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WAKEFIELD

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

Minutes

**Friday May 20th 2016
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Tom Burbank (Madbury), Wayne Burton (Durham), Bill Connor (Somersworth), Thomas Clark (Dover), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Tony McManus (Dover), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Kenn Ortmann (Rochester), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth)

Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner), Natasha Leuchanka (Regional Planner),

Guests: Elena Piekut (Dover), Pete Steckler (The Nature Conservancy NH)

The meeting began with a quorum at 9:06

2. Staff Communications:

C. Copeland explained that three new SRPC staff would be starting over the next few weeks. She said that Alexa Gozdiff would begin working with Tom Brown on data collection efforts next week, Lynn Cherry would begin work on the SHRP2 project the following week, and Rachael Mack would begin as a GIS Planner in June.

C. Copeland acknowledged T. Clark, who was shortly retiring from his position as the Dover building inspector. C. Copeland thanked him for his many years of service as an SRPC commissioner and for his valuable insights as a member of the regional impact committee. Everyone on the Commission wished him well in his retirement.

T. Clark thanked C. Copeland and introduced Elena Piekut who would be replacing him as Dover's Commissioner.

3. Action Item (s)

3.1 Minutes from April 15th 2016

K. Ortmann moved to accept the Policy minutes from April 15th 2016 as written

Seconded by T. Crosby

Vote: all in favor

4. Discussion Item(s)

4.1. Climate resilient infrastructure – Pete Steckler (The Nature Conservancy NH)

P. Steckler gave a presentation on an ongoing culvert replacement project where Bay Road crosses Lubberland Creek, in partnership with the town of Newmarket. The project included funding and technical support from several other partners and stakeholders including NOAA, NH Fish and Game, UNH Cooperative extension, The NH Coastal Program, and Wright Pierce Engineering. P. Steckler described the strong history of land conservation around Great Bay and in Southeast NH, presented data on the projected effects of sea-level rise in the project area, described the impacts of recent and future flooding on Bay Rd, and demonstrated the existing culvert's impact on wildlife and plants in the nearby salt marsh. The project includes studies of existing and future conditions, geological and hydrological analyses, engineering designs, and detailed cost analysis.

C. Copeland asked if there were still active land conservation efforts in the general area, saying that it seemed like historic efforts had slowed in the recent years. P. Steckler responded that organizations like The Nature Conservancy were still actively seeking opportunities to acquire properties or facilitate the easement process. He explained that more funding had been available to land conservation organizations in the past, but funding was currently a challenge. He added that as a non-profit, The Nature Conservancy could only offer land owners fair market value for their properties based on assessments, and were unable to negotiate prices based on landowners' requests.

W. Burton asked about the difference between The Nature Conservancy and Southeast Land Trust. P. Steckler said The Nature Conservancy and SELT are active partners and are part of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, which is a group of organizations concerned with land conservation and natural resource protection in the Great Bay Area. He said while individual organizations may have specific missions and goals, they are all collaborators.

B. Tapscott asked what was driving the sea-level rise projections in the region.

P. Steckler said he wasn't a climate scientist, but explained there are many factors contributing to climate change and sea-level rise. He said the melting of glaciers and polar ice was a primary driver of sea-level rise, and referenced a recent presentation from Dr. Cameron Wake from UNH.

C. Lentz asked for clarification about the climate modeling used in the study. He also asked if the culvert study used updated projections for 100-year storms in the New England region. P. Steckler explained that the study used sea-level rise projections based on high, medium, and low emissions estimates and used up-to-date projections for precipitation in New England.

B. Connor asked whether the culvert study used data related to astronomical high tides and storm surge from hurricanes.

P. Steckler responded that the study did not include astronomical high tide or storm surge data, but noted a separate collaborative effort underway to study the effect of sea-level rise, tides, and storm surge on the NH seacoast, including the Great Bay area.

P. Nelson said as a member of the Newmarket Planning Board it was great to be part of the project. He added that there needs to be more effort to engage a wider audience about the project and its goals in order to facilitate similar efforts throughout the region. He noted that projects involving private property commonly face challenges from landowners concerned with damages or conflicts on their property, and that the culvert project could be used to inform decision-makers and property owners about the value of resilience planning. P. Nelson suggested that the presentation should also include information about project costs and funding, and an explanation of climate science. He said he would like to work with P. Steckler to organize a presentation to Newmarket residents and decision-makers in order to educate the public about the project and the threat of climate change.

P. Steckler agreed with P. Nelson and said he would coordinate with P. Nelson about how to engage residents of Newmarket on the project and how it could improve coastal resilience.

C. Copeland noted that along Bay Rd there are numerous small crossings like Lubberland Creek that, if flooded, could cut off residents during a major storm.

P. Steckler agreed that flooding is a major threat to coastal and inland infrastructure in the Newmarket area. He added that The Nature Conservancy is working with the NH Coastal Program to take the culvert project to a larger scale, including development of a coastal culvert assessment protocol.

K. Ortmann agreed that future engagement of municipal decision-makers should include cost estimates, but suggested that they should also emphasize the difference between cost and value. He noted the importance of engaging property owners who may be well above sea-level rise projections, but may still be impacted by damage to roads and other transportation infrastructure.

C. Lentz asked if P. Steckler could send him a copy of the culvert study and cost information to distribute to Policy and TAC Committee members.

T. Burbank asked if Cameron Wake's presentation from the recent climate summit was available for public viewing. P. Steckler said presentations from climate summit (including Dr. Wake's) may be posted soon, and he would send links and documents to C. Lentz for distribution.

C. Copeland mentioned the SADES program and culvert assessments, and asked if SRPC field staff could visit the Newmarket culvert project in the future as a training event with TNC Staff. P. Steckler said they were welcome to visit the site.

B. Connor asked if the issues discussed at the meeting thus far were unique to the Newmarket culvert project, or if they were applicable to other projects. P. Steckler responded that many of the topics and issues were applicable to other projects, and that there is a need for greater community-level engagement throughout the region.

T. Burbank asked if regional climate studies showed inland impacts as well as coastal impacts (particularly from precipitation). P. Steckler responded that regional climate studies examined multiple climate change impacts throughout all of southeast New Hampshire.

5. Project Update(s)

5.1. Performance Based Planning – SHRP2 work schedule

N. Leuchanka explained that the SHRP2 project implementation window had been shortened by an additional month, as the funding agreement did not make either the April or May Governor and Executive Council meetings. She said SRPC anticipates the agreement will be approved at the June G&C meetings, and staff should be able to start work on the project by July 1, 2016.

5.2. Performance Based Planning – FTA/APTA Peer Exchange Workshop

N. Leuchanka said she attended a peer exchange workshop on May 4th and 5th in Albany, NY with Jen Czysz from Nashua RPC. They gave a presentation about the Granite State Future regional planning project and the recent efforts between RPCs, MPOs, and NHDOT to implement performance measures.

V. Parmele asked if there were other examples of similar efforts as those in NH. N. Leuchanka said many states, MPOs, and agencies are working to implement performance measures and that each approach is slightly different than the others; statewide collaborative efforts are rare.

6. Other Business

6.1. Senate Bill 364 - Complete Streets Study Committee

C. Lentz explained that the NH House passed an amended SB364 on May 11th. The Senate concurred on May 19th and the bill was enrolled on June 3rd. The bill established a committee to study the feasibility of including complete streets policy into the Statewide Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan process. C. Lentz said the committee would be examining a number of issues around complete streets and would likely be studying the ongoing complete streets project along NH108 through Dover, Somersworth, and Rochester.

V. Parmele asked if the bill had received any opposition. C. Lentz responded that there hadn't been any opposition during hearings, and the bill had received support from many organizations (such as the American Association of Retired People).

C. Lentz described a recent policy change from the FHWA that greatly reduced constraints on projects on the National Highway system. He explained that the FHWA used several controlling criteria to ensure uniform engineering standards for highway projects, but they were reducing

constraints in order to encourage highway design that considered local context. Specifically, projects on “high-speed” roads (over 50 miles per hour) would still be required to meet all ten criteria:

- Design Speed.
- Lane Width.
- Shoulder Width.
- Horizontal Curve Radius.
- Superelevation.
- Stopping Sight Distance.
- Maximum Grade.
- Cross Slope.
- Vertical Clearance.
- Design Loading Structural Capacity.

Projects on roads designed for speeds up to 50 miles per hour (“low-speed”) were only required to meet the *Design Speed* and *Design Loading Structural Capacity* criteria. Deviation from criteria on “low-speed” projects would still need to be approved by FHWA, but the policy allowed for more flexibility. C. Lentz noted that this would provide municipalities along NHS facilities more flexibility to incorporate complete streets design elements. He said his explanation of the policy was broad and he would speak with Leigh Levine from FHWA to clarify details. C. Lentz said he would send information about the policy change to SRPC committee members.

C. Lentz demonstrated an online tool that enabled users to view the location of nearby structurally deficient bridges.

C. Lentz explained that on Tuesday, May 24th volunteers would be conducting a count of bicycle and pedestrian activity across the state. He said Tom Brown (SRPC Data Management Specialist) had identified potential counting locations in municipalities throughout the region and would welcome any volunteers to count bicycle and pedestrian activity at specific locations between 5-7pm.

7. Citizen’s Forum

No citizens were present at the meeting.

8. Adjournment

K. Ortman moved to adjourn

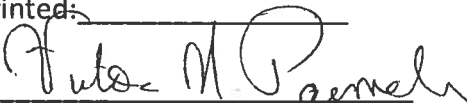
Seconded by T. Crosby

Vote: All in favor

Minutes submitted by,
Colin Lentz, Recording Secretary

Approved by

Name Printed: _____

Signed 

Date: 6/17/16

