

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

**Friday, July 21, 2017
9 a.m.-11 a.m.**

1. Introductions

Members Present: Steven Diamond (Barrington), Robert Jaffin (Rochester), Sandy Keans (Rochester), Martin Laferte (Farmington), Fred Kaen (Lee), Judith Nelson (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Brian Tapscott (Somersworth), Michael Williams (COAST)

Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner), Rachael Mack (GIS Planner), James Burdin (Regional Economic Development Planner), Cynthia Plascencia (Transportation Writer)

The meeting was called to order with a quorum at 9:05 a.m.

2. Staff Communications

C. Lentz announced that the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) kickoff meeting took place. GACIT is composed of five Executive Councilors, the governor, and DOT. Strafford MPO has municipalities in four of the Executive Council districts. He stated that two discussion items resulted from the meeting. One was the question of what role regional planning commissions (RPCs) will play in the GACIT process in regard to the public meetings. This is yet to be determined. The second item discussed was regarding the upcoming CMAQ round. The Executive Councilors will be looking at the commissioner criteria and making recommendations to DOT as far as what the final criteria will be. C. Lentz stated that presently the process does not include a role for the regional planning commissions in the scoring projects.

3. Action Items

Minutes from June 16, 2017 [VOTE]

C. Lentz stated the minutes needed to be adjusted to include Brian Tapscott.

M. Williams made a motion to approve the June 16, 2017 Meeting Minutes as amended.

Seconded by J. Nelson

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Agenda Development in FY18

C. Lentz gave an update on TAC's newly elected officers, with Martin Laferte as the new chair, and Michael Williams as vice chair. C. Lentz stated that he proposed working with the TAC officers to develop agenda items and integrate committee concerns to ensure the committee process is valuable to everyone. He would like to work with the Policy Committee officers to develop agenda items as well.

C. Lentz discussed FY2018 agenda topics, which included a request to have an MPO primer, including a review of laws and regulations, and a discussion with Bill Watson from DOT to discuss the challenges of project management. He stated he wanted to discuss community response to hazards, using the training he will receive in Portland, OR regarding transportation demand management strategies. C. Lentz encouraged members to send him suggestions for additional topics.

S. Keans asked if Colin was selected for the hazard plan training in Portland, OR, and he replied affirmatively. He explained that he and Jamel Torres, transportation planner from Southern Maine MPO, will travel to Portland, OR in September to assist Portland in developing its own recovery program for the metro area. They will bring back tools to develop a training exercise for the Southern Maine/Southern New Hampshire seacoast area. All commissioners are welcome to attend.

4.2 Project Development Services

4.2.a. Integration of Economic Development

C. Lentz gave a presentation on project development services. He explained that SRPC had a very successful Ten Year Plan project solicitation process, having met with all municipalities, transit providers, UNH, and NHDOT maintenance districts. He wanted to get thoughts from the Policy Committee as to what they need from SRPC to develop projects, and what the region needs from DOT to present viable projects. C. Lentz noted several overarching issues that need to be improved to increase the efficacy of the project solicitation process:

- the statewide project selection criteria were not finalized until the end of December 2016, leaving only 4 months before regional project lists were due to NHDOT
- the typical schedule is such that many meetings were late in the process and conflicted with town voting season
- the resulting project portfolio was very broad and unfocused

C. Lentz stated he wants well-developed, “shovel-ready” projects to propose for the Ten Year Plan and the TIP so DOT can easily see how the project fits its goals and fiscal constraints. He highlighted two major goals for the new approach: to develop more financially viable projects for proposing to the Ten Year Plan and TIP; and to improve Strafford MPO’s capacity to help communities develop projects and plan local transportation improvements.

C. Lentz noted the need for updated corridor plans for the region’s primary highways. He explained that corridor plans could link various planning areas and community goals beyond transportation improvements (including economic development, quality of life, and community character). Another benefit of corridor-based planning is that multiple projects are linked across municipal borders, rather than having single projects developed on their own. He said one goal was to start developing projects well ahead of the official Ten Year Plan development process so projects are more fully formed prior to their submission.

C. Lentz reviewed Strafford MPO’s existing capacity for project development services, including: census data and analysis; traffic and safety data collection and analysis; and general planning support. He also noted services in development, such as safety analysis software, compiling and categorizing project funding sources, scope development and cost estimation tools, and performance tracking and analysis.

C. Lentz stated successful projects for the TYP need to be strategic and fiscally viable. He explained that tying potential projects to state performance goals would be beneficial. He elaborated that performance measures are the new criteria, and going forward should be used in the project selection process. He suggested that the federally mandated performance measures represent a perfect opportunity to ensure the project selection process is transparent and consistent. If municipalities and agencies could use performance measures as project criteria, they could develop projects for the Ten Year Plan that specifically address the state and MPO’s performance targets.

C. Lentz explained that one of the first steps was to have a discussion with members of the Transportation Planners Collaborative (all MPOs, RPCs, NHDOT, Federal Highway Administration, NH Department of Environmental Services, and Federal Transit Administration) about establishing a process that will develop projects for the Ten Year Plan process in fall of 2018. After gathering feedback from the TAC and Policy Committees, C. Lentz would work with NHDOT and the MPOs and RPCs to develop an agenda for a future Transportation Planners Collaborative.

C. Lentz ended his presentation by asking for feedback to take to a Transportation Planners Collaborative meeting: what specific actions Strafford MPO can do to implement project

development services; and what does the region need to know from DOT to have “shovel-ready” projects.

4.2.b. Feedback for the Transportation Planners Collective

C. Lentz discussed the Technical Advisory Committee’s suggestions, which included: standardizing a predictable process for projects; looking beyond filling gaps in performance as the process gets developed; and facilitating the LPA process. Additional training for the Local Public Agency (LPA) process was listed as a suggestion from the TAC meeting. C. Lentz stated that municipalities must have a full time staff member who is LPA certified to receive grants.

V. Parmele stated that staffing a full-time LPA-certified member was not feasible for many small towns. She asked if RPCs could step in and fulfill that requirement for these situations. C. Lentz replied that while many staff members at SRPC are LPA-certified, that position is meant to be full-time for the town’s project management. He replied that he was unsure if RPCs could fill parts of the role for towns, but it would be a good question to bring to DOT.

S. Diamond elaborated on a town center issue in Barrington. He stated that the planning board just approved a new gas station close to an intersection and the state issued a waiver 1/10th the typical distance from the driveway setback, which raised concerns because it is a shared driveway and can cause back up. He also expressed a concern regarding an increase in commercial development, which aims to draw in large populations. He was worried about negative effects on the water and sewer infrastructure, which will be necessary in order to sustain that increased population. C. Lentz replied that those are the types of issues RPCs want to help with going forward.

R. Jaffin brought up the issue of building a portfolio for funds that are available prior to the Ten Year Plan. He stated that a much larger portfolio is needed that has ready-to-fund projects for funding sources that become available, not just the Ten Year Plan. C. Lentz agreed that a portfolio is needed with a series of projects that require minimal preparatory steps prior to submittal to funder.

P. Nelson agreed and stated that he would like to see SRPC show municipal audiences a model municipal plan that is part of a bigger portfolio. He would like SRPC to have a collective history on the known assets and transportation projects for each community. SRPC could then go to each community, present past projects and current known assets, and offer assistance and associated costs.

C. Lentz reiterated the importance of updating corridor studies as municipal members use these for project development. P. Nelson asked where those studies could be found and C. Lentz replied that they are on the SRPC website and in hardcopy in the office.

R. Jaffin stated that a new welcome packet is needed for new commissioners, with bulleted information such as past and current projects. P. Nelson added that all of this information should be available online for commissioners for ease and transparency. R. Jaffin stated that having multijurisdictional and interdisciplinary projects will also make them eligible for additional grant funding.

J. Burdin commented that some funding requires projects to have 4-5 jurisdictions to be considered multijurisdictional; projects that include one or two jurisdictions were not considered sufficiently inclusive. He added that the interdisciplinary aspect of projects is also important, for example the intersection of economic development and transportation. J. Burdin gave an example in Rochester. He stated that there are 10,000 people that work in the city of Rochester. There are 13,000 working residents in Rochester. He stated that there are 10,000 people that work in the city of Rochester. There are 13,000 working residents in Rochester. There are only 3,000 people who work and live in Rochester, which means that there are 10,000 Rochester residents that are commuting outside of Rochester for work; the other 7,000 are commuting in from other towns. J. Burdin stated that adding a company in Rochester which hired 1,000 employees would have limited economic impact for Rochester, benefitting other towns as well. He emphasized that the connections between municipalities ensuring access to transportation for jobs is important to the economic development work he does.

R. Jaffin stated that a program is needed to engage communities with their respective Executive Councilors. P. Nelson added that this information should be available online. C. Copeland mentioned that SRPC has purchased MapGeo, which has a hundred data layers, and that projects could be represented as points on the map, along with a layer for Executive Council districts.

V. Parmele asked if DOT is aware of SRPC's project development process, and C. Lentz responded affirmatively. He has spoken with Bill Watson at DOT to discuss the town issues and future goals. R. Jaffin stated that he would like to see more commissioners involved in events like Apple Harvest Day to reach out to the community, rather than just SRPC staff. J. Nelson agreed and reiterated the importance of creating a town's project development portfolio to share at these events. R. Jaffin asked if NHDES might be available to attend such events and E. Strachan replied affirmatively.

5. Project Updates

R. Mack stated that SRPC has purchased MapGeo and she has been planning what data to include across the transportation planning, natural resource, economic development spectrum. She suggested members Google Nashua's RPC MapGeo to check out what it will look like in the

future. She asked members for suggestions on items they would like to see on SRPC's MapGeo. R. Mack will be going to communities in the fall to discuss the application.

C. Copeland gave an update on the SHRP2 program stating they had their last official meeting in July. She stated that staff are working on website development, from collecting pictures and videos, to creating graphics and editing documents. She added that E. Strachan joined the workgroup and the four MPOs will be meeting over the next year to discuss performance measures. V. Parmele asked if DOT has offered any feedback on the project and C. Copeland responded they had a good working relationship with members of DOT.

6. Other Business

R. Jaffin asked C. Copeland if there was any inherent value in inviting the new Executive Director from Rockingham to attend a Policy Committee since Rockingham and Strafford are critical to the overall transportation structure. She replied affirmatively.

R. Jaffin asked if it was possible to move the August 18 Policy Committee meeting as there is a committee meeting discussing ending the NH Rail Transit Authority on the same date. He also asked Policy Committee members to attend and support the retention of the NH Rail Transit Authority as rail transit affects many of the Strafford communities. C. Copeland asked what is being proposed in the meeting. R. Jaffin replied that it is not clear, but the NH Rail Transit Authority is focusing on new technology as opposed to passenger transportation. If the committee does not see any interest in passenger transportation via various modes, it will redirect focus. C. Copeland offered to write a letter supporting a focus on passenger transportation.

M. Williams made a motion to have SRPC staff write a letter to the state encouraging a direction that facilitates all modes of passenger transportation.

Seconded by J. Nelson

Vote: Unanimous in favor

P. Nelson stated that he attended the Moose Mountain Regional Greenways meeting and they put together a 20-year regional conservation plan. He encouraged SRPC to be aware of the level of mapping Moose Mountain Regional Greenways has done. He explained that MMRG hired an outside company to do the GIS mapping. C. Copeland stated that the process MMRG used is the same as what SRPC used for the Conservation Plan for the Coastal Watersheds, so the two organizations are equivalent in their mapping process.

E. Strachan stated that she gave a presentation at the TAC meeting on DERA (Diesel Emission Reduction Act) funding. She suggested members visit the NHDES website for a draft proposal if they are interested in submitting a project. Members are also welcome to email E. Strachan questions or ideas for a project.

7. Citizen's Forum

Citizens of the Strafford region are invited to speak on the subject matter of the meeting. Statements shall be limited to three minutes.

No citizens brought comments forward.

8. Adjournment

B. Tapscott moved to adjourn

Seconded by M. Williams

Vote: All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Cynthia Plascencia and Colin Lentz

Approved by:

Name Printed

Victoria Parnelle

Signed:

Victoria Parnelle

Dated:

8/18/17

