction projects, they can make changes on the fly to make sure something gets built correctly. I think that was everything.

**14:23**

Amanda Gourgue

I was like, I need a flowchart. You guys do a lot.

**14:28**

Gerry Bedard

Again, I'm sorry I didn't do it justice because, again, my familiarity is mostly with project development.

**14:33**

Amanda Gourgue

Okay, so out of all of that, what bureau is you, and what does an active transportation engineer do?

**14:42**

Gerry Bedard

Over the years, it's kind of moved around a little bit. Up until maybe a few weeks ago, the active transportation engineer. And I'll explain what it is, but it was in the Bureau of Highway Design and then under the safety section of the Bureau of Highway Design. But just recently the safety section of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation was moved out of Bureau of Highway Design and put as an office under the commissioner's bureau or office more or less to elevate the whole issue of safety within the dot, not just make it be associated with just highway design so it be spread more across the board for all the different bureaus. So that's where I currently reside, is under the Office of Safety, under the commissioner's office. So what is active transportation? Active transportation is human powered transportation.

**15:42**

Gerry Bedard

Typically we think of walking and biking, but it doesn't have to be. My wife occasionally, unfortunately, cross country skis to work in the winter. So I guess that's another form of active transportation. It's funny, I was considering last fall I had an opportunity to possibly move to Manchester near the Merrimack river. And I thought, oh, it'd be fun to one day maybe take a kayak up the river to the office. But it wouldn't have been much of a work day because it would have taken me all day just to do that. But I was thinking that would be fun to do at least once. But anyway, that kind of fell through. But basically, human powered transportation is what active transportation is.

**16:24**

Gerry Bedard

Well, my formal job description says that I do engineering and administrative work on non motorized and intermodal transportation projects, but there's few, there's very few such separate non motorized transportation projects. Therefore, I coordinate with all our projects to make sure that pedestrian and bicyclists are accommodated in small rural New Hampshire. Those accommodations often don't include a sidewalk or a bike lane. So instead we look for maybe narrower lanes, wider shoulders if we can get fewer lanes and slower speeds. The project coordination also includes traffic control during construction. Engineers have

sometimes talked about, oh, there's going to be a five mile detour. That might not mean a lot to the motorist, but to someone who's walking or biking, that could be a big problem.

**17:19**

Gerry Bedard

So, you know, when I hear those things, I raise those issues and we try to find a way to address them. I monitor pedestrian bicycle crashes as much as I can to learn what I can from those. I kind of serve as the subject matter expert for active transportation issues. So I spend a lot of time keeping up with the guides and the latest developments. I'm the liaison between the New Hampshire DOT and the different bike and walk advocates throughout the state. Also the person@the dot that the public reaches out to when they have a walking or biking issue or concern. I meet quarterly online with my active transportation counterparts in the other 50 state departments of transportation.

**18:03**

Gerry Bedard

I encourage and support participation in things like the Commute Smart Challenge, the Week Without Driving, Walk and Roll to School Days, Bike to School Days, Bike Month, Winter Bike to Work Day. I also familiarize myself with New Hampshire laws pertaining to biking and walking. I will talk more about this, but I'm the facilitator for the Complete Streets Advisory Committee here at the New Hampshire dot, and I, along with that committee, make sure that the state is following through on the pedestrian and bicycle plan. I guess I have to say, because everyone thinks this contrary to what most people think. My focus is not on recreation, for example, biking and walking along rail trails, but making it easier to get around by biking and walking on the roads that we already have.

**18:53**

Gerry Bedard

So I guess my focus is less on rail trails, but how to get to the rail trails, if that makes sense. And also I think I've already mentioned that the Transportation Alternative grants, that's handled through Tom Jamison in our Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance. So it's not. Even though active transportation is kind of in the title, it's not something that I work with. Tom handles most of that. Just some of the. Some of the current projects and activities that I'm currently focusing on. We have a consultant working for us now that's doing a study of the rail trail crossings throughout the state. Historically, you know, the railroads just put in their lines straight from there. But we love rail trails because they're nice and straight and flat.

**19:35**

Gerry Bedard

But, you know, they just put them wherever they needed to and they would cross roads oftentimes at some odd spots there. You wouldn't expect a railroad crossing there. So, you know, we're looking at all of the rail trail crossings of public roads and looking into the safety. Are there signs warning that there's a crossing coming? So that study should be done at the end of this year, and then we'll try to figure out a way to incorporate any of the suggested improvements in projects that might be coming through. For example, when we pave the state roads on a cycle, if we have such a project coming through, maybe that might be the time to add some of the safety measures that are recommended.

**20:18**

Gerry Bedard

There might be some projects that rise to the top, have a high priority, and we might try to fund those projects in a different way. Last week, I just finished a training with the updated AASHTO Bike Design Guide. AASHTO is the American association of State highway and Transportation Officials, and they developed a bike guide. I forgot what the last one was May 2012. But this update was just released. There was just a three part series of training on the new manual. So that came out. I mentioned the public reaches out to me and has comments. And so there's some things on my radar that one of them is the pedestrian crossings of multi lane roundabouts and the pedestrian hybrid beacons that exist at some of those roundabouts.

**21:05**

Gerry Bedard

We're looking to find a way to make those as safe or as safe as they can be. I'm always, like I said before, I'm always looking into crashes and see if there's something we can learn from the crash or make things better. Skewed railroad crossings When a bike has to cross a rail line, if it's perpendicular to the road, it's pretty easy. But when the tracks cross the road at angle, what happens sometimes is the wheel can get stuck in the gap between the rail and cause the bike to fall. So that's on my radar as well as multi lane roadways. Multi lane roadways are kind of problematic for a biker because you might have a four or five foot shoulder along that multi lane roadway. But cars treat it differently.

**21:51**

Gerry Bedard

They tend to go faster and they tend to move over for bicyclists less than they do, and this is a personal opinion, less than they do on a two lane roadway. So that's something I'm always looking into as well in my role as active transportation engineer. There's probably a lot of other things, but that's what I can come up with right now.

**22:11**

Amanda Gourgue

It keeps you busy. Definitely. Probably more than a 40 hour a week work week or at least it could be.

**22:17**

Gerry Bedard

Use a few more people. Yeah, it's just me.

**22:20**

Amanda Gourgue

I think your last example would be a great transition as we talk about two lane roads and shoulders and talking about complete streets because you did mention as part of your project list you have the complete streets Advisory Council. And so let's talk about what a complete street is and how the advisory committee came up. Let's talk about the history and what all of that is.

**22:47**

Gerry Bedard

So the complete streets are roadways that are designed and operated to prioritize the safety, comfort and access to destination for all road users, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users. And the emphasis there is on all road users. In early July of this

year, the New Hampshire DOT adopted a complete streets policy. Why do you even need that? So according to New Hampshire law, the New Hampshire DOT is charged with planning, developing and maintaining a state transportation network which provides for safe and convenient movement of people and goods throughout the state by means of a system of highways, railroads, air mass transit and other practicable modes of transportation. So this policy, it doesn't change what the law says we have to do, but what it does, it emphasizes the safety of all modes and all road users.

#### **23:44**

Gerry Bedard

I'd say historically highway engineers were given a problem to solve. The problem came from the public. That's what we do. The public presents a problem, usually to the legislator and gets in the 10 year plan and then it becomes a project and we have to solve the problem. And more often than not, that problem was a congestion problem. So engineers would find a solution to the congestion problem. And once they solved the congestion problem, they would then take that design and make it as safe as possible for the non motorized users.

#### **24:16**

Gerry Bedard

So what this policy does is kind of move that consideration of the safety and convenience of the non motorized user to the forefront so that you're not thinking of the safety of the pedestrian and non motorized bicyclists at the end of the project, but you're thinking of it sooner within the project development phase. Again, this is just recently adopted. Even though the policy is adopted, we're still, we have a working group with the DOT that's developing procedures on helping guide the implementation of the policy. But some of the key things in the policy are building a recognition amongst the department and the engineers that by choice or circumstance, not all road users have access to a motor vehicle. Basically looking to change the mindset of engineers and planners. Another big thing in the policy is the concept of target speeds.

#### **25:12**

Gerry Bedard

A target speed, it's been around for a few years, but not necessarily within the dot. But target speeds are the highest operating speeds at which vehicles should ideally operate on a roadway in a specific context. Roadways have always had a design speed and as engineers, we would want to make sure that motor vehicles could safely travel the road at that speed. If the design speed was, let's say, 30 miles an hour, and we could design a road flat and straight, we would have thought, oh, we've done a great job. Cars can definitely travel on that road safely at 30 miles an hour. However, because the road was flat and straight, cars might feel safe going 50 miles an hour.

#### **25:57**

Gerry Bedard

So with a target speed in place, engineers will be looking at to add elements in the design that discourage drivers from going faster than what that target speed is. And then we mentioned the Complete Streets Advisory Committee, which has been around for quite some time. The committee is made up of representatives from regional planning agencies, biking and walking advocacy groups, bike clubs, other state agencies, including the Department of Business and Economic Affairs, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and that's the department that houses the Bureau of Trails. And it's the Bureau of Trails that manages most of the rail



trails because they are recreational facilities. Also the Department of Environmental Services and the Department of Safety. That committee meets about every two months. The purpose of the committee, it's called Advisory Committee.

**26:50**

Gerry Bedard

So the purpose of the Complete Streets Advisory Committee is to advise the commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation on policies, programs and recommendations to support bicycling, walking and transit as safe, convenient, and economically and environmentally beneficial forms of transportation and recreation. And when I say advise the commissioner is the Department of Transportation as a whole. And that advice is generally through the. Through my section of the bicycle. When the committee was established, it was the bicycle and pedestrian staff, which is now the active transportation group. The committee is also envisioned as a way to serve. I would say this is a big function of the committee. It serves as a form for the exchange of the information, ideas and resources related to bicycling, walking, transit among the New Hampshire DOT and other state agencies, local and regional planning, planners and community organizations.

**27:47**

Gerry Bedard

For example, we have a couple activities coming up. There's a group called Community Smart New Hampshire, and they have a challenge coming up in October. It's the Community Smart challenge is finding ways to not drive yourself in a car by yourself. It's walking, biking, carpooling. And also there's something coming up called the Week Without Driving, which we hopefully we can touch upon later. The Complete Streets Advisory Committee does a lot to help promote activities like that. So I think that's it for Complete Streets.

**28:18**

Amanda Gourgue

Well, you talked about the question. Yeah, but the policy got approved in July. I know we're talking about hopes and dreams later, but kind of what do you hope for the policy? How are you going to get it out? How are people going to find out about it? If people want to find out about it, where do they go? Like.

**28:37**

Gerry Bedard

If you want to see the policy, the public can go to the website. And under either Active transportation or Complete Streets, the policy is there. So you're going to read through the policy. And there are a lot of communities in the state of New Hampshire that have their own policy as well. We don't have links to those community policies, but hopefully we will. So that's there in terms of hopes and dreams for the policy at some point, the website, we're hoping to have like a list of resources that towns can go to look at ways how to make their community have more complete streets and Like I said, we have a task force@the dot that's working on developing procedures, formal procedures, where the dot is coming more and more to a recognition that staff changes.

**29:33**

Gerry Bedard

And I think more so nowadays than it used to be. I suspect years ago, people might spend their whole career at the Department of Transportation, where now it's less so. So we're trying

to document things like procedures on how to follow the complete streets policy so that when people move on or move or retire or whatever, the policies don't die. So that's what we're working on. Some of the key things are going to be target speeds. And once we establish a target speed, like, okay, what kind of design elements will we put in a roadway to encourage people to drive that speed? Sometimes it's as simple as street lighting or benches. Because when someone drives down a road and sees, let's say, ornamental lights or a bench, it changes the context of the road.

**30:28**

Gerry Bedard

They're like, oh, wait a minute, this is like, this is a section of the road people might be walking or this is someone sitting on a bench. So it could be as simple as that. But again, we will be doing some work on developing other suggestions for how to obtain, how to encourage drivers to drive at a more appropriate speed.

**30:48**

Amanda Gourgue

The more good things to come. I mean, personally, I'm excited for complete street, but you already know that.

**30:54**

Gerry Bedard

One other thing, if anybody Googles complete streets, you often see images of, you know, some of the major cities, like 20 foot sidewalk in an urban area that's applicable to very few places here in New Hampshire. So we have the, you know, we have a bit of a challenge in terms of we have to make this fit for rural New Hampshire. So it's a little bit different. It's not. It's a good challenge. It's not a bad thing. But. But I just want to just throw that out there. It just, it's not frustrating. But, you know, the complete streets, Concord has a great, their main street, I'd say, is a complete street, but there's very few places that have that. We don't have very many big cities that could have that type of thing.

**31:38**

Amanda Gourgue

So, yeah, most things with New Hampshire. Right. We come with unique challenges. I feel like I say that a lot. I'm like, well, in New Hampshire do things differently. So that's just one more thing to, you know, add to the list. Even fleet streets isn't cut and dry. Something else that I know is not cut and dry, you have the New Hampshire pedestrian and bicycle plan, which is a beautiful Document. When we first met, you handed me a plan, and I'm still trying to read it. Can you talk more about that plan and maybe even how they interact with complete streets and, like, how does the plan get implemented? And you know more details about that?

**32:20**

Gerry Bedard

Sure, sure. So the latest edition of the New Hampshire Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan was completed in August of 2023, just about the time that I was becoming the active transportation engineer. So I was a little bit like the Rosie Ruiz. I think that was her name. The woman. I don't know if people are familiar, but the woman who jumped in the Boston Marathon for the last, like, half mile or whatever and won the race. That's how I feel. I had really no input in development of the plan, but I got the active transportation engineer when it got finalized, so I guess I got it across the finish line maybe. I think this is the fifth pedestrian

and bike plan that we've had. The first being. Someone might correct me, but I think it was 1977, was the first one.

### **33:08**

Gerry Bedard

There may have even been two plans. It may have been a walking plan and a biking plan, but it was around 1977. I'd say the plan acts more like a compass, just pointing a direction for the department to go in. There are some actions in the plan that have come to fruition. For example, there's a whole chapter in the PED bike plan about complete streets. And I think that was kind of the impetus for the department to develop a complete streets policy. So that's a very good thing that came out of the plan. I mentioned the Complete Streets Advisory Committee, and I, along with the Complete Streets Advisory Committee, kind of monitor the plan and the progress of the plan.

### **33:52**

Gerry Bedard

The plan includes some action items, and we have a group within that Complete Streets Advisory Committee that meets and, like, reviews the status of some of those actions that were supposed to be taken besides the complete streets. Another thing that is in the plan, talked a lot about in the plan, is bicycle level of traffic stress and the mapping associated with that roads. The idea behind this is roads are given a level, a stress level of between one and four, with one being the least stressful road and four being the most stressful. We did develop some maps, and we had some data to kind of give a good level of stress for some roads. And I stressed some roads, but the data was lacking on many roads. So the maps were very disjointed.

### **34:45**

Gerry Bedard

I mean, if you looked at a map, it might have level of stress three, and then nothing for miles. So it wasn't very useful. So we found a way to get some funding so that when the state goes out and gathers data on roads, we are now going to collect additional data, specifically shoulder width, which was lacking. And hopefully in early next year we will have bicycle level of traffic stress maps available online. So that should help people, give them an idea of what roads are more comfortable to bike on. Because, you know, in New Hampshire, unless it's specifically prohibited, like on interstate highways, I mean, every road is a bike road. You can bike on any road.

### **35:35**

Gerry Bedard

So this will give a guide as especially I sometimes get calls from people from out of state saying, hey, I'm traveling to New Hampshire and I'd like to go from here to there. Can you recommend some routes? So this would be a resource that we could point to. Then another thing from the PED bike plan, which I know Bike Walk alliance is interested in, is reducing speeds and target speeds. I mentioned it's a big element of the complete streets policy, but it was also mentioned in the 2023 Pedestrian and Bicycle plan, so as one of the big safety goals. So that's the plan again, I have a copy. It doesn't look very good because it's full of tabs and markups, but I keep it at my desk. I have it here.

### **36:19**

Gerry Bedard

So again, it's kind of a guide and a compass and gives direction to the active me, the active transportation engineer and the people that come after me.

**36:28**

Amanda Gourgue

Well, I also refer to it sits on my desk as well. I find it to be a great guide as well, even though I'm not in it day to day like you. But thank you for that. I know before we talk about hopes and dreams and start to wrap up the podcast, I do want touch base on a things that you talked about. A couple of programs that are coming up that I'd love to get the word out about. The Week Without Driving would be obviously a good one to talk about. Can you elaborate on the events that are coming up that you want to talk about?

**37:02**

Gerry Bedard

So the week Without Driving, which when I first heard that, boy, that scared me. Like, I can't do a week without driving. So just right off the top, it doesn't mean you can't drive for a whole week. It'd be great if you could, but it's really, it's an awareness week. It was really originally geared for leaders like elected officials and like transportation leaders to bring awareness to those who can't drive. And the goal is to create more accessible communities for everyone, not just people in a car. It started in Washington State, and it went national because of the partnership with America Walks just, I think a couple of years ago, this will be our New Hampshire. I should know the second or third year participating. And again, we just encourage people to sign up.

**37:55**

Gerry Bedard

Even if you know you can't not drive your car, some of the best reflections come from someone participating in the challenge who has to drive because it makes you think, well, wait a minute. Why do I have to drive my car? What would it mean if I couldn't drive my car? Would I have to move? And if I had to move, is there an affordable place for me to move? So it creates better leaders and better citizens when they have more empathy for those who can't drive. And by the way, there's a stat in the. In the promoter of the event that says one third of people in the US Cannot drive due to age, ability, financial constraints, or other barriers. And sometimes that might just be temporary as well.

**38:40**

Gerry Bedard

Someone has an injury and you can't drive, it might just be for a few weeks. You might have a broken leg. So there's a lot of reasons why people might not be able to drive. And sometimes it's temporary, and you shouldn't have to lose your job. It'd be nice if you could still get around without using a car. So, again, it's just an awareness, is to bring awareness to the public that not everyone drives a car.

**39:06**

Amanda Gourgue

So true.

**39:07**

Gerry Bedard

Actually, by the way, I didn't say so. It starts. It starts September 29th and goes through

October 5th. And you can sign up @ [weekwithoutdriving.org](http://weekwithoutdriving.org) website. And once people sign up, because I'm kind of the state coordinator, America Walks will send me a list, and hopefully I can reach out to the. To the participants if they want it. At the end of the challenge, if they want to share some of their insights, hopefully I'll get some of those and we can kind of share that. But you don't have to. Even if you participate and just get something out of it on your own personal level, that's great, too. But if you can share, that'd be great as well.

**39:46**

Amanda Gourgue

You write my mind. Yeah, I was just gonna ask. I was like, how do people get involved? So that's wonderful. I love that. I actually just was chatting with somebody last week who broke her right leg, and her doctors told her she couldn't be driving until, I think was like, October 15th or something. And she was like, yeah, that's not happening. I appreciate you saying, even if it's temporary, you know, to look at your surroundings, And I will say the area I live in is not pedestrian friendly. So I appreciate this week for the awareness. So thank you for doing that. I guess with that, I mean, talking about my hopes and dreams, I would love to live in a very friendly pedestrian location. And I know you want more help, more staff help, those two things.

**40:32**

Amanda Gourgue

What are the other things that you are hoping for your job and moving forward and all the things you would like to have done or see with active transportation in New Hampshire?

**40:43**

Gerry Bedard

Oh, boy. So one of the easiest things is I would love to see more kids walking and biking to school, because first of all, you know, they don't drive. And I grew up just outside of Manchester in a small section of Gofftown called Pennardville. And I kind of had forgotten. Like, wait a minute, my mother didn't drive a car, and my father would leave to work early. So I used to bike or walk to school every day. And it was like three quarters of a mile, I think it was. It wasn't too long, but still, my whole elementary school, that's what I was doing. I had to actually reach out to my brother and say, is that what we did? Because it was such. It was. It wasn't a thing. It was just part of life. Like, that's what you did.

**41:30**

Gerry Bedard

That's what everyone did. And the park and the boys club, it was all the same distance, about three quarters of a mile away. So I would love to see it where you don't even think about it. That's just what we do. That would be a big goal. And not just kids. I would love to see everyone commuting bike. Not everyone. At least more people. Right now, I think the stat listed in the pet bike plan is about 3% of New Hampshire workers commute to work by walking or biking, which isn't very much. So I'd love to see that get higher. And I realize not everyone lives close enough to their work like I do. I only 2.46 miles away. Most people live much further. So for them, walking or biking is not an option.

**42:14**

Gerry Bedard

However, in their home community, you know, maybe going to the local grocery store, the

corner store, or a pharmacy or whatever is an option. So I'd like to see more of that. And that helps the local communities, too. And if the little local store is just a mile away, but the big chain grocery store is six miles away, you know, maybe they support the local store more, just like everybody. I love to see more separated bike facilities, but that's not going to happen quick enough. Therefore, I'd love to see less fearful bike riders. I know Bike Walk alliance and League of American Bicyclists work on this in terms of educating and training in our pedestrian bicycle plan as well as in the. I mentioned the AASHTO American association of State highway and Transportation Officials bike guide.

**43:03**

Gerry Bedard

They mentioned the different types of bicyclists in the US and the majority of US population does not bike. Or if they do bike, they only bike on trails and they're too fearful to bike on roads. I think the stat is only 15% of the population are comfortable biking on roads. So since we're going to be stuck with diking on roads for quite some time, one of my hopes and dreams is to kind of get people more comfortable with biking on roads. And as Department of Transportation, you know, it's our job to make those roads more comfortable for biking and walking so people aren't so fearful. My ultimate goal. A few years ago the BBC did a story on olo. It's. I'm not pronouncing that correctly, olo, Finland. I think the title of the story was the City that Bikes all Winter.

**43:58**

Gerry Bedard

And it's a short two minute story if anybody wants to Google that. But through that story I learned that they have an elementary school that has 1200 students and 1000 of them would walk to bike to school in the winter. And that's Finland. That's in the winter and that's further north than most of the Canadian provinces. I don't know, the sun might come up at 10 and go down at 2. And I couldn't believe it. The school was surrounded by bicycles in the snow. One of the people they interview mentions, you know, that he says something like, we're just wimps like everybody, everyone thinks we're all these hardy people. He goes, we're just wimps like everybody else, but they have better infrastructure and maintenance. So that's my dream situation is to have a community like they have in olo, Finland.

**44:47**

Amanda Gourgue

So that does sound lovely gap. I think that's more issues like zoning that you'd have to get involved with, right?

**44:58**

Gerry Bedard

Well, it's like I said, it's not that would be ideal, but I realize it's not going to happen fast. But if we don't do any movement, obviously it will never happen. You have to take some steps in that direction. I guess so.

**45:11**

Amanda Gourgue

Oh, I'm with you on that one. Like I live less than a mile from my elementary school and I know nobody walks to it. And so that's heartbreaking. And I'm with you.

**45:22**

Gerry Bedard

And I understand it. I mean, it always bothers me when a school district builds a school in the middle of nowhere, but I understand it. I mean, there's a cost associated with that if they have to go where they have the land. And so it's understandable to some extent. But, you know, just throw it. Maybe that it's the cheapest way place to build a school. But in the long run, this is the best thing for the community. But I understand it's not an easy thing for people to do, the people that are responsible for those type of things.

**45:52**

Amanda Gourgue

So I have so many more questions, but we, I think, have exhausted this topic for today. In my head, I keep thinking you're gonna have to come back for a part two, because I have other questions I want to ask. Is there anything else that you want to say or add or share to the group before we.

**46:13**

Gerry Bedard

Yeah, I guess there is. I just. Again, I commute to work every. Almost every day by bike. I go to the grocery store by bike. And unfortunately, I live in the city of Concord, so I don't have to go very far. But I would say that 90%, if not more than 90%, 95% of the drivers I encounter I have no issue with at all. So as all of us, when we're out there and I try to give a little wave or a thank you when I'm biking by, sometimes I'll go through a situation where I know I have the right of way, I'm the one who got here first, or I have the right of way, I'll still give a little wave and thank you to the driver because we all have to share the road together.

**47:01**

Gerry Bedard

So I think that can go a long way if we all kind of get along. And this one other issue is, I know we're not supposed to blame the bikers. However, we're stuck with the drivers that we have. So I'm big on visibility. I just went to the seacoast yesterday and it was a group of people riding, and I could see the person who had this yellow jacket on. But the group included someone that didn't have a yellow jacket, and they were kind of lost in the background. So I want it safe for everybody out there, and I want to encourage people. And you're less of a surprise if you're visible. You're not a surprise to the driver. And they don't get shocked and get mad at the bicyclist as much. So hopefully people all ride safe out there.

**47:46**

Gerry Bedard

We didn't even talk about E Bikes. So that's a whole other issue we can talk about sometime, too.

**47:51**

Amanda Gourgue

That's a great idea. We should have a whole special in just E Bikes.

**47:56**

Gerry Bedard

I'm not on E bike yet, by the way. It's coming down in the future, but not yet. I'm still just on my regular bike.

**48:03**

Amanda Gourgue

They do have their purposes.

**48:05**

Gerry Bedard

Yes, definitely.

**48:07**

Amanda Gourgue

Awesome. Well, thank you, Gerry for joining us. If anyone should want to get a hold of Gerry, feel free to shoot us an email and we can connect with him because there's a lot of. Unless, Gerry, you want to give how to reach out to you, I don't want to publicize your email address.

**48:24**

Gerry Bedard

You can go to the New Hampshire DOT webpage and under programs there's active transportation and you'll find my contact information there, as well as a lot of the stuff we talked about, the pedestrian bicycle plan. You'll have a link to that complete streets policy, some information about csac. So it's all on the New Hampshire DOT website under programs.

**48:48**

Amanda Gourgue

Fantastic. And with that, I want to say thank you for joining us and we'll do a part two. I appreciate you being here.

**48:57**

Gerry Bedard

All right, great. Thanks, Amanda. This is fun.

**48:59**

Amanda Gourgue

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**50:08**

Amanda Gourgue

Every hour you dedicate helps us pave the way for safer routes to stronger communities and a healthier environment. Join the movement to learn more about volunteer opportunities and



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**51:15**

Amanda Gourgue

Send us an email@[infowanh.org](mailto:infowanh.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.

**51:32**

Gerry Bedard

48 right around 30 Western warriors is the.