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SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

**Strafford Policy Committee Meeting & Public Hearing
January 20, 2012
Rochester Community Center, Rochester, NH
Minutes**

FINAL

SMPO Policy Members Present: Robert Jaffin (Rochester), Rad Nichols (COAST), Stephen Jeffery (Barrington), Steve Pesci (UNH), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Ed Comeau (Brookfield), Edmund Jansen, Jr. (Rollinsford), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester) and Glenn Davison (NHDOT)

SMPO Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Dan Camara (Senior GIS/Transportation Analyst), Matthew Sullivan (Regional Planner), Kyle Pimental (Regional Planner) and Marilyn Barton (Executive Assistant)

1. Introductions

The Chairman opened the meeting at 9:05 AM and asked for introductions around the room.

2. Staff Communications

M. Sullivan gave a PowerPoint presentation and discussed upcoming marketing strategies for the Planning Commission which is made up of a four-pronged plan to include: Web updates and to make them interactive so the user can link to certain parts of a document rather than scroll through the entire document, the SRPC newsletter with news and project updates, a blog about trending topics in planning and the use of Twitter. It was noted at the meeting that a newly developed Twitter feed is in progress and can be found at [Twitter.com/Strafford RPC](https://twitter.com/StraffordRPC). A discussion ensued as to how to make the public aware of this and a suggestion was made to contact communities and ask for their twitter link for the SRPC website. Another suggestion was to use existing print media such as putting the twitter link on SRPC letterhead to advertise on the new Twitter feed.

M. Ambrosi noted he and D. Camara attended a workshop last week called Planning for Operations, which focused on planning strategies to maximize efficiency of the transportation system and performance measures. M. Ambrosi noted the focus was on ITS solutions, such as signal coordination and what you have and how it can be improved. G. Davison stated the workshop also discussed integrating planning and operations and safety goals and objectives. D. Camara stated the goal is to work with NHDOT and grab data and get some base line figures and set goals for the transportation system moving forward. D. Camara gave an example of this: Using congestion data for an intersection: Using GIS work and time stamping to see how long it takes to get through an intersection and the problems associated with the intersection and the time of day those problems occur in. D. Camara noted the goal is to have a before and after assessment for things like turning movements and traffic counts. S. Keans wanted to know if the electronic signs are monitored by NHDOT. G. Davison stated they are monitored by NHDOT and there is live data.

A discussion ensued about if there were travel time statistics before and after implementing projects to see if we've been successful in solving a problem. G. Davison stated not at this time, however the department was moving forward and looking at performance measures and heading in that direction.

M. Barton stated she attended the Local Public Agency manual update meeting at NHDOT on January 11, 2012 and noted R. Nichols was there and reminded everyone of the required training and noted the dates were listed on the last page of the handout included in the meeting packets.

3.1 Open Public Hearing to receive public comment for 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Chairman opened the public hearing at 9:40 a.m. M. Ambrosi stated the SMPO started a thirty day public comment period in December and at their January 6, 2012 Technical Advisory Committee meeting, a motion was approved to recommend Amendment #4 to the Policy Committee. M. Ambrosi went over the most notable changes which included:

- The addition of the Spaulding Express Transit Project, now known as the *Clipper Connection*, which will offer transit service to the Shipyard and Pease intended to ease commuter congestion.
- Durham – Newmarket Project #13080 for bike shoulders and road geometry improvements has been included to adjust project phasing in order to move forward on elements of the project where Right of Way issues have been resolved.
- Durham Project #16254 to make interchange improvements at the Route 4 and Route 108 intersection has been added to amendment #4 and is to show consistency with the *Draft 2013-2022 Ten Year Plan* where this project was moved onto the DRAFT Ten Year Plan “Deferred Projects List.” The “Deferred Project List” is a prioritized list of projects that have been removed from the Ten Year Plan due to anticipation of future funding cuts from Federal Highway Administration.
- At the December Policy Committee meeting Rad Nichols, the Executive Director of COAST, requested the addition of their recently approved Federal Transit Administration grant to S/TIP Amendment #4. COAST was awarded roughly \$400,000 (\$324,000 federal, \$80,000 local match) under the new Federal Transit Administration *Section 5309 Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative*. The funds were targeted to support technological improvements and other capital related expenses for the establishment of a regional call center. The grant also includes funding for up to 99 Mobile Data Terminals (tablet computers modified to provide a variety of real-time information to transit drivers). The inclusion of this project would allow COAST and the Alliance for Community Transportation to access these funds and move ahead with implementing elements of their grant. Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization succeeded in adding this project to Amendment #4 by using the processes outlined in the Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Prospectus for amending project lists in Transportation Improvement Programs. The Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Planner proposed that the Air Quality Exemption Code “E-26” for “construction or renovation of power, signal, or communications systems” be assigned to the project making it exempt from the air quality conformity process. The project was then submitted to the *Interagency Consultation Group* to garner consensus that this project would not trigger a new air quality determination and could be added to the amendment. The group unanimously agreed that the “E-26” Air Quality Exemption Code was the appropriate label and that the project would not negatively impact the previously approved Air Quality Conformity Status.

M. Ambrosi stated an air quality conformity determination was conducted to ensure project changes did not increase air pollutant levels above thresholds set in the New Hampshire State Implementation Plan (SIP). The assessment ended up projecting a slight overall decrease in certain pollutants due to the project changes. This determination was

confirmed through the Interagency Consultation process. S. Pesci asked if the project manager of the Durham project would touch base with Durham and UNH after this amendment to give them idea where the project is at.

M. Ambrosi noted if future Federal Highway Administration funding is provided at or above current funding levels, projects from the "Deferred Projects List" would be restored into the Ten Year Plan in roughly the same period they were removed.

3.2 Close Public Hearing

After no other comments, the Chairman closed the public hearing at 9:50 a.m.

4.1 Draft MPO Minutes of December 16, 2011

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes from December 16, 2011 as presented. K. Ortmann made a motion and T. Crosby seconded that motion. It was noted there was two abstentions: S. Pesci (UNH) and S. Jeffery (Barrington) as they were not at that meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

4.2 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #4

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #4 as presented. K. Ortmann made a motion and S. Pesci seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

5.1 Coordinated Plan Update

M. Ambrosi noted this update is a collaborative effort with Rockingham Planning Commission, the Alliance for Community Transportation, and service providers from the Regional Coordination Council region. Federal rules recommend this document be updated every five years to maintain eligibility to access specific Federal Transit Administration funding programs including: *5310, 5316, and 5317*.

M. Ambrosi stated the initial timeline for updating this document was very aggressive in order to allow regional transportation providers to apply for upcoming Federal Transit Administration grant rounds. M. Ambrosi stated more recently, staff from NH DOT has confirmed that agencies in the Regional Coordination Council Region 10 will not be excluded from the grant rounds if the update is in the process of being completed. M. Ambrosi stated because transportation providers in the region will be eligible for the upcoming Federal Transit Administration grant rounds, we have pushed the approval date to the February Policy meeting to allow additional time for completing the update and a thorough public involvement process.

M. Ambrosi stated significant progress has been made on the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan update and are now in the public comment period. M. Ambrosi noted included in the update are new and more detailed tables conveying information about transportation service providers and their capabilities, updated census information to reflect the changing socio-economic and demographic trends from the region, and improved/updated information within the text of the document.

M. Ambrosi noted completed chapters of the Coordinated Plan included in meeting packets at the January Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy meeting or on the Strafford Regional Planning Commission website, www.strafford.org. M. Ambrosi stated comments regarding the Coordinated Plan will be accepted through the Public Hearing on February 17, 2012 and comments can be submitted in person at the Public Hearing, electronically by sending an email to him at: mambrosi@strafford.org or by sending a letter to him by mail to: Strafford Regional Planning Commission, 150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12, Rochester NH, 03867

M. Ambrosi reminded everyone we are on a tight timeline for finishing the update on a schedule that will prevent a lapse in our ability to access funding and will be seeking TAC and Policy Committee endorsement of the document in February 2012.

A discussion ensued regarding the definition of disability and how the ADA and Census have very different definitions. It was noted that a lot of nursing homes and hospitals have their own transportation services and does this fit it within this plan. M. Ambrosi noted yes they are a part of ACT meetings and assisting with developing strategies. A discussion ensued about how land use and transportation are connected and that we should also think of land use in conjunction with residential opportunities. With an aging population and changing demographics, communities should think about ways to adapt space to those concerns.

5.2 Annual Listing of Obligated Projects – FY 2011

M. Ambrosi stated this document is intended to increase the transparency of government spending on transportation projects and strategies in metropolitan areas to State and local officials, and to the public at large.

M. Ambrosi noted the format of the Annual Listing hasn't changed significantly from past years. M. Ambrosi stated the document reviews the role of Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization and our federally mandated plans. M. Ambrosi stated the document then discusses the meaning of "obligation" and reasons for negative numbers, before presenting the list of all the Federal Fiscal Year 2011 funding obligations for the Strafford region along with statewide expenditures. M. Ambrosi noted the document also contains a map showing project locations in the region.

M. Ambrosi went over the reasons for "Deobligating" funds:

- Bids come in at a lower level than the agreed to obligation amount for a project. After the project bid is accepted, the remaining funds are returned and shown as a negative obligation. This would happen when going out to bid and having estimates come in lower than anticipated, but before construction is completed. This happened recently with the Little Bay Bridges Project. Where NHDOT budgeted above where construction estimates came in.
- Advanced construction projects occur when the sponsor first pays the cost and is reimbursed. These projects often result in a deobligation because first the project must be obligated, and second it must be deobligated when the sponsor agrees to pay the costs of the project. Third, the project is obligated again when it is time for the federal government to reimburse the sponsor.

This can be seen in the Dover-Somersworth project #12644 to add a turning lane at the Long Hill Road / Route 108 intersection. The lane was added a few years back and now funds have been deobligated because the project had advanced construction. The project sponsors have been or will be compensated for the federal portion of the cost. Because inflation and constructions costs traditionally increase over time, advanced construction projects often cost less than they are projected to in the Transportation Improvement Program.

- A project phase is closed out causing funds remaining in that phase to be deobligated. This action must happen before the funds can be obligated into another phase for the same project.

M. Ambrosi noted this happened with the Wakefield Transportation Enhancements project #14824 to add sidewalks. The phase never progressed despite having funding allocated and the town moved on from the project in order to pursue alternative funding. The previously obligated funding must be shown as a negative to show the funding is deobligated.

- M. Ambrosi stated after a project is complete and all bills are paid, any remaining obligation authority is returned to the federal government and is shown as a deobligation, or a negative number in the obligations project list.

M. Ambrosi gave an example of this scenario: Durham project #13867 for Main Street reconstruction where the project cost appears to have come in lower (\$2,298 under the obligated amount) than the previously obligated amount. This type of deobligation of funding occurs after construction is completed.

M. Ambrosi stated this year SRPC created a table of annually obligated funding by project type (this was a somewhat subjective measure) and community (shared projects were split equally between beneficiaries). The tables show the last four years of obligated funding for projects in the Strafford region. S. Pesci stated he really liked the table but thought it needed a little more work and suggested to replicate methodically with every TIP so that it tells a story over many years as a snapshot of what has been done.

K. Ortmann asked about the statewide projects listed and if these were applicable to the region or statewide. M. Ambrosi noted it was statewide as it is tough to break down statewide projects regionally.

5.3 Intelligent Transportation Systems update

D. Camara stated the Strafford and Rockingham MPOs are working with the IBI Group out of Boston, to update our Regional ITS Architecture and Plan. D. Camara noted this Plan lays out the coordination framework (architecture) and timelines for completing ITS projects in the region (plan).

D. Camara stated in such a fiscally constrained time, ITS projects are a relatively low cost way of improving the safety and efficiency of our region's transportation infrastructure. D. Camara noted costly capacity improvement projects have left little opportunity for smaller safety/efficiency- improvement projects to move ahead as scheduled and as needed. D. Camara stated with NHDOT's current Ten Year Plan focus on preservation and maintenance, ITS projects are a great, lower cost method of increasing the safety and efficiency of our region's current transportation infrastructure.

D. Camara gave some recent examples of improvements to our region's ITS: Open Road Tolling (ORT) in Hampton, Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) and CCTV cameras on NH 16 and I-95, and Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) on I-95. Other examples of common ITS include: signal coordination, automatic vehicle location (AVL) for emergency management and transit operators, road weather information systems (RWIS), variable speed limit signs, and automatic traffic signal enforcement.

D. Camara noted we are anticipating a kickoff meeting with IBI Group in the beginning of February to begin discussions about the current status of ITS in the region and neighboring regions. D. Camara stated Strafford MPO is currently looking for volunteers to be on the region's Working Advisory Group (WAG) to help steer the update to the region's ITS Plan.

D. Camara noted members of the WAG would be looking at a commitment of three to four meetings between February and May of this year. [The project must be done by the end of May as this contract is extended for one year only.] Municipal officials, transportation professionals, transit operators, emergency management officials and alike are all welcome to help improve the region's transportation safety and mobility. D. Camara noted ITS projects are required to be in this plan in order for them to move forward into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and consequent Ten Year Plan. D. Camara stated the first WAG meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2012 at the Newington Town Hall at 10 a.m. and would send information on Monday, January 23, 2012.

D. Camara noted for additional information regarding the Regional ITS Architecture and Plan update please contact him at dcamara@strafford.org.

6. Project Updates

D. Camara noted the 2011 traffic count data is now available on the SRPC website under "Services" and then planning data and to contact him with any questions.

K Pimental gave a PowerPoint point discussion on The Mills Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. K. Pimental stated this included the communities of Durham, Newmarket, Madbury, Dover and Rollinsford. K. Pimental noted this plan is being submitted to NHDOT to be considered as part of the Scenic Byway Plan. K. Pimental gave an overview of the natural, historic, cultural, recreational and archeological conditions and noted pictures were taken along the route and the plan is to have a group work on this in early spring. This byway would go through scenic and historical parts of the communities via Routes 108 and 4 and downtown areas. A discussion ensued on how to use this as a marketing tool for the communities and to make it as easy to use as possible.

M. Ambrosi noted the Ten year Plan was signed by Governor Lynch and is off to the Legislators. M. Ambrosi stated the Seacoast Commuter Options meeting took place on December 9, 2011 and SRPC is waiting for a decision from COAST at their board meeting on February 9, 2012 regarding becoming the lead agency for this.

S. Pesci gave an update on the bill that was in the house to abolish the NH Rail Transit Authority. He noted there were not enough votes and the Authority continues on and would be working next on a feasibility study. S. Pesci noted regarding the Durham-Rochester bus service: they are waiting to get a notice to proceed from NHDOT and at this time the potential start date is January 2013.

R. Nichols stated the roll out of the Clipper Connection on January 9, 2012 went extremely well. R. Nichols gave some updates on other COAST bus routes: The Route 2/Trolley expansion will be taking place this fall. The Fast Trans service in Dover is at the end of its CMAQ funding life and some necessary cuts, such as eliminating early evening runs, were made. The Route 6 bus was extended from the Lilac Mall to Market Basket in Rochester and there was a twenty-five percent increase in ridership. The Route 1 bus which services Dover-Somersworth-Berwick now has Saturday service which has become very popular. R. Nichols noted ridership for COAST continues to increase and are looking at half a million riders in the upcoming year.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment

The Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:25 AM.

Minutes submitted by,



Marilyn Barton, PHR
Recording Secretary