

**Town of Greensboro**  
**Breezy Ave. Bike/Ped Scoping Study**  
**Project kick-off meeting – 1/26/26**

**Present:** Evan Haugh (VHB), Dede Stabler, BJ Gray, Josh Karp, Cilla Smith, Ricky Albores, Rachel Schiffer, Anna Weisenfeld, Bob Youngman, Nancy Sullivan, Alain McMurtrie, Melissa Moffatt, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer

**INTRODUCTIONS**

**Evan Haugh.** I work with VHB on road and sidewalk design, and scoping studies. The purpose of Greensboro’s scoping study is to rule out what is not feasible, explore a few project alternatives that are feasible, and develop cost estimates. This will prepare the town to apply for a future construction grant.

**BJ Gray.** I am president of the Greensboro Historical Society, our building is right above Willey’s Store on Breezy Ave.

**Dede Stabler.** I live across from the historical society. The existing sidewalk starts just below my house at the Miller’s Thumb. This past year Breezy Ave. residents got together and cleaned up the sidewalk and made them more walkable. I am looking forward to future sidewalk improvements!

**Ricky Albores.** Lives on Blockhouse Hill Rd. off Lakeshore Rd. I’m a cyclist and have done bike advocacy in the DC area. My main purpose for being in this group is to advise on bike-related issues, but I’m a walker as well.

**Cilla Smith.** I would like to be able to walk down the sidewalk to Willey’s, but the existing sidewalk is uneven and dangerous to walk on, especially in springtime when it gets muddy and slippery.

**Rachel Schiffer.** I am the executive and artistic director of Circus Smirkus. Our camp is at the top of Breezy Ave. Staff and campers frequently travel on Breezy Ave. between the camp and Willey’s Store during the summer. We also use the town ballfield and the Highland Center, and must travel the very short distance in vans due to safety issues. It would be great for us to be able to safely walk up to the four corners! We’re excited about this project, thank you for including me.

**Anna Weisenfeld.** I own the Miller’s Thumb Gallery, right across from Willey’s. I see community members and customers trying to safely navigate the downtown crosswalk. Excited about this project.

**Bob Youngman.** New full-time resident on Lakeshore Rd. We are avid cyclists, runners, skiers. The precariousness of the route from downtown Greensboro up to the four corners has concerned us from day one, there is a lot of opportunity for improvement. I have a background in this area, I served on a city council when we lived out West and worked to install many miles of bike/pedestrian lanes.

**Josh Karp.** I am the town's municipal project manager for this scoping study, doing the behind-the-scenes grant administration. I know many of you have been working on Breezy Ave. issues for years, I'm newly involved with this process and I have a lot to catch up on.

**Nancy Sullivan.** I've lived on Breezy Ave. in our current house for 40 years. I was a kid on Breezy in the 50s and it was basically the same sidewalk. 5-8 years ago, selectboard member Sean Thompson organized a sidewalk improvement project and the town paid for it...but the town never maintained the sidewalk and the grass grew right back in. So even if a project goes through, an essential component is that there are funds in the town budget to maintain this new infrastructure.

**Alain McMurtrie.** We moved up full time in 2015. 50, 60, 70 years of heaving has taken a toll on the Breezy Ave. sidewalks. Last year I saw the grass growing over the sidewalk and took my trusty edger to it, and couldn't stop, eventually some neighbors helped out. Where I came from (Newton, Mass.), sidewalk maintenance was a shared responsibility, we all took care of the sidewalk in front of our houses.

**Melissa Moffatt.** We live at the top of Breezy Ave. across from Smirkus. Our property may be the most impacted by a new bike/ped. path. The O'Briens were generous to let us mow the field path to extend the sidewalk for our legally-blind daughter to use.

## **DISCUSSION**

Rachel: we at Smirkus hugely appreciate that mown field path. Alain agreed.

BJ Gray: we have a new sidewalk on East St./Cemetery Ridge. It is well cleared in winter by the town, it's beautifully built and raised off the road, sheds water well, has a durable granite curb.

Evan: about our steps, schedule, what to expect. We need pictures, this helps our historical and natural resources people complete their assessments. This includes photos of what is currently NOT working on Breezy Ave.

We begin by documenting existing conditions, assess the current condition of the road, determine how far the town's ROW extends. We've also been asked to look at intersections at either end of the study area.

VTrans requires that a public meeting be held before any alternatives are brought forward. This is called the “local concerns meeting” and is a very important step, we want good attendance! The record of this meeting, all the comments, is what we stand on to express what the town wants and why.

After this meeting we’ll develop three alternatives, one being “do nothing”. These alternatives will be presented at another public meeting.

There is a final public meeting at the very end of the scoping study process.

A VTrans representative may attend some of these meetings, but because Breezy Ave. is not a state road they won’t scrutinize the project as closely.

It can feel like a drawn-out process, but the devil is often in the details. One of my roles is to pay close attention to the practicality of each option.

Alain: is there a recent project you’ve been involved with that we can discuss?

Evan: we did a sidewalk study for Richford of similar length. In that case there was a different alternative on each side of the street. On one side, powerlines were an issue and a slope would have to be flattened; on the other side, more driveways would be involved. So, they had to decide which side of the street was ultimately the best location, given all the factors.

Ricky: does the “do nothing” alternative literally mean doing nothing, or could it involve a minimum of work to make current sidewalks into ADA compliance?

Evan: It’s literally doing nothing, I’ve never seen a town pick the do-nothing option. Sometimes there’s a ‘minimum-improvements’ alternative instead. Generally speaking, if people advocated for a scoping study it means there’s a real will to see an actual project through. This is true even if the costs are high, it just might take some time to get the funds.

Alain: what tends to be the big sticking points?

Evan: right of way can be a problem. If you can avoid it, we advise towns not to take right of way for a sidewalk, even if they could, this can add years to a project. Another thing that can add years is someone who is uneasy about the proposal and won’t agree to an easement ahead of time.

Nancy: Evan, are you aware of the Local Motion study and the alternatives they came up with?

And Josh, did it come up at a Selectboard meeting that Breezy Ave. sidewalks may not go forward until the road is fixed?

Josh: yes, the storm drains up and down Breezy Ave. are at least 50 years old and in extreme disrepair. If we’re adding new infrastructure adjacent to the road, it’s very likely that the storm drains should be addressed first, I believe Evan will want to map out all utilities including these.

Despite the current condition of these storm drains, we can still agree as a town what kind of bike/ped. infrastructure we want to build. I believe we can plan out the road improvements and sidewalk improvements in parallel.

Nancy: the whole road was rebuilt in about 1985, 4-5 feet down.

Evan: a thirty- year lifespan is typical, and it's been at least 40...Breezy Ave. may be due for a full- depth reconstruction.

Josh: Evan, it can't be that unusual for towns to want to repair existing infrastructure before laying down new bike/ped infrastructure? Do you see these different project elements being combined into one large project?

Evan: if the town is going to do a major road reconstruction project, that is the time to do the sidewalk, it's easier to do both together.

Just extending the culverts or repairing/lining them tends to be expensive and just buys you some time, they'll have to be ripped out eventually. Depending on the site, sometimes we can put in a ditch between the road and sidewalk, or even move the sidewalk away from the road so it's not at the edges of the culverts. We'll have to really pay attention to where these culverts are.

Josh: on the right side where the mown path is, the land really slopes down away from the road. If we end up reconstructing the road, we could potentially widen the road in these areas, and extend the shoulder with a new sidewalk in mind. Doing both projects at once could be an opportunity.

Evan: there is money out there for sidewalks, but those funds won't help you reconstruct Breezy Ave.

Bob: I would hope that a large part of the scoping study is dealing with the issues down at the town center, the intersection of Breezy Ave./East St./ Wilson St. This a dangerous area, especially during the busy summer season. Due to the placement of the buildings, improving bike/ped. safety there seems like a difficult problem to solve.

Evan: yes, this is true. I haven't yet thought through what solutions there could be, perhaps at a minimum we're looking at reducing the crossing distances for pedestrians. I wonder why this isn't an all-way stop? It doesn't seem that there is so much traffic that it would back up a mile...

Nancy: oh, it would in the summer.

Evan: good to know!

Nancy: car speeds have increased on Breezy Ave. so much over the years.

Discussion of car accidents in Breezy over the last few years, including a fatality above Melissa's house.

Josh: by the time people reach Melissa's house, they are really flying as they head out of town. If we're talking about crossing from the lake side to the Smirkus side at some point, getting from one side of Breezy Ave. to another could be a real safety issue with these speeds. Evan, I imagine that part of this process is figuring out how to deal with vehicle speeds in places where people are used to driving fast.

Alain. I've seen a trend of drivers not stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks. You almost have to have those berms to control the speed.

Nancy: HPD used to patrol on different parts of Breezy Ave., not just up at the fire house.

Dede: the corner by Miller's Thumb is blind spot, you have trucks moving by who can't see you, we're lucky there's been no serious incidents. We should address the speeds of trucks and traffic coming from Craftsbury Rd.

Nancy: ...we need to address speeding vehicles coming from both ways.

Josh: Naomi had hoped that all three intersections would be addressed. We haven't talked yet about the four corners intersection. Given all the Highland Center activities, people who park at the head of Lake Rd., people flying into town from Hardwick...regardless of where a sidewalk would go, we need to consider how that intersection could be made safer. We have three intersections to look at but we only have so much funding in this scoping study for that.

Bob: one approach that can be taken is to reduce the amount of traffic into town. If there's a good path, people may choose to walk or bike into town instead of driving, which could reduce the overall amount of traffic into downtown.

Nancy: It's almost a mile from downtown to the four corners. Are we spending a large amount of money for this distance and then just stopping the sidewalk abruptly? Then, what do these walkers and bikers do?

Bob: I think the major traffic is to the downtown, that's where people are going. We have an outdoor-recreation focused community that would rather ride their bike or walk into town. I've seen this in other areas: once you provide those pathways, they quickly become what everyone does. Who wants to have to deal with parking if you can walk or bike? And these days, with e-bikes, more and more people can do this.

Ricky: I'm not so sure we'd reduce the amount of traffic with a new sidewalk. I don't see a change in behavior happening, I think people will still drive downtown.

Nancy: There's also a lot of heavy truck traffic going right through town, this won't change. Perhaps we're not trying to create a "rec. path", we're just trying to make safer sidewalks?

Evan: the local concerns meeting is like an open house. We make a short presentation and then hear from attendees. It's mostly listening to feedback, maybe we provide some prompts.

Nancy: we should consider a way for people to submit input if they can't come to the meeting.

Josh: when we publicize the event, we could provide an email address to submit comments to. If we have the capability this could be a hybrid meeting.

Evan: in the meantime, at VHB we're documenting existing conditions. We have a variety of tools available to us that we use to capture road width, drainage areas, traffic volume.

Josh: Evan, can you access a stormwater/drinking water infrastructure database? If you can easily get that great, if not we could work on it.

Nancy: John Mackin would have a map of the drinking water system.

Dede: the storm drain off Hussey Lane is sinking, it's not in good shape.

Nancy: at least three people have built their driveways a number of inches over the sidewalk level.

Josh: Evan, will we be needing to extend this project past late fall 2026?

Evan: No, I think we can wrap this up in 2026. Unless something comes up, such as negotiating for an easement or something like that.

Nancy: Josh, what is the town's share of this scoping grant?

Josh: the town's share is about \$14,000, 20% of the project total. Evan, given the rough ideas we have and our total project length, what might it cost the town to install this new infrastructure?

Evan: projects like this range from \$1 million to \$4 million per mile, depending on the complexity of the segments. Averaging this out, you're looking at over \$1 million for the .8 miles of Breezy Ave. The days of cheap building are unfortunately long behind us.

Josh: ...so regardless of any other infrastructure work we need to do on Breezy Ave. to install the new sidewalks we're looking at a minimum of \$250k for our 20% town match.

Evan: yes, but these projects take a few years to build so you would be likely spreading out this cost over two budget years.

Nancy: this is a lot of money to spend on .8 miles for sidewalks that abruptly stop on either end. We really need to think about this, for a lot less money we could just repair/improve what we currently have, make it safer.

Josh: it seems that the point of this process is that at the end, we'll have an actual plan to really consider moving forward with. I think about Smirkus, all those kids going back and forth to Willey's...add in all the speeding that's been discussed and we have some big challenges.

Does Breezy Ave. being on a federal aid route open up other funding sources or mean there are additional project requirements?

Evan: no for both questions.

Nancy: while this town appears to be populated by people with resources, there are a lot of people in this area who live on really tight budgets and who will not care if there's a sidewalk up to the Highland Center, a place they can't afford to go to anyway. Please keep this in mind.

Evan: I hear that everywhere we go. The point of this study is for the town to determine whether it's really worth it before committing to a project that's this expensive. Part of our job is that you have good cost estimates, we don't want towns to have to deal with huge cost overruns.

Naomi: bike/ped infrastructure has been a stated priority in our town plan for my entire life. It would be great if we could figure out some kind of solution to start tackling this challenge in whole or in part...