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ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

**Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
SRPC Office, Rochester, NH**

January 6, 2012 Minutes

Final

Present: Bill Hoke (NHDOT), Nick Alexander (NHDOT), Leigh Levine (FHWA), Paul Lockwood (NHDES), Beverly Cray (UNH), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Rad Nichols (COAST) and Melodie Esterberg (Rochester)

Members Not Present: Connie Brawders (Barrington), Chris Parker (Dover), James Campbell (Durham), Laurel Cox (Lee), Wallace Dunham (Madbury), Don Vachon (New Durham), Diane Hardy (Newmarket), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Patrick Carroll (Rollinsford) and Dave Sharples (Somersworth)

Staff: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director) Marc Ambrosi (Transportation Planner) Marilyn Barton (Executive Assistant), Greg Jones (Data Collection and Analysis Technician), and Dan Camara (Senior GIS/Transportation Analyst)

Guest: Robert Jaffin (Rochester)

1. Introductions

Chairman M. Esterberg opened the meeting at 9 a.m. and introductions were given around the room.

2. Staff Communications

M. Ambrosi introduced Greg Jones, SRPC's Data Collection and Analysis Technician and noted he would be assisting SRPC with various projects. M. Ambrosi stated Greg also assists Barrington with their public meetings.

3.1 Approval of Draft Strafford MPO TAC December 2, 2011 Minutes

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the draft Strafford MPO TAC minutes of December 2, 2011. J. Hotchkiss made a motion and R. Nichols seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

3.2 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #4-Recommendation to Policy Committee

M. Ambrosi stated the SMPO is seeking TAC recommendation for Policy Committee Approval of the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program, Amendment #4

M. Ambrosi noted NH DOT has released an updated draft for Amendment #4 to the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program and the SMPO is starting the public comment period for the amendment this week and there is a public hearing scheduled for Friday, January 20, 2012 during the SMPO Policy Committee meeting.

M. Ambrosi stated the most notable changes for the Strafford region are: the addition of the Spaulding Express Transit Project (or "Clipper Connection" as it is now known), which will offer transit service to the Shipyard and Pease intended to ease commuter congestion. And a change to the Durham – Newmarket Project #13080 to adjust project phasing in order to move forward on elements of the project where Right of Way issues have been resolved.

M. Ambrosi stated another notable change is in response to the recent Ten Year Plan hearings. M. Ambrosi stated the project to make interchange improvements at the Route 4 and Route 108 intersection in Durham is being moved out of the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program timeframe onto the "Deferred Projects List" to show consistency with the Draft Ten Year Plan. M. Ambrosi noted the "Deferred Project List" is a prioritized list of projects that have been removed from Ten Year Plan due to anticipation of future funding cuts from FHWA. M. Ambrosi stated if future FHWA 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 time frame they were removed.

M. Ambrosi stated at the December Policy Committee meeting Rad Nichols, the Executive Director of COAST, requested the addition of their recently approved FTA grant to S/TIP Amendment #4. M. Ambrosi noted COAST was awarded roughly \$400,000 (\$324,000 federal, \$80,000 local match) under the new FTA Section 5309 Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative. M. Ambrosi noted the funds were targeted to support technological improvements and other capital related expenses for the establishment of a regional call center. M. Ambrosi stated the grant also includes funding for up to ninety-nine Mobile Data Terminals (tablet computers modified to provide a variety of real-time information to transit drivers). M. Ambrosi stated the inclusion of this project would allow COAST/ACT to access these funds and move ahead with implementing elements of their grant.

M. Ambrosi stated the SMPO succeeded in adding this project to Amendment #4 by using the processes outlined in the SMPO Prospectus for amending project lists in Transportation Improvement Programs. M. Ambrosi stated he 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. M. Ambrosi stated 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. M. Ambrosi noted 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 noted an air quality conformity determination was conducted to ensure project changes did not increase air pollutant levels above thresholds set in the State Implementation Plan (SIP). M. Ambrosi stated the assessment ended up projecting a slight overall decrease in certain pollutants due to the project changes and this determination was confirmed through the Interagency Consultation process.

The Chairman asked for a motion to recommend the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #4 to the Policy Committee. J. Hotchkiss made a motion and B. Cray seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

4.1 Coordinated Plan Update

M. Ambrosi noted significant progress has been made on the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan update. M. Ambrosi stated 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 this update is a collaborative effort with Rockingham Planning Commission, the Alliance for Community Transportation, and service providers from the Regional Coordination Council (RCC) region. M. Ambrosi noted federal rules mandate 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 FTA grant rounds and noted more recently staff from NH DOT has confirmed that agencies in the ACT region will not be excluded from the grant rounds if the update is in the process of being completed. M. Ambrosi noted because transportation providers in the region will be eligible for the upcoming FTA grant rounds we have pushed the approval date out to the February Policy meeting to allow additional time for completing the update. M. Ambrosi handed out the first three draft chapters for review and encouraged everyone to look them over.

M. Ambrosi stated comments regarding the Coordinated Plan will be accepted through the Public Hearing on February 17, 2012. M. Ambrosi noted comments can be submitted in person at the Public Hearing, electronically by sending him an email to: mambrosi@strafford.org or by sending him a letter by mail to:

Marc Ambrosi
Strafford Regional Planning Commission
150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12
Rochester NH, 03867

4.2 Annual Listing of Obligated Projects FY 2011

M. Ambrosi stated the Annual Listing of Projects for FY 2011 has been published and is available on the SRPC website and also at the Rochester and Dover public libraries. M. Ambrosi noted this provision 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 the SMPO and our federally mandated plans. M. Ambrosi stated the document discusses the meaning of "obligation" and why some of the figures shown as negatives 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 explained reasons for "deobligating" funds:

Bids come in at a lower level than the agreed obligation amount for a project. M. Ambrosi explained after a project bid is accepted; the remaining funds are returned and shown as a negative obligation.

M. Ambrosi stated another reason for deobligating funds would be advance construction projects occur when the sponsor pays the cost and is reimbursed. M. Ambrosi explained 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.

M. Ambrosi stated a project phase is closed out causing funds remaining in that phase to be deobligated and explained this action must happen before the funds can be obligated into another phase for the same project.

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 noted this year a table of annually obligated funding by project type (this was a somewhat subjective measure) and community (shared projects were split equally between beneficiaries) was created to show the last four years of Obligated funding for projects in the Strafford region and reviewed the table.

N. Alexander noted obligations are different from expenditures.

5. Project Updates

D. Camara noted the Annual Traffic Report will be out soon and it contains one hundred traffic counts. D. Camara noted the report is a compilation of each location and is raw data that is collected and is useful to communities and would be on the SRPC website in a couple of weeks.

D. Camara stated the ITS Architecture Plan update is just getting going and there is going to be a kick off meeting in a couple of weeks. D. Camara stated a letter for a Working Advisory Group would be going out shortly and communities are welcome to participate. D. Camara stated projects have to be in the plan to go forward.

M. Ambrosi stated at the GACIT hearing he attended on November 30, 2011 there was one project removed unless funding is restored. M. Ambrosi noted the good news was 5310 funding was restored to approximately sixty-six percent of what it is currently. M. Ambrosi stated programs such as TE, CMAQ, HSIP, the Scenic Byways program and SRTS were cut severely at seventy percent. M. Ambrosi stated at that meeting there was a discussion about balanced maintenance needs and wasn't too clear about that. N. Alexander stated he would look into that.

M. Ambrosi gave an update on Seacoast Commuter Options and stated that the SMPO, Rockingham Planning Commission, COAST and the City of Portsmouth attended a meeting in Concord at NHDOT. M. Ambrosi stated moving ahead on the project, COAST has agreed to the lead agency and the next meeting would be on February 8, 2012. R. Nichols stated he had a brief discussion with the COAST board in December and will have another discussion at the next board meeting in January.

C. Copeland stated the Town of Deerfield and Southern NH Regional Planning Commission are working on a scenic byway which would include Deerfield, Candia, Raymond, Northwood and Nottingham and asked SRPC for assistance with this. C. Copeland noted G. Jones has been working on taking photos of signs along Route 108 and creating an inventory of the signs as part of the scenic byway being worked on to incorporate into the corridor plan.

R. Nichols stated on Monday, January 9, 2012, the Clipper Connection service would begin. R. Nichols stated COAST is working with Wildcat regarding training for CDL-P (49 CFR, Part 300).

6. Other Business

M. Ambrosi stated he and D. Camara would be attending training at the Nashua RPC next week for Planning for Operations.

M. Ambrosi stated NHDOT has released new draft guidance for communities on Local Project Administration and produced this manual to communicate all program processes and requirements to NHDOT's LPA recipients. M. Ambrosi explained it is an update and a replacement for the following Documents: - *TE & CMAQ Program Manual for the Development of Projects* (May 2001), *Safe Routes to School Project Administration Guide* (Sept. 2010) and *NH DOT Process for Municipally Managed Federal Aid Surface Transportation Program Projects* (Jan. 2007)

M. Ambrosi stated the purpose of this document is to provide a consistent and structured process to follow for Local Project Administration. M. Ambrosi noted the manual provides guidance for each step in project administration including reporting requirements and how to be reimbursed.

M. Ambrosi stated one significant change in NH rules is a new requirement that local project sponsors and their consultants attend a mandatory training to earn a project management certification valid for three years.

M. Ambrosi noted having standardized guidance in one place is a big step forward that will help standardize project administration in New Hampshire. M. Ambrosi stated since we will have to live with the guidance once it is approved, it is important that communities understand what is in the document and address any issues ahead of its approval. M. Ambrosi stated NH DOT is holding a Public Hearing to review and solicit comments about the contents of the Local Project Administration Manual at 3PM, Wednesday, January 11, 2012 at the John O. Morton Building located at 7 Hazen Drive in Concord. Strafford Regional Planning Commission strongly recommends communities in the region review the document and provide comments to NH DOT about any issues with its contents. M. Ambrosi stated M. Barton would be attending the meeting on behalf of the SMPO to bring up any questions, comments or concerns from the communities. M. Esterberg asked if training has been scheduled. N. Alexander stated that would be taking place in the spring.

M. Ambrosi noted an FHWA grant opportunity through the Transportation, Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP) and that MPOs, are eligible for grants. M. Ambrosi noted these grants allow communities to plan implement strategies which improve the efficiency of the transportation system, reduce environmental impacts of transportation, reduce the need for costly future public infrastructure investments, ensure efficient access to jobs, services and centers of trade, and examine development patterns and identify strategies to encourage private sector development patterns which achieve these goals. N. Alexander noted this grant has been around a long time and NH has benefited every year.

M. Ambrosi stated the SMPO was taking a look at future agendas and perhaps have communities come in to speak about projects they're working. R. Jaffin asked if the state or region has benefited from the HM Registration Grant Program, as there is money every year available.

R. Nichols noted the Memorial Bridge is zinc coated so there is not an ongoing need to paint and asked if that has been looked at system wide. N. Alexander stated he would check into that and get back to him on that.

7. Adjournment

The Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10 a.m. R. Nichols made a motion and J. Hotchkiss seconded that motion.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marilyn Barton, PHR". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Marilyn Barton, PHR
Recording Secretary