

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

FINAL Minutes

**Friday, May 19, 2017
9 a.m.–11 a.m.**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Mark Avery (Madbury), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Robert Jaffin (Rochester), Martin Laferte (Farmington), John Law (Farmington), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Tony McMannus (Dover), Elena Piekut (Dover), Steve Pesci (UNH), Sam Reid (Dover), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth) Michael Williams (COAST)

Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland, Executive Director; Rachel Dewey, Data Analyst; Nancy O'Connor, Communications and Outreach Assistant; Cynthia Plascencia, Transportation Writer.

The meeting was called to order with a quorum at 9:08 a.m.

2. Staff Communications

3. Action Item(s)

3.1. Minutes from April 21, 2017 [VOTE]

T. Crosby made a motion to approve the April 21, 2017 Meeting Minutes
Seconded by B. Tapscott
Vote: Unanimous in favor

3.2. Ten Year Plan Project list – re-approval [VOTE]

S. Pesci gave a summary of the ad-hoc workgroup efforts to finalize the Strafford MPO submission to NHDOT for the draft Ten Year Plan. The subcommittee met the Wednesday after the April Policy meeting to go through the list and narrow down the number of projects to send to DOT. S. Pesci emphasized that no alterations were made to the project scorings or their prioritization, but rather the workgroup went through a filtering process to take out the smaller projects that were not a good fit for Ten Year Plan consideration. S. Pesci stated that the list of projects and the summary of regional transportation improvement priority were a good representation of the overall value needs for the region. He referenced the list printed for the

meeting as well as the April 28, 2017 memo drafted by C. Lentz, which has been sent to B. Watson at DOT.

V. Parmele commented that she appreciated the list taking into consideration regional issues relevant to smaller towns like Northwood.

S. Pesci added comments about the Epping to Rochester RT 125 project which reflected the group working together at a regional level. He noted that the current list of project proposals was an assembly of individual projects along a corridor that needs a coordinated planning effort. He said the workgroup came to a consensus that DOT really needs to look at the whole NH125 corridor in totality and prioritize what improvements need to be done in terms of safety and capacity.

C. Copeland asked if S. Pesci could go over the projects the workgroup had selected as regionally significant. S. Pesci gave an overview of the seven selected projects, all of which were found on a meeting hand out titled "Projects of regional significance selected by Policy Committee Ten-Year Plan workgroup." He mentioned that the committee partly focused on projects that had several years of planning support, or had been in the Metro Plan for multiple cycles. S. Pesci recognized that some of the projects were large, expensive projects, but the group knew that additional grant funds would need to be pursued for these types of projects. He elaborated that for some projects, funding might not be coming out of traditional highway funds.

C. Copeland expressed gratitude for the workgroup's efforts and also hoped that the committee would approve of the project list.

J. Law thanked S. Pesci for the group's work and expressed a desire for the committee to work on getting more attention to other corridors in the region, in addition to those on the project list. J. Law encouraged the group to work together on a corridor approach to take to the state for consideration.

S. Reid made a motion to re-approve the Ten Year Plan list.

Seconded by B. Tapscott

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Report on SHRP2 progress and implementation of performance-based planning

N. O'Connor gave a presentation on the SHRP2 project, now known as *Partnering for Performance NH*. She stated that due to the passing of The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012, there was a shift in transportation planning towards

performance-based planning. In an effort to be proactive, Strafford MPO decided to get together with New Hampshire's three other MPOs and the Southern Maine MPO to start thinking about strategies to deal with performance measures, and create new performance measures. N. O'Connor outlined the specific requirements for states and MPOs to be compliant with federal law, explaining that a significant benefit of the SHRP2 effort was that much of a large workload was shared between members of the performance measures workgroup led by SRPC staff.

N. O'Connor explained that the present workgroup is made up of DOT, the four MPOs, SHRP2, FHWA, a rural RPC, FTA, and Environmental Services. She stated that the workgroup decided to get together and brainstorm strategies; they had to answer this question: *What is a performance measure?* She defined a performance measure as a metric to measure progress towards a specific goal. N. O'Connor stated they have been tasked with federal performance measures to comply with. However the federal performance measures address big picture issues that are one-size-fits-all. She made the comparison that the federal measures for San Francisco were the same as for Strafford MPO.

N. O'Connor stated that the group decided to come up with supplemental performance measures that were just for the Strafford region. She discussed one of the most useful frameworks they used for this process was the SMART framework. The group decided that a good performance measure is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. She stated that using this framework helped the group to narrow down an extensive list of potential supplemental measures and figure out which ones were feasible.

N. O'Connor discussed a funding opportunity given by SHRP2 (Strategic Highway Research Program 2) and how Strafford MPO applied for Plan Works funding, which is a tool developed by the Federal Highway Administration for implementation of performance measures. This award and their tools helped formalize the group's work and reinforce the collaboration between the workgroup agencies and advisors from the region.

N. O'Connor discussed how this project affects the Policy Committee. Since the group focuses on performance-based planning, that allows decision-makers to make more informed decisions. She elaborated that it is important to look at the data to evaluate how the region is doing. This data-driven analysis leads to more effective decisions that ultimately improve infrastructure, and increase transparency and accountability. It will also help to improve collaboration and communication between agencies.

N. O'Connor stated that the workgroup began with basic questions to develop a performance-based planning framework: Where do we want to go? How do we want to get there? How we are going to measure that? What will it take, how did we do? She discussed how the workgroup

reached out to traditional transportation stakeholders as well as nontraditional stakeholders in fields such as environment, public health, and conservation to get their perspectives on what is important to their sector. The outreach yielded a list of 652 measures which has been narrowed down to seven measures. N. O'Connor referred to a process chart that outlined the process the Partnering for Performance NH workgroup took to narrow down the measures.

V. Parmele asked if there was a requirement or mandate to narrow down the measures to that number. R. Dewey explained that those selected 7 measures were "bonus" measures that were supplemental to the federally mandated measures. She said that the federal measures focus on the national highway system and don't take into consideration local level issues. She stated that the supplemental measures were chosen to address gaps the federal measures did not fill.

R. Dewey explained that the 652 measures, proposed by the stakeholders, included some federally mandated measures, but it also included many that aren't required, but that the workgroup still wanted to track. She stated that since there are 17-18 federal highway measures and 5 federal transit measures finalized, (with more to come), the workgroup knew they couldn't feasibly add too many supplemental measures. She explained that the workgroup has a list of other supplemental measures they want to revisit later once they receive the rest of the mandated measures and see what gaps remain.

R. Dewey described the process used to narrow down the full list supplemental measures from 652 to 7. After removing duplicates, vague goal statements, and measures that were simply not feasible, the workgroup went through several rounds, eventually deciding on seven supplemental measures. R. Dewey said the workgroup has started working on target-setting for the supplemental measures, as well as strategies for how to achieve the targets for those measures.

N. O'Connor stated one of the federal mandates is to create system performance reports which show trends and progress in meeting targets. She listed some of the outcomes of this project as improved workgroup relationships, improved collaboration between organizations, and an effective framework to use for future measures. She stated that the workgroup has decided to continue meeting monthly after completing of the SHRP2 project to continue their work on performance-based planning. R. Dewey explained that many supplemental measures that did not make the final cut were set aside to be revisited when more data becomes available. R. Dewey stated they're also working to incorporate a scope of work and a budget in the UPWP to continue working on data collection and implementation of these performance measures. She elaborated that they are working with several agencies and MPOs to address the federal mandated measures.

N. O'Connor ended the presentation by announcing an upcoming colloquium on the Partnering for Performance N.H. project for June 7, 2017, from 12 – 4 p.m. at the NHMA Complex in Concord, N.H. She invited members to attend, and emphasized the importance of the Policy Committee members to give feedback on the targets being proposed. She mentioned that a firm has been chosen to research and design a website to be a central repository of the project's best practices regarding performance-based planning.

V. Parmele asked what role DOT has in the project. R. Dewey stated that in the long-term they would like to work with DOT to implement some of the supplemental measures. They will also be working with DOT on the mandated measures continually.

M. Williams asked what the purpose of the colloquium was, to communicate information or invite discussion. N. O'Connor responded that they would be presenting a summary of the Partnering for Performance NH project and facilitating a small-group exercise to develop potential supplemental measures.

4.2 Introduction to Transit Asset Management (TAM)

C. Copeland explained that the final rule from the Federal Transit Administration for Transit Asset Management (TAM) says that transit providers had to set their performance targets for state of good repair by Jan. 1 2017, and each MPO needs to establish regional targets no later than 180 days later which is June 30, 2017.

C. Copeland presented background information on TAM in preparation for adopting regional performance targets next month. She stated that COAST has set its targets and asked S. Pesci if UNH had set their targets. S. Pesci replied that he could not answer that at the moment, but will follow up.

C. Copeland stated that the Strafford MPO is a tier two sub-recipient of FTA funds, because COAST has fewer than 100 vehicles in fixed-route service. She explained that the federal requirements for performance management focus on state of good repair to ensure that transit providers have safe and efficient vehicles and facilities. The performance measures for transit assets are specific for *rolling stock* (revenue generating buses and vehicles), equipment (non-revenue vehicles), infrastructure (related to fixed guideway trains such as light-rail), and facilities (such as maintenance garages). C. Copeland noted that she believes Strafford MPO didn't need to set targets for infrastructure because there are no qualifying fixed-guideway systems in the region. So the region would only be tracking equipment (non-revenue support-service and maintenance vehicles), rolling stock (revenue vehicles by mode), and facilities (maintenance and administrative facilities; and passenger stations and parking facilities).

C. Copeland reviewed the performance measure for each asset area starting with the rolling stock. She explained that the measure tracks the percentage of revenue vehicles in service that meet or exceed their useful life benchmark. C. Copeland asked if M. Williams could elaborate on what useful life benchmark means for individual vehicles. M. Williams explained that a typical heavy duty bus [>35 feet] is expected to have a service life of 12 years or 500,000 miles. C. Copeland asked how long COAST keeps its buses in service. M. Williams replied that their oldest is 22 years old and others are from 2000-2001, so they regularly exceed the Useful Life Benchmark. C. Copeland asked if Strafford MPO should note that buses usually exceed their useful life to be frugal when they set targets for the region. M. Williams noted that the FTA has established performance measures without a reliable source of funding in place for transit providers to meet their targets for vehicle replacement. S. Pesci added that that's the same situation the Wildcat has, where their busses often exceeds the 12-year Life Benchmark and probably have very similar statistics as COAST. M. Williams noted that the 12 year useful life benchmark is a minimum replacement guideline for ideal funding circumstances; it does not mean buses that run for longer than 12 years are unreliable or unsafe.

C. Copeland explained that Strafford MPO would be working with COAST and UNH Wildcat over the next few weeks and proposing regional TAM performance targets at the June TAC and Policy meetings. S. Pesci explained that both UNH Wildcat and COAST will be hosting FTA auditors for their biennial reviews in the coming week. C. Copeland acknowledged this and noted that Strafford MPO will be having their federal review in February of 2018.

S. Pesci asked if commuter bus providers (such as Concord Coach) and state-owned park-n-rides were included under the TAM performance requirements. M. Williams said he thought those vehicles and facilities fell under the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration (FMCSA) and not FTA. C. Copeland said they would follow up on the question and get clarification.

5. Project Updates

5.1 Dover-Rochester-Somersworth Complete Streets Project 29604

C. Copeland directed meeting attendees' attention to a memo in their meeting packet and reviewed information on the project. She explained that a consultant for the Dover-Rochester-Somersworth complete streets project (TIP #29604) had been selected and NHDOT is currently negotiating the development of the scope for "Part A" of the project. Part A pertains only to the study portion of the project, which includes ROW survey, analysis of traffic and land-use data, environmental assessment and document preparation, development of alternatives, and public engagement. C. Copeland said that C. Lentz had been working with NHDOT on the early

development of the project and recently participated in a meeting between the consultant and NHDOT staff to discuss the scope of work. He will be working with the consultant to provide any data related to traffic volumes, bike/ped, and socioeconomic trends, and will be assisting with the public engagement process. In addition to regular meetings with NHDOT staff, the consultant has proposed a robust public engagement process including multiple meetings with officials and staff from the three cities and SRPC, a multi-media approach to informing and soliciting input from the public (with web-based components), and several site walks.

6. Other Business

C. Copeland reviewed another memo in the meeting packet describing a recent meeting with staff from Representative Carol Shea-Porter's office. She explained that C. Lentz and David Walker (from Rockingham Planning Commission) recently met with Chris Hillesheim and Patrick Carroll (a resident of Rollinsford and former SRPC commissioner) from Representative Carol Shea-Porter's office to discuss high-level transportation planning issues in the seacoast region. The intent was to provide context from the regional level as the congresswoman's staff advise her on policy directions and anticipate future legislative issues (such as transportation planning rulemaking, federal budget development, and potential authorization bills or continuing resolutions on transportation funding). The memo highlighted several topics covered during the meeting:

- Issues related to stability of federal funding and equity of MPO funding apportionment
- How MPO planning fits with the administration's focus on "infrastructure investment"
- Increased funding and support for public transportation (e.g. COAST and Wildcat), demand-response community transportation (e.g. ACT), and intercity transit (e.g. C&J Bus lines)
- The NH project solicitation and development process
- How performance-based planning will affect project development and selection
- Regionally-significant projects
- Need for comprehensive corridor planning

In another area, C. Copeland encouraged meeting attendants and board members to talk to their local board members about the local option fee to support transportation improvements if it wasn't already in place at the local level. She explained the value of the program [a \$5.00 fee added to local vehicle registration to build local transportation improvement funds] and noted that few communities have adopted the local option fee besides Newmarket and Dover. S. Pesci said he believed Durham had not adopted the program, but would check with the town administrator. C. Copeland emphasized that many federal transportation funding programs are looking for "shovel-ready" projects which also have access to matching local funds.

Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

C. Copeland explained that she was part of the CMAQ scoring committee, and they were working on weighting the criteria that would be used to score proposed projects. She asked for volunteers from the committee to help SRPC staff calculate criteria weights. B. Jaffin and V. Parmele volunteered to help staff weight the scoring criteria. S. Pesci noted that NHDOT has flexibility in how they allocate CMAQ funds for various needs in the state [such as transit operations or individual congestion reduction projects], and encouraged SRPC to request the NHDOT focus funds on traditional CMAQ-specific projects that improve congestion and air quality. C. Copeland said she was requesting volunteers to weight the scoring criteria because she has disagreed with how CMAQ funds were allocated in past rounds and wanted to retain objectivity as a member of the CMAQ committee during the scoring process. S. Pesci emphasized the need for municipalities and other applicants for CMAQ funds to have matching funds and local political backing of projects ready to present with project proposals.

STIP Inflation Rate Update

C. Copeland explained that NHDOT recently updated the inflation rate used to calculate project costs (which is calculated based on cost-of-living expenses, and the present values for various commodities). She said the NHDOT commissioner and FHWA had signed off on the change and MPOs and transit providers were being asked to concur with the decision. She noted that NHDOT had been using a 3.2% rate for a number of years, and that the rate would be changing to 2.55%. C. Copeland said she had discussed the issue with COAST and Wildcat and that they had objective concerns and questions, but that they concurred with the decision. J. Law asked how that affects MPO operations. S. Pesci explained that it affected individual transportation improvement projects in the region's TIP and long-range projects that use the inflation rate to calculate "year-of-expenditure" costs 10-20 years into the future. He said the new inflation rate would make it more straightforward to program projects in the Ten Year Plan and better manage fiscal constraint with more accurate long-term cost estimates. C. Copeland said the issue wasn't on the agenda as an official action item, but asked for a consensus from the committee. The committee members acknowledged their consensus to concur with the new inflation rate.

Rail Working Group

B. Jaffin expressed a desire for improving capacity at the local and regional level for project development in order to be ready to apply for funds from various sources. He suggested that SRPC could play a role in helping communities develop potential projects that could be ready for funding applications. He suggested that SRPC could facilitate the development of a "portfolio" of projects and asked that the issue be discussed at a future Policy committee meeting.

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 citizens brought comments forward.

8. Adjournment

M. Laferte moved to adjourn

Seconded by B. Tapscott

Vote: All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Cynthia Plascencia and Colin Lentz

Approved by: Name Printed Victoria Parnell
Signed: Victoria Parnell
Dated: 4/14/17

