



Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, February 15th 2019 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Strafford Regional Planning Commission
150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12, Conference Room 1A
Rochester, NH

AGENDA

The meeting was called to order at 9:05am

1. **Attendance:**

Committee Members

Fred Kaen (Lee), John Hotchkiss (Middleton), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Steve Diamond (Barrington), David Landry (Dover), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Mike Bobinsky (Somersworth), Mark Avery (Madbury), Lucy St. John (NHDOT), Marcia Gasses (Barrington), Michael Williams (COAST), Don Hamann (Rochester),

Guests/Public attendees

Julian Long (Rochester Community Development Coordinator)

Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Nancy O' Connor, Stef, Colin, Rachel

2. **Staff Communications**

J. Czysz notified the committee that there was a vacant seat on the SRPC Executive Committee and two alternate seats that someone could fill on a trial basis if they were unsure about committing long-term.

J. Czysz explained that SRPC had held their first strategic planning retreat the previous Friday. There was great participation from commissioners, staff, and a team of UNH planning students that acted as facilitators. SRPC staff came away with great ideas, thanks to good energy and enthusiasm from commissioners. The lead facilitator, Maria, sent a first draft of a summary which staff had reviewed and sent back for revision. There will be a new draft out soon for commissioners to review and comment on. Future steps include beginning to flush out plans and ideas for further refinement in the future.

V. Parmele remembered planning this event over a year ago and thought it went very well.

C. Lentz noted that Ken Mayo SRPC's editor will moving on from the Strafford regional planning commission. He and his expertise will be missed.

3. **Action Item(s)**

Public Hearing for updates to the Transportation Improvement Program and Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Motion to open public hearing (6 minutes on recorder)

M. Bobinsky made a motion to public hearing
Seconded by J. Hotchkiss
Vote: Unanimous in favor

C. Lentz explained that the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and regional TIPs are updated every two years with new projects and funding. The new projects in the TIP come from the Ten Year Plan, which is informed by the regional Metropolitan Transportation Plans (Metro Plan). Because of this, the Metro Plan is updated concurrently with the TIP. C. Lentz provided a presentation reviewing the content in the TIP including: local and regional projects that had been completed or were being added; regional and statewide programs (such as paving and bridge maintenance); and transit funding for COAST and UNH Wildcat Transit. C. Lentz explained that fiscal constraint was a core component of transportation planning. The Metro Plan, Ten Year Plan, and TIP can only contain projects for which reasonably expected funding is available. The TIP also shows how each project is connected to performance measures.

S. Diamond asked if he had heard correctly in the past that the region gets a disproportionate share of federal funding for projects in the TIP. C. Lentz answered that it's inaccurate to say the region is not getting its "fair share" of funding. There will be high years when large projects are in the construction phase, and lower years as those projects are completed. He added that turnpike projects do not use federal funding, but the projects are included in the TIP because of their importance for the region.

M. Bobinsky asked for clarification about the expected regional funding allocation in more depth. C. Lentz explained that each region has a theoretical allocation of federal funds based on population and miles of federal aid eligible highways. This comes to about 10% of the total allocation of federal funding for the state. NHDOT ensures that the STIP and Ten Year Plan are fiscally constrained; the MPOs confirm that their regional TIPs are constrained and that the long-range projects in the Metro Plan are constrained. Funding in the Metro Plan is estimated based on current federal funding levels, and projected using a 2.55% inflation rate. J. Czysz clarified that the graph used a simple trend line based on the federal funding currently available because funding has not increased along with inflation. This is a more conservative estimate of funding available in the future.

V. Parmele asked how performance measures and targets would be integrated into the plan and process in the future. C. Lentz explained that MPOs were still getting used to the performance-based planning approach and Strafford MPO would be working with its partners to continue this process. He noted that the performance measures were a way of showing return on investment of federal transportation funds (for instance, whether projects that use safety funding are actually improving safety).

C. Lentz explained that he had several objectives for improving the TIP. Better integration of performance-based planning was a primary one. The database that tracks projects is being updated by Rachel Dewey so that project tracking was much easier. C. Lentz said he wanted to increase regular tracking of funding that gets obligated to individual projects. He said he wanted

to do a better job of identifying which projects were in the ten year plan that would be entering the TIP in the future.

C. Lentz continued with a presentation on updates to the Metro Plan. The Metro Plan is a long-range plan which covers years 2017-2040 and includes the four-year TIP, the six additional years of the Ten Year Plan, and “out-years” projects that are in development. He showed a bar graph for the whole Metro Plan with programmed funding compared to the regional fiscal constraint target (10.01%). C. Lentz noted that the graph included years near the end of the plan were above the constraint target. This is due to large, expensive projects. The cumulative funding in the overall plan is constrained even though a couple of individual years are above the constraint target.

C. Lentz reviewed the ways he wanted to improve the Metro Plan in 2019:

- Reestablishing a clear set of goals and objectives that can be linked to programmed projects
- A better link between regional data and trends in the plan to the programmed projects
- Projects in the plan need more accurate cost estimates and scopes
- Projects need to be organized into distinct categories based on funding sources (e.g. Highway Safety, congestion mitigation, Transportation Alternatives Program, and general Ten Year Plan projects)
- Improved project development and prioritization process with municipalities and committee members.

C. Lentz noted that he would be starting a full Metro Plan update in the Spring to address these issues.

C. Lentz reviewed the comments he had received during the 30-day public comment period that he had not addressed already (in addition to small corrections such as typos):

- Recommendation to update the out-years project table to be more readable [completed]
- FHWA recommended that the Metro Plan include a more detailed accounting of funding programmed for operations and maintenance of the transportation network.
- Some out-years projects are expensive, have vague scopes, and need to be more refined to fit with the Metro Plan and future funding availability.

V. Parmele asked if there were any additional public comments before the hearing was closed.

Julian Long expressed support for the inclusion of COAST and public transit in the plan because it is an invaluable resource for lower income residents. He noted that 11% of Rochester residents have no or limited access to a car. J. Long said he managed Rochester’s Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and the state has asked recipients to focus on potential hazard mitigation projects related to climate change.

C. Lentz noted that the final published Metro Plan would include a record of public comments received during the comment period and public hearing.

M. Williams made a Motion to close the public hearing

Seconded by M. Bobinsky

Vote: Unanimous in favor

3.1 - Minutes from January 18th 2019 [VOTE]

E. Strachan noted that the minutes quoted her as saying “the four hottest days” regarding how air quality standards are set. She asked that it be corrected to say “a certain number of days”

M. Williams made a motion to accept the minutes with requested change

Seconded by S. Diamond

Vote: Unanimous in favor

3.2 - Safety Performance Targets for 2020 [VOTE]

R. Dewey presented information on the setting of safety performance targets that are required for MPOs every February. She described the federal measures for which MPOs are required to set targets:

- Number of Fatalities
- Rate of Fatalities
- Number of Serious Injuries
- Rate of Serious Injuries
- Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Non-motorized Serious Injuries

R. Dewey explained that MPO staff were recommending that the Policy Committee adopt the targets set by NHDOT in June of 2018. She showed the state targets (table below) and noted that targets are based on a five-year rolling average. This is an incremental approach to improving safety on public highways. R. Dewey explained that New Hampshire’s underlying goal is to have zero deaths on public highways so supporting the state target of 116 fatalities is not saying that 116 fatalities is acceptable. It is a benchmark by which to measure success. R. Dewey pointed out that after the state set their targets in June, the number of fatal crashes increased dramatically to end the year at 145. This will impact future target setting because year five had fewer fatal crashes but will be removed from the five-year rolling average, while the most recent year with 145 will be added. This will skew the curve up and dictate a rising target, rather than a lower one (which is a confusing message).

Statewide 2019 Safety Performance data and targets based on 5-year rolling average (2013-2017)					
Measure	2017 Value	Previous	Current	2019 Target	SRPC target: Not more than...
Number of Fatalities:	102	117.6	116.4	116.4	10% (15)
Rate of Fatalities:	0.746	0.900	.881	0.879	1.244
Number of Serious Injuries:	410	499.8	457.2	433.2	11% (46)
Rate of Serious Injuries:	3.567	3.847	3.462	3.207	5.323
Non-Motorized Fatalities and Non-motorized Serious Injuries:	54	56.4	53.4	53.4	14% (8)

R. Dewey highlighted the regional proportion of fatalities and injuries in the table. This is a regional benchmark to track how many of the total statewide fatalities and severe injuries happen in the Strafford region.

R. Dewey explained that a new statewide database is being implemented that would be a single source of crash data that state agencies would have access to. This will improve data access and reporting that support crash analysis and project development.

R. Dewey provided information on motorcycle fatalities at the regional level. She noted that the graph looked drastic but that was because fatal motorcycle crashes varied between 0 and 3 per year in the Strafford region. She said the MPOs had included motorcycle fatalities as a supplemental measure. P. Nelson said it would be valuable to know if the riders were wearing helmets in the fatal crashes. Members discussed the possible causes and distribution of motorcycle crashes in NH. R. Dewey noted that there were generally very few motorcycle crashes during NH Bike Week – most likely because there are so many motorcycles, drivers have higher visibility.

M. Bobinsky asked if other MPOs had set their own targets or adopted the state targets. C. Lentz said all MPOs were supporting the state targets for all performance measures, except that Southern NH Planning Commission set their own targets for travel-time reliability because of the disruption caused by the I93 highway widening project. R. Dewey noted that the four MPOs had worked closely to discuss target setting. C. Lentz said in the future Strafford MPO could set its own aspirational targets.

P. Nelson said that the goal should be to have a consistently falling target and trend; it's a strange message to set a target of 116 fatal crashes when the ultimate goal is zero. R. agreed and acknowledged that the state is currently forced to set its targets according to crash trends, using a methodology prescribed by federal law. The goal is to do everything possible to have a decreasing trend. NHDOT will not set a rising target; if there is a year with a high crash rate such as this one, NHDOT will set a level target (not higher than the previous target). P. Nelson said it was important to eliminate the crashes involving drugs and alcohol from the calculation and focus on the crashes involving infrastructure [the crashes MPOs and NHDOT can objectively address]. Instead of putting all crashes under the same curve, break out the causes. C. Lentz acknowledged the value of identifying the causal factors of crashes: infrastructure-related crashes could be addressed through improvement projects, while DUI crashes would require enforcement support or legislative action. M. Bobinsky said it was important for the MPO to support programs that address driver behavior issues like seatbelt use, substance abuse, etc. in addition to infrastructure. M. Avery noted that it was often very difficult to determine a primary cause of a crash from crash reports.

J. Czysz said targets need to be set today because of federal requirements, but reiterated the need to develop better linkages in the Metro Plan between performance measures and targets and the projects programmed in the plan. She said the Metro Plan updates in the spring/summer would include developing this link.

S. Diamond noted the strong cyclical trend in crashes but there was a downward trend in serious injury crashes. R. Dewey said the serious injury crash data were very inconsistent from year to

year. She said the fatal crash rate was random geographically, but tended to follow economic trends and the price of gasoline. The data also show events like the advent of widespread texting on phones (a rise in crashes) and state bans on texting while driving (a decrease in crashes).

Members discussed how best to analyze crash data and how to address causes.

R. Dewey noted several strategies for improving safety trends in the future:

- Targeting local intersections or locations where crashes are happening regularly and identify if infrastructure is a causal factor
- Provide data to legislators to help focus support for proposed/pending legislation
- Assist municipalities with grants and funding opportunities that could improve safety projects
- Work directly with local police departments on crash reporting

P Nelson said he wished MPO staff could analyze the crashes in the region and determine causal factors for individual crashes so they could focus efforts on addressing them. C. Lentz explained that most local police departments still use paper crash reports and getting clear information is not simple. R. Dewey specified that those reports tend to get submitted to the DMV all at once at the end of the year. C. Lentz pointed out that there was a bill currently in the legislature that would make inter-departmental crash data sharing easier.

M. Gasses made a motion to adopt and support the state safety targets.

Seconded by M. Avery

Vote: Unanimous in favor

3.3 - 2019-2022 Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and

2019-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan [VOTE]

M. Bobinsky made a motion to adopt the Metro Plan and TIP

Seconded by M. Gasses

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Legislation and Decision-maker engagement updates

C. Lentz provided a handout listing legislation that was currently being developed and debated in the House and Senate. He asked for feedback on what the committee would like to focus on as far as presenting testimony, for staff to do more research, or write a letter to legislators.

C. Lentz noted that the handout was missing two transportation-related bills: one that would define electric bicycles for legal purposes; and one repealing the ban on texting while driving (HB198). Members discussed HB198; C. Lentz noted that the most current docket said the bill “ought to pass with amendment”. He located the bill docket and put it on the screen for committee viewing. After reading the proposed language, it appeared as though the penalties were actually stricter in the amended language than under the previous law.

C. Lentz reviewed a number of other bills that was on the list for committee review.

M. Bobinsky said he would like to take the list of bills back and follow up with additional comments and questions. He thought HB478 looked interesting. C. Lentz provided a brief explanation about HB478, HB538, and HB510. He said HB538 was a proposed gas tax (“road toll”) increase of six cents that would be applied to various highway and bridge projects. HB478 and 510 were specific to fuel efficiency (Miles per gallon – MPG), miles traveled, and vehicle weight. J. Czynsz specified that HB478 used 20MPG and 10,000 miles per year as a baseline, and assessed a fee for higher mileage vehicles. On the one hand, this penalizes more efficient vehicles; on the other it aims to capture gas tax revenue (used to fund highway and bridge maintenance) lost to fuel-efficient or electric vehicles. C. Lentz pointed to a bill that would fund research into alternative funding models to ones that penalize people for having fuel efficient cars.

J. Czynsz noted that the list of bills included a hyperlink for each bill’s docket with language and other information. D. Landry suggested that policy members identify the top three bills that are important to them. J. Czynsz said that would be a great approach and help staff identify which bills would need letters, testimony, or other input.

C. Lentz said he would work on additional analysis to help identify priority bills for direct engagement of legislators. This would include a future survey of bills and issues. E. Strachan said she would not respond to a survey of legislation because she is a state agency employee.

5. Other Business

P. Nelson noted that the Public Utilities Commission has funding available for low-income solar projects. He recommended that people go to the Clean Energy NH website for more information. He noted that approximately \$650,000 dollars available and the applications are due in March.

L. Strachan noted that the state contract for passenger vehicles is available to help municipalities purchase fuel efficient or electric passenger vehicles. She also reminded members that the statewide pedestrian/bicycle plan was under development. The plan development process and draft can be viewed at a website that is easy to find. J. noted that the consultant firm working on the plan will be at the March TAC meeting.

6. Citizen’s Forum – Citizens of the Strafford region are invited to speak on the subject matter of the meeting. Statements should be limited to three minutes.

7. Adjournment

M. Gasses made a motion to adjourn
Seconded by M. Bobinsky
Vote: unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 11:12am

Minutes Approved by [Print Name] _____

Signed _____ Date _____