

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

**Minutes**

**Friday, September 15, 2017  
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

**1. Introductions**

**Members Present:** Steve Diamond (Barrington), Don Hamann (Rochester), Sandra Keans (Rochester), Tony McManus (Dover), Judy Nelson (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Stephen Pesci (UNH), Elena Piekut (Dover), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Bill Watson (NHDOT), Michael Williams (COAST)

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

The meeting was called to order with a quorum at 9:06 am.

**2. Staff Communications**

C. Lentz explained that he recently returned from a training exercise in Portland, OR where he met with MPO staff from across the country to discuss the challenge of developing plans or frameworks for recovering from major emergencies that affect transportation infrastructure. He said he would be working with staff from Southern Maine MPO and consultants to develop and lead a table-top planning exercise for the Strafford/Rockingham/Southern Main region, in which participants would work through a disaster scenario and discuss recovery planning needs. The training and the exercise emphasize transit capacity for aiding in recovery efforts.

**3. Public Hearing**

*2017 Strafford MPO Public Participation Plan*

S. Sylvia presented the draft Public Participation Plan. She explained the role of the plan in defining a process for ensuring a full range of transportation stakeholders from the region have opportunities to participate in the regional planning process. S. Sylvia reviewed new content, goals in the plan, and new internal performance measures. She noted that the draft plan is available on the SRPC website and in hard copy.

D. Hamann asked what comments had been received from Rochester staff. S. Sylvia responded that Rochester staff had asked questions about specific training for public involvement that SRPC staff attend. C. Copeland noted that there is a public comment process for all MPO-

related plans and the record of comments submitted for the draft Public Participation Plan will be presented to the committees prior to approval.

P. Nelson reminded the committee members about a current Request for Proposals (RFP) from Amazon because the company is looking for a new site for a headquarters. He asked what role SRPC played in advocating on behalf of the region related to the RFP. Committee members discussed the RFP and New Hampshire's potential involvement.

S. Pesci made a motion to close the public hearing for the draft Public Participation Plan.

S. Keans seconded the motion.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

#### **4. Action Item(s)**

##### *Minutes from August 18<sup>th</sup> 2017*

M. Williams made a motion to accept the draft minutes from August 18<sup>th</sup>. S. Keans seconded the motion. D. Hamann noted a misspelling of his name and provided a correction.

Vote: all in favor. UNH abstained

##### *Draft System Performance Report Template*

R. Dewey presented draft templates for performance reporting that were developed by members of the Partnering for Performance NH workgroup. She demonstrated how the templates would be used to report regular tracking of performance measures and related targets. R Dewey asked for input from committee members.

P. Nelson asked who sets targets. R. Dewey responded that each state and each MPO set targets for individual measures. P. Nelson suggested that the template would show more detail if it showed actual trends and compared them to desired trends. C. Copeland noted that the "desired trend" is essentially to improve the current state [relative to an individual measures].

P. Nelson clarified that it would be useful to see more detail in the trend analysis, such as change in actual trends compared to change in desired trend [is investment having a measureable effect on trends in the desired direction?]. R. Dewey noted that the "target met" column will be blank for the first round since targets are currently being set.

S. Pesci said he liked the templates but suggested the template show a rate of change (e.g. the rate of fatal crashes in addition to the total number of crashes). R. Dewey noted that some measures (such as safety) will have individual rate measures and targets. She added that a rate calculation could be added for some supplemental measures. B. Watson suggested that the template and reports could show a correlation between data and rates.

M. Williams suggested that the reporting templates show national data related to performance and compare it to state and regional performance data.

P. Nelson said that the majority of motorcycle fatalities are due to riders not wearing helmets. He acknowledged that performance measures are focused on infrastructure, but suggested that linking motorcycle fatalities to the lack of helmet laws would be a valuable communication tool for readers.

B. Watson emphasized that performance measures and reporting requirements are new for states and MPOs, and all are currently adapting to new processes. He said that the reporting

tools and processes will continue to evolve to include information on issues in addition to infrastructure.

S. Pesci remembered that the supplemental measures were chosen from a list of 652 potential measures, and said the ones selected were excellent.

C. Lentz noted that the reporting templates were developed through the Partnering for Performance NH workgroup so that reports would be consistent across the MPOs.

J. Nelson made a motion to approve the draft system performance report templates

D. Hamann seconded the motion

Vote: Unanimous in favor

## **5. Discussion Items**

*Project development & management process - Bill Watson (NHDOT, Director of Planning and Community Assistance)*

B. Watson reviewed several statewide and regional planning processes currently ongoing (including CMAQ and Ten Year Plan development), and said he was open to discussing them with committee members.

C. Copeland said SRPC was taken by surprise by a sudden change in cost for one of the region's priority projects submitted for the Ten Year Plan, and one of SRPC's primary concerns was an ability to make accurate cost estimates for proposed projects. She noted that SRPC is constrained to 4.9 million dollars for proposed Ten Year Plan projects, and it's frustrating to propose projects within that constraint without a shared basis for cost estimates.

B. Watson noted the importance of inflating cost estimates using the statewide inflation rate of 2.55%. He said NHDOT would continue working with RPCs to improve the cost estimation process for new Ten Year Plan projects.

S. Pesci recalled that a workgroup of the Policy Committee met to select regional priority projects to submit for the draft Ten Year Plan, and noted that the high-priority project proposed for the intersection of US Route 4 and NH152 in Northwood and Nottingham was estimated at \$600,000, but was added to the Ten Year Plan by NHDOT with a cost of \$4.2 million. He added that inflating the original cost estimate would only make it a \$1.2 million project. He noted that if the Policy workgroup had known NHDOT would estimate such a large cost difference, they might have chosen a different project for the priority list. He emphasized the need for shared tools and dialogue between RPCs and NHDOT to reduce similar conflicts.

B. Watson noted that if NHDOT can get more detailed information about proposed projects from RPCs and communities at the start of the Ten Year Plan process, they can help more accurately estimate costs.

C. Lentz said he would be working with communities on an ongoing basis to fully develop potential Ten Year Plan projects and create a more focused list of projects based on demonstrated local and regional needs. He noted that the RPC project solicitation process was influenced by the late date of the final decision on project selection criteria that were developed between NHDOT, RPCs, and other state and federal agencies.

V. Parmele reiterated the difficulty for local staff to navigate Ten Year Plan project development challenges and noted that the Northwood/Nottingham is a local "need" not just a "want".

C. Copeland noted communication conflicts between RPCs, NHDOT, and municipal officials and staff, saying that separate conversations between NHDOT and SRPC, and NHDOT and the municipalities resulted in conflicting information.

B. Watson emphasized the need for the SRPC staff and committee members reviewing potential projects to be fully aware of the goals and expectations of municipalities.

He summarized the Ten Year Plan process and noted several decision points in the near future: RPCs submitted priority projects on behalf of their regions; NHDOT developed the draft Ten Year Plan and presented it to GACIT; GACIT is currently holding public hearings throughout their districts; following the hearings, GACIT member will discuss and the draft Ten Year Plan with NHDOT; discussions among GACIT members will result in submission of the draft plan to the Governor in December for his consideration.

V. Parmele asked if GACIT members can change the scope of individual projects, add new projects, and adjust funding levels in the draft plan. B. Watson said that they can do all those things, but that changes to or elimination of individual projects is not common or expected with the current GACIT members.

C. Lentz explained that he had recently proposed that the Transportation Planners Collaborative (made up of all nine RPCs, NHDOT, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and NH Dept. of Environmental Services) discuss the issues related to effective project development for the Ten Year Plan, including the integration of performance based planning into the process.

S. Diamond asked for clarification on his understanding that revenues from gas taxes are not enough to support the needs and costs of maintaining and improving the transportation system. B. Watson confirmed this, noting that the state gas tax currently does not provide enough revenue for the state to offer cash match for federally funded transportation projects. He said current gas tax revenues are used to support the NHDOT operating budget and other state agencies in order to fulfill their constitutional requirements. B. Watson noted that this essentially means federal dollars are used 20% less effectively because cash match cannot be included. He noted that the State Aid Bridge program used to be funded through the NHDOT operating budget, but currently receives funds through [NH] Senate Bill 360 – the recent state gas tax increase.

C. Copeland noted that long-term project history plays an important role in the development and selection of projects by NHDOT. V. Parmele added that the Northwood/Nottingham project is along the US4 corridor which is in need of comprehensive planning. B. Watson noted that Northwood could attend a GACIT meeting and propose the advancement of planning funds for a corridor study to ensure the Northwood/Nottingham project is designed effectively.

#### *CMAQ program updates*

C. Lentz explained that CMAQ application forms had been posted to the NHDOT website and applications would be due on October 20<sup>th</sup>. He said after applications had been submitted, the RPCs would be working with applicants and the NH Dept. of Environmental Services to conduct air quality analyses for each application. B. Watson explained that NHDOT would be providing a list of CMAQ projects to GACIT in December, in time for their inclusion in the Ten Year Plan. He noted that the members of GACIT will make the final project selection for this CMAQ round.

## **6. Project Update(s)**

### *Road Safety Audit projects in development*

C. Lentz reminded members that the application deadline for the Road Safety Audit program is December 1<sup>st</sup>. He said he had recently completed an application with the City of Somersworth and was in contact with several communities about potential local intersections that could be eligible for an application to the program.

### *Partnering for Performance NH – SHRP2 close-out process*

R. Dewey reminded the committee that funding from the Strategic Highway Research Program in support of SRPC's performance-based planning project was being closed out. Project efforts and collaboration between the four MPOs will continue under the name Partnering for Performance NH. She noted that the group has a new website:

[PartneringforPerformanceNH.com](http://PartneringforPerformanceNH.com).

## **7. Other Business**

S. Pesci noted that UNH will be completing several projects funded through Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds, including bus stop pull-outs, and emergency generators for Wildcat transit natural gas fueling stations. He noted that UNH would be very interested to participate in the emergency recovery planning effort described by C. Lentz at the beginning of the meeting. S. Pesci added that the recently approved TAP project on campus will be completed in 2019 rather than 2018 due to constraints in the upcoming construction season. He added that UNH is in the process of purchasing electric vehicles and charging stations for the fleet of campus [non-transit] vehicles.

C. Copeland noted that R. Mack was in the process of meeting with communities regarding their participation in a new GIS mapping program (called MapGeo) and updating local data in preparation for the 2020 census.

P. Nelson made a motion to request SRPC to contact staff at the NH Dept. of Business and Economic Development to learn about any plans to propose locations for the new Amazon headquarters in New Hampshire

J. Nelson seconded the motion and asked that staff identify regional assets and opportunities for such a proposal.

Vote: unanimous in favor.

## **8. 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.

**9. Adjournment**

J. Nelson moved to adjourn

Seconded by S. Pesci

Vote: All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Colin Lentz

Approved by:

Name Printed Victoria Parmele

Signed Victoria Parmele

Date: 10/26/17