

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

**Final Minutes**

**Friday, November 17, 2017  
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

**1. Introductions**

**Members Present:** Gary Anderson (Nottingham), Mark Avery (Madbury), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Donald Hamann (Rochester), Rick Healey (Rochester), Fred Kaen (Lee), Sandy Keans (Rochester), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Shanna Saunders (Somersworth), Glenn Davison (NH DOT), Steve Pesci (UNH), Tim White (NHDES), Michael Williams (COAST), Rad Nichols (COAST)

**Staff Present:** Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner), Rachael Mack (GIS Planner), Nancy O'Connor (Program Coordinator), Stef Casella (Data Collection and Analysis Assistant), Cynthia Plascencia (Transportation Writer)

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

**2. Staff Communications**

SRPC staff did not have any new communications.

**3. Public Information Session**

C. Lentz gave a presentation on the updated Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Metro Plan). He stated that he, along with Editor Ken Mayo, edited and condensed the Metro Plan to increase its readability. C. Lentz presented an outline of the current Metro Plan, as well as the updated version, which is up for public comment. He detailed revisions to the Metro Plan, which includes condensing some of the chapters, and adding information on performance based planning. He added that a main goal in updating the Metro Plan is for it to facilitate local and regional project development, where projects developed with municipalities can show a direct relation to national performance measure goals. C. Lentz added that the public comment period would end on December 14, 2017 prior to a vote by the Policy Committee at their meeting on December 15th.

**4. Action Items**

**4.1. Minutes from October 20, 2017**

M. Williams made a motion to approve the October 20, 2017 Meeting Minutes  
Seconded by S. Keans  
Vote: Unanimous in favor

## **4.2. Ten Year Plan Summary Comments to NHDOT**

C. Lentz stated that the public comment period for the Ten Year Plan ended on November 6, 2017. He stated that Strafford MPO would like to send a letter to DOT as a communication tool summarizing the changes Strafford MPO will make to improve project solicitation and development moving forward. C. Lentz asked for comments or suggestions on content that the Policy Committee would like in the letter to DOT. He clarified that he wanted focus on how to improve future project solicitation process. He stated that he would draft the letter leading up to the December Policy Committee meeting.

C. Copeland stated that one important issue to address in the letter is to emphasize that the Ten Year Plan is a continual process between the MPO, municipalities, and agencies to improve the quality of the projects. C. Lentz stated that no vote was needed at this point of the process for the letter.

## **5. Discussion Items**

### **5.1. Supporting Local Public Transportation**

M. Williams, COAST director of operations, gave a presentation on services offered by COAST. He stated that the mission of COAST is to champion and provide customer-focused public transportation with a commitment to excellence in safety and service. He stated that the main type of service offered by COAST is Fixed Route Service. He detailed the service area, spanning from Farmington to Portsmouth, with an average of 1,588 rides given on a weekday.

S. Diamond asked how recent the Maine addition was to the COAST Fixed Route Service and what factors contributed to its inclusion. M. Williams stated that the Maine route is a limited service in South Berwick and Elliot and it has been in place for five years. M. Williams added that the route ends at the Portsmouth Shipyard, which is the primary destination for many of the commuters on the Maine route.

M. Williams described the demographics COAST uses, including household income and age range, as well as customer destinations. He emphasized the significance of commuter's household income data. He explained that COAST aims to counter the perception that public transportation is exclusively for low-income commuters. Regarding the data of high-income commuters, T. White asked if the implication of the data was that the majority of these commuters were riders who chose to use transit as opposed to riders who have no other choice. M. Williams explained that it is difficult to answer that question because a transit rider's reasons for riding the bus is not solely based on personal finance, but can depend on other factors as well.

M. Gasses asked if COAST has noticed an increase in ridership in the downtown Dover area due to the construction of new apartments. M. Williams stated that he would have to review additional data, but one challenge COAST faces is getting their ridership data on a narrow enough scale because they don't have any electronic or automated counting tools. He added that it would make sense, according to the industry trend, for ridership to increase in an area like downtown Dover due to its higher density of mixed-use and limited parking availability.

M. Williams described the Clipper Connection, another service provided by COAST, which is a commuter bus that runs to and from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. He reviewed ADA Complimentary Paratransit, which mirrors fixed route services by offering equivalent service for those whose disability prevents fixed route usage. M. Williams explained that since it is a door-to-door shared ride service, riders would need to schedule at least one day in advance.

V. Parmele asked if the same type of bus is used, and M. Williams replied that they are not the same. He described the various other vehicles like vans, and stated that they use the smallest and lowest operating cost vehicle to make the trip. S. Keans asked what the primary uses for these rides were, and M. Williams stated that medical is the highest, followed by shopping.

M. Williams reviewed Community Rides, a partnership through the Alliance for Community Transportation (ACT), which offers shared ride, door-to-door, reservation-based transportation. He stated that these rides are only for medical appointment needs, and for seniors and individuals with qualifying disabilities. M. Williams added that a difference between this partnership and the ADA Paratransit program is that Community Rides allow COAST to go to a broader range of locations, while the ADA Paratransit program only services fixed route locations. V. Parmele asked if the ADA Paratransit was the same cost, and M. Williams stated that the pricing is twice the usual fixed route fare.

M. Williams discussed travel training where they teach individuals the process of reading a schedule, boarding a bus, riding a bus, and arriving to a location. He explained other services that COAST provides, such as emergency exercises for local area agencies. He also explained that law enforcement officers and SWAT teams from all over the country visit the New Hampshire seacoast training facilities, and COAST offers a bus for transit-oriented training. These trainings can include how to shut down a bus from the rear of the bus, and how to clear a bus in various situations, among other exercises. COAST also offers warming or cooling stations in cases of emergency. He stated that State Emergency Services coordinate these instances.

M. Williams described the two different agencies COAST partners with, ACT's regional call center (TripLink) and CommuteSMART Seacoast. He explained that TripLink aims to expand and improve community transportation services in the region. COAST's partnership with CommuteSMART Seacoast is to promote sustainable commuting options such as carpooling, taking transit, bicycling, walking, and teleworking.

Members discussed how to bring fixed route services to more rural towns, such as Barrington and Northwood. M. Williams listed a lack of funding and low population density as key reasons fixed route services might not work for more rural communities.

R. Nichols, COAST executive director, gave a presentation on COAST finances. He reviewed the FY18 operating budget, and described the sources of revenue, elaborating on the top sources: federal funding (53%), fares/contract revenues (13%), and local municipal match (12%). He stated that passenger fare revenues have increased over the past 10 years, and the percentage of revenue generated is fare-based on the region's population.

R. Nichols discussed local match in-depth, including the municipal funding formula, which was established for the purpose of raising sufficient local funds to support the operation of the core system (Routes 1,2,6, 7, and ADA). He stated that the formula provides the methodology for equitably determining how municipal contributions are calculated. R. Nichols commented that

the formula was reassessed in 2016 and passed in January 2017. One change was that a minimum municipal contribution level was set at \$20,000, an amount modeled on the minimum contribution level necessary to participate in the NH Municipal Association (NHMA).

R. Nichols presented the funding formula, detailing weekly demand response (DR) service miles, DR ridership, weekly fixed-route (FR) service miles, and FR ridership per municipality. He emphasized the economic impact of COAST's operations, where every dollar of source revenue yields four times that in economic return on investment. He stated that public transportation is a critical component of transportation infrastructure.

Additional discussion occurred regarding expanding services to rural communities, such as Northwood. M. Williams suggested Northwood do research to see if there is a high demand for a fixed route service to ensure ridership. S. Pesci brought up the example of the Wildcat Transit route from Durham to Rochester. He stated that it had not been as successful as projected despite it showing promise due to Rochester being a densely populated area and demand seeming to exist. C. Copeland added that it also connected a large city to the largest employer in the region (UNH). S. Pesci emphasized the importance to use that example as a cautionary tale for rural municipalities looking to add fixed route services.

## **6. Project Update(s)**

### **6.1. Letter to USDOT re: retaining greenhouse gas emissions performance measure**

C. Lentz gave an update on a previously discussed proposal by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to repeal the measuring of the percentage of change in tailpipe carbon dioxide. He elaborated that the FHWA stated that the cost of measuring the emissions was a factor in the proposed repeal, as was the belief that it was not a direct measure of emissions. He explained the current process of measuring emissions, and stated that the MPO letter would focus on the need to measure emissions. T. White stated that on behalf of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, he appreciated Strafford MPO for writing this letter in support of continuing to measure emissions.

## **7. Other Business**

C. Copeland brought up a recent CMAQ committee meeting about the CMAQ air quality analysis. C. Lentz stated that the committee reviewed existing templates for measuring the benefits of proposed CMAQ projects on emissions and congestion. He listed the proposed projects and stated that they may need more information, such as additional data collection and analysis into quantification of benefits. T. White added that the committee is looking to reach a consensus on the final version of the evaluation templates. T. White stated that once the consensus is reached, the committee members will begin applying them to projects.

S. Diamond asked what actions can be taken to detour heavy traffic on Rt. 125. A discussion was held regarding this route and the possibility of adding signalization to slow down traffic on the heavily congested route.

**8. 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 forward any issues.

**9. Adjournment**

M. Williams moved to adjourn

Seconded by G. Anderson

Vote: All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Colin Lentz & Cynthia Plascencia

Approved by: Victoria N. Parnelle  
Name Printed

Signed Victoria N. Parnelle

Date: 12/15/17

