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

Minutes

**Friday April 15th 2016
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Wayne Burton (Durham), Bill Connor (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Rick Healy (Rochester), Janet Hotchkiss (Middleton), Suzanne Huard (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Tony McManus (Dover), Sam Reid (Dover), Dianne Smith (Brookfield),

Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner)

The meeting began at 9:05am with a quorum

2. Staff Communications

C. Copeland announced that SRPC was in the process of recruiting for several temporary positions. An offer was made to an applicant for the Transportation Planning Assistant to work with Data Management Specialist Tom Brown on traffic counts and other data collection efforts. C. Copeland noted that the offer was accepted, but she was waiting for the signed offer letter to confirm the appointment. She said SRPC staff were still interviewing candidates for two other positions: GIS Planner, and Regional Planning and Communications Assistant. C. Copeland said many excellent candidates had applied for the positions, and SRPC has an important decision to make regarding how the candidates' skills will be utilized to further organizational goals.

3. Public Hearing – 2015-2018 TIP Amendment #3

*K. Ortmann voted to open the public hearing,
Seconded by D. Smith
Vote: Unanimous in favor*

C. Lentz gave a presentation covering the projects included in TIP Amendment #3:

- UNH Wildcat Transit scope change
- Statewide Pavement Marking Program (PVMRK)

- Statewide Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
- Statewide Road & Weather Information Systems (RWIS)

G. Davison explained that NHDOT had recently begun including an “other” phase as part of project fiscal constraint. The phase isolates initial planning funding (meeting with RPCs and municipalities, initial site visits, and public engagement) from preliminary engineering.

W. Burton asked whether the changes to the phase naming structure would affect local efforts to apply for funding. G. Davison said it would not affect any ongoing or future applications.

W. Burton asked specifically about the availability of funding for local trail mapping efforts. K. Ortmann asked if the Recreational Trails process included any analysis of economic benefits of trails throughout the state. G. Davison said the Recreational Trails Program is managed by the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (NHDRED), and that he wasn’t fully aware of all the allowable uses for recreational trails funding or whether they performed any analysis of economic impacts.

C. Lentz said Chris Gamache (RTP director) would be giving a presentation about the Statewide Recreational Trails Program at the May TAC meeting.

R. Healy notified meeting attendees that NHDRED had the current guidelines for the Recreational Trails Program on their website. C. Lentz said he would include the information in the meeting packet prior to Chris Gamache’s presentation.

D. Smith explained that she had been communicating with NHDOT and NHDRED with her questions about the Recreational Trails Program. She extended her appreciation to NHDOT staff and said her questions were addressed in great detail. D. Smith also noted that local projects that did not fit under the Recreational Trails Program may be eligible for the Transportation Alternatives program (TA).

W. Burton mentioned that Durham was currently reviewing proposals to charge a parking fee to non-residents at the Wagon Hill Farm. He asked if this would eliminate their eligibility for funds from state programs like TA and the Recreational Trails Program, because that would make the farm a for-profit facility.

G. Davison responded that charging a fee would likely preclude Durham’s eligibility to apply for funding.

K. Ortmann asked whether the *New Hampshire Alerts* smartphone app was included in the statewide RWIS. G. Davison said it was one of several apps included in the system.

K. Ortmann moved to close the public hearing.

Seconded by S. Reid

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Action Item(s)

- a. Minutes from March 18th

T. McManus moved to accept the minutes from March 18th 2016

Seconded by R. Healy

Vote: unanimous in favor

b. Approve TIP Amendment #3

K. Ortmann moved to approve TIP Amendment #3,

Seconded by S. Reid

Vote: unanimous in favor

5. Discussion Item(s)

a. Non-Metropolitan Public Consultation Process (NHDOT)

C. Lentz explained that NHDOT is currently in the process of updating the document that outlines the formal public engagement process the agency uses when developing statewide transportation plans. He encouraged committee members to review the document and send comments to NHDOT.

K. Ortmann asked if the document would affect processes currently in place at the regional planning level. C. Lentz said the document under review does not include any changes to the current regional planning process. G. Davison explained that the document focuses on the non-metropolitan areas of the state and simply formalizes the current collaborative process between NHDOT, regional planning commissions, and municipalities.

b. Protected Intersections for Local Complete Streets

C. Lentz presented a video about designing intersections to provide greater protection for bicycles and pedestrians. He noted that the video was geared for larger cities, but that the concepts of the video were applicable to municipalities in the region.

W. Burton discussed the challenge of installing protected intersections and improved facilities in a small town like Durham. He emphasized the potential for lawsuits against municipalities for unsafe infrastructure designs for bicycles and pedestrians.

J. Nelson warned that it is possible to design “complete streets” that are not safe for all users; that in some cases it may be safer to not include a [painted] bicycle lane.

C. Lentz questioned whether having unsafe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure came with the same potential for lawsuits as having no infrastructure at all.

P. Nelson invited any input from SRPC about safety and complete streets design for downtown projects in Newmarket.

D. Smith responded to an example of a small-scale, low-cost protected intersection from the presentation [“protection zones” were painted on a small neighborhood intersection in Texas, providing visual cues to drivers creating safe space for bicycles and pedestrians]. She said it was an improvement over traditional intersection design and may represent a viable option for smaller communities in the region.

K. Ortmann suggested SRPC staff look for examples of other college towns dealing with bicycle and pedestrian safety challenges similar to Durham.

R. Dewey said she had recently attended a regional bicycle and pedestrian summit in Vermont and suggested that if committee members send her specific locations that present bicycle safety challenges, she could find comparable examples from Vermont.

W. Burton cited the recent fatal accident in Durham involving a driver opening the door of their parked car into the adjacent bicycle lane. He re-emphasized that Durham faces conflicting challenges between cyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles, and that finding solutions will be very challenging.

S. Reid suggested that the safety conversation could continue if municipalities had specific examples of successful bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements from the region.

S. Keans thought that expecting cyclists to share a left-turn lane with vehicles was dangerous, and noted the design in the video required cyclists to travel around the entire intersection.

C. Lentz emphasized the complete streets framework to help communities create a sense of place using innovative and creative street designs.

B. Connor asked if larger cities have an advantage over smaller municipalities when applying for and receiving grant funding for such projects. C. Lentz responded that existing programs are designed to be unbiased with regard to the size of municipalities applying for funds, but larger cities may have an advantage in the resources they can dedicate to project design and planning. C. Lentz added that the FAST Act provides more flexibility for municipalities to propose alternative street designs.

K. Ortmann suggested that these kinds of intersection designs need to consider self-driving cars. He said cars are being designed with more conflict-avoidance technology and intersection design should consider this.

6. Project Update(s)

a. GIS Data Organization

C. Lentz reminded meeting attendees that SRPC's GIS Analyst Chris Scheiner had recently left SRPC. Prior to his departure, C. Scheiner completed a major overhaul of the organization's GIS data organization structure. He explained that the new system reorganized in-house GIS data sources that are used for routine mapping and analysis for planning. In general, data were previously organized by source; this made it difficult for staff to locate specific data. The new structure organizes data by type (e.g. if a staff member needed to add data about streams and rivers, they go to a folder labeled "water data" and select the appropriate data layers).

S. Huard asked how the SRPC database related to UNH's GRANIT database.

C. Lentz said UNH GRANIT data are part of the SRPC dataset.

P. Nelson asked if SRPC has a separate copy of GRANIT data, and suggested that having multiple copies of data in separate locations could lead to coordination challenges. C. Lentz responded that the GIS data are shared between agencies and organizations, and SRPC can do more detailed or custom analysis than is available on the GRANIT Viewer website. P. Nelson asked if SRPC's GIS data were publicly available. C. Lentz said the public is still able to make data and map requests. R. Dewey said the new organization structure is a dramatic improvement over the previous version. G. Davison said it is more efficient to keep local databases, rather than storing GIS data off-site (e.g. in "the cloud"), because it is much faster to process and analyze

data that way. He added that it is often useful to have separate copies of data in a system in order to take historical snapshots of land use at different time periods.

K. Ortmann asked for clarification about the availability of GIS data to the public. C. Lentz responded that citizens, organizations, or municipal staff can make requests for data and maps, but individual citizens cannot access SRPC data through an internet connection from outside SRPC. G. Davison suggested that in the future it would be valuable if SRPC had the capacity to share specific maps/layers (e.g. wetlands, flood hazard zones, roads) on the GRANIT viewer website.

C. Lentz asked if P. Nelson's original question had been answered. P. Nelson said it had and the new SRPC data organization structure was an improvement.

7. Other Business

W. Burton explained that the plan for the Seacoast Reliability project [extension of high-capacity transmission lines through Madbury and Durham, across Little Bay to Newington] had been filed, but the project is facing concerns from private landowners in the right of way. Eversource is required to install aboveground wires in the right of way, but they're hoping to use underground wires to avoid land owner conflicts. W. Burton said he would have more information in the future.

W. Burton also said he would be testifying on state legislation that would allow municipalities to raise the allowable tax credits from a maximum of \$2,000 to \$12,000 for fully disabled veterans.

P. Nelson noted that construction phases for the Durham-Newmarket Bicycle shoulder project along Rt. 108 would be commencing in the summer. W. Burton added that Durham was working with NHDOT on engineering designs to improve safety at the intersection of NH108 and Durham Point Rd.

8. Citizen's Forum

No citizens were present at the meeting.

9. Adjournment

K. Ortmann moved to adjourn

Seconded by S. Reid

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11am

Minutes submitted by,
Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary

Approved by

Name Printed: Brian Tapscott

Signed 

Date: May 20, 16

