

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

**Minutes**

**Thursday November 29, 2018**

**9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

**\*Rescheduled from typical date due to winter weather\***

**1. – Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 9:11 AM

Members: Mark Avery (Madbury), Mike Bobinsky (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Don Hamman (Rochester), John Huckins (Barrington), Fred Kane (Lee), David Landry (Dover), Wes Merritt (Durham), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Liz Strachan (NHDES)

Staff: Jennifer Czysz (Executive Director), Colin Lentz (Sr. Transportation Planner), Stefanie Casella (Data Collection and Analysis Assistant)

**2. - Staff Communications**

C. Lentz reminded commissioners to fill out SRPC strategic planning survey. The survey will help SRPC as they transition and reevaluate the goals and direction of the organization. The survey is completely anonymous and can be done electronically or on paper. J. Czysz reminded NHDOT and NHDES representatives that there is a separate survey tailored specifically for stakeholders.

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

**3.1 - Minutes from October 19<sup>th</sup> 2018 [VOTE]**

M. Gasses made motion to approve minutes as written, seconded by D. Landry.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

**3.2 Candidate Ten Year Plan Projects for NHDOT Engineering Review [VOTE]**

C. Lentz spoke to the Ten Year Plan project solicitation process and moving forward with project engineering reviews. He explained that the project development subcommittee had developed a list of candidate projects. TAC members had weighted the project scoring criteria and staff will complete a draft prioritization of the projects, which TAC will review prior to sending the candidate list to NHDOT for engineering review and cost estimate generation. The engineering review is to refine project cost estimates and scopes, and ensure they will fit within the theoretical regional allocation of federal highway funds, in preparation for final project submission to NHDOT in May.

L. Strachan asked to confirm that the project list included in the meeting packet was not in order of priority. J. Czysz confirmed that the list is not in order of priority and elaborated that the prioritization process will begin at the next TAC meeting with a discussion on the draft ranking order. Some of the projects cannot go through the engineering review without the additional support from NHDOT so it will be an iterative process.

M. Gasses had one correction to the project list. The Dover project *Mill Street and Back Water Road* should read *Mill Street and Back River Road*.

M. Bobinsky made a motion to approve the candidate list, seconded by D. Hamman.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

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

##### **4.1 – Follow up from NHDOT Commissioners’ presentation and discussion**

C. Lentz recapped the last meeting where Victoria Sheehan (Commissioner, NHDOT) and Christopher Waszczuk (Assistant Commissioner, NHDOT) had presented information about the upcoming Ten Year Plan process and discussed issues regarding the sustainability of state and federal transportation funding. C. Lentz provided a handout restating the takeaways of the NHDOT presentation and the requested RPC action items. He said a primary goal of the Commissioner’s visit was to generate support and input for proposed NHDOT budget items and encourage MPOs and municipalities to engage with decision-makers about transportation funding issues. They had provided a set of primary issues and requests for input from MPO communities. C. Lentz provided a handout which included a draft list of “resolutions” which would act as a potential response to the NHDOT request and as a set of policy positions to be discussed with various decision-makers and agency staff. C. Lentz asked the Policy Committee member to review and comment with recommendations.

S. Diamond asked for clarification on Requested RPC Action Item 4, “Need for Restoration of general funds for rural public transit operating costs.” C. Lentz responded that in the past state funds had been designated for rural transit operations. However, it had been excluded from the state budget for the past few years, and NHDOT was proposing that \$200,000 be put back into the budget for this purpose. V. Parmele asked if the program was originally removed because of a policy or budgeting issue. C. Lentz and G. Davison determined that it was both. C. Lentz elaborated that running an effective transit system is expensive so finding a sustainable source of funding for these rural services is important.

J. Czysz reminded the committee that the addition of this rural transit budget item is a statewide item and would not directly benefit COAST and Wildcat in the Strafford Region. J. Huckins asked if park and rides would be considered part of a rural transit system. J. Czysz and C. Lentz determined that park and rides are part of the highway system and not eligible for rural transit funding. Members discussed if the park and rides were built with rural connectors in mind, would it be eligible for rural transit funding? Staff will look into this question and get back to the Policy Committee.

C. Lentz explained that sustainable transportation funding is a national issue because gas taxes were designed to pay for the maintenance and improvement of the highway network, but since cars are more fuel efficient, revenues from gas taxes are no longer adequate and must be substituted with general federal funds to make up the difference. He reminded members that one of the major proposals from NHDOT coming up in the Ten Year Plan process is a proposed toll increase and extension of the I93 turnpike in Concord. This is in order to ensure turnpike revenues reflect the costs of maintenance and operations. Extending the turnpike would enable NHDOT to dedicate turnpike dollars to a current highway expansion project and spend federal dollars on other needed projects throughout the state. C. Lentz noted that an issue the Policy members could provide input on was the state's use of Toll Credits in lieu of providing the 20% match for federal funds

V. Parmele asked what the significance of "not just cars" was for Resolution 1. C. Lentz explained that the thinking was for the resolution to take into account the range of transportation modes and users, not just the vehicles, such as public transit and alternative modes of transportation. P. Nelson agreed that this is a good point to make and also suggested adding, if available, trip information to distinguish where people are going and coming from both inside and around the Strafford region.

M. Bobinsky noted the importance of having a direct line of communication to decision makers and using them to inform our legislators on the policy issues being discussed. He added that regarding the funding issue, moving towards a user-fee based model is going to be a trend in the future and encouraged more language to support that shift in the resolution list.

M. Gasses added that taxing by vehicle weight and value is already being done during car registration, and the gas tax had not been increased in a number of years despite the technology advancements and more fuel efficient vehicles. For this reason the gas tax increase should be left as an option moving forward.

Members discussed incentivizing alternative modes of transportation, and the policy process for driverless vehicles.

P. Nelson mentioned the need to take changing demographics into account as well as discover new technologies and opportunities for advancement and new revenue sources.

Members discuss the need to take local infrastructure into account when planning on the larger scale, including zoning, parking restrictions, land use, and density.

W. Merritt asked if there is data availability from navigation apps such as Waze and Google Maps. C. Lentz and J. Czysz responded that there is data available and SRPC has purchased data in the past. Currently, R. Dewey and the SRPC team are working on updates to the Travel Demand Model which will give more information about how the regional road network is functioning and what demand will look like in the future. Committee discussed the capabilities of the model.

C. Lentz said he would make edits to the list of resolutions based on Policy Committee input.

The committee discussed SRPC information outreach to stakeholders, communities, and partnering organizations via 'Bit's and Pieces'. D. Landry suggested adding policy information to the weekly publication to ensure all interested parties are being reached.

#### 5. Other Business

P. Nelson requested that flooding on Bay Road be added into the weekly communications (Bits and Pieces) and M. Gasses elaborated on the success of hazard mitigation efforts and funding sources regarding culverts in Barrington.

#### 6. Citizen's Forum

No citizens brought forward comments.

#### 7. Adjournment

T. Crosby made a motion to adjourn, seconded by M. Bobinsky.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

*Meeting adjourned at 10:20 am*

Minutes prepared by Colin Lentz and Stefanie Casella

Approved by

Name Printed:

Victoria N. Parnell

Signed:

Victoria N. Parnell

Date:

12/21/14