

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

Minutes

**Friday August 19th 2016
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Gary Anderson (Nottingham) Wayne Burton (Durham), Bill Connor (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Rick Healey (Rochester), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Robert Jaffin (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Tony McManus (Dover), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Sam Reid (Dover), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth), Dirk Timmons (UNH Wildcat Transit), Tim White (NHDES)

Staff Present: Tom Brown (Data Management Specialist), Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Lynn Cherry (Regional Planning and Communications Assistant), Alexa Gozdiff (Transportation Planning Assistant), Rachael Mack (GIS Planner), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner),

Guests:

The meeting began with a quorum at 9:05am

1.1. Point of order – Request change of order to move items 5.1 and 5.2 to discussion items section

C. Lentz requested a point of order to move items 5.1 and 5.1 from the Project Updates portion of the agenda to the Discussion Items section in order to get feedback from the Committee. B. Tapscott made a motion to amend the agenda, seconded by J. Hotchkiss, and the Committee voted all in favor.

2. Staff Communications

2.1. Cynthia Copeland and Tom Brown

C. Copeland announced that T. Brown will be resigning from his position as Data Management Specialist on August 20, 2016. T. Brown will be moving on to pursue a career with a landscape design and construction company. C. Copeland thanked Tom for his work at SRPC, said that his contributions to data collection efforts such as traffic counts and RSMS had been invaluable. She expressed her regret at losing such a valuable member of the SRPC team but wished him well in the future.

C. Copeland announced that a Performance Measures Assistant, K. Gross, has been hired to join the SHRP2 team and would be starting on August 29, 2016.

3. Action Item(s)

3.1. Minutes from July 15th 2016

K. Ortmann made a motion to approve the July 15th minutes

Seconded by S. Reid

Vote: unanimous in favor

K. Ortmann expressed concern that the writing and editing of meeting minutes took up a lot of staff time and asked if people thought they were more detailed than they needed to be.

V. Parmele disagreed and stated that the minutes are important, especially for Commissioners who miss meetings and want to stay caught up. B. Connor agreed with V. Parmele. C. Lentz explained that the minutes are a team effort with A. Gozdoff and R. Dewey and they can take about 4-5 hours total to complete.

3.2. National Proposed Rulemaking on MPO Coordination and Planning Area Reform - Approve docket submittal on behalf of SRPC TAC and Policy Committees

C. Lentz updated the Committee on a Proposed Rulemaking by FTA and FHA. He explained that it is a proposed rule that would determine how federal transportation laws are implemented. He provided maps and example language from the proposed rule. The rule proposes aligning MPO boundaries to be more consistent with census-designated urbanized area boundaries and stipulates specific requirements for the coordination of planning documents and activities among neighbor MPOs. C. Lentz said he was working on a letter to submit to the federal register docket and outlined the primary themes of concern with the proposed rule. He explained that all the comments submitted to the docket (from other MPOs, agencies, and members of Congress) have been critical of the proposed rule and expressed a need for an extension to the comment period which ends on August 26, 2016. C. Lentz welcomed additional comments from the Committee on the draft letter for docket submittal and said he would continue to accept comments through next Wednesday (8/24).

M. Gasses pointed out small urbanized areas in Barrington and asked about their significance given their small size. C. Lentz said he wasn't sure how peripheral pockets of urbanized area would be affected, and noted that the methodology used by the Census Bureau to calculate urban areas changes for each decennial census. J. Hotchkiss asked if this change would affect the region's size and standing in the state. C. Lentz explained that SRPC is a small-to-medium sized MPO compared to the rest of the state. The rule is forcing a top-down approach which contradicts the role of metropolitan planning organizations. He noted that the proposed rule in its current form will likely discourage participation and inclusion of rural communities and may have an impact on the way that communities use smart growth principles, practice sustainable land use, and conserve land.

C. Lentz said it is unclear from the proposed rule how coordination between states will function in cases where urbanized areas (and thus MPO boundaries) cross state boundaries. In such cases, the proposed rule requires interstate cooperation to develop one

Metropolitan Transportation Plan, one Transportation Improvement Program, and one set of performance measures and targets. K. Ortmann suggested that SRPC make a comment in their letter to acknowledge that SRPC values a bottom-up approach which the proposed rule contradicts. C. Lentz said the letter makes this statement. V. Parmele added that the performance based planning initiative that the government has been expanding also seems to go against the top-down nature of the NPRM. C. Lentz agreed. J. Hotchkiss commented that the proposed rule is reflective of a “bigger-and-simpler-is-better” trend in the country right now.

K. Ortmann made a motion to approve the draft comment letter with the understanding that staff would incorporate comments from the meeting and through Wednesday (8/24), seconded by J. Hotchkiss, and the Committee voted all in favor.

4. Discussion Item(s)

4.1 Draft 2017-2018 Transportation Improvement Program- components, development process, and preliminary timeline.

C. Lentz gave an update on the draft TIP and gave a preliminary review of the update process. He said the approval timeline had been delayed since the summer and NHDOT would be sending draft materials in September and is expecting approval by the end of the calendar year.

C. Lentz explained the process for developing the document, the fiscal constraints, and available future project funding within the TIP. He noted that the Strafford region can theoretically receive 10% of federal funds allocated to New Hampshire for regional transportation projects on state and federally- owned highways. He explained that the 10% is based on estimates of revenue and not a direct allocation of funds. C. Lentz expressed his hope to improve the project solicitation process going forward in order to assist municipalities with developing projects eligible for inclusion in the ten-year plan.

P. Nelson asked if the 10% is based off lane miles. C. Lentz clarified that it is based off lane miles and population. P. Nelson asked how non-state and non-federal roads affect this number. C. Lentz explained that they do not play a role in the calculation of funds. K. Ortmann added that local roads are a local responsibility.

P. Nelson asked how a road transitions from local to state ownership. K. Ortmann responded that that process usually goes the other way, from state to local ownership. M. Gasses added that there is a book and a workshop called *A Hard Road to Travel* that explains the New Hampshire road system.

S. Reid asked if SRPC is ready if a new federal transportation authorization bill resulted in new funding for infrastructure i.e. “shovel-ready projects.” C. Lentz explains that his role is to help municipalities get more projects ready to go through project solicitation. C. Lentz mentioned that after the transition from MAP21 to the FAST Act that transportation funds were increased overall, and the funds were primarily used by the state for infrastructure loans and large-investment projects.

K. Ortmann asked if it is possible to program more projects for 2018 since it appears the region has a large amount of available funds for that year. He also added that local communities should be aware of this opportunity in 2018 now so that they can start planning for it. C. Lentz explained that 2018 is a missed opportunity because there is not enough time to get projects approved and scheduled. Instead the region should focus on projects 5-10 years from now.

B. Connor asked if larger cities and towns have an advantage over smaller cities and towns because of more staff and resources. C. Lentz said that they do because they can usually afford more full time engineering and other technical staff, but he hopes to level the playing field in the MPO through a project solicitation process that provides equal opportunity for municipalities to propose projects.

M. Gasses asked if the Town of Barrington could propose the NH 9/NH 125 project. C. Lentz said yes because they are state highways.

P. Nelson asked where alternative transportation such as transit comes into play to reduce road congestion. C. Lentz explained that the 10-year plan and the TIP focus primarily on road way infrastructure but that other projects outside of particular infrastructure take place through CMAQ, HSIP, and TAP. C. Copeland added that SRPC and RPC have been very successful in obtaining CMAQ dollars for transit.

4.2 Transportation Alternatives Program- Process updates

C. Lentz explained that applicants throughout the state have sent their letters of interest and are moving forward with their applications. Out of 55 applications in the state the Strafford region has three: Dover, Somersworth, and UNH/Durham. All three projects aim to improve pedestrian infrastructure in specific areas of their communities. C. Lentz emphasized that TAP is a reimbursement program with an 80/20 split; awardees pay the full cost of their projects and are reimbursed by NHDOT. After applications are reviewed in September, TAC Committee members will be scoring and ranking them at the October TAC meeting. NHDOT will be announcing the selected recipients at the end of the calendar year.

5. Project Update(s)

5.1 Progress update on SHRP2 project

L. Cherry gave an update on the SHRP2 Project. They are excited to have K. Gross joining their team soon and have already had two successful workgroup meetings. She said the team has been working to finalize the criteria used to selected performance measures, and encourage collaboration between MPOs and their transit partners.

5.2 Dover-Rochester-Somersworth complete streets project update

C. Lentz explained that the municipalities, COAST, and SRPC are currently compiling a letter to Keith Cota (project manager) about their design vision and objectives for the complete streets project between Innovation Dr. near Skyhaven Airport and Weeks Crossing in Dover. SRPC has been facilitating discussion with the three cities and COAST prior to NHDOT's

consultant selection process beginning early in the Fall. B. Connor asked if the project would include funding for maintenance. C. Lentz responded that municipalities are responsible for maintenance of sidewalks on state projects like this one, but that COAST had been discussing cost sharing methods for bus stop and sidewalk maintenance with the municipalities and NHDOT. M. Gasses asked if this was an 80/20 cost split project. C. Lentz responded that it is a fully funded project within the TIP and Ten-Year Plan.

6. Other Business

6.1 Durham-Newmarket bike shoulder project guardrails- Durham Town Council resolution

W. Burton explained that shoulders along guardrails in certain sections of the current project on NH 108 between Newmarket and Durham gravel are too narrow for bikers to use safely. He noted that the ASHTO safety standards require a five-foot shoulder when guardrails are used. A review was requested by the Town of Durham and the project manager acknowledged that they are not in compliance with safety standards. C. Copeland added that the 4 foot shoulders have been overlooked by several parties, including the MPO and herself. People were unaware of this change in engineering standards and didn't recognize the situation until the guardrails were in place. D. Timmons added that the shoulder sections that are currently gravel will eventually be paved. W. Burton asked if it would be appropriate to express concerns to review the safety standards of the project. M. Gasses added that the standards had changed before the final designs were completed but that the renderings of the project do not show the guardrails. A motion was made by W. Burton for SRPC to express their concerns, P. Nelson seconded, and the Committee voted all in favor.

7. Citizen's Forum – Citizens of the Strafford region are invited to speak on the subject matter of the meeting. Statements shall be limited to three minutes

No citizen comments were brought forward.

8. Adjournment

K. Ortmann moved to adjourn

Seconded by J. Hotchkiss

Vote: All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47am

Minutes submitted by,
Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary

Approved by
Name Printed: Victoria Parnell

Signed Victoria Parnell

Date: 9/14/16

