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WAKEFIELD

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

FINAL Minutes

**Friday February 19th 2016
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Wayne Burton (Durham), Thomas Clark (Dover), Bill Connor (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Janet Hotchkiss (Middleton), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Robert Jaffin (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Kenn Ortman (Rochester), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth), Dirk Timmons (UNH),

Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner), Natasha Leuchanka (Regional Planner), Chris Scheiner (GIS & Technical Analyst),

Guests: Tim Blagden (Bike Walk Alliance of NH), Mike Bobinsky (Somersworth)

2. Staff Communications:

C. Copeland noted that Natasha Leuchanka has been invited to be part of the proposal review committee for the next SHRP2 funding opportunity.

C. Copeland extended appreciation T. Blagden for presenting at the meeting.

Tom Brown noted that he attended TransCad training in Massachusetts. He explained that TransCad is a computer program for modeling traffic patterns and can be used to forecast future transportation demand, analyze air quality conformity, and congestion management.

3. Action Item (s)

3.1 Minutes from January 15th, 2016

T. Crosby moved to accept the minutes from January 15th 2016

Seconded by Jon Hotchkiss

Vote: all in favor

4. Discussion Item(s)

4.1. State-level bicycle and pedestrian planning, advocacy, and policy development (Tim Blagden, Bike Walk Alliance of NH)

T. Blagden gave a presentation about the benefits of improving safety and accessibility for bicycles, pedestrians, and other non-motorized modes of transportation. He described the transportation infrastructure design philosophy known as complete streets, which emphasizes designing local streets to be safe and accessible for multiple transportation modes. He also described the work of the Bike Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWANH) at the regional and state level to promote state-level policy changes that improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and encourage healthier, active forms of transportation.

B. Connor asked about the long-term maintenance costs of expanding sidewalks and bike lanes. T. Blagden responded that NHDOT will build bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, but the maintenance is the responsibility of the municipality. He acknowledged that this is a major barrier to constructing bike/ped facilities and that the BWANH has been working with NHDOT to address similar issues.

B. Connor asked about the costs associated with complete streets and bike/ped infrastructure. T. Blagden explained that one of the simplest ways to improve safety for cyclists is to move painted fog lines slightly toward the center of the road and realign them to go down the center of any rumble strips. He recommended that municipalities could coordinate with local and regional paving or re-striping schedules to implement such low- or no-cost improvements. T. Blagden emphasized that each project has to be planned and implemented within the local context.

K. Ortmann asked about automated vehicles such as self-driving cars. T. Blagden responded that autonomous technology is growing very rapidly and that some car manufacturers are incorporating bicycle and pedestrian detection systems in new vehicles.

M. Bobinsky asked about whether state-level legislation is considering the challenge of maintenance responsibility and costs associated with complete streets. T. Blagden said that he was sure the issue would come up during senate and house committee discussions. He also advised municipalities to adopt local complete streets policies in order to negotiate with NHDOT about complete streets issues. M. Bobinsky suggested that as bicycle and pedestrian access becomes more of a central planning issue, there is a need to educate non-motorists about traffic laws and safety; he asked whether BWANH is doing any such education. T. Blagden said that BWANH has information on their website and is working on statewide public service announcements that will be featured as part of the state's "Driving Toward Zero" campaign.

R. Jaffin asked what is being done about the problem of distracted pedestrians (those looking at cell phones or walking with headphones on), citing an increase in accidents involving pedestrians not paying attention to traffic. T. Blagden affirmed the problem, saying that 10% of pedestrian accidents are attributed to distraction because of electronic devices.

W. Burton referenced a recent fatal incident in Durham when a bicyclist hit an open car door. He noted that accommodating all users is difficult in a town like Durham. T. Blagden said that having bike lanes in conjunction with on-street vehicle parking is a particular challenge. Meeting members discussed several examples of alternative approaches to incorporating parking and bicycle lanes.

R. Jaffin made the point that complete streets is not a prescription for certain types of transportation infrastructure; that each town is different and requires a unique solution.

C. Copeland mentioned the changes she has noticed over her years of walking in Newmarket. She said as Newmarket has improved their local pedestrian infrastructure, they have also increased their investment in maintenance of the sidewalks.

K. Ortmann thanked the meeting attendees for the good conversation about an important topic and encouraged them to take the conversation back to their communities in order to shift the focus from a motor vehicle-focused approach to one that considers all modes of transportation.

5. Project Update(s)

5.1. Applying Strava bicycle data to regional planning

R. Dewey gave a presentation about her analysis of bicycle data recently purchased by NHDOT from the activity mapping software company Strava. Individuals with a smart phone or other device can download a free app to record their bicycle or walking trips and track their own activity or that of other public users. R. Dewey has been conducting in-depth analysis of bicycling activity data and comparing it to safety conditions along state-recommended bicycling routes.

T. Blagden mentioned that the travel speed on roads is an extremely important factor in their safety for cyclists. He explained that a cyclist getting hit by a car traveling at 25 miles an hour has an 85% chance of surviving, but at 40 miles per hour it's an 85% chance that the accident is fatal for the cyclist.

B. Tapscott asked what side cyclists should ride on. T. Blagden said bicyclists should ride with the traffic – for safety, and because they are required to follow the same traffic laws as cars. M. Gasses added that she has witnessed numerous incidents of cyclists blatantly running red lights and stop signs.

W. Burton asked T. Blagden to talk about rumble strips. T. Blagden said rumble strips are very inexpensive and effective for reducing line-crossing and run-off-the-road accidents by cars. However, when rumble strips are in between the fog line and the edge of the road, they are a major barrier for cyclists.

T. Blagden mentioned the benefit complete streets provides for low-income individuals. He explained the difference in cost associated with a car vs. a bicycle.

5.2. Performance Measures update

N. Leuchanka presented the recently published Performance Measures Synthesis Report. The document describes the results of a year-long research effort involving interviews with transportation stakeholders across the state. The research constitutes phase 1 of an interagency effort to develop a performance-based framework for statewide transportation planning.

5.3. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

C. Lentz reminded meeting attendees to look at a handout for basic information about the CMAQ program. C. Copeland summarized the major points of discussion at a meeting of the CMAQ advisory committee she recently attended at NHDOT. Because New Hampshire's air quality is overall very good (and has been improving steadily since federal air quality laws were established), the state faces difficulty deciding how to equitably allocate federal funds dedicated for transportation projects that will reduce emissions.

C. Copeland noted that there is a backlog of CMAQ projects since there hasn't been an open funding round since 2009. She explained that the CMAQ advisory committee will be meeting multiple times in the coming fiscal year to discuss funding priorities and review project proposals. She noted that one of the difficulties is that the Ten Year Plan is now fiscally constrained and it is not possible to carry unspent funds between fiscal years.

C. Copeland confirmed that there will be a CMAQ round in the near future – she was unable to confirm when the round would open, but encouraged committee members to be ready to promote the transportation needs of the region and to discuss possible projects with the NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit.

C. Lentz reminded the meeting attendees that for the first 3 years of the up-coming Ten Year Plan, 25% of CMAQ funds would be shifted to the statewide paving program, and then restored to 100% for the following 7 years.

B. Connor asked about the project selection process for CMAQ. C. Copeland responded that the details are still being developed but she will be on a CMAQ sub-committee examining project eligibility. C. Lentz added that regional projects will also be scored by MPOs and their TAC and Policy Committees will approve scored projects before they are sent to the CMAQ committee.

S. Keans expressed concern that in the past, regional concerns expressed during project solicitation had been ignored during the final state-level project scoring process.

P. Nelson asked what happens if a region proposes and constructs projects that don't deliver the estimated air quality improvements. C. Copeland responded that the state would be required to shift funding away from highway expansion projects that would increase capacity for personal vehicles, and dedicate it to projects that would remove cars (e.g. commuter buses). R. Jaffin summarized by explaining that if air quality standards are not met, the state would be required to dedicate more of its transportation funding to projects that will improve air quality. C. Lentz added that New Hampshire is expected to meet the recently increased air quality standards for ozone.

6. Other Business

C. Lentz gave the committee a report on two items at the request of a committee member. He explained that the Governor's draft of the Ten year Plan included 4 million dollars for engineering and environmental work on the capital corridor rail project which was not included in the GACIT draft of the Ten Year Plan.

C. Lentz mentioned a set of bills before the state legislature: HB460 and HB1602. C. Lentz explained that HB460 formed a committee to study alternative approaches to generating revenues for transportation improvements and suggested a fee system based on gas mileage (higher MPGs = higher fees). That bill has been postponed for the current legislative cycle, but HB1602, which proposes an additional fee only for electric vehicles, is still in committee. The general issue facing New Hampshire and the rest of the Country is that federal funds for transportation are derived from taxes on fuel. As cars become for fuel-efficient and people look for more ways to drive less, less revenue is generated for the Highway Trust Fund. The challenge is to develop a revenue generation model that is equitable and fully supports needed transportation planning and improvements.

7. Citizen's Forum

No citizens were present at the meeting.

8. Adjournment

K. Ortmann moved to adjourn

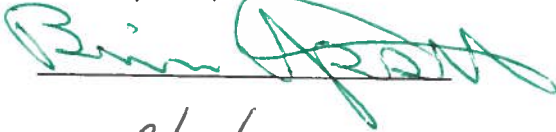
Seconded by B. Jaffin

Vote: All in favor

Minutes submitted by,

Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary

Brian Tapscott, Chair



Date: _____

3/18/16

