

# **Vision for Pedestrian, Biking, and Hiking Mobility in Belfast**

*Submitted February 2008  
at the request of the Belfast Vibrancy Committee by  
the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition and Belfast Trails*

*Amended November 2009  
by the Belfast Pedestrian, Biking, and Hiking Committee*

**Draft**

## Summary

*At the request of the Belfast Vibrancy Committee, the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition and Belfast Trails have prepared here a vision for pedestrian, biking, and hiking mobility in Belfast. Our vision outlines specific priorities for improvements in sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, handicapped mobility, and recreational walking routes within the city, as well as a general vision for hiking trails and bike routes that connect the downtown with outlying areas and other local points of interest.*

*First we outline some goals and benefits to the community of having safe and efficient ways for citizens to move around Belfast and surrounding areas without a car. The second section identifies critical improvements needed for safe pedestrian and bike mobility along routes to key destinations. The third through fifth sections suggest other improvements for sidewalks and cross walks, bike lanes, and in town trails and connecting trails. Finally, we propose some next steps for moving forward to further refine and implement this vision.*

*This report has been amended by the PBHC to reflect work that has been done since the initial report.*

*Appendix A provides a summary table of key destinations and critical improvements needed to address immediate safety concerns.*

## Report authors

***Belfast Trails** strives to create a healthier community by developing safe, accessible and attractive travel routes for motorless use.*

***The Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition** is a group of organizations and individuals working to support conservation and stewardship of natural, scenic, historic, and public access resources of the Belfast Bay watershed through research, community building, and education.*

Cloe Chunn	Liza Wheeler
Skip Pendleton	Molly Schaffler
Margot Carpenter	Seth Benz
Liz Townsend	

The Belfast Pedestrian, Biking, And Hiking Committee (PBHC) is a city committee convened as a result of the initial Vision for Pedestrian, Hiking, and Biking Mobility report.

Glenn Montgomery	Liz Townsend
Marti Packer	Liza Wheeler
Skip Pendleton	

## **Section 1: Goals and Benefits**

### **Goals:**

- Ensure that the citizens of and visitors to Belfast have safe, viable, and attractive pedestrian, bicycle and wheelchair access to new and existing businesses, public services and residential areas in Belfast.
- Promote healthy and economical alternatives to automobile transportation in and around Belfast.

### **Benefits to the community:**

- Promotes individual health and fitness for young and old alike
- Provides safe, viable, low-cost transportation options for youth and those without cars
- Improves handicapped access to businesses and services
- Fosters community
- Makes Belfast an attractive destination for tourists
- Reduces in-town automobile traffic by creating viable & efficient alternatives
- Conserves fuel use, supports the city's climate protection effort
- Reduces air and noise pollution
- Increases recreational opportunities, supports YMCA and hospital fitness programs
- Reduces demand for parking

## Section 2: Critical Needs (Route 1 crossings)

Route 1 crossings at Rte. 52, Belmont Ave/Rte 3, and Rte. 141 are heavily used pedestrian and bicycle routes that connect downtown Belfast with key destinations outside the bypass (i.e. Troy Howard Middle School, Reny's Plaza, East Side School). We view them as critical because they are the most lacking in infrastructure and planning in terms of safety relative to their high rate of pedestrian use (or potential use) and because they involve routes and intersections with heavy auto traffic.

### 1. Rte 52: (Destinations: Bank of America property, Walsh Ball Field, Little River Community Trail, YMCA, Troy Howard Middle School)

*Status:* The first phase of work has been completed for the improvement of this crossing, as part of an MDOT grant. The crosswalk has been slanted at a new angle to provide a shorter crossing. The sidewalk on the west side of Route 1 near Athena Health has been extended to accommodate the new crosswalk. Flashers indicate to motorists that there is a crosswalk. There is currently a "no right turn on red" sign which is activated when someone activates the Walk signal. There has been some concern expressed that people who do not always see the "no right turn on red" sign will not notice it when it is illuminated. The crosswalk itself will be resurfaced with Duratherm, but since it is anticipated that Route 1 will be resurfaced in that areas in the next year, the resurfacing of the crosswalk has been put off.

### 2. Main St./Belmont Ave./Rte. 3/: (Destinations: Reny's Plaza, Rte. 3 commercial district, UMaine Hutchinson Center)

*Status:* This heavily used pedestrian route is difficult to walk because sidewalks are discontinuous. One cannot walk from the post office up Main St. to Family Dollar and Camden National Bank without crossing the street. Heading from town toward Reny's one has to walk up Main St. hill across from the post office as there is no sidewalk on the left except for a paved drainage swale next to Family Dollar (Fig. 1). At the cemetery one crosses Main St. on a crosswalk to continue sidewalk access on the left side of the street. From here the curb cuts are long with short stretches of sidewalk in between (Fig. 2). Starrett Drive has a crosswalk but no pedestrian crossing signal, so traffic is never stopped at the traffic light (Fig. 3). Next one must cross Rt. 3 to continue on sidewalks, and again, no pedestrian signal exists at this signaled intersection. There is no crosswalk for the Rt. 1 on-ramp. New sidewalks are in place from Reny's to Wendy's on both sides of Rt. 3, and there's a pedestrian signal at the new Reny's entrance (Fig. 4).

*Need:* All pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked at curb cuts, and a pedestrian walk signal should be added to the intersection at Starrett Dr. for crossing both Starrett Dr. and Rt. 3. Bike lanes should be added to both sides of the street from the post office all the way out to Reny's using the MDOT model seen in Fig. 4 for split lane situations. With the Expansion of Hutchinson center, it would seem prudent to add bike lanes and sidewalks out to Hutchinson center.



Figure 1. Parking and drainage swale next to Family Dollar



Figure 2. Long curb cuts on Belmont Ave interrupt sidewalks



Figure 3. Starrett Dr./Belmont Ave. intersection is busy and has no pedestrian signal



Figure 4. The new Reny's entrance has turn lanes, bike lane, and pedestrian signal

**3. Rte 141:** (Destinations: East Side School, East Side businesses on Rte 1, Patterson Hill/Robbins Rd. residential community)

*Status:* Recent improvements to the Rt. 141/Rt. 1 intersection, designed by MDOT, have made this pedestrian crossing less dangerous. These changes include moving the crossing of Rt. 1 to the North beyond Rt. 141 so that pedestrians have to cross only two lanes of traffic, installing a Duratherm crosswalk which should remain more visible for more of the year, installing pedestrian warning lights that flash at the crosswalk and farther south next to the northbound lane, and installation of pedestrian crossing sign at crosswalk.

A crosswalk was added on Rt. 141 for pedestrians to get from the south side of Rt. 141 to the north side where the new sidewalk leads to the new crosswalk. There is no crosswalk between Robbins Rd. and the East Side School.

*Need:* The state is considering reconfiguring the entire intersection to make it safer and more efficient. The city should work to keep this process moving forward and to ensure that pedestrian access and safety are a top priority in the design.

A sidewalk should be constructed between Robbins Rd. and the East Side School on Rt. 141 (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Sidewalk on Rt. 141 ends at Robbins Rd. instead of at the East Side school or Keene Mobile Home Park

**4. Outer Congress St:** (Destinations: Coastal Workshop, Belfast Airport, Industrial Park, Little River Community Trail.)

*Status:* Although the Route 1 crossing at Outer Congress Street currently has no pedestrian facilities, it is presently a safe crossing because of the good line of sight and relatively low pedestrian use. As traffic increases, future improvements may be warranted.

### Section 3: Sidewalks and Crosswalks

The City used a five-year sidewalk plan to guide the improvement and construction of new sidewalks beginning in 1998. It appears that the plan was not updated after 2003. In the Autumn of 2008, the PBHC completed the resurveying of all Belfast sidewalks with respect to conditions of the sidewalks, crosswalks, curb cuts. The resulting spreadsheet has been given to the city.

General recommendations:

- Mark all crosswalks prominently with high visibility cones for a longer portion of the year (i.e. not just in summer).
- Use the newly revised sidewalk condition report as a guide to repairing sidewalks.

In compiling information for this report, some specific areas stood out as needing attention:

**High St.** (between Miller and Belfast Glass): replace or renew sidewalk and curb, add green space & trees. The sidewalk has been replaced between Miller and Park Street.

**Rte. 3 from in town to Reny's**, or preferably Hutchinson Center, through the Rte. 1 interchange. (Figures 1, 2, and 3)

**Church St.** (between Market and Anderson): Clearly mark pedestrian right of way past Duval's

**High St.** (MaLleod's to Belfast Variety): The sidewalk should continue from MacLeod's at least to the area opposite Belfast Variety.

Minimize length of and mark pedestrian crossings. Clarify pedestrian route and wheelchair route.

**Walkway from Post Office to Family Dollar** (Figure 1)

**Starrett Drive:** Clearly mark pedestrian right of way from Hannaford and Ocean State Job Lot to Rte. 3, mark and minimize street crossings.

**East Side:** Construct sidewalk on North side of Rt. 1 from Rt. 141 to the Big Apple. Improve sidewalk from footbridge to Perry's Nut House

## Section 4: Bike lanes

We recommend using Miller Street as a well-designed model for bicycle travel; it has no painted centerline and has well-marked bike lanes on each side.

General recommendations:

- Belfast should use opportunities arising from major road or development projects to add sidewalks and bike lanes.

Bike lanes should be added on both sides of these streets:

- Main St./ Belmont Ave. corridor to the Hutchinson Center
- High St. headed West from downtown to Belfast Variety
- Rt. 52 to Troy Howard Middle School

## Section 5: In-town trails

These are “trails” that offer recreational, cultural and scenic walking routes within the City, connect significant destinations, or allow public access to the shore. Some examples are listed here; others may be identified. These trails contribute to Belfast’s vibrancy, and should be promoted in tourism guides.

### 1. **Rangeways** (Public rights of way to the shore)

Recommendation: Review the status of all City Rangeways and ensure that public access to the shore via the existing rights of way is maintained

### 2. **Waterfront trail** (Belfast Boathouse to west end of Footbridge)

Recommendation: further develop, post signs, landowner negotiations, integrate into Stinson property use.

Status: A contract has been signed with the state allowing work to begin on a “coastal” walkway.

### 3. **The Muck / Kirby Lake Nature Trail** (Grove Cemetery to the Muck and beyond)

Recommendation: develop concept with input from the City, design interpretive signs, landowner negotiations

#### 4. **Museum in the Streets**

## Section 6: Connecting trails

This section describes trails (either existing or envisioned) that connect the City of Belfast with other trail systems, other communities, or other destinations outside the immediate City. We envision initiative, funding and maintenance for these trails to come from other organizations, such as the BBWC, Coastal Mountains Land Trust. Support from the City would be in the form of cooperation in planning, letters of support for funding, and acknowledgment of the value trails bring to the community.

### 1. **Rail Trail** to City Point Bridge

Recommendation: Support development by Coastal Mountains Land Trust.

### 2. **Little River Community Trail** and **Outer Greenway Trail** (Belfast River Water District to Stover Preserve via Little River Community Trail, Troy Howard, and the Hutchinson Center)

Recommendation: This trail would form a ring around Belfast, from the Little River Water District to the Stover Preserve on the Passy River at Doak Rd. Endorse BBWC efforts to develop this trail, support access to trail heads and development of safe parking options.

### 3. **East Coast Greenway**, an interurban pedestrian and bicycle route connecting the entire East Coast, from Florida to Maine and the Maritimes

Recommendation: Continue collaboration and cooperation with this initiative

### 4. **Maine Birding Trail**: Belfast is part of the Maine Birding Trail (see [Mainebirdingtrail.com](http://Mainebirdingtrail.com))

Recommendation: Continue collaboration and cooperation with this initiative

### 5. **Inter-town trail connectors** for hiking and skiing

- a) Moose Point State Park and Searsport
- b) Frye Mountain
- c) Durham State Forest & Northport
- d) Hurds Pond

### 6. **Passagassawaukeag Canoe Trail** and **Goose River Canoe Trail**

**Section 7: Other considerations**

1. An important aspect of promoting car-less mobility is making it possible for citizens to travel between Belfast and other population centers such as Rockland, Bangor, and Augusta. We would like to see the City prepared to collaborate regionally with other municipalities or state-level organizations – possibly even take the initiative – to create regular public transportation routes that connect job, service, and shopping centers as well as the outlying communities those routes will pass through.