

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

**Friday, July 7, 2017  
9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.**

**Members Present:** Seth Creighton (Rochester), Maricia Gasses (Barrington), Michael Hoffman (Newmarket), Martin Laferte (Farmington), Christopher Parker (Dover), Shanna Saunders (Somersworth), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Michael Williams (COAST)

**Staff Present:** Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner), Rachael Mack (GIS Planner), Cynthia Plascencia (Transportation Writer), Stephanie Casella (Data Assistant), Derrick Bartlett (Data Assistant), Mason Towmbly (Data Assistant), Molly Bellanger (Data Assistant),

*The meeting was called to order with a quorum at 9:10 a.m.*

M. Laferte stated that since TAC Chairman Jon Hotchkiss stepped down to fill a position with the NH Farm Museum, he, as vice-chair, would be leading the meeting.

A quorum was not present between 9:00am and 9:10am. M. Gasses and C. Parker raised a point of order stating that since there was no quorum, no meeting should be held. M. Hoffman stated that the meeting should continue to discuss informational material, but not discuss or vote on action items. M. Gasses and C. Parker raised objections to this, stating it was not appropriate to continue with the meeting without a quorum. At 9:10am, enough members arrived to achieve a quorum. C Lentz said he would check the bylaws for direction on quorums.

**1. Staff Communications**

C. Lentz announced that Strafford Regional Planning Commission's UPWP for fiscal year 2018-2019 had been submitted and accepted by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

**2. Action Item(s)**

2.1 Approval of the Minutes from June 2, 2017 [VOTE]

C. Parker made a motion to approve the Minutes from June 2, 2017

Seconded by M. Gasses

Vote: All in favor

## **2.2 Election of committee officers for FY2018 [VOTE]**

C. Lentz explained that every fiscal year there is an election of officers. He stated that since Jon Hotchkiss stepped down as chair, M. Laferte volunteered to fill his position, having served as vice chair for two years. C. Lentz added that he and Cynthia Copeland discussed establishing more communication between the chair, vice chair, and himself for the development of agenda items, presenting them to the committee at large, and contacting guest speakers for presentations.

M. Laferte stated that he has plenty of time to dedicate to the Technical Advisory Committee and is capable of filling the chair position for the year.

M. Gasses moved to nominate M. Laferte for chair

Seconded by C. Parker

Vote: All in favor

C. Parker moved to nominate M. Williams for vice chair

Seconded by M. Gasses

Vote: All in favor

## **3. Discussion Items**

### **3.1 Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funding opportunity – Liz Strachan (NH Department of Environmental Services)**

E. Strachan gave a presentation on the Clean Diesel Grant Program, which is funded by the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA). She stated that the DERA program came from the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and appropriates funds for reducing emissions from diesel engines. Seventy percent of the DERA funds are used for a federal competitive program for larger projects. Thirty percent of the DERA funds are allocated to the states under the DERA State Clean Diesel Program for funding a wide range of projects at the state level.

E. Strachan stated that NHDES anticipates a total of \$338K to \$550K to be available for DERA grants. She explained that the reason for the range is that NHDES had the opportunity to match what the federal government offers with Volkswagen settlement funds. If NHDES matches the settlement funds, NHDES receives an additional bonus. The total amount of funding is not definite yet because the Volkswagen settlement is still in process.

E. Strachan explained that NHDES manages DERA funds to be awarded through an open solicitation and review process. The overarching purpose of the program is to provide support for projects that protect human health and improve air quality by reducing harmful emissions

from diesel engines [which, in addition to greenhouse gases, produce microscopic soot particles that pose an incredible health risk]. She reviewed a list of eligible projects, including: exhaust controls; verified idle reduction technologies; verified aerodynamic technologies and verified low resistance tires; marine, locomotive, or non-road vehicle engine replacement; highway vehicle engine replacement; highway diesel vehicles (other than drayage) and buses; locomotives and non-road vehicles and equipment replacement; and drayage vehicles. Each eligible project has a percentage value associated with it, which represents what the grant will cover.

M. Hoffman asked what drayage was. E. Strachan explained that drayage is vehicles used to move boxes or trucks around a specific port or freight hub facility. Drayage vehicles do not generally go on the road, are confined to a specific location, last longer, and tend to be in areas where there are typically other environmental health issues. C. Lentz asked if there was a preference for older engines in the selection process, or an overall priority for funds. E. Strachan stated that there isn't a specific scale or priority for project funding.

E. Strachan discussed funding restrictions for medium and heavy-duty trucks, transit buses, and school buses; non-road engines and equipment; and marine engines. She reviewed several requirements to receive funding, including the criteria that vehicles scheduled for replacement prior to Sept. 30, 2021 are not eligible, any whole vehicle being replaced must be destroyed (including the engine), and no project costs may be incurred prior to approval of the grant agreement from the Governor and Executive Council. She added that quarterly reports on operative details of the vehicle must be submitted to NHDES for a period of 1-3 years and grant recipients must comply with EPA DERA program requirements. E. Strachan mentioned that they do occasionally permit waivers for specific projects that pose a benefit, but may not fit all program requirements. E. Strachan stated that three quotes are needed for any project proposal to ensure funding covers the percentage allotted.

E. Strachan reviewed the steps for applying for the grant. She said that a draft Request For Proposals (RFP) for the upcoming DERA round is on the NHDES website as a reference, and that this round's RFP will be very similar to the previous round. A final RFP will be available on the NHDES website soon, and they will be accepting the first round of applications between Oct. 1 and Oct. 15, 2017. If anyone has any questions, they can submit them to [elizabeth.strachan@des.nh.gov](mailto:elizabeth.strachan@des.nh.gov).

### **3.2 Improving Project development services – 1<sup>st</sup> Objective: input from the Strafford MPO Committees for the NH Transportation Planners Collaborative**

C. Lentz gave a presentation on proposed “project development services”. He explained that SRPC had a very successful Ten Year Plan project solicitation process – having met with all municipalities, transit providers (including C&J Buslines), UNH, and NHDOT maintenance districts. However, C. Lentz noted several issues that need to be improved to increase the efficacy of the project solicitation process:

- the statewide project selection criteria were not finalized until the end of December 2016, leaving only 4 months before regional project lists were due to NHDOT
- the typical schedule is such that many meetings were late in the process and conflicted with town meetings
- the resulting project portfolio was too broad and needed more focus

C. Lentz said he hoped for feedback the committee on developing a new approach that would go beyond project solicitation and shift toward active project development between Strafford MPO and communities. He highlighted two major goals for the new approach: to develop more compelling and financially viable projects for proposing to the Ten Year Plan and TIP; and to improve Strafford MPO’s capacity to help communities plan local transportation improvements and develop projects & services.

C. Lentz said one goal of his efforts was to be able to start developing projects well ahead of the official Ten Year Plan solicitation process so that projects would be fully formed prior to their submission. He reviewed Strafford MPO’s existing capacity for project development services, including: census data and analysis; traffic and safety data collection and analysis; and general planning support. He also noted services in development, such as safety analysis software, compiling and categorizing project funding sources, scope development and cost estimation tools, and performance tracking and analysis,.

C. Lentz stated successful projects for the TYP need to be politically and fiscally viable. He suggested that the federally mandated performance measures represented a perfect opportunity to ensure the project selection process was transparent and consistent. If municipalities and agencies could use performance measures as project criteria, they could develop projects for the Ten Year Plan that specifically address state and MPO performance targets.

C. Lentz explained that one of the first steps was to have a discussion with members of the Transportation Planners Collaborative (all MPOs, RPCs, NHDOT, Federal Highway Administration, NH Dept. of Environmental Services, and Federal Transit Administration) about getting a process in place as soon as possible to start developing projects for the Ten Year Plan process in fall of 2018. After gathering feedback from the TAC and Policy Committees, he would

work with NHDOT and the RPCs to develop an agenda for a future Transportation Planners Collaborative.

C. Lentz specifically noted the need for updated corridor plans for the region's primary highways. He explained that corridor plans could link various planning areas and community goals beyond transportation improvements (including economic development, quality of life, and community character). Another benefit of corridor-based planning is that multiple projects are linked across municipal borders, rather than having single projects developed on their own.

C. Lentz ended his presentation by asking the committee for feedback to take to the Policy Committee and a future Transportation Planners Collaborative meeting, and any specific actions Strafford MPO can take to implement project development services.

M. Laferte discussed a recent meeting for the towns of New Durham and Farmington regarding increases in traffic congestion and safety hazards along Route 11. He presented the meeting as an example of the type of communication between communities this project development process needs. C. Lentz agreed and added that he had reached out to Bill Watson to come to a Committee meeting to discuss the challenges of managing individual projects.

M. Gasses commented that the process has promise, but in order to be effective the state process also has to implement the performance base process. She raised the concern that if communities propose projects that tie to the state's performance gaps, it has to be assured that the state will be analyzing for those gaps. She stated that she hoped the NHDOT would work more closely with communities and make their expectations clearer and earlier in the process. She added that the LPA process is bigger than people think and navigating it is a huge barrier to many of the smaller towns. She suggested that it would be great if the state allowed RPCs to be LPA certified to help municipalities.

C. Parker added that another problem with the LPA process is that the requirements change often. S. Saunders noted that in the past, updates to the LPA manual have conflicted with local project development and management deadlines. C. Parker agreed and noted that a local project in Dover had recently come in conflict with new LPA requirements that were added after the project had been approved and had begun. He expressed hope that in the future, there would be more opportunities for LPA training in addition to the trainings typically offered by NHDOT in October and April. M. Gasses asked if communities are required to have full-time engineers on staff for certain projects. C. Lentz responded that municipalities must have a full-time staff member who is LPA certified to receive certain grants like the Transportation Alternatives Program.

M. Williams noted that the effectiveness of a performance-based approach and the use of performance targets as project selection criteria is limited by what data are available. He added

that the seven federally-mandated performance measures are important, but may not address regionally-specific challenges. He said the process should include an effort to find consensus on measures that are important to the region, and an effort to collect data that support those issues. C. Lentz agreed and noted that the Partnering for Performance NH workgroup [of the four MPOs in the state] has unanimously decided to continue working together on performance-based planning and other transportation planning issues after the SHRP2 project is completed.

C. Lentz stated that he would put together a summary of discussion from the TAC and Policy Committees and send it around for further comments, from both committees.

#### **4. Project Updates**

C. Lentz shared an update on the Road Safety Audit Program. He explained that it is an annual grant program that uses Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds managed by NHDOT. The application deadline for projects in the upcoming selection round is December 1 2017. C. Lentz explained that the program focuses on intersections and highway segments with demonstrable safety hazards. He noted that state and local roads are eligible but eligibility depends on two important criteria: a proposed project must address an area that has at least one fatal incident within the past 10 years, and has not had any safety-specific improvements within the past five years. C. Lentz noted that the program has a specific focus on realigning heavily skewed "Y" intersections. He explained that the program includes an on-the-ground "safety audit" conducted collaboratively by NHDOT engineers and local public safety officials, public works staff, and other stakeholders.

M. Gasses asked what the program funding covers, if it was just the audit or the entire project. C. Lentz replied that local funding match was dependent on individual project factors, but that the program covers the bulk of expenses.

M. Hoffman reiterated his suggestion that SRPC get legal guidance on the bylaws regarding holding a meeting without a quorum. He noted the importance of the informational discussion items and expressed concern that the committee would suffer long-term if meetings were cancelled due to lack of a quorum. C. Parker explained the importance of members RSVPing to the email notification for upcoming meetings in order for C. Lentz to ensure a quorum would be present.

**5. 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 citizens brought comments forward.

**6. Adjournment**

C. Parker moved to adjourn

Seconded by S. Creighton

Vote: All in favor

*The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.*

Minutes submitted by Colin Lentz and Cynthia Plascencia

Approved by

Name Printed: MARTIN G. DA FERTE

Signed: 

Dated: 8-4-17

