

Senate Transportation Committee

Kat Bourque 271-3091

SB 243-FN-A, relative to complete streets policies, establishing a complete streets pilot program, and making an appropriation therefor.

Hearing Date: February 14, 2017

Time Opened: 2:11 p.m.

Time Closed: 3:07 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Birdsell, Gannon, Ward, Watters and McGilvray

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill requires the commissioner of the department of transportation to assist municipalities to implement complete streets projects. This bill also establishes a pilot program in the department of transportation for facilitating matching grants to municipalities for complete streets projects and makes an appropriation for the pilot program

Sponsors :

Sen. Feltes

Sen. Birdsell

Rep. Higgins

Who supports the bill: Senator Feltes, Senator Birdsell, Mike Rollo (American Cancer Society), Chris Rueggeberg (NH Council on Developmental Disabilities), Ryan Donnelly (Granite State Independent Living), Dawn McKinney (NH Legal Assistance), Doug McNutt (AARP), Rebecca Harris (Transport NH), Robert Mulligan (AARP), Nate Miller (SNHPC), Gary Milbury (NH DES), Tim Blagden (Bike Walk Alliance NH), Charles Cautley (Bike Walk Alliance NH), Selma Harrison (AARP), Jean Lynch (AARP), Nancy Vaughan (AHA), Scott Bogle (Rockingham Planning Commission), Will Stewart (Greater Derry Londonderry Chamber), JJ Smith (NH Public Health Association)

Who opposes the bill: No one

Who is neutral on the bill: Bill Cass (DOT)

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Feltes

Prime Sponsor

- This bill requires the Commissioner of DOT to assist municipalities to implement complete streets projects.
- This bill also establishes a pilot program in DOT for facilitating matching grants to municipalities for complete streets projects and makes an appropriation for the pilot program.
- Senator Birdsell's bill last session formed a study committee to study complete

streets in the state -- those that are walkable, bikeable and promote public health, safety, economic benefits and can link up with tourism in the state.

- Senator Feltes explained that this bill is a result of the work of the study committee.
- This bill prioritizes applications by municipalities for the implementation of complete streets programs.
- The bill also gives a brief definition of complete streets and shows, on line 10-16, that DOT would be required to do a number of things to establish the program.
- The legislature, upon the completion of a pilot program, can decide whether or not they would like to move forward with a more concrete program.
- Senator Watters asked if these projects would or would not be eligible for federal funding since they would be held to different criteria. Senator Feltes stated that they would not.
- Senator Birdsell asked Senator Feltes if he recalled that federal money for these programs runs out quickly and that a pilot program at the state level would be helpful. Senator Feltes confirmed that the demand for this type of funding far outweighed the available funding that we get as a state.
- Senator Ward explained that she is familiar with complete streets program in the Southwest Regional Planning Commission. She asked if there were others who were taking part in this as well. Senator Feltes stated that yes, many regional planning commissions are working hard on this issue and are interested.
- Senator Ward asked where this pilot program is planned for. Senator Feltes stated that each municipality would have the ability to apply for it and that there is no geographic targeting within this bill.

Ryan Donnelly

Granite State Independent Living (GSIL)

- GSIL is in support of this legislation.
- Complete Streets programs are an exciting opportunity for all, especially those with disabilities.
- Several municipalities have adopted Complete Street programs to great success, including in Concord.
- As someone who uses a power wheelchair, Mr. Donnelly explained that he has had poor experiences with too little space in sidewalks, no curb cuts, or no sidewalks at all.
- GSIL would love to see an expansion of Complete Streets across the state and this bill is a great step towards that.

Doug McNutt

AARP

- AARP is in support of the legislation as a part of their livable communities work.
- By 2025, nearly 1 in 5 Americans will be over the age of 65. Complete Streets policies helps individuals stay in their communities and in their homes.

Rebecca Harris

Transport New Hampshire

- Ms. Harris stated that she would follow up with the committee to send information regarding Complete Streets in a seminar that took place last fall.
- Making our downtowns more livable and walking helps to increase sales, boost property values, attract tourists, make seniors independent and make it easier to stay healthy by getting more exercise.
- Together, the elements in this bill will help communities partner with DOT to determine which Complete Streets strategies will help them reach their specific goals.
- 45 towns submitted applications to DOT for funding through the federal Transportation Alternatives Program. \$26 million was submitted for request but only around \$6 million was rewarded.
- Dover's approach has increased property values in their area and created a desirable downtown area.
- Keene's adoption of a Complete Street policy in 2016 was quickly followed by surrounding towns.
- Ms. Harris added that areas where roads don't seem to have room for Complete Street policies, there is not always improvement necessary since they do not get a lot of bicycle traffic.

Nate Miller

Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

- SNHPC serves 14 municipalities in the greater Manchester area.
- They have seen great interest in Complete Streets policies throughout the region. This is not an issue of urban areas, since rural areas also express significant interest.
- Interest across the state has increased since many realize that this is a good economic decision.
- There are three large factors that hinder communities in implementing these policies: 1) minimum state guidance exists, 2) other projects trump complete street programs in competing for Ten Year Plan funding, and 3) federal funding is the only funding available for these programs.

Tim Blagden

New Hampshire Bike Walk Alliance

- NHBWA supports this legislation, which follows the bipartisan recommendations of the study committee from the last legislative session.
- Complete Streets policies are a cost effective way to improve the economy, public health, and attract and maintain citizens.
- The one year pilot project proposed by this legislation is the best way to establish how we can fund the demands that are clearly desired by towns.

Nancy Vaughan
American Heart Association

- The American Heart Association is in support of this legislation and echoed the testimony of others.
- She stressed the health benefits behind Complete Streets and submitted written testimony.

Scott Bogle
Rockingham Planning Commission

- Mr. Bogle submitted written testimony on behalf of the Rockingham Planning Commission's Director, Cliff Sinnott.
- The Rockingham Planning Commission is in support of the legislation and was active at the Complete Streets study committee.
- Rockingham Planning Commission's interest in this concept comes from extensive community input as part of a recent update to their Regional Master Plan.
- The federal funding available through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is cumbersome in its federal oversight requirements.
- Updating the state's minimum geometric guidelines for local roads and streets is wise and overdue.

Will Stewart
Greater Derry-Londonderry Chamber of Commerce

- Mr. Stewart echoed previous support of the bill and noted that the Chamber supports this bill especially for economic reasons.
- Senator Ward asked what happens with the major highways that go right through communities. Mr. Stewart explained that although he is not an engineer, there are often tunnels or over-the-road pedestrian and bicycle bridges. Complete Street programs are about making the streets themselves safer. This could include wider shoulders, bike lanes, etc.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition : N/A

Neutral Information Presented:

Commissioner Bill Cass
Department of Transportation

- Commissioner Cass explained that DOT has always tried, whenever they do a project, to gain and understand the perspective of the community.
- With that said, they have taken some efforts to enhance bike and pedestrian benefits, reviewing highway design manual and standards to better accommodate input with regards to Complete Streets policies, and more.

- There are many more needs than there are resources to address.
- As much guidance in the bill as can be provided is extremely helpful to the DOT. Whatever the intended matching rates are for this bill would be helpful to learn about beforehand.
- Senator Birdsell asked if he had heard anything about TAP oversight being eliminated so that the state could decide what it is used for. Commissioner Cass stated that he has not heard about this.
- Senator Watters asked about lines 13-16 of the bill and whether or not these are things that the DOT could do. Commissioner Cass stated that the Bureau of Rail and Transit has recently released a guidebook advocating for more bicycle and pedestrian projects or amenities. DOT could review this guidebook and broaden it. Senator Watters asked if this is something that DOT will do regardless of if this bill passes. He stated that it is likely. Additionally, creating new guidelines under c) of this section is something that the Department is also looking into.
- Senator Watters expressed concern about the issue of funding. Referencing the scoring and priority system in competing with other projects, what level of priority is there for Complete Streets programs in relation to other DOT needs? Commissioner Cass stated that he would have to look at this across the board not only for municipal project applications but how they rate other projects coming forward.
- Senator Ward stated that she knows of a community where land would need to be taken from property owners in order to build bike paths or the like. She asked how this would work. Commissioner Cass stated that every project is unique in terms of specific impacts. Having community involvement is incredibly important.

Future Action: Ought to Pass with Amendment