

**Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Policy Committee Meeting  
150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12, Conference Rm. 1A  
Rochester, NH 03867**

**FINAL Minutes**

**Friday, June 15, 2018  
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

**1. Introductions**

*The meeting was called to order at 9:11am*

Members Present: Tom Crosby (Madbury), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Don Hamann (Rochester), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Jan Hotchkiss (Middleton), Sandy Keans (Rochester), David Landry (Dover), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Shanna Saunders (Somersworth), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Michael Williams (COAST)

Staff Present: Jen Czysz (Executive Director), Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner)

**2. Staff Communications**

C. Lentz said Monique Duchesne recently joined SRPC as a summer data collection intern and would be working with Stef Casella during the season. He also mentioned that staff would be holding interviews for the GIS planner position and a wide range of candidates had applied.

C. Lentz reminded the committee that SRPC's annual meeting would be held on Thursday June 28<sup>th</sup>.

C. Lentz noted that there would be no Policy committee meeting in July as there were no business items and he would be on vacation.

**3. Action Item(s)**

**3.1. Minutes from May 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 [VOTE]**

M. Gasses made a motion to accept the draft minutes from May as written

Seconded by Jan Hotchkiss

Vote: unanimous in favor

**3.2. Comments and Approval of Letter to NHDOT: Regional Priorities for Urban and Rural Freight Corridor Designation [VOTE]**

C. Lentz summarized content from the most recent draft of a letter to NHDOT regarding designation of new urban and rural freight corridors and general freight planning needs in the Strafford region. He said the letter described the need for consideration of the need to balance freight traffic in a region with many small communities along freight routes. He said TAC and Policy members had come to consensus

that the letter should highlight Routes NH16 (not the Spaulding Turnpike because it is not eligible), NH125, US4, and NH11 as priorities for freight planning in the region. The letter also identified the Boston to Maine rail line as critical freight infrastructure, as well as intermodal freight connections. C. Lentz noted that the Spaulding Turnpike sections of NH16 are not eligible for consideration under the corridor designation process, but he said the letter highlighted the multiple important interchanges of NH16 and other primary highways in the region. He said the letter highlighted several communities and locations where freight traffic conflicted with local safety and community planning (e.g. Barrington and Northwood). C. Lentz said the final sections of the letter made a request for continuing collaboration with the RPCs and MPOs during the statewide freight planning process, and a request for increased access to shared sources of freight data. C. Lentz said he would be attending the final regional freight summit with Jen Czys next Thursday (June 21<sup>st</sup>).

Jan Hotchkiss noted grammatical and typographical errors in the second and third sentences of the conclusion paragraph. C. Lentz said he would fix those sections.

W. Burton asked what a project that balanced freight movement and local safety/quality of life would look like. C. Lentz said a wide range of project types were eligible for freight funding that could include technology solutions, and road geometry to improve safety. Members discussed legal issues around trying to regulate truck movement on regional highways. M. Gasses said Barrington didn't want trucks to stop traveling on NH125 through the center of town, but the town is concerned with ensuring freight traffic, local safety, and planning efforts are balanced. V. Parmele said she wasn't sure how that could be accomplished in a place like Northwood where a major highway (US 4) geographically divides the town down the middle and carries a large volume of freight because it's the only alternative east-west highway to US101.

J. Czys suggested that the first step was to identify such challenging locations and begin thinking about possible design and planning approaches that can lead to successful solutions. C. Lentz added that this is the first statewide freight planning effort and the first statewide freight plan for New Hampshire.

P. Nelson asked for clarification on the timeline for decision-making around this process.

C. Lentz said NHDOT was hoping for comments from RPCs, communities, and individuals by June 30<sup>th</sup>. He said it wasn't an official public comment period and NHDOT was soliciting input from regions through RPCs. The final decisions about designation of new freight corridors would be made at the executive level with the Governor and Council. P. Nelson requested that the letter include the mileage of eligible highways identified as priorities for the region. C. Lentz said he liked the approach of providing a broad planning overview with specific locations and data points like highway mileage.

E. Strachan explained how important complete streets and balancing modes and road uses was and said she thought the planning process and the letter were a good start in that direction.

P. Nelson suggested that the region needs a more detailed definition of the different types of freight in the region and the various carriers. J. Czys agreed but said the challenge would be getting data at that level of detail.

D. Landry noted that Dover had designated several local routes to restrict truck traffic. He asked if towns had made efforts to protect smaller roads that are not designed to handle heavy trucks in places where trucks may divert off larger highways. M. Gasses said Dover's road restrictions had been based on various truck weight classes. J. Hotchkiss said he was aware that many towns pass weight-restriction

ordinance and laws to limit heavy truck travel on smaller local roads. W. Burton said there was a need for more outreach and understanding of the economics of trucking and shipping related to local access to markets and truck routes.

P. Nelson reiterated the need for more detailed definition of freight and analysis of freight locations in the region. He said there was a need for a comprehensive freight plan that is coordinated with Rockingham MPO and incorporates freight generators outside the region (e.g. Pease Tradeport). The plan needs a map of freight generators around the region. J. Czysz agreed and said the current effort was the first step toward a broader, regionally-specific freight plan.

W. Burton suggested that the language in the letter was phrased as more of a friendly request. He suggested that the state is obligated to work with MPOs and municipalities and the language could be stronger to reflect this. J. Czysz said they could include specific language from federal planning laws about required collaboration between DOTs and MPOs.

M. Williams made a motion to approve the letter with the requested miles for prioritized routes, a map, and typographical edits.

Seconded by Jon Hotchkiss

Vote: Unanimous in favor

#### **4. Discussion Items**

##### **4.1. Regional Transit Asset Management (TAM) Targets**

C. Lentz gave a brief presentation about performance measures and target setting for regional transit provider assets. He noted that MPOs are not required to set new transit targets every year, but are required to update them along with the Metro Plan (at least every five years). C. Lentz presented data on the current condition of COAST and Wildcat's vehicles, equipment, and facilities. He noted that both providers had successfully applied for replacement buses through the CMAQ program, which would replace older fleet vehicles.

C. Lentz noted that the data he had handed out in the meeting packet would need to be updated and that he would be working with COAST and Wildcat and the other MPOs to develop a process for tracking the condition of transit assets with greater detail and regularity. He said the goal would be to track trends and coordinate with transit providers on capital planning to support their funding applications and advocate about the value of public transportation.

W. Burton asked if any transit providers had applied for Volkswagen mitigation funding. E Strachan said the applications weren't available yet but would be soon.

V. Parmele asked about the possibility of expanding demand-response services for non-medical trips such as employment. M. Williams said Northwood was outside COAST's service area, but there were other service expansions (such as COAST starting to provide senior transportation services in Portsmouth starting in the fall). These expansions depend on communities coming forward with funding to support routes and services. Jon Hotchkiss noted that COAST used to run the "North Bus" in northern communities of the Strafford region. He said the service eventually had to cease because of low ridership, even with volunteer drivers.

P. Nelson asked for clarification of the "Useful Life Benchmark" (ULB) of buses in transit fleets – whether the ULB ratings were based on internal combustion engines. M. Williams said ULBs were calculated for individual bus classes based on several factors including the engine. P. Nelson speculated that electric buses would have longer service lives and asked if COAST was considering adding electric vehicles to the fleet. M. Williams said they were tracking the feasibility and cost of switching to electric buses but it was not possible. He said battery lives were currently not adequate for COASTs service levels and electric buses were more expensive even with lifetime fuel savings.

#### 5. Other Business

W. Burton noted that the filing deadline for proposed state legislation was coming up in September.

P. Nelson informed the committee members that Brian Tapscott has recently passed away. He noted Brian had served as a City Councilor in Somersworth and as an SRPC commissioner for many years. P. Nelson acknowledged Brian's long-term commitment to local public service and asked everyone to keep him in their thoughts.

C. Lentz said RPCs and state and federal agencies had all met to discuss projects in Amendment 4 to the STIP due to an air quality case in California that would likely be requiring MPOs and states to demonstrate that they were within federal air quality standards. He said NHDOT anticipated that they would be sending Amendment 4 to FHWA and FTA for approval in early July, and that MPOs would be working with NHDOT and other agencies to address air quality conformity requirements in the coming months.

#### 6. Citizen's Forum

No citizens brought forward any issues or topics of discussion.

#### 7. Adjournment

Jan Hotchkiss made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by M. Williams

Vote: Unanimous in favor

*Meeting adjourned at 10:19 am*

Minutes prepared by Colin Lentz

Approved by

Name Printed: Victoria Parnelle

Signed: Victoria Parnelle

Date: 8/17/18