

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, May 17th 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), Randy Orvis (Farmington), Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Richard Michaud (Somersworth), Wayne Burton (Durham), Stephanie Benedetti (Dover), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), John Hotchkiss (Middleton), Don Hamann (Rochester), Michael Williams (COAST), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), David Landry (Dover), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Mark Avery (Madbury)

Guests

Steven Workman (Transportation NH)

Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Nancy O' Connor, Colin Lentz

2. **Staff Communications**

S. Sylvia said that SRPC was working with other RPCs to organize a statewide CommuteSMART challenge to encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation for their daily commutes between work and home. This will be a month-long event starting on June 1st. S. Sylvia said the goal is to encourage friendly competition between businesses and agencies to see who can make the most trips by transportation modes other than driving alone (this includes walking, cycling, carpooling, public transit, telecommuting, etc.). She requested that committee members sign up for the event and encourage their municipalities to form teams to compete in the challenge.

J. Czysz noted that Kyle Pimental (SRPC's Principal Planner) had accepted an award on behalf of SRPC for his work on regional sourcewater protection planning with multiple municipalities.

3. **Action Item(s)**

3.1 - Minutes from April 19th 2019 [VOTE]

M. Williams made a motion to accept the minutes

Seconded by J. Hotchkiss

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Metro Plan Structure and Goal Setting

C. Lentz provided a handout with a draft set of focus area topics for the Metro Plan. He said they would form a set of distinct chapters in the plan, each with a data snapshot and a set of goals and objectives. C. Lentz said he was hoping for input from committee members to ensure the list of focus areas would reflect the needs of communities and the region. He reviewed the draft list of focus areas:

- Demographics, Origins & Destinations
- Overall System Performance
- Safety
- (Intra)Regional Public transit
- Infrastructure Condition
- Climate Change Impacts (mitigation, adaptation, and recovery preparedness)
- Environmental Impacts
- Economic Linkages
- Community Vitality
- Transportation Technology

C. Lentz said a set of overall goals for the Metro Plan would be developed following input from committee members on the focus areas, local focus group discussions, and a survey that had just been released. N. O'Connor explained that the survey had a broad set of questions about regional transportation improvement.

B. Holstein asked where the survey had been sent and to whom. N. O'Connor said the survey was being distributed in a digital format, had been sent out to a wide range of people, would be available online. This included municipalities and a range of agencies. B. Holstein suggested that the survey should be sent to local planning boards and advertised on local cable channels.

P. Nelson requested that the Metro Plan have a stronger focus on electric vehicle charging infrastructure. He said the plan needs to help the region be out ahead of technology implementation and be ready for funding opportunities like the Volkswagen Settlement. NH is currently a gap in publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure; there is quite a bit in all three neighboring states. P. Nelson said the Metro Plan should focus on developing that network of charging stations. He said Eversource and other private companies are already proposing projects and selecting sites for new vehicle chargers. Part of the Volkswagen settlement also included \$6.2 million for an open project solicitation. SRPC should identify sites based on regional need and effective adoption of electric vehicle technology. C. Lentz said SRPC had helped NHDES identify candidate sites for Volkswagen funding through the Electrify America subsidiary to install new charging stations in the state. E. Strachan clarified that \$4.6 million of the Volkswagen funding was allocated to EV charging stations, the majority of the funding is allocated to diesel vehicle replacement projects, some of which is specifically allocated for municipalities. D. Landry wondered if it would be possible to learn how Tesla sited their chargers. P. Nelson said it cost between \$20,000 and \$60,000 to install a new charging site. D. Hamann said Tesla had recently presented to the Rochester Planning Board about installing one of their proprietary charging stations at the Hannaford on Main St. L Strachan added

that many municipalities that are approached by Tesla request that they install universal chargers in addition to the Tesla ones that only work with Tesla vehicles.

M. Bobinsky asked that the safety focus area include details discussion about improving lane markings and signage. He also requested the it include discussion of water conservation and MS4 permitting.

V. Parmele asked about outreach on legislative engagement. C. Lentz responded that the Metro Plan would incorporate two kinds of actions: project-based, and policy-based. Some issues in the plan would require direct engagement with decision-makers to address laws and policies that impact transportation. He referenced the fact that bus fares paid by COAST riders did not count as local match under federal rules; this would require discussions with NH's congressional delegation.

P. Nelson said the Metro Plan should include more analysis of how large distributors like Amazon impact regional freight demand and movement, and their connection to regional economic development.

R. Orvis asked that the Metro Plan include discussion about recreational vehicle (e.g. ATVs and snowmobiles) trails. C. Lentz said he had forgotten to include trails in the outline of focus areas, but that they would be included in the chapter about the overall regional transportation network. P. Nelson added that there were opportunities for municipalities to partner with outdoor companies like Eastern Mountain Sports and REI to develop and improve local trails.

V. Parmele noted the chapters that had federally required performance measures (e.g. safety) and asked about the possibility of performance measures for climate change. C. Lentz said it would be possible to develop some climate change performance measures. V. Parmele asked what "connected vehicles" were. C. Lentz provided the example that automated vehicles could communicate with each other and drive in a coordinated platoon. There is also vehicle-to-infrastructure technology that is regularly in use today, such as traffic signals that communicate with emergency vehicles to stop all other traffic and keep a light yellow longer to allow transit buses to pass through, improving their on-time performance. Members discussed issues surrounding connected and automated vehicles. V. Parmele asked how the Metro Plan would address the detailed issues around connected and automated vehicles. C. Lentz said the plan should probably focus on how prepared the regional transportation infrastructure was for new vehicle technology, rather than trying to discuss or address specific technology issues themselves. Members discussed the difficulty of ensuring that vehicle technologies were compatible in urban and rural areas (for example, current driverless technology relies on cameras that detect lane striping to navigate, which would be useless on roads with faded lines or snow-covered roads).

C. Lentz said he would incorporate requested additions and changes; that there would be several other opportunities to review the proposed set of chapters. He added that the next phase would be developing draft data snapshots for each chapter.

4.2 State Legislative Update

C. Lentz provided an update of legislative bills that SRPC had been tracking. He noted that HB409 has passed, enabling municipalities to raise their local vehicle registration fee from the current \$5.00 to a maximum of \$10.00. SB220 had also passed, giving NHDOT access to detailed crash data that was critical for identifying the cause of crashes and potential solutions.

S. Workman provided an update on HB1 (the state operating budget) and HB25 (the State capital budget). He said the funds for public transportation capital replacement were probably safe because indications were that the Governor would not veto the Legislature's reinstatement of those funds in an amendment after the Governor had initially removed them. It was not as clear that the operating budget was as safe from veto. The operating budget had included \$200,000 for public transit operating support that was requested by NHDOT but removed by the Governor. HB1 was still being debated by the legislature and the ultimate fate of the funds was unsure.

V. Parmele asked if SRPC would be forming a sub-committee to discuss future legislative issues and engage decision-makers. C. Lentz said the sub-committee would likely start working after the current legislative cycle was complete and legislators were more accessible to discuss initiatives and issues.

4.3 **Draft MPO review report from FHWA**

C. Lentz reminded the committee that in November 2018, FHWA and FTA had conducted a triennial review of Strafford MPO. The review was comprehensive of their documents and processes, and FHWA and FTA had provided a summary report listing recommendations for future improvements and several corrective actions that required more immediate attention. C. Lentz provided a draft progress report that would be used to track progress towards achieving those recommendations and corrective actions. He said it would be periodically updated and sent to FHWA and FTA.

5. **Project Updates**

5.1 **BUILD and CMAQ grants**

C. Lentz reminded the committee members that there were currently open solicitations for two funding programs: the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program (CMAQ) administered by NHDOT; and the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program administered by FHWA. He noted that the deadline for submitting CMAQ letters of interest to NHDOT was June 7th. The letter of interest is mandatory for submitting a full application, which will be due on Friday, September 6th. C. Lentz added that the RPCs would be conducting regional air quality analysis for each project and requested that applicants send him their letters of interest and any project information as soon as possible so he could prepare for project analyses. C. Lentz said BUILD grant applications were due on July 15th. He noted that the application process looked complicated but he had sent out an email with several of the required elements: the full notice of funding opportunity; an editable word document with required sections for a project narrative; an excel spreadsheet required by FHWA, and a PDF form required for federal funding assistance requests.

6. **Other Business**

No other business was brought before the committee.

7. **Commissioner Roundtable**

- B. Fisher said a solar field application in Farmington had been denied but the town was working on rectifying it. He added that the Cocheco River Local Advisory Committee needed members.

- M. Bobinsky said Somersworth had recently hosted a listening session for the 108 complete streets project and there was a walking tour planned for June 1st. He added that the current CMAQ projects to improve traffic signal timing on NH9 in Somersworth and NH108 in Dover were moving forward. City council and the Mayor are also discussing the development of a “little Indonesia” downtown because of the large population of people from Indonesia, with a possible formal archway built by Indonesia for the new designation. Somersworth is also developing form-based code.
- D. Landry said the Dover planning board had passed architectural design standards for central downtown core with 5 overlays for distinct sections of downtown.
- V. Parmele noted that she had attended a workshop on legal and planning issues around tiny houses and that it was more complicated than she had thought.
- M. Williams said COAST was going to be hosting another round of public forums for a proposed system redesign. There will be a total of six forums and there is a link on COAST’s website.
- G. Davison said NHDOT is working on a first draft of the Ten Year Plan. All the projects requested by RPCs had been included in the draft and the next phase of the plan development will be submitting it to the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT)
- B. Holstein said Rochester was continuing a survey as part of their master planning process and they had received 180 responses. There will be a public meeting to review a summary of public comments and the process is expected to finish in June.
- P. Nelson said Newmarket is implementing a municipal commercial composting system for local household organic waste. They partnered with a regional company Mr. Fox that will process the compost, which allows meat and dairy. The process started by local advisory committee. He said the town would be interested to hear from other municipalities (especially school districts) about any experiences with local efforts to implement composting or other waste-reduction techniques. He said the town was also trying to find alternatives to harsh chemicals for weed control on city streets, and they have been collaborating with Dover.

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**

M. Williams made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by M. Bobinsky

Vote: unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am

Minutes Approved by [Print Name] _____

Signed _____ Date _____