

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, June 21th 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

Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Richard Michaud (Somersworth), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Beverly Crey (UNH), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), John Hotchkiss (Middleton), Don Hamann (Rochester), Michael Williams (COAST), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), David Landry (Dover), Linda Dusenberry (NHDOT), Tom Crosby (Madbury)

Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Colin Lentz

2. Staff Communications

C. Lentz said there were two promising candidates for the summer field work positions that would hopefully be filled soon.

J. Czysz announced that SRPC had received a new round of grant funds for Brownfields planning (\$300,000). She added that Economic Development Administration funds had been delayed at the federal level but would hopefully be reaching SRPC soon.

R. Dewey explained that SRPC had joined the other three MPOs and two RPCs to purchase access to expanded data through the National Performance Monitoring Research Data Set (NPMRDS). The additional data allows SRPC to monitor congestion along a greater number of roads in the region and provides additional analysis tools. This will be beneficial for future modeling and project development.

3. Public Hearing – Amendment #1 to the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program

M. Bobinsky made a motion to open the public hearing

Seconded by B. Cray

Vote: Unanimous in favor

C. Lentz reviewed project changes included in the TIP amendment. He noted that a project in Durham at UNH was added following the start of the public comment period. The change was just

to transfer the project funds from Federal Highways to Federal Transit. This required no change to the funds and the project is going to construction over the summer.

S. Diamond asked for clarification about a statewide project to change the exit sign numbering approach for tier 1 highways. C. Lentz said the project was to switch from the current approach (consecutively numbered exits with no specific organizational structure or geographic reference) to numbering the exit signs based on mile markers.

M. Bobinsky made a motion to close the public hearing
Seconded by M. Williams
Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Action Item(s)

4.1 - Minutes from May 17th 2019 [VOTE]

C. Lentz pointed out a change he had made to the minutes for clarification requested by L. Strachan.

D. Hamann made a motion to accept the minutes
Seconded by M. Williams
Vote: Unanimous in favor

4.2 Amendment #1 to the 2019-2022 TIP

M. Bobinsky made a motion to approve TIP amendment #1
Seconded by M. Williams
Vote: Unanimous in favor

4.3 Ten Year Plan priorities for GACIT

C. Lentz provided a draft list of regional planning priorities that would be used to communicate with members of the Executive Council during development of the Ten Year Plan in their role as the Governor's Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT).

M. Williams suggested that each individual issue in the document include more specific language about what was being requested for action.

J. Czysz noted that the public hearings for the Ten Year Plan would likely start in September and SRPC staff would also be meeting directly with councilors to discuss the issues prioritized by the Policy committee.

M. Bobinsky asked about draft language supporting an increase to the turnpike toll rates and expansion of the turnpike into Concord. C. Lentz said his understanding from Commissioner Sheehan's recent presentation was that NHDOT would be proposing a similar toll increase and turnpike expansion for the upcoming cycle. He said in the past round Policy had supported the proposal with the caveat that the turnpike not be expanded beyond revenue-neutral capacity without consideration for proportional additions of toll plazas. C. Lentz said he would provide additional detail so the committee could understand the proposal and decide about supporting it for this round.

S. Diamond suggested that there be language focused on corridor planning and development. C. Lentz said he would include a section about corridors. He noted that past discussion had identified NH108, NH11, US4, and NH125 as regional priorities for corridor study.

D. Landry asked about the availability and application of Waze data. C. Lentz said some data from way-finding apps like Waze are included in the NPMRDS data that SRPC just got expanded access to. He added that the traffic management center in Concord, which monitors traffic conditions on major highways throughout the state, uses data from Waze and other programs. The MPOs have had several discussions with staff from the center about data and planning for technological improvements to the transportation system.

M. Williams asked what GACIT has direct authority over because they have no revenue generating capacity except for setting the turnpike toll rates. He suggested that the letter and the communication approach take this into account. M. Williams C. Lentz agreed and said he would incorporate more language for this consideration.

J. Czysz said the larger financial issues would have to be discussed through the legislature, but GACIT does address individual projects and prioritizing funding for them. Testimony by SRPC commissioners and staff would play a role in identifying issues and prioritizing projects. C. Lentz added that GACIT had requested the CMAQ funding round two years ago and had recommended to the Governor that CMAQ funds be flexed to paving needs.

J. Boudreau suggested that the content in the document should better show the integration between individual components discussed. M. Williams noted that public transit is noted in several sections as a potential benefit or solution to various challenges. It should also be discussed as an individual item in the document.

D. Landry asked about funding of projects and issues; how they are prioritized based on limited funding. He asked if there is a strategy for prioritizing projects to improve the chance of getting some projects funded. C. Lentz used the example of the approximately \$5 million that is allocated to the Strafford region for new projects in the ten year plan (for each two-year cycle).

J. Czysz provided an example of community in the Nashua region that had a priority project: they had applied for and received funding in the ten year plan, then been approved for a CMAQ grant at which point they removed the project from the ten year plan.

C. Lentz acknowledged that a clearer funding strategy will be an important part of the project development process over the next few months.

The Committee asked C. Lentz to incorporate changes in order to vote on the final document at the next meeting.

5. Discussion Items

5.1 Metro Plan Outreach update

C. Lentz provided an update about the Metro Plan outreach process. He said that survey had received 242 online responses and provided some snapshots of the survey results. He noted that the survey would be closed in early July. M. Bobinsky asked if C. Lentz could re-send the survey link so he could encourage more responses from Somersworth.

Members discussed various data points in the draft results.

6. Commissioner Roundtable

D. Hamann said that there had been a large public meeting regarding the Strafford square roundabout project, and that the city was hopeful construction and utilities would start this summer.

E. Strachan said there was a solicitation (using funding from the VW settlement) for municipalities to replace diesel school buses with new electric and propane buses. She noted that bus transportation companies that provide school transportation are also eligible.

M. Bobinsky said Somersworth would be completing the engineering for their TAP project to improve pedestrian connection from the schools to the downtown. He said Sebago Technics had been selected to be the consultant for the High St corridor signal coordination project. Somersworth is also close to embarking on a \$13 million waste water treatment plant upgrade that will improve water quality and accommodate projected growth in the city.

D. Landry noted that the Dover planning board is addressing in-fill as a priority issue as the city grows and increases density to preserve open space. He said the challenge is to preserve historic buildings. Many times private development threatens historic structures (such as the old court house, in a recent case). Older properties are cheaper to knock down and build something new. Density requires taller buildings in the downtown and developed areas, but by the time an application gets to the planning board it's often too late to address the historic structures.

B. Holstein said Rochester was continuing to update the transportation master plan chapter and was also developing a specific downtown plan. There is an active steering committee and the city is focused on revitalizing the downtown.

7. **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.

8. Adjournment

M. Williams made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by M. Bobinsky

Vote: unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 10:40am

Minutes Approved by [Print Name]

7/19/19

Signed

Victoria Parnell

Date

Victoria Parnell