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ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

**Strafford Policy Committee Meeting
August 17, 2012
Rochester Community Center, Rochester, NH
Minutes**

FINAL

SMPO Policy Members Present: Tom Clark (Dover), Jeremy LaRose (COAST), Dirk Grotenhuis (Nottingham), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Ed Comeau (Brookfield), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Marcia Gasses (Dover), William Connor (Somersworth), Carol Vita (Middleton), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester), Beverly Cray (UNH), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Lou Vita (Middleton) and Tony McManus (Dover)

SMPO Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director) Marc Ambrosi (Transportation Planner) Dan Camara (Senior GIS/Transportation Analyst), Marilyn Barton (HR Specialist/Events Coordinator), Greg Jones (Regional Planner), Matt Sullivan (Regional Planner), Zachary Kahr (SRPC Intern), Nick Dowhaniuk (SRPC Intern) and Kaitlin Davis (SRPC Intern)

GUEST: Steve Brown (Wakefield)

1. Introductions

Chairman Vita opened the meeting at 9: 05 a.m. and asked for introductions around the room.

2. Staff Communications

C. Copeland noted a new addition to the agenda: Citizen's forum which allows the public to speak and comment on any items discussed at the meeting. C. Copeland stated the listening boxes for the Granite State Future project were ready to go out to the region. C. Copeland noted these boxes allow for public input from the region and asked if anyone wished to take one back to their community today to let her know.

3.1 Draft MPO Minutes of July 20, 2012

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes of July 20, 2012. K. Ortmann stated he wished to make a change to the minutes (page 2, fifth paragraph that starts with K. Ortmann...) to read as follows, as it more accurately reflects what was said at the meeting:

“The Vice-Chairman asked for a motion to adopt the Intelligent Transportation Systems Architecture/Plan. K. Ortmann made a motion and J. LaRose seconded that motion. The motion carried. There was one vote not to approve – E. Comeau. A discussion ensued about financial sustainability of the Plan and the challenges with petitioning for meaningful public input. K. Ortmann then moved to set up a ITS Coordination subcommittee meeting a minimum of one time a year and reporting back to the MPO and to set up a link on the SRPC website so that the public can enter comments on something they read on the site. E. Comeau seconded that motion. Following discussion about the usefulness of establishing another committee that led to dialogue about the appropriate frequency for staff reports regarding ITS progress, K. Ortmann

withdrew his motion and E. Comeau withdrew his second. M. Ambrosi stated they would discuss staff capabilities and follow up at the next MPO meeting.”

K. Ortmann made a motion to approve the draft minutes of July 20, 2012 with changes as presented. E. Comeau seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

4.1 Transportation Improvement Program

M. Ambrosi noted he had sent out project lists to communities and summarized the three documents and how they tie together. M. Ambrosi stated the first document, the 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) shows the next four years of anticipated projects. M. Ambrosi noted projects must be shown in the TIP to receive federal funding (unless they are initially grouped under a “Statewide” funding category like projects from the Highway Safety Improvement Program). M. Ambrosi stated the TIP shows lists of projects receiving federal funding or that are “regionally significant,” and provides breakdowns of programmed expenditures verses anticipated revenues for Transportation.

M. Ambrosi stated the second document is the Air Quality Conformity Analysis & Determination and is a companion document to the TIP & Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). M. Ambrosi noted it is necessary to show that NH’s non-attainment area for ozone is within the vehicle emissions budget for ozone set in the NH State Implementation Plan (SIP). M. Ambrosi stated the Air Quality Conformity document shows the latest planning assumptions for demographic and economic changes in our region and includes lists of all of the projects included in the SRPC transportation model, identifies projects exempt from air quality conformity and those projects that are not included in the model (but are non-exempt from air quality) for the 2013-2040 timeframe.

M. Ambrosi noted the third document is the 2013-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and lists all anticipated transportation projects expected to use federal funding or to be “regionally significant” in the Strafford region out to Fiscal Year 2040. M. Ambrosi stated it must show consistency with the 2013-2016 TIP and 2013-2022 NH Ten Year Transportation Plan. M. Ambrosi stated it shows financial constraint for projects extending through 2040 using latest the planning assumptions. M. Ambrosi stated the project lists must be updated concurrently with the TIP and AQA document.

M. Ambrosi provided a presentation that showed the timeline of the documents of what will be done and when. M. Ambrosi noted due to delays, the public hearing for this update will not be until October and once it is approved will then be sent to the FHWA, FTA, and the EPA and will be approved in approximately January 2013.

There was a discussion as to what four MPOs have the AQA determination: Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Rockingham Planning Commission, Southern Regional Planning Commission and Nashua Regional Planning Commission. D. Camara explained the non-attainment area in the state, which spreads out over the four MPOs, is in the southern and eastern part of the state.

M. Ambrosi stated there are two primary steps remaining in the TIP update:

1. Create a budget of transportation expenditures on regional transportation projects for the four year period, showing that NH has the funding to cover the anticipated costs. M. Ambrosi explained the issues

remaining with this: Funding assumptions have been discussed. Due to the Surface Transportation Reauthorization: MAP-21, there is uncertainty about program level funding splits and simultaneous lack of guidance available regarding the bill. At this point there are still unanswered questions about how program level transportation funding will look. Agencies are working to gain an understanding of how existing programs will fit into the new funding paradigm. This has led to a situation where NH MPOs are only able to show financial constraint at the annual level for federal transportation funding. M. Ambrosi stated the Strafford MPO will be working with FHWA and NHDOT to establish an agreement indicating that the SMPO has made a good faith effort to perform financial constraint using what information and guidance are currently available. However, due to the recent reauthorization the Strafford MPO was unable to provide the level of detail recommended in the Strafford MPO's last federal review.

2. Update the Transportation Improvement Program document and make changes to document content to address changes in transportation policy since the last TIP update. This task is in process will be completed shortly.

M. Ambrosi stated due to delays in this process we now anticipate seeking Policy approval at our October 19, 2012 meeting. M. Ambrosi noted this approval date will still allow time to meet the NHDOT schedule for State Transportation Improvement Program approval.

M. Ambrosi stated Long-Range project lists were sent out to communities for their endorsement. M. Ambrosi showed the Committee the list as an example and how the list was created, using the previous project solicitation, Red Bridge list and regional priorities.

B. Tapscott asked how firm this list [for the 2013-2040 MTP] is and if this list is what we'd like to have. M. Ambrosi stated this list is a best guess of what is needed for that time and is non-binding. M. Ambrosi noted it is better to have a project on the list than not. R. Nichols noted if you don't have funding for the project it can't get on the list but that doesn't mean the project isn't needed. M. Ambrosi explained the project could be added as a vision project.

E. Comeau asked for an example of a controversial project. M. Ambrosi stated the sidewalks on Route 4 in Northwood. M. Ambrosi noted the controversy surrounding this project is that Northwood would be responsible for maintenance of the sidewalks as an ongoing cost. It was noted the project listing was sent out to TAC and Policy Committee members and all groups he met with during the Project Solicitation which included Town Administrators, Boards of Selectmen, city engineers and road agents.

4.2 Summer Data Collection - Presentations

Interns N. Dowhaniuk and Z. Kahr gave a PowerPoint presentation of what they had done and learned throughout their internship at Strafford Regional Planning Commission. They explained they worked on culvert assessments and traffic counts throughout the summer, the need for this work, the goals, equipment used, data collected and why this information is important for communities. N. Dowhaniuk explained this information is entered into a database and a GIS shapefile is created. Z. Kahr noted communities completed this year were Northwood, Lee, and New Durham and last year Rochester, Somersworth and Barrington were completed and the goal is to have culvert assessments for all eighteen communities completed in the next couple of years.

G. Jones spoke about the probe runs process now referred to as delay counts. G. Jones gave an overview of the Delay Count Project and the work that was done during the summer using GPS to count the number of points and calculate congestion on the roads. G. Jones stated this allows SRPC to focus on and use Transportation Enhancement funds more effectively. G. Jones noted the runs occur during Monday through Thursday during peak times, 6-8:30 a.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m. and on Fridays from 4-6 p.m. G. Jones noted this data will be used to produce maps to show congestion in the area, particularly on Routes 108 and 125. G. Jones stated the use of traffic count data allowed them to know when peak times occurred and the use of that data was useful in this project.

There was a discussion regarding keeping this information updated. G. Davison stated the hard part is sustaining the data and if that is not done it is a waste and encouraged a business plan to be created for sustainability purposes. A discussion ensued about how to make it more cost effective to update this plan through the use of technology, interns or volunteers. M. Gasses noted the peak times on Route 125 should be changed to 3:30 pm., as that is when rush hour really begins.

E. Comeau asked who pays to collect this data and is it required. M. Ambrosi stated FHWA pays for this data to be collected. M. Ambrosi explained FHWA is starting to require performance measures and to show that investments being made are working.

Intern K. Davis gave a PowerPoint presentation on what she had been working on and learning throughout her internship at Strafford Regional Planning Commission. K. Davis explained she had learned how to set up traffic counts, assess culverts within the region and studied traffic flow patterns on Routes 125 and 108, using a GPS unit. K. Davis noted her main project during the summer was researching and developing methodology for sidewalk and curb ramp inventory. K. Davis stated she was working with NHDOT and the Technology Transfer Center at UNH to standardize this methodology with the state. She explained why this project was important and noted she completed the inventory of Newmarket's sidewalks and curb ramps and stated she was still waiting to hear back from NHDOT to schedule a meeting regarding the methodology proposal.

There was discussion about the communities maintaining their sidewalks and how that is a major expense for the communities. C. Copeland noted the Town of Newmarket used local option fees to assist in managing maintenance.

4.3 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century

M. Ambrosi explained that MAP-21 was reauthorizing funding at the federal level and begins on October 1, 2012. M. Ambrosi stated the goal of MAP-21 places a real focus on maintaining and preserving the transportation system and provides more flexibility to States for using funding. R. Nichols requested that a presentation be given on MAP-21 related to FTA at the next meeting.

5. Project Updates

M. Ambrosi stated the Steering Committee in Newmarket met regarding the Sky Bridge Project and Newmarket has also met with the design consultant and the project is going forward and going well. M. Ambrosi noted the Maine DOT held a public meeting in Somersworth regarding the Route 9 Somersworth-Berwick Bridge and noted Commissioner W. Connor was there with some good input regarding ITS. M. Ambrosi noted the start date looks to be the summer of 2013. M. Ambrosi stated the Durham-Newmarket Bike Shoulders project is moving forward and is in final design and 2014 is the projected start date for the

project. M. Ambrosi gave an update on the Rochester Park and Ride. M. Ambrosi noted the project has been delayed to 2013 regarding agreements between NHDOT and the landowner and is now at the AG's office in Concord for review. It was noted the project is now at the Rochester Planning Office.

6. Other Business

K. Ortmann stated in the amendment of the minutes there was mention about getting reports back from staff regarding the ITS Architecture/Plan and if that could be a separate agenda item for the next meeting. D. Camara stated that could be done.

M. Ambrosi noted the Dover Whittier Street Bridge is closed and that may be indefinite. R. Nichols followed up by mentioning it is a local bridge that is having a regional impact on COAST. R. Nichols explained one of their buses uses that particular route to service the Whittier Street area and is causing significant delays in their service provision and ridership has dropped because of that. It was noted it is on the State Aid Bridge list and the important thing is that it is having an impact more on low-income people than the rest of the population and it is a challenge to make sure everyone receives equal treatment and get the same opportunities.

There was no other business.

7. Citizen's Forum

There were no comments from the public.

8. Adjournment

The Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m. K. Ortmann made a motion and B. Tapscott seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Minutes submitted by,



Marilyn Barton, PHR
Recording Secretary