

BARRINGTON  
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NORTHWOOD  
NOTTINGHAM  
ROCHESTER  
ROLLINSFORD  
SOMERSWORTH  
STRAFFORD  
WAKEFIELD

## Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, December 18, 2015 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Strafford Regional Planning Commission  
150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12, Conference Room 1A  
Rochester, NH

### AGENDA

#### 1. Introductions

**1.1. Members Present:** Bill Connor (Somersworth), Tom Clark (Dover), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Rick Healey (Rochester), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Suzanne Huard (Rollinsford), Bob Jaffin (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Paul Lockwood (NHDES-ARD), Judy Nelson (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Rad Nichols (COAST), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Steve Pesci (UNH), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth)

**Staff Present:** Tom Brown (Data Management Specialist), Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Chris Scheiner (GIS & Technical Analyst), Natasha Leuchanka (Regional Planner), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner),

#### 2. Staff Communications

*C. Copeland introduced Rachel Dewey to the Policy Committee members. Rachel joined the SRPC staff at the beginning of December as a data analyst. Her work will focus on the Metro Plan and performance measures development under the upcoming SHRP2 project.*

#### 3. Action Item(s)

**3.1.** Approve minutes from October 16, 2015

*B. Connor made a motion to accept the minutes from October 16, 2015 as written, the motion was seconded by K. Ortmann.*

*Vote: unanimous*

#### 4. Discussion Item(s)

**4.1.** 2015 Annual Listing of Obligated Projects

*C Lentz reiterated the purpose of the Annual Listing of Obligated projects and he provided a brief summary of regional projects in the document. The Annual Listing of Obligated projects was accepted.*

#### **4.2. Dover-Rochester-Somersworth : Ten Year Plan Complete Streets Project**

*C. Lentz explained that SRPC staff held a meeting on December 14<sup>th</sup> between municipal staff from Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth, and Rad Nichols from COAST to hear a presentation from Keith Cota and Michael Babinski from NHDOT about the Complete Streets project along NH108 currently in the Ten-Year Plan (TYP project # - 40599). The project includes multiple infrastructure improvements along NH108 between Weeks Crossing in Dover (108 and Indian Brook Dr.), and Innovation Dr. (near Skyhaven Airport) in Rochester. The goal of the meeting was to review the existing project scope and discuss changes that should be incorporated into an updated scope before NHDOT began consultant selection and preliminary project design. Discussion areas included changes in traffic levels and landuse patterns, improving facilities and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, overall design considerations, economic development, project-specific public input, and post-construction maintenance.*

*R. Nichols mentioned that this project will be the first regional complete streets project. C Lentz added that it is also a very early example (at the national level) of a project that includes multiple municipalities, and very likely one of the first to pass through areas with urban, suburban, and rural density levels.*

*C. Copeland noted that K. Cota agreed to incorporate comments made at the meeting and meet again with SRPC and municipal staff later in the summer (2016) to review and discuss a new proposed project scope, before posting a request for proposals for consultant selection. C. Copeland also highlighted the role of the municipalities in analyzing landuse patterns along the corridor.*

*K. Ortmann asked whether the project focused only on the three municipalities, and asked about the extent of UNH Wildcat Transit's involvement. C. Lentz replied that the project only concerns Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth, and that the project scope was outside UNH Wildcat Transit's service area.*

### **5. Project Update(s)**

#### **5.1. 2015-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan – Update**

*C. Lentz reviewed progress to-date on the 2015–2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. He gave a presentation with an overview of the plan and its chapter content, with a focus on the data and technical resources that will inform policy and recommendations (such as demographic and economic data, infrastructure conditions, land use patterns, traffic and safety records, and climate change trends).*

*K. Ortmann asked what the Energy Information Administration is (which was referenced as a source of data for the Metro Plan). C. Lentz responded that the Energy Information Administration (EIA) is a federal administration that provides detailed information about fuel use, fuel cost, and some emissions data, at national and state levels.*

*S. Pesci asked about the source of demographic data shown in a graphic in the presentation. C. Lentz responded that it came directly from SRPC's recently published Housing Needs Assessment.*

*K. Ortmann inquired about data on commuting patterns in the presentation and mentioned that the Rochester Economic Development Committee might be a source for local and regional data on commuting patterns. C. Lentz explained the nature of presented data and thanked K. Ortmann for his suggestion.*

*During discussion about impervious cover and its effect on water quality, C. Copeland added that while the region as a whole contains around 5.5% impervious cover, most of that is concentrated in the urban centers, where runoff goes directly into major streams and rivers.*

*P. Lockwood asked a question related to the limit of 10% impervious cover – the calculated point at which water quality impairments are expected to occur because of pollution in runoff from impervious cover. He asked whether there were similar calculations that predicted when impervious cover would reduce the ability of soils to soak up stormwater and lead to flooding that could cause infrastructure damage. C. Lentz responded that he wasn't aware of such a limit, but that the Metro Plan would be directly considering infrastructure resilience in the face of increased flooding amid growing development.*

*During discussion about roadway infrastructure conditions K. Ortmann asked whether there was a way to compare older legislative highways Classifications with the current "tier" system used by NHDOT. G. Davison responded that there really wasn't an coherent way to translate the two systems. C. Lentz mentioned that the Metro Plan will include a general description of the roadway classification system.*

*R Nichols pointed out that the condition of transit fleet vehicles should be considered alongside roadway conditions. C. Lentz agreed and mentioned that the Metro Plan contains data on transit fleet condition, but it wasn't included in the presentation*

*S. Pesci asked whether the data used to describe roadway conditions were total miles or lane miles, and said pointing out the difference would be critical to accurate analysis. He said that if the data are in total miles (rather than lane miles), they paint a different picture. While smaller regional highways outnumber large interstate highways in New Hampshire, most regional highways have fewer lanes, and therefore lane miles would be a more accurate number. G. Davison explained that the data shown (which were from NHDOT's draft Ten year Plan supplemental documents) were calculated from lane miles.*

*During discussion about the Highway Trust Fund and transportation funding approaches at the federal-level, R. Healey asked for confirmation that under the current model (the gas tax) fuel efficiency and falling vehicle miles traveled are reducing revenues for federal transportation funding. C. Lentz confirmed the question and said that municipalities and states are looking for alternative ways to increase funding for transportation improvements. P. Lockwood mentioned that several states have been experimenting with different user fee-based approaches such as a tax on miles traveled, instead of fuel use. He added that a bill (HB 460) is under development in the New Hampshire legislature that proposes assessing registration fees based on the mileage of cars at annual inspections/registrations. K. Ortmann reiterated R. Healey's question and commented that the goal of planning was to look ahead of challenges like the fuel tax-based funding model and develop new models and approaches before major problems arise. R. Nichols added that it was equally important to continue incentivizing good behaviors that decrease congestion and continue improving air quality. Multiple members discussed the privacy issues around assessing fees based on odometer readings, and the fact that odometer readings are already recorded at annual inspections.*

*During discussion about freight rail, S. Huard asked about data presented on the number of NH Northcoast rail cars bringing recycled oil from a facility in Rollinsford, saying that residents have expressed concern about the number and size of trucks traveling to and from near the facility. C. Lentz said he would be getting more accurate data on NH Northcoast freight data.*

*S. Pesci said that discussion around freight rail needs to include data from Pan Am railways because it moves so much more volume than other companies like NH Northcoast.*

*B. Jaffin added that the plan should include data on the volume of freight moving in and out of ports and airports.*

*C. Scheiner asked C. Lentz to briefly explain what “100-year storm” meant. C. Lentz explained that the existing model measures the probability that a storm of a certain magnitude (amount of rainfall) will occur in a given year.*

*C. Copeland described the changes in tidal flow she has observed in coastal communities like Newmarket.*

*C. Scheiner mentioned an ongoing project between SRPC and Rockingham Planning Commission to look at projected impacts to infrastructure from sea level rise. S. Pesci recommended a presentation he had seen at RPC about the sea level rise project.*

*Rick Healey asked about the seemingly slow rate of sea level rise (measured at 1.76 millimeters/year for Portsmouth). C. Lentz responded that the rate may seem small, but it is incremental over many years, and current research suggests that emissions and climate change could have a cumulative effect that accelerates sea level rise rapidly.*

*K. Ortmann mentioned that the Metro Plan should have a component focusing on technology like telecommuting and autonomous cars. C. Lentz agreed and said the plan does have a focused section on new technologies.*

*P. Nelson suggested that the Metro Plan should include freight and travel to and from airports and ports. C. Lentz agreed and said he would find more information.*

## **5.2. Scenic Byways – Update**

*C. Lentz told the committee that he had recently taken on the scenic byways work. He said that the Mills Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan is being finalized prior to a meeting in mid-January, including updated data on bicycle and pedestrian activity. He also explained that the Branch River Scenic Byways Strategic Marketing Plan has been adopted by the byway committee and approved by the State Scenic and Cultural Byways Council.*

## **5.3. Review of letter from the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) about the updated draft 2017-2026 Ten-Year Plan.**

*C. Lentz highlighted specific parts of a letter the GACIT commissioners recently sent to the Governor along with their updates to the draft Ten-Year Plan. Topics included flexing of funds from the HSIP and CMAQ programs, use of toll revenues, and impacts from the recently signed federal transportation funding authorization (“Fixing America’s Surface Transportation” - FAST act).*

*C. Copeland recommended that committee members review the letter sent by NHDOT on November 20<sup>th</sup> in response to questions raised by GACIT members, which provided expiations of turnpike toll revenues.*

*S. Pesci emphasized a sentence related to projected funding through the FAST Act which will supplement current funding levels for transportation in New Hampshire: “The GACIT recommendation is that this supplementary funding be used to address additional red list bridges and to continue to improve pavement condition across the state, however, GACIT defers to the Governor and Legislature to determine how best to utilize the additional federal funds in the future years.” G. Davison replied that the GACIT was too near to finishing their deliberations and voting on the draft Ten Year Plan to reasonably incorporate the new issues brought up by increased funding through the new FAST Act. S. Pesci recommended the need to pay close attention to how new FAST Act funds are considered during the continuing legislative process.*

## 6. Other Business

*R. Nichols highlighted the continuing success and popularity of the Clipper Connection bus that provides transit from northern communities in Strafford and Carrol Counties, to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. He also described challenges arising at the newly completed Park n' Ride in Rochester: after passengers are dropped off after the workday, lines of cars form and create localized traffic and safety concerns when turning from the Park n' Ride on to US202. He mentioned sightlines as a particular issue at the location under discussion.*

*S. Pesci described ongoing planning challenges for UNH Wildcat Transit. As UNH continues to build student housing on or near campus, ridership on Wildcat Transit routes is declining (however, on-campus connector routes continue to grow rapidly). UNH Wildcat is considering scaling back certain off-campus Wildcat routes where ridership has decreased. For instance, Route 5 to Newmarket saw a 34% drop in ridership compared to the Fall of 2014. R. Healey pointed out that this will further incentivize students to live on-campus, and lead to more cuts to transit routes in the future. S. Pesci responded that while more students living on-campus means lower ridership on Wildcat routes, in a broader view relative to air quality and energy use, more students commuting on-foot or taking on-campus shuttles is a positive trend. He also added that ridership on the Rochester 125 express route remains unsustainably low, and that when federal assistance for the route runs out, it will likely be discontinued. S. Huard asked about student demand for off-campus recreational routes. S. Pesci responded that Wildcat service to Portsmouth was extremely popular for students in the evenings and especially on weekends. He added that students pay a \$112 fee per year to support UNH transit services, and that the planning department is responsive to student requests for service changes.*

*C. Copeland proposed that SRPC staff meet with COAST and UNH Wildcat to review existing transit service challenges for the Newmarket area, and discuss future transit planning. S. Pesci said they would contact COAST and SRPC to set up a meeting after they formalized proposed cuts to UNH Wildcat routes.*

*K. Ortmann added that while the focus of Wildcat Transit has historically been on students, it is important to note that UNH is the largest employer in the region. He suggested that discussion between COAST and Wildcat consider the possibility of promoting greater ridership from faculty and staff.*

*B. Jaffin mentioned that the recently reorganized NH Rail Transit Authority will be meeting for the first time on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 at NHDOT at Hazen Drive in Concord. He recommended that people attend the meeting to contribute their thoughts and suggestions to the appointed members.*

*T. Brown described the NHDOT Traffic Safety Audit Program which helps municipalities address safety issues at specific intersections or segments of road. Administered through the HSIP program, the audit program focuses on intersections that have had at least one fatality and have not incorporated any safety improvements within the past 5 years. T. Brown described the application process, distributed application forms, and said the application is also available online. S. Huard asked whether there was a list of current and previous applicants to the program. T. Brown said that he has a record of applications and highlighted a project in the Strafford region that is in process. K. Ortmann asked whether the intersection at the Rochester Park n' Ride and US202 [described above by R. Nichols] could qualify for the audit program. T. Brown responded that it was unlikely because the intersection had recently been improved as part of the Park n' Ride construction, and there were no recorded fatalities. T. Brown added that the Safety Audit Program is primarily reactive in nature and designed to address existing safety concerns – not proactively address projected safety concerns in the future.*

## 7. Citizen's Forum – No citizens were present.

**8. Adjournment**

*T. Crosby made a motion to adjourn, seconded by B. Connor*

*Vote: Unanimous*

*The meeting was adjourned at 10:56am.*

Minutes submitted by,

Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary



Brian Tapscott, Chair

Date

