

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

**FINAL Minutes**

**Friday, May 18, 2018  
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

**1. Introductions**

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

Members Present: Mark Avery (Madbury), Wayne Burton (Durham), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Don Hamann (Rochester), Fred Kaen (Lee), Sandy Keans (Rochester), Martin Laferty (Farmington), David Landry (Dover), Judy Nelson (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Anthony McManus (Dover), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Steve Pesci (UNH), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Michael Williams (COAST)

Staff Present: Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Stefanie Casella (Data Collection and Analysis Assistant), Kathy Foster (Financial Consultant), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner)

**2. Staff Communications**

C. Lentz announced that Rachel Mack (GIS Planner) had accepted a position at a consulting firm near Portland, Maine and today was her last day at SRPC. He said staff were excited for her and wished her well, and that the search to find a replacement had already begun. C. Lentz explained that SRPC was also in the process of hiring an intern for the data collection season. He said they were in the process of conducting interviews and current staff had already started setting traffic counts assigned by NHDOT.

V. Parmele said she understood that SRPC would have half the staff working on data collection this season compared to the previous season. C. Lentz explained that in the recent past, funding had usually supported hiring a larger team of 3-4 data collection interns in the first year of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), while usually one additional intern was hired in the second year to assist staff. He said the intern would be working with Stef Casella to conduct data collection.

V. Parmele asked if SRPC staff still had the same workload as the previous season [with more limited staff capacity]. C. Lentz responded that they had the same number of NHDOT-assigned traffic counts to set. He added that in years when a large data collection team is unavailable, staff must prioritize completing traffic counts over expanding other programs such as culverts, sidewalks, and local road assessments. He said staff would not be neglecting those other data collection programs and that they would be fulfilling existing obligations and agreements for those programs.

S. Pesci said it seemed like NHDOT was falling behind on publishing up-to-date traffic data and reports on their website.

G. Davison responded that he hadn't looked at the state of the online statewide dataset, but that NHDOT staff were currently working on implementing new systems that would make data more available and useful, including online maps. He said that could be a reason for the delay compared to years past, and he would check on progress.

C. Lentz reminded the committee that Jennifer Czysz would be starting as SRPC's new Executive Director on May 29<sup>th</sup> (the day after Memorial Day).

### **3. Action Item(s)**

#### **3.1. Minutes from April 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 [VOTE]**

T. Crosby made a motion to accept the draft minutes from April as written

Seconded by J. Nelson

Vote: unanimous in favor

#### **3.2. Review and Recommendation of Eligible Routes for Urban and Rural Freight Corridor Designation [VOTE]**

C. Lentz reviewed the request for input from the Regional Planning Commissions regarding designation of new miles of "Critical Urban Freight Corridors" (CUFCs) and "Critical Rural Freight Corridors" (CRFCs). He noted that NHDOT was authorized by federal law to designate 150 new miles of federal aid eligible highways as CRFCs and 75 new miles as CUFCs as part of development of their required freight plan. C. Lentz presented a map of highways in the region that were eligible for designation and those that are already designated. He said designation of new freight corridor sections would make them eligible for federal funding under the National Highway Freight Program. G. Davison pointed out that New Hampshire's apportionment would be about five million additional freight dollars for the whole state, and that NHDOT needed to develop the statewide freight plan in order to receive the funding. C. Lentz said he had discussed freight issues with municipal planners who were concerned that corridor designation and freight funding would lead to more trucks traveling through communities. He said he had been thinking of the funding as supporting improve freight management – improving freight access and safety, and minimizing conflicts with local traffic and development – rather than strictly widening highways to accommodate more freight traffic.

W. Burton asked what C. Lentz meant by freight "management", saying that people might equate that to "regulation" by the government that would affect private freight companies. C. Lentz responded that he had been using the word management for his own purposes to describe a more holistic approach to freight planning that included consideration for the need to ensure efficient freight movement and the potential impacts from increased freight traffic. G. Davison added that the state's goal was not to manage freight traffic in the sense of regulating companies' access to freight routes, but to work with freight stakeholders, planning commissions, and municipalities to improve a fragmented freight network. G. Davison explained that several stakeholders from freight

sectors (including trucking, rail, and air freight) were part of the Statewide Freight Advisory Committee that was being facilitated by NHDOT for development of the State Freight Plan. He said the freight plan development process included several planned public freight summits across the state. The first had been in Claremont and Concord and another was scheduled for Portsmouth, with others in the near future.

C. Lentz asked about Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) such as open-road tolling and all-electronic tolling. G. Davison said ITS was an important component of the freight plan and improvements, but pointed out that the turnpike system was not being considered for freight corridor designation as the turnpike system is self-sufficient through toll revenue and freight funding should be invested elsewhere.

S. Diamond asked about NH202 being identified on the map C. Lentz had provided.

C. Lentz explained that the map simply identified routes that were eligible under the designation rules; it didn't constitute a recommendation for designation of NH202.

G. Davison added that NH202 was unlikely to be designated because it is a smaller highway that has many twists, turns, and hills.

S. Pesci asked what the small crosses on the map represented.

C. Lentz responded that they were locations he had identified as potential areas of freight concentration (such as the Ossipee Aggregates rail facility in Rochester used by New Hampshire North Coast rail, and the UPS distribution hub in Dover).

S. Pesci asked for clarification on the role of the Regional Planning Commissions in the urban and rural freight corridor designation process. G. Davison responded that NHDOT was looking for input on the priority candidates for designation of new routes under the state freight plan development process.

C. Lentz explained that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members had identified NH16 (the Spaulding Turnpike) and US4 as priority routes in the region for consideration. He said he was looking for similar input from Policy members on priority routes and additional technical analysis.

V. Parmele asked about the TAC's process in discussing priority corridors in the region. C. Lentz responded that the TAC had a general discussion about the corridors that were already important routes for freight, and where communities had concerns about conflicts with local traffic patterns and development.

P. Nelson asked how the priorities and input of freight providers and users was being incorporated into the corridor designation processes. G. Davison reiterated that the state freight advisory committee included a diverse range of freight providers who were providing direct input to the plan development.

S. Pesci pointed out that Strafford MPO had already made recommendations to NHDOT regarding freight through its Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the list of projects it had submitted for consideration during the Ten Year Plan development process. He asked how additional technical

input was really useful at this point. S. Pesci suggested that the Policy committee direct SRPC staff to write a letter to NHDOT summarizing discussion points and identifying priority corridors: NH16; US4; NH125; the Boston to Maine Rail Corridor; and all the crossings and connections associated with those routes. He asked if there was consensus among the Policy members on those routes.

Policy members discussed the priority routes. S. Diamond suggested that an underlying assumption [of communications to NHDOT about TAC and Policy discussion] should be that rail is the safest, most efficient freight mode.

C. Lentz asked for confirmation of consensus on the priorities proposed by S. Pesci. He said he would draft a letter compiling TAC and Policy discussion points and concerns. He reiterated that RPC comments were due to NHDOT by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Policy members concurred with the proposal.

P. Nelson emphasized the need to identify prospective projects that are eligible for funding under the National Highway Freight Program in the short term. G. Davison said the freight planning process was designed to identify those projects but also to ensure funding would be invested where needs were greatest – as identified by the RPCs and their communities.

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

##### **4.1. Air Quality Conformity and STIP approval**

C. Lentz provided an update on an ongoing court case in California that challenged federal air quality standards from 1997. He explained that depending on how the case is determined in the appeals process, MPOs across the country could be required to show that they are “in attainment” of the 1997 federal air quality standards. C. Lentz said the court case impacted the current amendment to the STIP (Amendment #4) – although the RPCs had approved the amendment, it had not been approved by FHWA before the original court case was ruled. Therefore, the RPCs, NHDOT, NHDES, and federal agencies had reviewed projects that would require detailed air quality analysis to ensure that they wouldn’t increase vehicle emissions. He said none of the projects in the Strafford region required analysis, but three projects in other regions would need to revert to their funding levels prior to the amendment in order to get it approved. This was critical because the recently approved CMAQ projects were part of Amendment 4. C. Lentz said Amendment 4 would be delayed but approved in the near future. He explained that the real impact of the court case could be on the update to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). This would usually happen in the fall [of an even-numbered year] following the approval of the Ten Year Plan. C. Lentz said that any future amendments to the current STIP or updates would potentially require air quality analyses to be completed by the RPCs. He clarified that any future amendment to the current STIP could be approved as long as it only contains projects that are exempt from air quality analyses (such as transit, bike/ped, traffic signal, and other congestion reduction or safety projects). C. Lentz explained that because the state had been in attainment of air quality standards for several years, the computer models used by Rockingham and Strafford MPOs to conduct air quality analyses had not been maintained, were out of date, and would require time to refurbish.

S. Pesci expressed dismay that it was unfortunate that the models had fallen into disuse and disrepair. He said it was going to be much more expensive to rebuild the models than it would have been to maintain them.

C. Lentz said he would keep the committees updated with any new information.

**5. Other Business**

**5.1. Approach to Regional Project Development and Ranking**

C. Lentz reminded the committee members that he was organizing a sub-committee of TAC and Policy members to discuss regional planning and develop projects to be submitted for the next Ten Year Plan.

V. Parmele informed the committee that it was the last meeting for Judy Nelson and Anthony McManus. She thanked them for their years on the Policy and Executive Committees in service to the MPO and the region.

**6. Citizen's Forum**

No citizens brought forward any issues or topics of discussion.

**7. Adjournment**

S. Keans made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by W. Burton

Vote: Unanimous in favor

*Meeting adjourned at 10:19 am*

Minutes prepared by Colin Lentz

Approved by Victoria Parmele  
Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: Judy Nelson  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date: 4/13/16

