

## Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup> 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 9:08am

#### 1. Attendance:

##### Committee Members

Bill Fisher (Farmington), Leslie Schwartz (Durham), Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Richard Michaud (Somersworth), Wayne Burton (Durham), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), John Hotchkiss (Middleton), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Don Hamann (Rochester), Michael Williams (COAST), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), David Landry (Dover), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Mark Avery (Madbury)

##### Guests

Steven Workman (Transportation NH)

##### Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Nancy O' Connor, Stefanie Casella, Colin Lentz

#### 2. Staff Communications

No staff communications were brought to the committee

#### 3. Action Item(s)

##### 3.1 - Minutes from March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 [VOTE]

D. Hamann made a motion to accept the minutes

Seconded by D. Landry

Vote: Unanimous in favor

##### 3.2 Ten Year Plan Candidate Project list – for submission to NHDOT

C. Lentz reviewed the Ten Year Plan (TYP) project development process. He summarized the TAC process for establishing scoring criteria weightings and the sub-committee process for identifying and selecting candidate projects. He described a handout with the ranking results for the top projects. [See table below for project and funding details]

C. Lentz explained that the top-ranked project was in Dover (a roundabout project on the NH108 bridge over the Bellamy), but the NHDOT cost estimate for the project was above the theoretical

allocation of federal highway funds to the region. The TAC had voted to proceed with the four projects other projects (plus a soundwall project) and refine the Dover roundabout project at the 108 bridge over the Bellamy river for future funding opportunities. C. Lentz specified that the Dover soundwalls project does not use funds in the regional allocation; it was included so it could be eligible for the Type II soundwalls program.

C. Lentz noted that given time and resource constraints, NHDOT was only able to review the top five projects submitted in Strafford MPO's preliminary list in December; the Rochester bridge over the Cocheco project in the table above was not one of the top five. The scope of that project focuses on bridge widening and would likely have resulted in a cost estimate beyond the regional allocation.

| Priority Number | Municipality | Scope and Location Summary  | Project Cost Estimate  |
|-----------------|--------------|---|------------------------|
| 1               | Dover        | Safety and Congestion improvements at NH Route 108 over the Bellamy River                       | \$6,896,505            |
| 2               | Rochester    | Intersection improvements at the sequence of Charles St/NH 125 (Columbus Ave) and Old Dover Rd  | \$2,361,753.60         |
| 3               | Dover        | Pedestrian and accessibility improvements along Chestnut St                                     | \$204,551.20           |
| 4               | Somersworth  | Pedestrian improvements along W. High Street and High Street to connect schools to the downtown | \$1,157,142.40         |
| 5               | Northwood    | Intersection improvements at School St (107) & US 4/US 202 Intersection                         | \$1,002,694            |
| 6               | Rochester    | NH125/Columbus Ave bridge over Cocheco  | no cost estimate       |
| 7               | Dover        | Soundwalls at Exit 7 on Route 16 - Spaulding Tnpk   | Not part of allocation |
| 8               |              | Total of Selected Project Estimates (only highlighted projects)                                 | \$4,726,141            |
|                 |              | <b>Regional Allocation of Federal Aid Highway Funds</b>   | <b>\$4,901,449</b>     |

T. Crosby asked about the funding for the safety project at the intersection of NH155 and Madbury Rd. C. Lentz said the project was still in the TYP and that they had discussed accelerating the project with NHDOT.

S. Diamond asked about the funding source for the soundwalls project. C. Lentz explained that the Dover project would be under the Type II program which was for noise remediation after a highway had been built. The Type I program funds soundwalls during construction or expansion of a highway.

W. Burton asked about safety improvements at the intersection of US4 and Madbury Rd. C. Lentz explained that the project was separate from the TYP process and was moving forward through the Highway Safety Improvement Program.

C. Lentz described improvements to the TYP project identification and development process.

J. Hotchkiss made a motion to accept the slate of TYP projects (# 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 in the table above)

Seconded by D. Hamann

Vote: Unanimous in Favor

### 3.3 2020-2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

C. Lentz provided an overview of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), noting that SRPC's transportation planning funding (from Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration) is organized in a two-year work program administered by NHDOT. He noted that the overall five category structure hadn't changed from past years: 100 (Administration), 200 (Planning), 300 (Public Outreach), 400 (Data Collection and Analysis), and 500 (General Local/Regional Assistance and Transit Planning).

C. Lentz identified several changes and additions to the tasks in the UPWP. He pointed out that SRPC and Rockingham Planning Commission will be working on a study of public transit and economic development under separate funding from FTA.

S. Diamond asked about assessing the number of people per square foot and vehicles per housing unit in Barrington. J. Czynski said the density of people was measured by bedrooms in households and said the transportation model could help measure vehicles and travel demand related to housing.

D. Hamann made a motion to approve the draft Unified Planning Work Program

Seconded by J. Hotchkiss

Vote: unanimous in favor

### 3.4 Newington-Dover Bicycle & Pedestrian Access Letter to NHDOT

C. Lentz explained that when the General Sullivan Bridge closed at the end of October 2018, it cut off bicycle and pedestrian access across the Piscataqua River from Dover to Newington. NHDOT had proposed that one lane of the newly finished span of the Little Bay Bridge be dedicated for temporary bike/ped access, but had been unable to finalize plans with the project consultant yet. C. Lentz said bike/ped advocates and the regional CommuteSMART group had asked if he could write a letter to NHDOT requesting that they accelerate the implementation of bike/ped access since winter was over and more cyclists and pedestrians would need access for commuting and recreation.

W. Burton pointed out that the Bunker Creek bridge replacement project would also be creating traffic delays and congestion.

C. Lentz asked if the committee members were comfortable with him writing a letter to NHDOT.

D. Landry asked if there had really been that many people using the General Sullivan Bridge for commuting and recreation, and what the congestion impacts would be of closing one of the new lanes [that were not open to traffic yet]. C. Lentz said he didn't know the numbers off the top of his head, but many people commuted into Newington daily. He added that NHDOT had done an analysis of the impacts of closing a lane on the new bridge, that found minimal impact from only having three northbound lanes open out of four. M. Williams asked why it would be such a big deal to close one new lane when the bridge had only been two lanes, and now there would be 4 in one direction and 3 in the other. E. Strachan suggested that there were more people that relied on the General Sullivan than most people think.

M. Gasses suggested that it would be helpful to open the new bridge with only three lanes to see what the traffic impacts would be. V. Parmele asked what the permanent solution was going to be.

C. Lentz said eventually there would be a dedicated bike/ped bridge to replace the General Sullivan, but NHDOT was still reviewing design alternatives to find the most cost-effective solution.

W. Burton noted that the Seacoast Reliability Project would be starting soon and noted that it could possibly impact traffic patterns. Members discussed the Seacoast Reliability Project.

S. Workman emphasized the need to maintain a bike\ped link across the Piscataqua River; that it wasn't equitable to ignore the needs of people that used the bridge to commute. He noted that without the bridge, there was an approximately 36-mile detour that was unreasonable for cyclists. L. Schwartz asked what the timeframe was if they decided not to send a letter immediately. C. Lentz said it would have to be approved at the next Policy meeting. V. Parmele asked for a show of hands for how many people were comfortable with C. Lentz sending a letter that simply asked NHDOT to accelerate the installation of temporary bike/ped access across the Little Bay Bridge as much as possible. A majority of members raised their hands. V. Parmele asked for a formal motion.

M. Williams made a motion to request C. Lentz to send a letter to NHDOT regarding the need for bike/ped access across the Little Bay Bridge. Seconded by D. Hamann  
Vote: 16 out of 17 in favor; M. Gasses voted against.

#### **4. Discussion Items**

##### **4.1 Letter to Sen. Maggie Hassan**

C. Lentz reminded members that staff from the four New Hampshire MPOs had met with Rep. Chris Pappas to discuss transportation priorities for federal legislation. He explained that the four MPOs had collaborated on a letter sent to Senator Maggie Hassan specifically regarding a future transportation authorization bill to replace the current FAST Act. The letter touched several topics including federal transportation funding equity between states, transportation challenges with an aging population in NH, simplifying the process and requirements for local management of federally-funded transportation projects, and new revenue generation models for transportation funding. Many of the issues in the letter had been discussed by TAC and Policy committee members at past meetings and were part of the draft policy priorities. Members discussed the Local Public Agency requirements for local management of federally-funded transportation projects – that the rules were very onerous and made local project management expensive and complicated. G. Davison noted that many pieces of the rules were based on federal requirements. J. Czysz added that there were several New Hampshire-specific rules that were additional or conflicted with federal rules. For instance, costs over \$400,000 required a bid process under the federal rules, but the state threshold was only \$2,000. This was also the case for Strafford MPO if they needed to purchase equipment.

M. Williams noted that currently bus fares (user fees) do not count as local match for federal funding programs. He said COAST would appreciate support in advocating for a change in that rule and there was support for a rule change from the people he had been talking to. Allowing fair box revenue to count toward local match would not require more federal funding, it would reduce the financial burden on local communities which are currently responsible for local match [the state of NH provides \$0 toward matching federal public transit dollars).

C. Lentz provided a copy of the letter to the committee.

#### **5. Project Updates**

##### **5.1 COAST strategic planning process**

C. Lentz reminded the committee members that COAST was in the process of reviewing their routes and gathering public input on updates to the system as part of a Comprehensive

Operations Analysis. M. Williams said they had met with NHDOT about proposed route changes and funding opportunities, and COAST was planning a second round of public forums in the coming months. M. Gasses asked about Route 33 in Dover that would potentially be cut. M. Williams said because Route 33 connected to Route 1 (to Somersworth) and change to Route 1 would drastically impact Route 33. M. Gasses asked him to send her information so she could communicate with other Dover councilors. S. Diamond asked for clarification about Route 33. M. Williams said Dover was unsure about providing their share of funds that supported the route and that Strafford County was in support of the route, but unable to fund it alone. He said they would be discussing this with Dover and the County moving forward. He noted that route 33 also connected to the Dover Park and Ride.

### 5.2 FTA 5305(e) grant application

C. Lentz reiterated that Strafford MPO would be starting a specific project focused on regional public transit and its relationship with economic development. It was funded by a grant from the FTA and would be rolled into the UPWP.

## 6. Other Business

S. Workman provided an update on recent work at the legislature. He noted that the SRPC representatives played an important role in widespread public input in support of several bills that were currently being debated by the state House and Senate.

- HB409 – a bill to allow municipalities to raise the maximum vehicle registration fee from \$5.00 to \$10.00. The revenues from the fee go toward transportation improvements and are usually spent in support of public transit (local match) or for bike/ped improvement projects.
- HB25 - the capital budget. The Governor's draft capital budget did not include \$950,000 for public transit capital that was requested by NHDOT. The House had replaced the funding in an amendment and there are indications that the Senate would also support it. S. Workman said Governor Sununu had said he would veto the amended budget and had sent a letter to state agency department heads that he expected them to support his budget. The letter basically said state agencies could support individual budget items that had been removed by the Governor (such as transit capital), but they would have to cut other items of equivalent cost.
- HB1 – the state operating budget. S. Workman reminded the committee that HB had included a request from NHDOT for \$200,000 to support rural public transit service. This had been removed by Governor Sununu in his draft budget, but restored by the legislature and currently being discussed.

W. Burton asked about a current bill to provide funding for clean-up projects in municipalities around the Great Bay. S. Workman said he wasn't sure, but many bills were threatened by the budget fight. C. Lentz looked up the bill and said there was a hearing scheduled for April 23<sup>rd</sup>. J. Czysz said it was Sen. Watters's bill and was currently in the Municipal and County Government committee.

S. Workman said both state budget bills were in-committee. He suggested that members could send letters to committee members while they debate issues.

7. **Commissioner Roundtable**

- B. Holstein said Rochester was in the process of updating local master plan chapters and would provide updates moving forward.
- G. Davison said NHDOT was starting to pull together a draft of the Ten Year Plan. He thanked the RPCs for their work on developing projects.
- P. Nelson noted that Bay Rd in Newmarket had an ongoing culvert replacement project that was related to coastal resilience for the isolated roadway.
- V. Parmele said Northwood’s safety complex funding had failed a town meeting vote. She said the council would be going back to the drawing board.
- D. Landry said Dover was addressing downtown density rules that had a lot of implications for revenue and open space preservation.
- D. Hamann said the NHDES licensing for the Turnkey Landfill was under review because of opposition to proposed expansion of the site.
- E. Strachan noted that she was going to be putting in a notice of intent for a new funding round through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA). This will include \$800,000 for diesel engine and truck replacement. She said there would be an RFP in the fall and recommended that municipalities think about nay vehicles they would want to replace.
- M. Avery said Madbury continued to put a lot of land into conservation which helped ensure a good water supply for Portsmouth. T. Crosby added that the community would be working on local trail improvement and a new Library.
- W. Burton said the Seacoast Reliability Project included a provision in the settlement with Eversource to build a micro-grid in Durham that would improve distribution of the locally-generated power from the town’s alternative energy generation. This was important for Durham’s goal of generating all local energy. He said Durham was also discussing removal or preservation of the Mill Pond Dam in town.
- B. Fisher said Farmington would be breaking ground on six solar fields soon that would be generating local energy. He added that there was a lot of discussion about what to do with the old fire station and its parking lot. J. Czys said the fire station issue was part of the reason for Farmington requested SRPC to complete a downtown parking study.

8. **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.

9. **Adjournment**

D. Hamann made a motion to adjourn  
Seconded by J. Hotchkiss  
Vote: unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 10:50am

Minutes Approved by [Print Name] \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_