Introduction

A feedback survey on the demonstration project was launched on 7/21/23. The survey and a project factsheet were posted on either side of the crosswalk as well as on Facebook and on our website. The survey will also be advertised in the September newsletter on the front page. However, on August 28 DOT requested its removal for paving. Therefore, the only visual project elements remaining are the faded sidewalk feature on Main Street.

As of August 28, there have been 102 respondents, of which 99 live in Bowdoinham. Further, 17% (17 respondents) own a business in Bowdoinham. Lastly, 52% (55 respondents) offered their ages, which ranged from 28-84, with only one reporting in their twenties and one in their eighties. Current results are as follows:

Driving Experience

The majority, 88% of respondents, reported driving the area the area daily, with 13% weekly, and 1% rarely. 44% of drivers reported a worse experience, compared to 30% who said there was no change, and 27% that said it was better. Overall, a majority, 57%, found the project either did not interfere with their driving experience or created a better experience.

Taking a closer look at comments left by the 44% of respondents that had a negative experience, 23 individuals advocated for the removal of just the delineators, another 22 specifically said they were in favor of keeping just the crosswalk, and only 13 individuals called for a removal of all elements of the project including the crosswalk.

A screenshot of a chat

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

Walking Experience

24% of respondents reported walking the area daily, with 48% weekly, and 28% rarely. Most walkers, 50%, found the project to improve their walking experience. 10% of walkers reported a worse experience, compared to 40% who said there was no change. Overall, 90% found the project either neutral or positive.

A screenshot of a chat

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

Bicycling Experience

A majority, 82%, found the project to either not interfere with their biking experience or created a better experience. 57% said there was no change, 25% determined it was better, and 18% of reported a worse experience. The survey did not ask how often individuals biked through the location.

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

Slowing Traffic

When asked if the project slowed down motor vehicle traffic a resounding 51% said it did, while 27% said it did not, and 22% were unsure.

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

Safety of the Roadway

When asked if the installation made the roadway safer it was a toss-up with an even split of 47% saying either yes or no, with 6% unsure. Examining the comments left by respondents that reported the project made the road less safe, 23 individuals advocated for the removal of just the delineators, another 19 specifically said they were in favor of keeping just the crosswalk, and only 13 individuals called for a removal of all elements of the project including the crosswalk.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

When asked what they liked about the project answers fell in these general comments:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Generalized comments** | **Number of comments** |
| Clearer pedestrian crossing traffic markings | 25 |
| Calms traffic and makes pedestrians feel safer | 21 |
| More welcoming area for pedestrian traffic to businesses | 9 |
| There are laws and expectations crosswalks bring that promote safety | 1 |

Criticisms of the project included:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Generalized comments** | **Number of comments** |
| Delineators and/or planters narrows the road too much for users | 28 |
| Just keep the painted crosswalk lines only, all else is distracting | 16 |
| No need for the project | 11 |
| The installation could be more assertive, i.e flashing speed signs or lights, speed table, more signage. | 9 |
| Signage/delineators has caused confusion | 7 |
| Requests for more crosswalks at the intersection and elsewhere in town | 5 |
| Should cross at Masonic Lodge | 4 |
| Concerns about costs | 3 |
| Sidewalk takes up too much needed parking space | 2 |

Here are some actual comments that capture the overall sentiment:

Pros

*“This is a creative solution to this problem. I think it is super! There has been a need for a safe crossing here.”*

*“In spite of the (usual and expected) griping on social media, there has also been chronic complaints about traffic speeding through town. You can't have it both ways, but I am glad that we're going for safety over convenience and unregulated speed. We can't (and can't afford) our own Police Dept., and the Sherriff isn't in town enough to stop the speeders, so this is a cost-effective and much needed experiment. Good job!!!”*

*“Vehicles know this is where people cross. There are laws and expectations with crosswalks that promote more care and caution.”*

Cons

*“The poles narrow the road way a bit, it might be more difficult for vehicles with trailers. Also if the sidewalk that goes down towards the waterfront is supposed to be a no parking zone that will need signs or designated parking spaces.”*

*“Don’t take the much needed parking away. The crosswalk is on the wrong side because most people walk to the waterfront from the other side of the street. People are not using the crosswalk and are walking through the intersection, so it clearly is misplaced. The posts make it harder for large trucks to navigate the corner.”*

*“All the markings make the area confusing to navigate. Cars coming off Main Street think it’s an all-way stop, which it is not. Get rid of everything except the zebra stripes.”*

Other considerations:

The survey was up for a few weeks before all elements of the project were in place. For example, the painting the crosswalk and hanging the crossing signs were not completed until more than a week after the rest of the elements were installed. Further, having an incomplete installation required us to hang a new traffic pattern sign which likely was the source for some of the confusion before it was taken down a few weeks into the installation.

Also, the survey did not specifically call attention to the sidewalk element although a handful of comments were made that should be noted. Those ranging from concerns about the loss of parking, need for signage if there is not to be parking along side of them, and concerns about cars parking along Rt. 24 in between Three Robbers and the curve headed south.

Conclusion

Elements that narrowed the roadway were not well received, most noted were the delineators. However, the painted crosswalk was well received overall and does not pose a hinderance to drivers, bicyclists, or pedestrians.

Further, there were several respondents suggesting additional elements to the crossing such as a raised table, flashing lights, and more signage. Others mention the need for a no parking sign along Rt. 24 or other signage warning those to slow down on Rt. 24 before entering downtown. While these areas and elements were outside of the project scope, they may warrant more investigation as we develop the new waterfront park and gateways.