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SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

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

FINAL Minutes

**Friday March 18th 2016
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Thomas Clark (Dover), Tom Burbank (Madbury), Bill Connor (Somersworth), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NH DOT), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Janet Hotchkiss (Middleton), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Robert Jaffin (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Leigh Levine (FHWA), Tony McManus (Dover), Rad Nichols (COAST), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Sam Reid (Dover), Steve Pesci (UNH), Dianne Smith (Brookfield), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth)

Staff Present: Tom Brown (Data Management Specialist), 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 SRPC recently posted two recruitments for temporary, full-time positions to begin in late April 2016. The first is for a Transportation Technician who would assist Tom Brown with transportation field data collection. The second is a Regional Planning and Communications Assistant who would primarily support the development of the regional performance measures framework through SHRP2 funding once the contract is approved by the NH Governor and Council.

3. Action Item (s)

3.1 Minutes from February 19th, 2016

T. Crosby moved to accept the minutes from February 19th 2016

Seconded by T. Clark

Vote: all in favor

4. Discussion Item(s)

4.1. FAST Act Updates

L. Levine gave a presentation covering recent updates to the federal funding authorization (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act – "FAST") for transportation that will support the next five years (2016 to 2020). His focus was on the federal highway program, but he covered proposed funding apportioned to various programs in the Federal Highway Administration and a wide range of issues covered in the act. Specifically, L. Levine discussed funding apportionments for the *National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)*, the *Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)*, the *Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)*, the *Railway Crossing's Program*, the *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)*, *Metropolitan Planning*, and the *National Highway Freight Program*. He highlighted the expanded freight program in the FAST act, with increased funding for state freight networks. He noted that states are required to have statewide freight plans in place in order to receive funds and that NHDOT is currently developing a freight plan.

C. Copeland asked when states and MPOs would start to see increased FAST Act funds and also asked L. Levine to review the various federal funding programs under the FAST Act and the kind of state programs they support for new commissioners. L. Levine said it was unclear when states and MPOs would see increased funds. He gave an overview of federal programs like the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, the Highway Safety Improvement program, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

B. Connor asked whether passenger rail projects could be included in the new FAST Act freight rail program. L. Levine said the FAST Act focused on freight rail and would not impact current provisions for passenger rail.

R. Nichols asked if both private and public freight facilities would be able to receive FAST Act funds. L. Levine said public or private facilities could apply but that port authorities or other similar entities would have to apply for any federal funding under the FASTLANE discretionary, competitive grant program.

C. Copeland asked L. Levine whether the FAST Act permitted MPOs to only plan infrastructure on the road leading up to ports and airports (not within port or airport boundaries). L. Levine responded that that provision remained in place, but it now permitted port and airport representatives to participate on MPO boards.

S. Pesci asked how FASTLANE is different than TIGER. L. Levine explained that TIGER focused on capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure, while FASTLANE has a focus on freight improvements. C. Copeland added that the FASTLANE program has increased flexibility for rural areas applying for funds.

C. Lentz explained that NHDOT will be submitting separate applications for TIGER and FASTLANE funding to improve the I-89 Bridges between New Hampshire and Vermont.

C. Copeland asked whether the new freight provisions included improvements for truck stops and rest areas. She noted that she observes trucks stopped along highways and other unsafe locations while rest stops and truck stops remain closed or inaccessible. L. Levine said he wasn't sure at this point since the detailed provisions are still being formalized.

C. Copeland asked about the FAST Act stipulation that long-range transportation plans include assessments of capital investments for system preservation and infrastructure vulnerability. She said she was concerned about past challenges with negotiating both USDOT/NHDOT and Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) processes. L. Levine said he was unable to provide a detailed answer to the question, but said the USDOT's focus was on the vulnerability of transportation infrastructure and that more details would be coming out of the federal legislative process in the future.

S. Pesci noted that the FAST Act increases flexibility for agencies' choice of infrastructure design manuals. The law allows agencies to go beyond the standard American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Highway Safety Manual and use the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Manual in coordination with the state. S. Pesci encouraged meeting attendees to review the guide, saying that the NACTO manual is an excellent guide for smaller communities and those interested in incorporating a complete streets approach to local streetscape improvements. The change in federal law specifically allows municipalities more flexibility in working with NHDOT to design local transportation improvement projects to match the town's character and planning goals.

L. Levine added that the new rule says: *"the state may allow a local jurisdiction to use a roadway publication [design manual] other than the one used by the state if the roadway – other than an interstate – is owned by the local jurisdiction, the jurisdiction is a direct recipient of federal funds [for a transportation project], the publication is recognized by the Federal Highway Administration, and the design complies with all other applicable federal laws"*.

D. Smith asked for clarification about the meaning of "direct recipient". L. Levine responded that it means federal funds are going directly to a municipality from the federal government (e.g. through a Transportation Alternatives grant to improve pedestrian safety along Main Street, or a CMAQ grant for public transit capital investment), rather than being assigned by the state through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. As a direct recipient, the municipality would be managing the funds

5. Project Update(s)

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

C. Lentz explained that he was working with N. Leuchanka and R. Dewey on the final editing stage of the Metro Plan in order to submit it for a 45-day public comment period starting on April 19th and ending on June 2nd, with a public hearing at the Policy Committee meeting on June 17th.

C Copeland thanked N. Leuchanka and R. Dewey for taking on the editing role and helping streamline the review process for her. She asked if any TAC members were willing to be official plan reviewers during the public comment period. B. Connor volunteered to review the Metro Plan during the public comment period.

Regional Data Collection

T. Brown provided an update on the upcoming transportation data collection season. He explained that he had recently received the list of 2016 traffic count locations from NHDOT and would be sending a letter to local planners, public works officials, and police departments with a list of traffic count locations in their municipality in order to coordinate with local paving and maintenance work. The letter will also invite municipalities to submit supplemental traffic counts outside the locations assigned by NHDOT. T. Brown specified that municipalities which had not paid annual dues could request supplemental traffic counts, but they would need to develop individual contracts with SRPC to pay for each count at-cost. T. Brown noted that the process for purchasing equipment had recently changed to require a formal bidding process for any purchase over \$2,000. For purchasing traffic counting equipment, he will be requesting bids from multiple companies. T. Brown said the RSMS pilot program was entering the next phase that included the development of a forecasting model to translate collected road condition data into useable information for municipalities.

Performance-Based Planning Update

N. Leuchanka informed the committee that SMPO was continuing to work with NHDOT to begin work on the performance-based planning project funded by SHRP2 funds. Due to the delay, SMPO will need to condense the 18 month SHRP2 project to 15 months. She said SMPO is hoping they will receive a "Notice to Proceed" from NHDOT either after the April 6th or the April 20th Governor and Executive Council meetings. N. Leuchanka explained that with the receipt of a "Notice to Proceed" SMPO will be able to start using the SHRP2 funding and begin work on the project on May 1, 2016. The new projected end date is July 31, 2017. The expedited timeline has required adjustments in the project budget, which does not impact the total amount distributed to project partners. The adjusted budget does include SMPO hiring another staff member to work on SHRP2 project-related tasks part time.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Data

R. Dewey said that on April 1st she would be attending a planning summit in Rutland, Vermont to learn about improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

S. Pesci noted the recent changes to Durham's downtown as an example of the need for improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the local level. He said vehicle traffic over the past 5 years has not changed, but that bike\ped traffic is up 50% overall, with some areas in new developments experiencing 300% increases in bike\ped activity. He emphasized the technical challenge of counting pedestrians and bicycles as opposed to established techniques and equipment for vehicles.

C. Copeland explained that SRPC will be compiling a mid-contract work review and budget report to submit to NHDOT in May.

C. Copeland also described the ArtPlace grant program that SRPC recently applied for. The proposed project focuses on building awareness for personal health and improving accessibility and safety for active transportation along NH 108 between Rochester and Dover. The proposed project

links with the current complete streets project (included in the draft ten year plan) planned for the same area of NH108.

6. Other Business

G. Davison informed the meeting attendees that the state had recently completed a full update of aerial imagery for GIS mapping and the imagery was available for use.

S. Pesci said UNH and Durham were considering jointly applying for TIGER grant funds to complete a number of projects in the UNH/Durham area. The project proposal will include Wildcat Transit replacement, the South Drive expansion project behind Bremmer Field and the Cowell Stadium on UNH campus, Amtrak Station Expansion, and downtown streetscape improvements. He explained that the bundle of projects is needed to meet the minimum cost threshold of 5 million dollars for applicants in urban areas.

R. Nichols explained that COAST is now a Medicaid transit provider for non-emergency transportation, which allows them to expand service and offset the cost of ADA paratransit service. He noted that COAST recently purchased 5 new mini buses to support expanded service; three buses will add to the existing COAST fleet, and two are for Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels. R. Nichols said that COAST recently completed a resiliency project that installed a backup generator to support transit operations in the event of a power outage. He added that COAST will be undertaking a strategic planning effort with a local consulting firm to develop a 3-5 year strategic plan for transit services.

7. Citizen's Forum

No citizens were present at the meeting.

8. Adjournment

J. Hotchkiss moved to adjourn

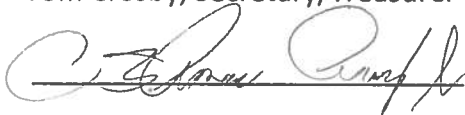
Seconded by B. Connor

Vote: All in favor

Minutes submitted by,

Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary

Tom Crosby, Secretary/Treasurer



Date: 4/15/16

