

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 15th 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 9:05am

P. Nelson filled in for Chair as both the Chair and Vice Chair were unavailable.

1. Attendance:

Committee Members

Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Donald Hamann (Rochester), Tim White (NHDES), David Landry (Dover), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Steve Pesci (UNH), Bill Fisher (Farmington), Peter Nelson (Newmarket)

Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Colin Lentz, Rachel Dewey, Jackson Rand

Guests

Nicole McKenzie – U.S. Census Bureau

2. Staff Communications

C. Lentz noted that several SRPC staff members were attending the annual meeting of the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association. James Burdin was presenting as part of a session on work-life balance, and Shayna Sylvia was presenting about the work of the regional economic development group Explore Moose Mountains.

C. Lentz said he and R. Dewey would be attending a workshop on December 11th and 12th hosted by Federal Highway Administration for MPOs, State DOTs, public transit providers, and federal staff in the northeastern U.S. The focus of the workshop is performance-based planning implementation. Jen noted that she and James Burdin would be attending a national Brownfields Conference in Los Angeles.

P. Nelson explained that the executive committee had been meeting prior to the Policy Committee and noted that SRPC was in an excellent financial position with a healthy workload for 2020. He thanked the commissioners for their participation and thanked the staff for their hard work.

3. Public Hearing – Amendment #2 to the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program

M. Bobinsky made a motion to open the public hearing.

Seconded by D. Landry.
Vote: Unanimous in favor

C. Lentz gave a presentation regarding projects included in the amendment to the TIP.

- Dover – Rochester (project # 29440): Toll booths being upgraded to all-electronic tolling
- Dover-Rochester-Somersworth (project # 29604): upgrade of the NH108 corridor using a complete streets approach
- Lee (Project # 41322: Bridge replacement on NH125 over Little River
- Newfields – Newmarket (project # 28393): upgrade of the NH108 bridges over the railroad
- Newington - Dover (project # 11238-S) General Sullivan Bridge replacement
- Statewide Program - Rehabilitation of Tier 2 highways: funds redistributed within program due to changes in “child projects”. No projects affected in the Strafford region
- Statewide Program - maintenance of high-investment bridges: funds redistributed within program due to changes in “child projects” no projects in the Strafford region
- Statewide (Project # 41756): CMAQ statewide signals assessment

Members discussed the importance of bicycle safety improvements being included with the Newfields-Newmarket project.

S. Pesci requested that staff develop a summary of investment in the Newington-Dover project now that it is near to completion.

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

4. Action Item(s)

4.1 Minutes from October 18th 2019

M. Bobinsky made a motion to approve the minutes as written.
Seconded by T. Crosby
Vote: unanimous in favor

4.2 Approve Amendment #2 to the 2019-2022 TIP

D. Hamann made a motion to approve Amendment #2 to the 2019-2022 TIP
Seconded by S. Pesci
Vote: unanimous in favor

5. Discussion Items

Nicole McKenzie gave a presentation on the work being done to prepare for the 2020 Census. She explained that the 2020 Census will include a new online option but the paper forms will also be sent to people who don't take the online version. Census workers will conduct in-person visits if individuals don't submit a paper form after a certain date. N. McKenzie noted several examples of the importance of the census; primarily that it determines how many seats each state gets in congress

and how much federal funding is distributed to states and other jurisdictions for the next decade. She said census workers are paying close attention to hard-to-count populations and noted examples of areas and demographics that were likely under-counted during the 2010 census. There was a national undercount of children under the age of six and this impacted funding for school lunch programs.

N. McKenzie said the decennial census is required by the constitution and is the most important census program because it's about counting every single person in the country, but the census includes the American Community Survey that fills the intervening years with more limited samples from communities across the country. She said she was hoping for help from municipalities to promote the census and emphasized the message that it is *safe, easy, and important*. Census data are protected under title 13 of the U.S. code; the census bureau cannot share personal information or provide raw data with other federal agencies. N. McKenzie noted that after the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, the bush administration tried to gain access to the census data through the Patriot Act but the access was challenged in the supreme court and denied.

N. Mckenzie said the census counts individuals at the location where they live most of the time. This includes UNH students who are counted as living in Durham since that's where they live for most of their time at school. However college and university towns like Durham, Keene, Lebanon are considered hard-to-count because many students may be living on couches, may not know they need to fill out a census form, or assume that their parents will fill it out and say they live at home. S. Pesci asked if N. Mckenzie had contacted anyone at UNH about the census. She said she had but would like to discuss further contacts with S. Pesci to get as much student outreach as possible. She noted that census staff compare count data to the known student head counts and students in on-campus housing are counted in group-quarters and the census contacts student housing directly. Census staff also check for duplicate names. She noted that the census will need to hire 13,000 temporary workers to canvas addresses that have not filled out forms. The jobs pay well at \$17.50 per hour plus \$0.58 per mile driven and offer flexible scheduling up to full time (they would like people to work at least 20 hours per week. N. McKenzie said workers have to be at least 18 but no experience is necessary, and many seniors like to work for the census because of the flexibility and it's great for students looking for a side job and additional income. The jobs will open in May of 2020 and continue through the summer.

D. Hamann asked why the census form asked for "Hispanic origin" and made a distinction between color and race. J. Czysz responded that "race" and "ethnicity" are distinct concepts. "Hispanic" is an ethnicity and various people may identify as black and Hispanic or white and Hispanic. Race and ethnicity are separated to avoid a double count. B. Holstein asked how homeless people are counted. N. McKenzie said they're working with towns and cities to identify camps or other locations and census workers will go out and do a head count at camps and shelters. She added that people without an address can list a shelter, library, or other street address. N. McKenzie noted that the census is available in 12 major languages, and technical assistance is available in 59 others. W. Burton asked if the census counts undocumented people. N. McKenzie said yes it does but there is real concern that the recent attempt by the Trump administration to include a citizenship question will cause a significant undercount because both citizens and undocumented people will be anxious about responding to the census. She reemphasized the importance of knowing how many people live in each community regardless of who they are because that community will likely serve those

people in some way regardless of their status. Whether through a hospital, police or emergency response, local schools, or a homeless shelter.

N. McKenzie explained she's working with "Complete Count Committees" to coordinate local efforts to ensure an accurate census count. She recently met with a group of Rochester staff and residents to form a local complete count committee. She encouraged members to help promote the census in their communities and noted that the city managers of Dover, Newmarket, and Durham had a friendly competition in 2010 to see who could have the highest self-response rate. They agreed that the two losing managers would wash the fire truck of the winning town and Newmarket won.

N. McKenzie described the census data dissemination program. Aggregated census data are free to the public but in the past they had been difficult for the average person to access and analyze, so third-party vendors have packaged census data and sold it as a special product to unwitting buyers. The new program provides census data on a website with the goal of making census data easier to access. It can help communities and agencies analyze census data to apply for grants, or help people starting a new business.

P. Nelson noted that this was a great opportunity for SRPC commissioners and MPO technical advisory committee members to engage with their communities. R. Dewey described additional census-related work that she and other staff had done recently. This includes work to update local addresses and incorporate new building that been done in the months leading up to the census so its incorporated. N. Mckenzie noted that developers and building managers were great contacts to get materials out to their properties and residents. J. Czyns noted that SRPC staff will continue providing technical assistance and public outreach. C. Lentz said he would send out a packet of information and materials after the meeting.

6. Project Updates

Regional Workshop on Housing, Transportation, and Economic Development

C. Lentz explained that since the Metro Plan, Comprehensive Economic Development Study, and Regional Housing Needs Assessment were being updated concurrently, staff were developing a regional workshop to incorporate input on transportation, housing, and economic development from technical staff from municipalities and agencies in the region. He said the workshop was scheduled for Friday, January 10th from 9am-12pm. This would normally be the TAC meeting, so the intention was essentially to make it an extended TAC workshop with additional participants. C. Lentz said there would be an invitation and additional meeting information soon.

W. Burton said solid waste was a critical issue that could eclipse all other issues in the short-term. New Hampshire's six landfills are quickly filling up and a solid waste management committee of the state legislature just issued a bill with a dire assessment of waste capacity. W. Burton noted that the committee's report referenced the role of regional planning commissions in tackling this challenge with regional solutions. One of the factors involved is that China recently stopped buying recyclables from the U.S. so all that is going in domestic landfills now. W. Burton noted that H.B. 617 was the enabling legislation for the committee. C. Lentz said he would look up the report and send it to the committee. M. Bobinsky said it would be important to share examples of best practices such as "pay as you throw" that had been implemented in Somersworth. W. Burton noted that it

was interesting that electricity, water, and other home utilities are priced by volume, but not solid waste. J. Czysz suggested that solid waste be the central topic for the February Commission meeting.

7. Other Business

CMAQ and Ten Year Plan Update

C. Lentz provided a list of projects that NHDOT had recommended be funded through the CMAQ program and incorporated into the draft Ten Year Plan that would be sent to the Governor. The list included an intersection improvement in Rochester, a park and ride in Lee, signal timing improvements around the state, and UNH Wildcat bus replacement. A project proposed in Dover by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) to improve rail siding was deemed ineligible by Federal Highway Administration because they considered it to be deferred maintenance. S. Pesci said he was grateful that UNH Wildcat's application had been accepted and that NHDOT was considering flexing 25% of CMAQ funds to support public transit, but he was disappointed with the lack of transparency in the CMAQ process this round. He noted that the results of NHDOT's decision-making were not provided until the meeting with GACIT where they were presented for the first time. He said he was disappointed that the rail siding project was deemed ineligible because represented a huge air quality benefit because it increased the efficiency and speed of passenger and freight rail traffic along a restricted rail corridor. It was also identical to a project in the last CMAQ round.

S. Pesci made a motion that the Strafford MPO Policy Committee send a letter to Bill Watson and Tom Jameson requesting that NNEPRA have the opportunity to appeal NHDOT's decision in a public forum and that email communications related to FHWA's ineligibility determination be made available. P. Nelson seconded the motion.

W. Burton asked if SRPC staff had a perspective and opinion on the issue. C. Lentz said he felt it was a valid request. He agreed that the process lacked transparency and communication. He said he had received no communications from NHDOT until a few days before the most recent GACIT meeting when the CMAQ results were going to be presented so he sent his completed air quality analyses for regional projects. It wasn't clear that the air quality analyses completed by RPCs were factored into the NHDOT decision-making.

W. Burton suggested that the letter include concern over the lack of transparency in the CMAQ process. S. Pesci said he wanted to focus specifically on the NNEPRA project but would include a request that NHDOT formally respond to NNEPRA and SRPC. S. Pesci added that the CMAQ list from NHDOT did not include the \$1.2 million that was granted to COAST [outside the formal CMAQ solicitation round] to implement their new service concept. He wondered why NHDOT wouldn't want to celebrate that decision. He reemphasized the need for transparent processes when it comes to funding opportunities like CMAQ.

M. Bobinsky asked if the letter and the appeal and reinstatement of the NNEPRA project would result in other projects losing funding. S. Pesci said it would likely reduce the 25% of CMAQ funding that was proposed for transit.

Members voted unanimously in support of the motion.

C. Lentz said he would work with S. Pesci to draft the letter and send it to NHDOT as soon as possible.

C. Lentz provided an update on the rescission provision built into the FAST Act, which stipulated that \$7.5 billion be returned to the Federal Highway Administration by July of 2020 (based on federal funding that was unobligated nationwide at the end of September 2019. Each state was required to divide their unobligated balance at the end of September 2019 (\$26 million in NH) by the total amount of obligated funding nationally (\$5.3 billion) to get a percentage (NH represents .5% of the total national unobligated funding). The state's percentage is then multiplied by the \$7.5 billion required in the FAST Act to get the total required for NH by July of 2020 (\$37 million). This meant that states ended up losing millions of dollars regardless of how much funding they had obligated during the FAST Act. C. Lentz noted that NHDOT would have to find the required funds from a range of federal programs. M. Bobinsky asked if this could impact ongoing or approved projects that were funded through federal sources like CMAQ. C. Lentz said he wasn't sure how far the cuts would have to go, but it was likely that the rescission would impact existing projects if it goes forward as written. He noted that there was strong bipartisan support in congress for eliminating the rescission provision, and plenty of support from transportation-related agencies.

S. Diamond noted several locations in Barrington where properties were potentially in high flood-hazard zones and that maps were inaccurate or ended at town boundaries. He noted the larger conversation tends to focus on flooding in coastal areas due to climate change, but not inland areas. He acknowledged that SRPC is not responsible for updating the flood maps but asked about the possibility of communities in the region sharing the cost of updating floodplain maps to prepare for climate change. J. Czyns said Kyle Pimental had been working with the Town of Lee to analyze and map major watershed for flooding hazards. She recommended that the project be completed and used as a pilot for a regional discussion on climate preparedness.

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**

T. Crosby made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by M. Bobinsky

Vote: unanimous in favor

Meeting adjourned at 11:10am

Minutes Approved by [Print Name] 12/20/2019

Signed Peter Nelson Date Peter Nelson