

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 19th 2019 9:00 – 11:00 AM

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

The meeting was called to order at 9:04am

1. Attendance:

Committee Members

Bill Fisher (Farmington), Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Stephanie Benedetti (Dover), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Richard Michaud (Somersworth), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), Don Hamann (Rochester), Mark Avery (Madbury), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), David Landry (Dover), Tom Crosby (Madbury)

Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Colin Lentz, Rachel Dewey

2. Staff Communications

C. Lentz said the two summer field data collection interns, Gordon Lewis and Stephen Geis had started in early July. In addition to traffic counts and sidewalk inventory, they had been working on GIS analysis and data compilation for the Metro Plan.

3. Action Item(s)

3.1 - Minutes from June 21st 2019 [VOTE]

T. Crosby made a motion to accept the minutes as written

Seconded by D. Hamann

Vote: Unanimous in favor

3.2 Ten Year Plan priorities letter and communications for GACIT

C. Lentz provided an updated draft of regional planning priorities that would be used to communicate with members of the Executive Council during development of the Ten Year Plan (TYP) in their role as the Governor's Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT). He noted revised content and organization as well as edits that he had made since the last meeting. C. Lentz noted that he had reached out to NHDOT regarding their proposal for a toll rate increase and expansion of the turnpike. He had heard previously from NHDOT staff that there were possibly

changes to the proposal that had been submitted during the last GACIT round, but had not gotten a response yet. C. Lentz said he hoped to confirm with Policy committee members if the draft document provided a good foundation for communications with GACIT during their process. C. Lentz noted upcoming GACIT meetings focused on the draft TYP: July 31st (2:00pm, location TBD), and August 14th (2:00pm in Dover). He noted that the first GACIT public hearings had been scheduled in the region: September 10th (6:00pm) at the McConnell Center in Dover, and October 2nd (6:00pm) at the Frisbie Memorial Hospital conference center in Rochester. C. Lentz reviewed the geographic coverage of executive councilors and their relationship to SRPC projects and planning:

- The bulk of SRPC projects currently in the Ten Year Plan are represented by Andru Volinsky in District 2;
- The northern communities in the Strafford region are represented by Michael Cryans (District 1), where there are fewer TYP projects but a lot of need for tourism planning;
- Ted Gatsas represents District 4, which includes Northwood, Nottingham, Lee, and Barrington where NH125 and US 4 are critical corridors;
- Russell Prescott (District 3) only represents Newmarket for the Strafford region, but it will be critical to discuss COAST's proposal that covers more communities in his district and District 2

S. Diamond noted a typo in the section on infrastructure resilience.

M. Bobinsky asked if the draft document would be a formal letter. C. Lentz responded that the document was intended to be a foundational set of priorities for reference during the GACIT process, but he could easily turn it into a formal letter. He added that the topics and contents would also inform face-to-face meetings with GACIT members and help him prepare a presentation for regional GACIT hearings in the coming up in the fall. M. Bobinsky asked for clarification about how the letter would be sent; is it from staff or will it need to be signed by the Policy Committee chair? C. Lentz said the committee could vote to direct him to finalize the list of topics as a formal letter to be signed by V. Parmele and sent to members of GACIT. This would be sent to GACIT members prior to meeting with them and used as a set of talking points.

J. Czysz provided more detail about the GACIT communications process. There are three main opportunities for presenting the issues to GACIT: sending the letter prior to NHDOT releasing the draft TYP, face-to-face meetings with individual GACIT members, and during the public hearings for the TYP.

P. Nelson requested that NH108 be added to the list of important regional corridors.

M. Gasses requested that the letter provide more direct discussion of the need for better integration of freight improvements and local planning. This is important for the corridors in the region.

V. Parmele asked if there had been any recent developments following recent public meetings regarding the state freight plan. C. Lentz said he hadn't heard anything new but noted the state freight plan had been finalized by NHDOT. V. Parmele asked if C. Lentz thought the state freight plan (or freight planning in general) would be a topic during the GACIT process. He said he wasn't sure but would follow up about the freight plan.

D. Landry said the letter was well constructed. He asked if MPOs coordinate on communications like this for the ten year plan; do they use a similar format, compare notes and issues, etc.? He noted that there was potential for competition among the MPOs for limited TYP funding and wondered if the process tended toward collaboration. C. Lentz said there were similarities among the MPOs, but there wasn't a shared format or approach to engagement during the TYP process. D. Landry

suggested there was a lot of opportunity for the MPOs to compare and build on each other's approaches and best practices. C. Lentz agreed and said this would be a great topic for a future Partnering for Performance NH meeting. R. Dewey said the August PFPNH meeting was booked but September could include discussion of this issue. J. Czynsz added that it would be very easy to do more to share letters and priorities among MPO staff.

P. Nelson noted that the letter was missing discussion of alternative fuel vehicles. This issue could be integrated into the section of the letter on corridors. E. Strachan noted that alternative fuels infrastructure development was eligible for CMAQ funding, which GACIT had some influence over. R. Michaud suggested SRPC should coordinate with the other regions about the alternative fuels issue because it is a statewide challenge and opportunity.

J. Czynsz explained that SRPC commissioners could provide testimony regarding the issues in the letter during the regional GACIT hearings. Staff will provide a presentation at the hearings, but commissioners can provide supporting testimony on important issues. Staff will provide the final letter and additional guidance for commissioners' guidance.

M. Gasses made a motion to request C. Lentz to incorporate the comments presented at the meeting and approved that they be compiled in a formal letter to be signed by the Policy Committee chair and sent to the members of the Executive Council.

Seconded by M. Bobinsky.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

4. Project Updates

C. Lentz explained that SRPC staff had met with project partners for the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) project. He said the recent public outreach helped with regional network analysis which was almost complete. Modelers from Plymouth State University had developed draft analysis results for discussion. C. Lentz said he wanted to discuss how the LTS analysis could be used to develop projects to improve the bicycle network in the region. For instance, should the focus be on improving the network broadly (e.g. converting all level 3 routes to level 2), or focus on connecting important destinations to where people live (e.g. connecting residential areas to schools or employment centers). C. Lentz explained that the model incorporates several road parameters to define its level of comfort (or stress) for four levels of riders:

- Level 1 – for instance young children
- Level 2 – new riders or those with less confidence/ability
- Level 3 – generally confident riders who may not be comfortable with high speeds or levels of traffic but who could ride on a wide shoulder.
- Level 4 – very confident riders who are comfortable in most traffic situations

The LTS model and results could help identify potential projects for future funding, and incorporate new criteria scoring TAP or Ten Year Plan projects. C. Lentz noted that the LTS model could also help identify low-cost opportunities such as moving fog lines to widen shoulders when roads get repaved.

P. Nelson suggested that the project include consideration of the availability of bicycles that have an electric motor. An individual's level of comfort is tied to how fast they can ride, and electric assist motors will allow more people to ride bicycles in urban centers. C. Lentz noted that the LTS model incorporates hills because a less confident rider may avoid hills because of the extra exertion required. An electric assist bicycle could mean more people on a road where they wouldn't be on a regular bike.

D. Landry asked if the model provided just a snapshot of the current road conditions, or if it included predictive capabilities to show where roads will be improved in the future. J. Czysz said it was a snapshot, but the data could be very effective in identifying the best locations for future improvements. E. Strachan noted that NHDOT was working on a statewide pedestrian and bicycle plan that would incorporate the LTS model results.

D. Landry asked if the regional model results would be integrated to ensure effective inter-regional planning and project development. C. Lentz said the model was designed to integrate regional results and facilitate coordination throughout the state.

E. Strachan asked if people will be able to provide input beyond the LTS project. R. Dewey said project partners had discussed leaving an online interactive map up after the project and developing opportunities for continuing input and outreach as the model results are implemented and refined.

S. Diamond described a route planning app he had heard about that focused on how attractive a commute was rather than just directness and convenience. He said the developer realized the more attractive and enjoyable route was only slightly longer (time wise) than the more direct, large urban highway. Thus the trip is more about the journey than just the destination.

C. Lentz noted that to-date he knew of three CMAQ projects being proposed for the region: bus replacement from UNH Wildcat; intersection improvements in Rochester; and COAST's proposed route restructuring. J. Czysz said the official CMAQ application had been posted on the NHDOT website and the deadline was September 6th.

C. Lentz said the initial outreach for the Metro Plan was almost complete. The regional online survey had received 320 responses so far and it would be available for a couple more weeks. He said the results would be compiled to help with Metro Plan goal setting in the near future.

C. Lentz said Dover had applied for a federal BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) grant to implement a wide range of downtown streetscape improvements prioritized in the city's Master Plan.

5. **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.

No members of the public brought comments forward

6. **Adjournment**

D. Hamann made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by T. Crosby

Vote: unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 9:57am

Minutes Approved by [Print Name] Victoria Parnell

Signed Victoria Parnell Date 9/20/19

