

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

Friday, January 15th, 2016 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Strafford Regional Planning Commission
150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12, Conference Room 1A
Rochester, NH

AGENDA

1. Introductions

1.1. Members Present: Bill Connor (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Rick Healey (Rochester), Bob Jaffin (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Tony McMannus, Judy Nelson (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester), Victoria Parmele (Northwood),

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

2. Staff Communications

3. Public Hearing

3.1. 2015-2018 TIP Amendment #2

S. Keans moved to open the public hearing, seconded by B. Cray

Vote: Unanimous

In response to submitted questions, C. Lentz described an Intelligent Transportation Systems project in the amendment. He explained that the project cost was shared between New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont, and that the system will provide traffic and weather hazard information to travelers within all three states.

C. Lentz also described a meeting held at Strafford RPC offices to discuss the complete streets project along NH108 between Weeks Crossing in Dover and Skyhaven airport in Rochester. Staff from the three municipalities, SRPC, and from COAST discussed the project with engineering staff from NHDOT and provided feedback on plans and design features of the existing project scope. The project was originally conceived in 2003 as part of plans to build an Exit 10 from the Spaulding Turnpike. C. Lentz said everyone at the meeting was positive about the project and that SRPC will be setting up another meeting with NHDOT and project stakeholders to see how project designs were updated based on input. The second meeting will take place prior to NHDOT beginning consultant selection in fall of 2016, followed by preliminary engineering beginning in fall of 2017.

C. Scheiner described his ongoing work with NHDOT to streamline the TIP amendment process and make the proposed changes easier to understand for TAC and Policy committee members and members of the public. C. Scheiner has developed a project database that enables him to update project information rapidly and maintain continuity between multiple planning documents.

K. Ortmann complimented the new TIP amendment report, and made a request to include an explanation of project acronyms in future reports. C. Scheiner responded that they would work on including the full title of programs along with their acronyms.

P. Nelson asked whether it would be possible to include more information about the schedule and budget history of projects in TIP amendment documents. He suggested that people want to understand the outcome of projects – how they have evolved over time, whether they have gone over budget or over schedule. K Ortmann responded that it would be ideal to include such information, but because most projects evolve so much beyond their original scope and budget, tracking them would be complicated. G. Davison concurred that projects designs have a long-term perspective and are initially based on future needs. Because of this projects inevitably grow and change in response to new information and evolving needs in the project area. C. Lentz suggested that detailed project history may be difficult to include, but the reports could include basic information about start date and proposed completion dates, and proposed and final budgets. He added that this kind of information could help people understand why projects evolve. C. Lentz added that the Durham-Newmarket bicycle shoulder expansion (which was first proposed in 1998), and Newington-Dover Little Bay Bridges projects provide an example where such information would be useful. People would understand if a bridge expansion project takes many years and requires multiple budget changes, but if they read that a shoulder expansion project had been ongoing for two decades, they would be more likely to ask questions. Chris Scheiner added that this information would be critical for when new staff join SRPC, and that he would work on including historical information in amendment reports.

After asking for final comments, the chair asked for a motion to close the public hearing.

K. Ortmann made a motion to close the public hearing and the motion was seconded by S. Reid

Vote: unanimous

4. Action Item(s)

4.1. Approve minutes from December 18th, 2015

K. Ortmann made a motion to accept the minutes from October 16, 2015 as written, the motion was seconded by T. Crosby.

Vote: unanimous

4.2. Approval of the 2015-2018 TIP Amendment #2

R. Healy made a motion to accept the seconded by J. Nelson.

Vote: unanimous.

5. Discussion Item(s)

5.1. Durham-Newmarket Bike Shoulder Expansion project (NHDOT #13080)

C. Lentz gave an overview of what he heard at a public information session hosted by NHDOT regarding the shoulder expansion project along NH108 between Durham and Newmarket that is designed to improve safety and accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians. He explained that several property owners at the meeting described past flooding damage on their properties, and expressed their concern that the proposed project would increase the potential for flooding. NHDOT's response was that their research and computer modeling of stream flow in the project area provided strong evidence that the project would not increase the risk of flooding; and that the project was designed to increase the safety of road users (bicycles, pedestrians, and cars), not control storm water and seasonal flooding. C. Lentz explained that one meeting attendee asked the NHDOT

representative how long the project can be delayed before funding is in jeopardy. C. Copeland explained that the project concerns her primary commute route. She described project details, and explained the need for completing the project: periodic flooding will continue to occur in the area because of the local topography and hydrology, but if the road isn't improved and becomes impassible (as it has in the past), cars and heavy trucks will be diverted to smaller roads that aren't designed for heavy traffic.

C. Copeland added that the towns of Durham and Newmarket have a vested interest in the project's completion because of potential economic benefits and that it is one of the primary projects in the TIP for the region. B. Connor asked how many bicyclists are expected to use the improved route. C. Copeland described a bicycle and pedestrian data resource that SRPC staff have used to analyze regional bicycle and pedestrian activity. She provided examples of individuals she knows who bike and walk the route year round. P. Nelson added that Newmarket has invested large amounts of money for water and sewer expansion in the north end of town in anticipation of the project's completion. He said that the message from Newmarket is that they're upset that the project has been delayed so long. He said that he rides his bike along the route, and provided other examples of local residents who use the route for biking and walking and would benefit from improved safety.

B. Cray explained that UNH Wildcat bus drivers are constantly concerned about the narrow lane and shoulder widths because they pose a risk when cyclists, cars, and buses have to share the road. B. Jaffin mentioned that as a volunteer for the Dover Amtrak station, he knows of multiple people who ride their bikes from Dover to Kittery year-round. K. Ortmann asked about the source of bicycle data. C. Lentz explained how the data collection app works and directed meeting attendees to the program website for STRAVA. S. Reid said he uses the STRAVA app when he runs, and said that he anticipates many people will take advantage of the improved safety for biking and walking.

6. Project Update(s)

C. Copeland explained that on January 28th, she will be attending a meeting to discuss a potential upcoming round of funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program.

7. Other Business

7. Citizen's Forum – No citizens were present.

8. Adjournment

T. Crosby made a motion to adjourn, seconded by B. Connor

Vote: Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 10:56am.

Minutes submitted by,

Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary

Brian Tapscott, Chair

2/19/2016

Date



