

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

FINAL Minutes

**Friday, April 20, 2018
9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

1. Introductions

Meeting called to order at 9:00 am

Members Present: Mark Avery (Madbury), Wayne Burton (Durham), Beverly Cray (UNH), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Don Hamann (Rochester), Fred Kaen (Lee), Sandy Keans (Rochester), David Landry (Dover), Judy Nelson (Rollinsford), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Anthony McManus (Dover), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Michael Williams (COAST)

Staff Present: Rachel Dewey (Data Analyst), Stefanie Casella (Data Collection and Analysis Assistant), Kathy Foster (Financial Consultant), Colin Lentz (Regional Transportation Planner),

Guests Present: Jennifer Czynsz

2. Staff Communications

V. Parmele announced that Jennifer Czynsz had accepted the Executive Committees offer for the position of Executive Director of SRPC. She noted that there were ten candidates for the position and three finalists, and Jenn was by far the most qualified. C. Lentz added that all SRPC staff had met with J. Czynsz to ask her questions from their perspective prior to the Executive Committee making an official offer. He said staff were very excited that J. Czynsz had accepted the offer and looked forward to working with her. J. Nelson said J. Czynsz would be starting officially in late May/early June. V. Parmele added that Kyle Pimental would be filling the role of Acting Executive Director until then, with C. Lentz and S. Sylvia in supporting roles according to the established succession plan.

W. Burton asked J. Czynsz if she could briefly introduce herself and her background. J. Czynsz said she is currently the assistant Executive Director at Nashua Regional Planning Commission where she has managed the land use and transportation programs. Prior to that she managed the regional and municipal assistance programs at the NH Office of Energy & Planning (now the Office of Strategic Initiatives, or OSI). Before that she was a regional planner at Nashua, for a total of 15 years of planning experience in New Hampshire. Her education and training includes an undergraduate degree in architecture from Norwich college, two years of community development work in West Africa with the Peace Corps., a Masters in City Planning from MIT, and work at an architecture firm in Boston. J Czynsz noted that she grew up in New Hampshire.

3. Action Items

3.1 Minutes from March 16th 2018 [VOTE]

D. Hamann made motion to approve minutes as written

Seconded by M. Williams

Vote: Unanimous in favor

3.2. Updates to the Memorandum of Understanding between MPOs, NHDOT, and public transportation providers [VOTE]

C. Lentz provided background information about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the four MPOs, NHDOT, and Transit Providers in New Hampshire. It describes the agency-specific and shared responsibilities for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process, including compliance with federal requirements and state processes. C. Lentz explained that this is an update to an existing MOU. He said that some language has been updated and the overall document is now better organized, but one of the primary reasons for updating the MOU is to incorporate federal requirements for performance-based planning. This includes identifying responsibilities and processes for data sharing and performance reporting. C. Lentz explained there is a Master Agreement that applies to all parties and specific sub-agreements organized in three appendices. Appendix A contains sub-agreements related to the urbanized areas throughout the state. For instance Rockingham MPO, Strafford MPO, and NHDOT share a sub-agreement related to the Portsmouth urbanized area because Newmarket is part of that urbanized area, but is part of the Strafford MPO planning area. Appendix B contains sub-agreements related transit providers. For instance there is a sub-agreement between Strafford MPO, Rockingham MPO, and COAST; as well as a separate one between the MPOs and UNH Wildcat Transit. Appendix C contains sub-agreements related to specific performance measures. The current proposed update to the MOU only includes a sub-agreement for Safety performance measures, data sharing, and target setting and reporting. C. Lentz explained that more sub-agreements will have to be developed and added to Appendix C over the course of the year as NHDOT, state agencies, and MPOs develop targets for the remaining performance (these include federally-required performance measures for pavement and bridge conditions, and travel time reliability on the interstate system).

S. Diamond asked if it would be useful to use the MOU to establish standards for formatting data so that it can be shared more easily. C. Lentz replied that including specific provisions for the format of data would be difficult. He noted that highway safety data is a good example. Crash data come from municipalities (much of it on paper forms that have to be scanned into a computer), are sent to the DMV, distributed separately to NHDOT and the Dept. of Safety, and from there to the MPOs and RPCs. C. Lentz said that data sharing is a major concern for effective and consistent performance management and reporting by the agencies involved and they are currently working to address issues, but it's a bit early to include specific language in the MOU.

C. Lentz explained that the MOU (described as "written provisions") was required by federal law and the other MPOs were currently working to approve the master agreement and their specific sub-agreements.

M. Williams made motion to approve the draft MOU

Seconded by D. Hamann

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Approach to Regional Project Development and Ranking

C. Lentz explained that one year from now was the deadline for the MPO to submit a list of priority projects for inclusion in the Ten Year Plan. He said he wanted to start the conversation as early as possible so that the region could develop and submit a list of projects that represented regional needs. He gave a presentation that provided an overview of the issues that needed to be considered for developing projects.

- The proposed projects should be ones that don't fit within existing NHDOT programs (such as Highway Safety Improvement, Bridge or pavement programs, Transportation Alternatives, or CMAQ)
- The projects will likely be scored using a set of criteria agreed upon by the RPCs, NHDOT, FHWA, and NHDES. However, regional and state performance measures will be playing a larger role in the future.
- Projects will be added to years nine and ten of the draft plan so the transportation needs ten years from now should be considered. Additionally, project cost estimates need to be inflated out ten years.
- New priority projects need to be constrained closely to the region's theoretical funding allocation for new projects. In the past ten year plan round the region was constrained to \$2.5 million for each of the two new years of the draft plan.

C. Lentz proposed forming a sub-committee of TAC and Policy committee members representing small and large municipalities, and transit providers to propose a list of projects that could be developed with regular review and input from both committees. C. Lentz also proposed including James Burdin (SRPC's Regional Economic Development Planner) to consider regional economic development factors.

W. Burton mentioned a recent shift at national and state level politics that places low priority on public transportation and other modes that typically require public subsidization. He asked how the political climate affected the Ten Year Plan process at the MPO level.

J. Nelson suggested that it was the MPO's role to push back against policies it saw as detrimental. C. Lentz said that was another reason to begin the Ten Year Plan process now so that the MPO could develop a set of policy communications.

P. Nelson said the region needs a set of priorities for the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

S. Diamond mentioned that he had been looking at data on the in-flow and out-flow of commuters in Barrington. He said he was surprised at the large numbers of people traveling long distances for work

and wondered how to encourage people to find work closer to where they live. C. Lentz suggested that SRPC could develop projects that speak to those issues, such as transit-oriented development – which encourages developing residences, jobs, and services near each other and directly adjacent to public transit.

J. Nelson noted that during the Eisenhower administration, heavy investment was made to develop the National Highway System, but shifted investment away from public transportation. She stressed the need to balance issues such as maintaining roads and bridges for passenger cars with supporting a multi-modal network including public transit.

C. Lentz asked for discussion and consensus on the proposed approach with the project development sub-committee. He said he would be communicating with both TAC and Policy members following the meeting to explain the proposal and extend an invitation to participate.

The Policy committee supported this approach by consensus.

5. Other Business

5.1 State Freight Plan Participation

C. Lentz provided information about the first State Freight Plan that was being developed. He explained that the RPCs would play a role in providing recommendations for new freight corridors as part of the plan development process. Specifically, the state was enabled through the FAST Act to designate 150 miles of new “Critical Rural Freight Corridors” and 75 miles of new “Critical Urban Freight Corridors”. The state freight plan was required for accessing federal funding for freight planning and improvements. The new designated routes would be added to the existing network of designated freight routes (primarily consisting of Interstate Highways). C. Lentz explained that new designated urban corridors had to be within the boundaries of urbanized areas and the rural corridors outside the urban areas. C. Lentz said he would be providing more detailed information for discussion and development of preliminary recommendations at the May TAC and Policy meetings.

5.2 Preparing for the 2020 Census

C. Lentz explained that there was a proposal to adjust the way census data were organized for transportation planning. Census data are compiled into Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP) and are critical for transportation planning and specifically, computer modeling. Recently those census data have been grouped separately from the “standard geography” (Tracts, Blocks, and Block Groups) for transportation planning (called Transportation Analysis Zones or TAZs). TAZs generally contain geographic areas that help transportation planners model commute patterns and other trips. The oversight board that manages the CTPP recently proposed eliminating the separate TAZs and using only the traditional Census geography. C. Lentz explained that MPOs and RPCs will have the opportunity to collaborate to realign the current Tracts, Block Groups, and Blocks so that they support transportation planning and modeling efforts in the future. He said this process would be taking place over the long term.

5.3 Bike/Walk to Work Day

C. Lentz noted that the annual Bike/Walk to Work Day was coming up on Friday May 18th. He said there would be breakfast stations at Dover, Durham, and Newmarket for commuters participating in the event.

W. Burton explained that the Seacoast Reliability Project (addition of high-capacity electrical transmission wires across the Little Bay) was still being negotiated but would likely result in increased development along the lower Piscataqua River in Newington. He stressed the need to keep track of the implications of such projects and take opportunities to advocate for a regional perspective on impacts to quality of life.

C. Lentz responded that he always appreciated input on how to address projects of regional impact. He noted that SRPC had received a clear directive to remain politically neutral and objective, but it would feel irresponsible to not provide objective input on projects and plans that could have negative impacts on quality of life in the region.

Committee members discussed transportation and energy issues related to fossil fuels, gas taxes, and state legislation around fuel efficient vehicles. P. Nelson noted that the CEO of the Shell Corporation [the Fossil Fuel company] recently wrote an article saying that electric vehicles are the future and they're betting their bottom line on electric vehicle development. He said he hoped SRPC could incorporate such issues into its communications and engagement at the regional level.

C. Lentz provided a brief introduction to the draft plan for distributing mitigation funds from the Volkswagen settlement. He reviewed the proposed goals for the plan and noted that it focused on replacement of diesel state and municipally owned vehicles, but had a specific set-aside for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. C. Lentz said the NH Office of Strategic Initiatives was accepting comments on the plan prior to June 5th.

E. Strachan noted that school buses that are privately owned but operated on contract with a municipality are eligible under the settlement agreement. She said Public Transit vehicles were eligible as well.

W. Burton noted that there was push-back from legislators regarding public charging stations for electric vehicles. E. Strachan said there was a state plan in development for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. C. Lentz added that the Volkswagen settlement funds in the draft plan were separate from the Electrify America funds for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. He explained that Electrify America was part of the Volkswagen settlement but it was a subsidiary company set up to administer funding specifically for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. He said SRPC had provided recommendations to NHDES about locations for new electric vehicle charging infrastructure that would benefit the region's commuters. W. Burton noted that the public electric vehicle charging stations at the Durham Public Library had already paid for themselves.

P. Nelson suggested that SRPC develop a GIS overlay specifically for regional electric vehicle charging infrastructure development locations. C. Lentz noted that he had been working with staff to look at

regional concentrations of employment and economic centers where electric vehicle charging infrastructure would be beneficial and encourage adoption of electric vehicles. Members discussed issues around development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

B. Cray explained that May 17th would be the last day that UNH Wildcat would be operating the Route 125 bus between Durham and Rochester. Additionally, UNH Wildcat was seriously considering the need to eliminate weekend service on the route serving Newmarket (route #5). She explained that the Rochester route had struggled from the beginning to maintain sustainable ridership. The Newmarket route had also seen consistent declines in ridership. She noted that the bus stop at Cherry Hill and Bennett Way along the Newmarket Route would need to be eliminated in addition to weekend service. Weekday service would not be affected.

C. Lentz said he had attended meeting at NHDOT on March 23rd where proposals were presented for potential Public-Private Partnership projects. He noted two projects that were significant in the Strafford region. One was a proposal from a European conglomerate to privatize the NH Turnpike. C. Lentz noted that the NHDOT Commissioner had said NHDOT would not be pursuing this proposal at this time since it concerned larger policy discussions. The second proposal was from C&J Buslines to privatize the Dover and Portsmouth Park N' Rides where C&J operates. C. Lentz explained that the proposal included parking fees to support maintenance and improvements, and a portion of revenues would go to support public transportation providers. C. Lentz noted that all proposals are on an NHDOT website: <https://www.nh.gov/dot/programs/public-private-partnership/index.htm>

6. Citizens Forum

No citizens brought forward any issues or topics of discussion.

7. Adjournment

M. Williams made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by W. Burton

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 am

Minutes prepared by Stefanie Casella and Colin Lentz

Approved by

Name Printed: Victoria Parnelle

Signed: Victoria Parnelle

Date: 5/18/18