

Feedback on paving projects: STP PC20 (3), NH PC20 (4)



Dear Project Managers, Engineers, VTrans and Town representatives,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important road project. As Addison County and Middlebury residents, we've looked at this project through the lense of the on-road cyclist after traversing the roadway to be familiar with its particulars. This project contains many improvements to this roadway and we look forward to seeing it constructed. That said, there are a number of places where it could be further improved to better meet the needs of all road users. Please see below for general and detailed comments.

Best regards,

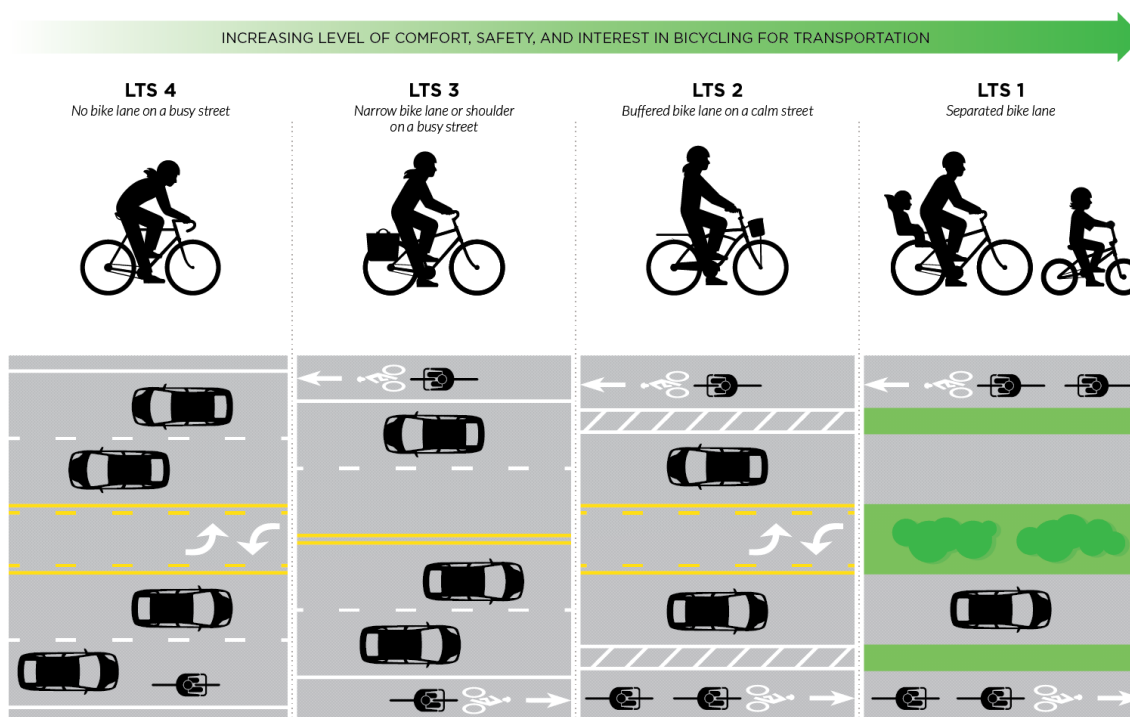
Adam Franco, Chair of the Walk-Bike Council of Addison County, Middlebury resident

Document being referenced: [z18v188 z18v220 Composite Preliminary Plans.pdf](#)

General comments

For people on bicycles at all levels of experience, traffic speeds and shoulder widths are two of the biggest factors that determine the [level of traffic stress](#) and how comfortable people will be using the roads.

LEVEL OF TRAFFIC STRESS



Example LTS graphic created for public consumption for our project in Bend, OR. ([source](#))

While none of the road segments in this project provide broad accessibility to all age ranges and abilities, the draft changes (with some tweaks) may provide some improvement over the current state of these roadways. These state and federal highways provide the core of the road network in Middlebury and often no reasonable alternative to them exists for connecting from our residential areas to schools, businesses, and employers. While this project won't be sufficient to fix problems, incremental improvements still are possible within the project scope.

For people walking, connectivity and crossing safety are two of the key issues. Many of the pedestrian facilities within the project scope are adequate, but there are some notable exceptions highlighted below.

A general recommendation is to replace any “SHARE THE ROAD” signs



with “[bicycles] MAY USE FULL LANE” signs.



The former is ambiguous in its intent (should both squeeze into the same lane when opposing traffic is present?), while the later is clear that taking the lane is approved. This is especially important in the many portions of this project area where shoulders diminish and people on bicycles must move into the travel lane.

Throughout the project area recessed stormwater grates are a major problem which limit the utility of even narrow shoulders. These should all be brought to the surface-grade so that they can be safely ridden over.

Areas of interest/concern

VT 30

West of Academy Street

Most significant issue west of Academy Street are the lack of shoulder and recessed grates on the southbound (uphill) side of the roadway. The new 2'-11'-11'-8' lane-profile in the draft is an improvement over the current state of no shoulder, but grates *must* be flush with the surface if the 2' shoulder is to be at all usable by people on bicycles. If conditions allow for any additional inches of shoulder on the uphill side they will be helpful. The segment from Academy Street to the hill crest by Emma Willard House is the biggest issue due to lack of suitable alternatives for the bicycle mode and the uphill incline dramatically slowing the speed of people on bicycles.



The northbound (downhill) direction is less problematic due to smaller speed differentials between bicycles and autos and lack of grating near bicycle tires. Given project scope and constrained roadway width, providing more shoulder for uphill bicycle travel would be a good priority.

East of Academy Street

The plans indicate that the “[BICYCLES] MAY USE FULL LANE” signs will be retained, however “sharrow” markings are not indicated on the plans. These should have at least the current extent and if possible continue south up VT-30 through the full 25MPH zone.



East of the roundabout, the biggest issue is again the recessed drainage grates. While speeds are slow and naturally calmed by the streetscape, the recessed drainage grates present an unnecessary hazard for people on bicycles who are not centered on the sharrow and taking the full lane.

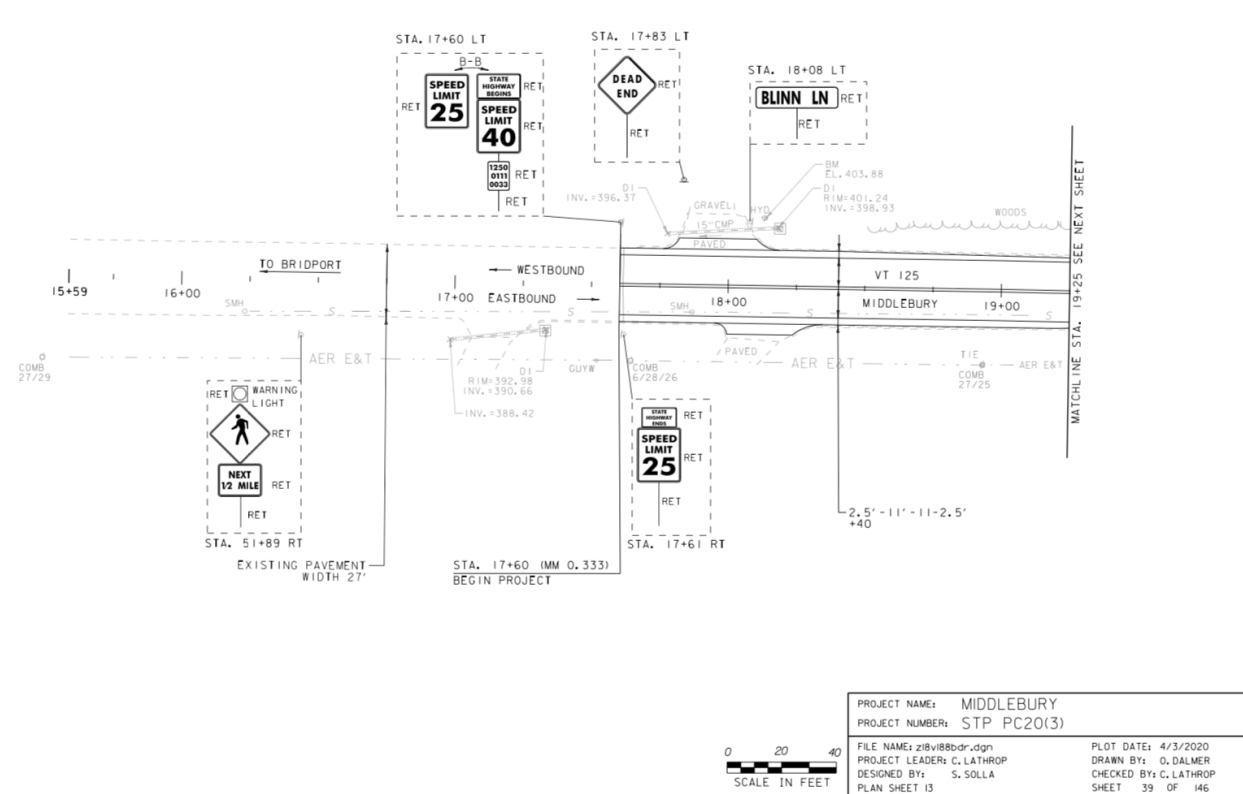
VT 125

West end

The biggest safety issue on the west end of the project is the long uphill climb east-bound from the project start up to Adirondack View. In this location there is no sidewalk and alternatives through the college campus are out of the way and non-obvious. People regularly walk, run, and bicycle this segment of roadway (and due to the lack of shoulder) do so in the travel lane.



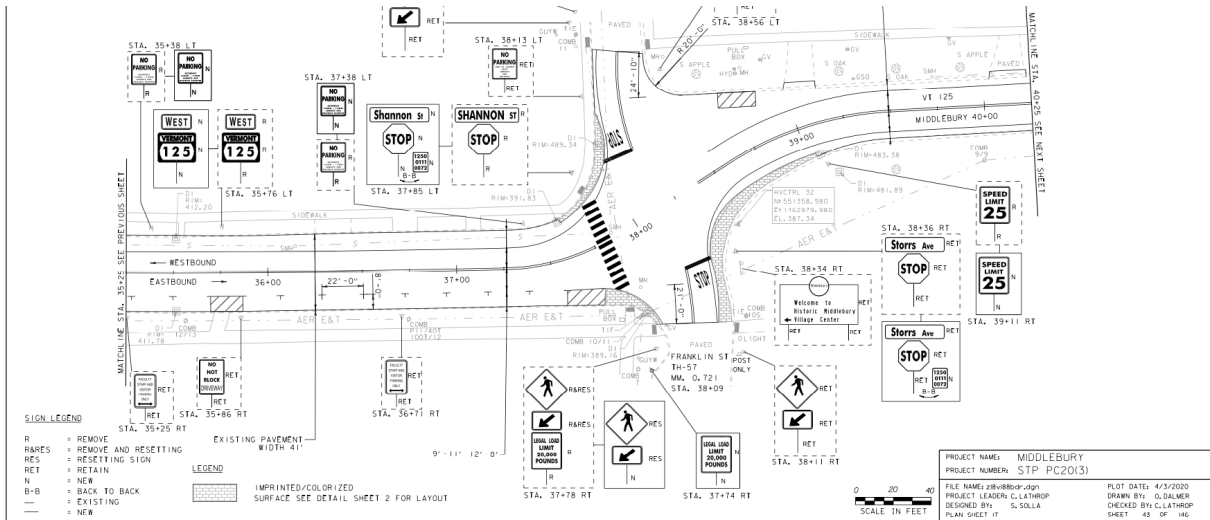
The draft plans show this as a 2.5'-11'-11'-2.5' cross-section (sheet 39). While this is an improvement on the current state of extra-wide travel-lanes and no shoulders, 2.5' is still not enough shoulder to be comfortable for uphill-bicycling or pedestrian use in either direction.



Biasing the centerline by 1.5 feet could provide a 1' wide shoulder on the westbound (downhill) side and a 4' shoulder on the eastbound (uphill) side, wide enough to be more usable by both bicycles and pedestrians.

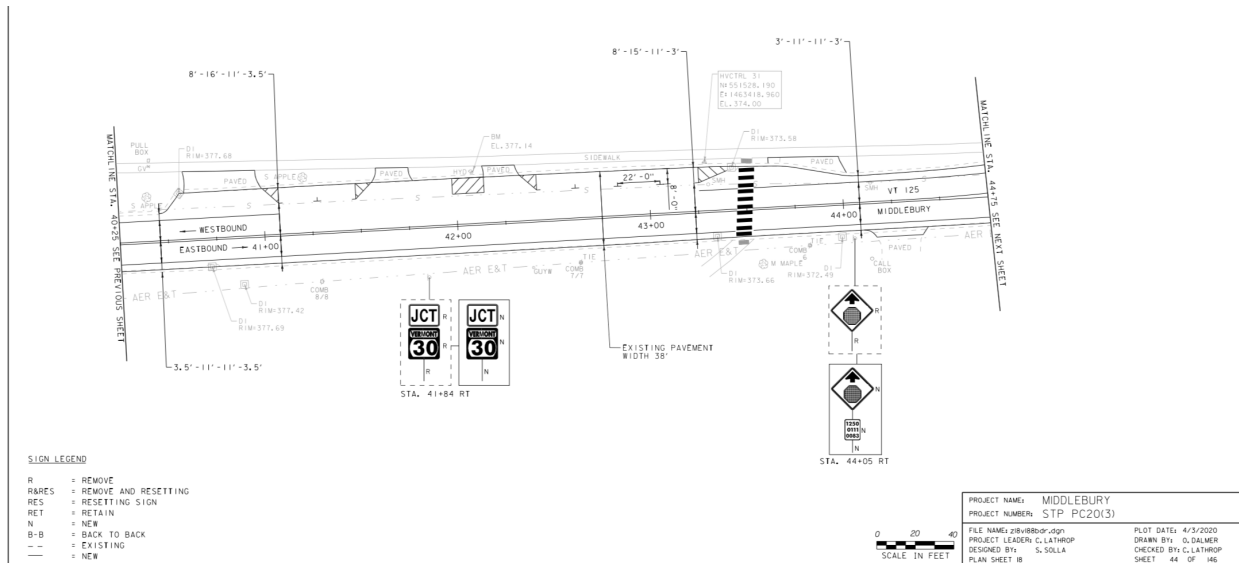
Saint Mary's area

The 9' wide shoulder on the steep uphill in front of Saint Mary's (sheet 43) is great both for space for very slow-moving bicycles as well as to keep auto traffic constrained for calming purposes.



Academy to Shannon

Sheet 44 shows the west-bound fog-line stopping for the mixed parallel parking/residential driveway segment. This opens up a 15'-16' space for the west-bound lane, reducing the effectiveness of lane-width as a traffic-calming measure as the roadway climbs uphill. Continuing to paint a fog-line in this section would help traffic calming and provide definition for a 4'-5' shoulder in an area where bicycles are climbing slowly.

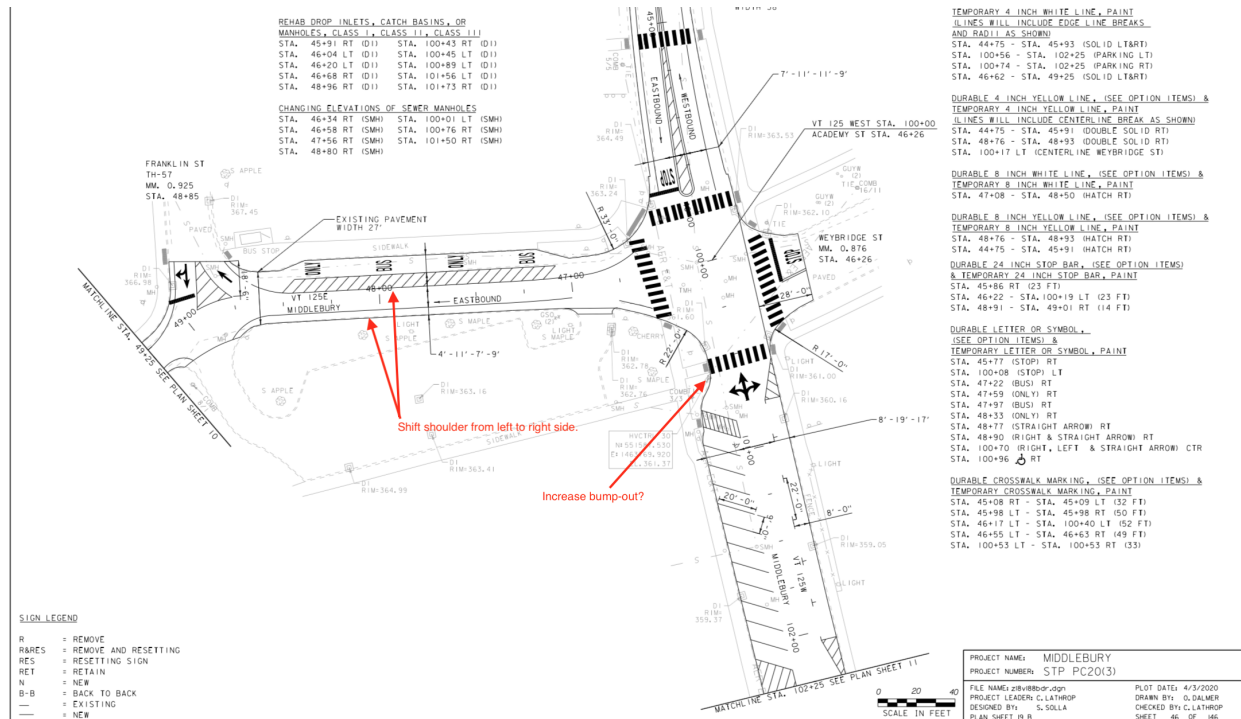


Academy Street

One of the often-voiced safety concerns of the College Street/Weybridge Street/Academy Street intersection is people on bikes (mostly reported as college-students) continuing eastbound

downhill straight onto the one-way section of College Street, against traffic. There are likely several reasons for this ill-advised behavior, but a few tweaks to this area could discourage it:

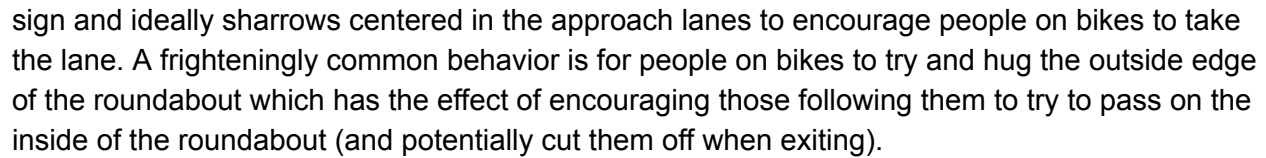
1. Increase the sidewalk bump-out to further discourage east-bound travel against traffic flow. This would also help shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians crossing from the park to Weybridge Street.
2. Improve the desirability of Academy Street as a bicycle route to downtown. This could be achieved by shifting the shoulder to the right side of Academy street and narrowing the bus buffer slightly to provide enough space for a full 5', signed/painted bicycle lane the length of Academy Street. Providing this attractive bicycle facility would go a long way toward encouraging prosocial behavior and not presenting eastbound students-on-bicycles with a host of unattractive options and hoping that they make a better choice.



Annotation of sheet 46.

Roundabout

All approaches to the roundabout should have a



SIGN LEGEND

R	= REMOVE
RARE	= REMOVE AND RESETTING
RES	= RESETTING SIGN
RET	= RETAIN
N	= NEW
B-B	= BACK TO BACK
E	= EXISTING
-	= NEW

PROJECT NAME: MIDDLEBURY
PROJECT NUMBER: STP PC2(03)

FILE NAME: BICYCLE-LANES.dgn
DRAWN BY: G. CALDER
CHECKED BY: C. LATHROP
DATE: 4/9/2020

SCALE: 1" = 40'



US-7

Overall, the draft plans provide significant shoulder improvements where there is currently excess lane-width and do not improve or diminish shoulders where width is constrained. Lack of significant shoulders is a problem any place where there is a turning lane or the roadway is otherwise constrained. While the draft plans are an improvement over the current state, they (and this project overall) do not serve to make US-7 a comfortable road on which to travel by bicycle.

A major problem with the current state of US-7 is the dramatically recessed grates that prevent any use of the minimal 2' shoulder currently available. These *must* be brought up to level to have any hope of a usable shoulder.



Creek Road/Court Street intersection

This intersection (sheet 84) was the subject of an intersection reconceptualization prepared by Alta Planning. The Middlebury Town Planner should have these concept plans. The crosswalk across Court Street is extremely wide and at the crest of the hill, making for a very long and

TEMPORARY 4 INCH YELLOW LINE PAINT
 LINES WILL INCLUDE CENTERLINE BREAK AS SHOWN
 STA. 224+70 - STA. 228+25 (SOLID LT & RT)
 STA. 225+40 LT (CENTERLINE CREEK RD)

DURABLE CROSSWALK MARKING, (SEE OPTION ITEMS) &
 TEMPORARY CROSSWALK MARKING, PAINT
 STA. 225+10 LT STA. 225+15 RT (50 FT)
 STA. 225+11 LT - STA. 225+52 LT (42 FT)

STA. 224+70 LT STA. 224+96 LT STA. 225+11 LT STA. 225+99 LT

CREEK RD
 11'-19"
 MM. 4, 269
 STA. 225+40

WATER STATION - COMB - 22/79/121
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 E1 1466889, 210
 EL. 380, 24

WYCTRL 3
 10 5429219, 530
 E1 1466889, 210
 EL. 380, 24

WYCTRL 2
 10 5429219, 530
 E1 1466889, 210
 EL. 380, 24

WYCTRL 1
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 E1 1466889, 210
 EL. 380, 24

WYCTRL 0
 10 5429219, 530
 E1 1466889, 210
 EL. 380, 24

WYCTRL -1
 10 5429219, 530
 E1 1466889, 210
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WYCTRL -2
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WYCTRL -3
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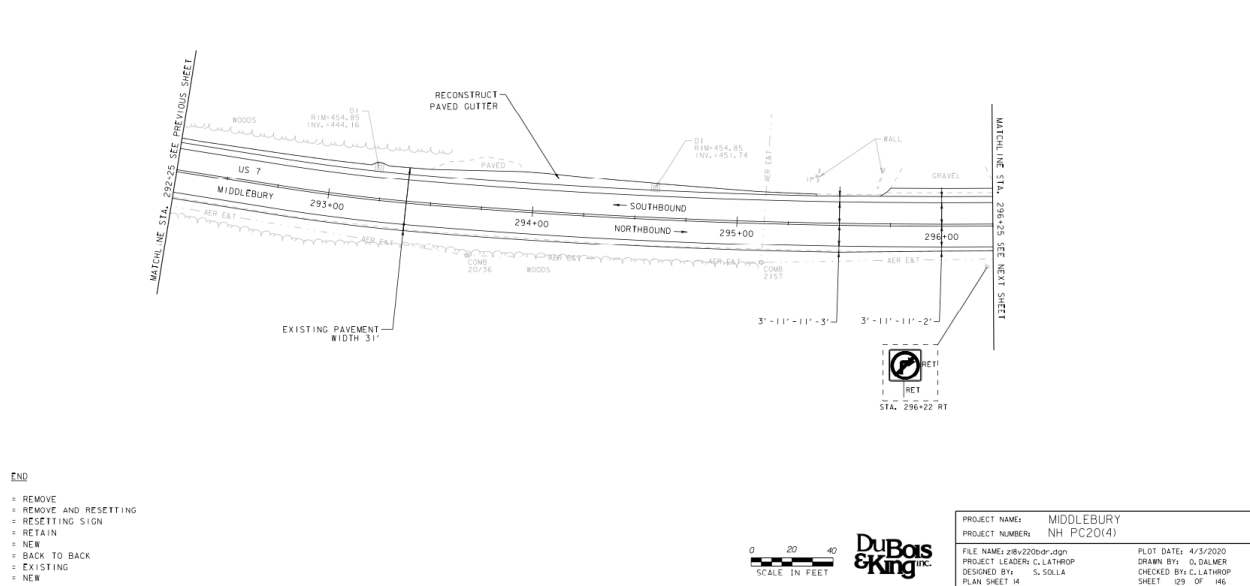
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WYCTRL -49
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WYCTRL -50
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WYCTRL -51
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 EL. 380,

The north end of the project area (Sheets 127-130) is a stretch of roadway particularly problematic for pedestrians and people on bikes. The combination of hill, curve, side-slope, and narrow roadway mean that shoulders and sight-lines are minimal and no safe facility is provided for either mode. Anything that can be done additionally to calm traffic speeds and add even inches of shoulder would be beneficial.



Additional comments from the community

- “The section of Rte 7 north of Maplefields has little room for shoulders - 1 foot and 2 feet. I suggest that the uphill side have the 2 foot shoulder, not 1 foot has shown in the plan. Uphill cyclists need a bit more room than downhill cyclists and although 2 feet isn't much, it's better than 1 foot.”
- “One of my pet issues that I've mentioned before is the DO NOT ENTER sign where South Pleasant St meets Rte 7 at Court House Square. That sign, and perhaps other indicators, needs to be much more visible. With lots else to catch their attention, I think visitors to Middlebury simply miss the sign and go straight into oncoming traffic. I have seen this happen a number of times.”
- “Catch basin grates on Court St. and especially Rte 30 need to be flush with the pavement. Cycling westbound on Rte 30 with the relatively narrow roadway and curbs, coupled with recessed catch basin grates, requires cyclists to move left, impeding traffic -- not to mention risking a collision.”
- “I would like to see a pedestrian crossing at the end of Seminary St. across Rte #7. Working at the RPC, if I wanted to go to the marbleworks, it was putting your life into your own hands.”