

## Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization

### Policy Committee

#### Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> 2021

9:00 – 11:00 AM

Strafford Regional Planning Commission  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Rochester, NH

The meeting was called to order at 9:07am

The chair read the following statement prior to the roll call:

The chair of the Strafford MPO Technical Advisory Committee has found that, due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-21, this Committee is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means.* We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone number 1-646-558-8656 and meeting ID 829 0534 5549, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82905345549?pwd=eTQ4dEVrbjVPbm5iL2dqQmxIdXpyQT09>
- *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting.* We previously gave notice to the public of how to access the meeting using Zoom, and instructions are provided on the SRPC website at [www.strafford.org](http://www.strafford.org).
- *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access.* If anybody has a problem, please call 603-948-9483 or email at: [clentz@strafford.org](mailto:clentz@strafford.org)
- *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting.* In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time. Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking a Roll Call attendance. When each member states their presence, also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

## 1. **Attendance:**

### Committee Members

Steve Diamond (Barrington), Michael Williams (COAST), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Tim White (NHDES), Dave Landry (Dover), Wayne Burton (Durham), Bill Fisher (Farmington), Mark Avery (Madbury), Mike Bobinsky (Somersworth), Mark Richardson (Somersworth), Don Hamann (Rochester), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), Barb Holstein (Rochester), Gary Anderson (Nottingham), Beverly Cray (UNH)

### Staff

Rachel Dewey, Natalie Moles, Nancy O'Connor, Alaina Rogers, Jackson Rand, Stephen Geis, Jen Czysz, Colin Lentz

## 2. **Staff Communications**

C. Lentz said SRPC was finalizing paperwork with NHDOT to hire an engineering consultant to develop scopes and cost estimates for prospective projects, develop a project database, and implement the SRPC travel demand model.

## 3. **Action Items**

### 3.1 Minutes from January 15th, 2021

D. Hamann made a motion to approve the minutes as written.

Seconded by G. Anderson

Vote: All in favor (via roll-call vote)

G. Anderson commented about the importance about increasing access to crash reports for local safety improvements.

## 4. **Discussion Items**

### 4.1 Metro Plan updates

### Draft section on Environmental Justice and Equity

C. Lentz described a draft section of the Metro Plan that will lay out a new strategy for increasing outreach to historically underserved communities in the region. The strategy will focus on speaking directly to people who have a stake in the planning process, and incorporating a data-driven approach to identifying people who are most vulnerable to climate change impacts and other environmental hazards. Nancy O'Connor and Alaina Rogers have been drafting the section and it will be incorporated into a comprehensive update to SRPC's documents on Environmental Justice and Title VI populations.

C. Lentz asked for feedback from committee members:

- Is SRPC's approach to improved EJ&E planning clearly described?
- Do you feel the proposed four-phase framework is an effective path to increasing equity in SRPC's transportation planning efforts?
- Do you have specific recommendations for communities/neighborhoods/locations where SRPC should consider equity challenges and potential improvement actions or projects?

J. Boudreau asked if the Metro Plan went beyond transportation on the topic of equity. C. Lentz said equity is an all-encompassing issue and the draft metro plan section uses a resilience and disaster recovery framework, but transportation is the primary lens.

S. Diamond said food security and access for low-income residents was an important issue for him and he was glad SRPC was increasing its focus on equity challenges.

W. Burton noted that transportation was a major barrier for continuing education and employment. Most Great Bay Community College students can't afford to live near the main campus in Newington. They also cannot afford to live in larger communities where jobs are concentrated. Public transit is limited by the lack of state funding support, so often the only option is to drive and owning a car is expensive.

N. O'Connor noted that the section would include specific strategies for increasing engagement with people whose voices are not typically represented in the MPO process. M. Richardson reminded SRPC staff to contact the commissioners in each municipality if they were planning an outreach event because they could promote it and engage community members.

W. Burton noted that the pandemic will make equity challenges worse in many cases. Some people may be able to switch permanently to virtual work, while so many others whose jobs require face-to-face contact won't have that option. S. Diamond noted that part of the solution to improving access and equity is to adapt development patterns to reduce the need for personal vehicle transportation. Communities would be more equitable if housing and essential services were closer together and accessible by foot, bike, or transit.

#### Draft Economic Vitality metrics

C. Lentz presented a new batch of snapshots for metrics related to economic vitality to be added to the regional database. He noted that 2020 data for multiple metrics will be available soon and will added as they become available. The following metrics were briefly described:

- Housing Costs
- Living Wage and Poverty Wages by Household Type
- Typical Expenses by Household Type
- In-Area Labor Force Efficiency
- Labor Force Size
- Labor force participation rate by age
- Percent of employees under the age of 18
- Building permits
- Broadband internet access

W. Burton asked about large annual increases in employees under 18 in the North Country. R. Dewey said employment data are reported quarterly and the large spikes were from summer employment for seasonal jobs. D. Landry said the formatting and graphics were well done and the snapshots would be great for continuing conversations about regional challenges. W. Burton added that town councilors would love to see materials like these.

S. Diamond asked about the broadband internet graphics and suggested that the DSL and satellite access service areas be removed. He said DSL is too slow to be useful these days and satellite is available essentially everywhere but is currently too expensive for most users. He suggested removing them would make the service area map more representative; there aren't that many options for internet service in the region.

M. Bobinsky said he was interested to see the 2020 and 2021 data because at the beginning of the pandemic he would not have guessed that building permits and housing costs would rise so significantly.

## 5. Project Updates

C. Lentz noted that there were three critical items requiring a vote at the March meeting:

- Ten Year Plan Projects – Final decision on candidate projects
- STIP Update – public hearing and vote
- Draft UPWP for fiscal years 2022 & 2023

He said a quorum would be vital to discuss these items and vote on them.

N. O'Connor described SRPC's current project called Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions (CHAT). The project is funded through the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. She said they had held a community forum in Durham and had developed a survey to understand the municipalities' levels of age-friendly-ness. She said they wanted to have forums in all municipalities. The next commission meeting will focus on the project and have a guest speaker.

## 6. Municipal Roundtable – Updates on local COVID-19 adaptation Are there ways that SRPC can help your community recover from COVID-19?

G. Anderson noted that Nottingham was working with NHDOT to coordinate a bridge replacement project on NH152. It's on the primary access road to the town and near local schools and the fire and police department, so it's not as easy as simply shutting down the road.

B. Cray said the UNH Transportation Policy Committee was discussing the upcoming budget for Wildcat Transit service. There will be more funds in the coming year than the previous year, but the committee is also seriously considering discontinuing service to Newmarket because ridership has been well below minimum levels for multiple years. She said 14 riders per run is the minimum for viable service and the average for several years has been less than 7 riders per run. D. Landry asked about potential causes. B. Cray said it was likely a combination of the increased student housing in Durham and the fact that housing costs in Newmarket had risen to the point where it is less expensive to live in Dover. B. Cray added that UNH was applying for funds to purchase electric buses for the UNH fleet.

M. Bobinsky said Somersworth was going to release an invitation to bid on constructing a complete streets improvement project on Cemetery Road.

S. Diamond said Barrington was experiencing increased residential development at the intersection of NH9 and NH125 and local board members were considering impacts from increasing traffic.

D. Hamann said Rochester would be starting construction on the Strafford Square roundabout project: Utilities improvements were scheduled for the 2021 season and roundabout construction was scheduled for 2022.

W. Burton said Durham was considering what to do with the historic dam on the Oyster River and the town seemed to be divided between preserving the historic structure and removing it for environmental benefits. W. Burton added that the Durham Agricultural committee was working on updating the local agricultural ordinance that would enable more small-scale agriculture without impacting homeowner interests. He said they were happy to help municipalities working on similar ordinance.

7. **Other Business**

No other business was brought before the committee.

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.

No citizens were present to provide input.

9. **Adjournment**

D. Hamann made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by M. Bobinsky

Vote: unanimous in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20am