

## Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization

### Policy Committee

#### Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 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 9:05am

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 2021-04, 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

Joe Boudreau (Rochester), Barb Holstein (Rochester), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Michael Williams (COAST), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Tim White (NHDES), Dave Landry (Dover), Wayne Burton (Durham), Bill Fisher (Farmington), Mike Bobinsky (Somersworth), Mark Richardson (Somersworth), Don Hamann (Rochester), Peter Nelson (Newmarket)

### Guests

Arthur Capello (Farmington), Shanna Saunders (Rochester), Peter Nourse (Rochester),

### Staff

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

## 2. Staff Communications

## 3. Public Hearing

### 3.1 Draft 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program and 2021-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update

J. Boudreau made a motion to open the public hearing

Seconded by S. Pesci

Vote: unanimous in favor via roll call vote

C. Lentz presented the draft update to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that will cover years 2021-2024. The TIP includes federally funded transportation projects in the region that are ready for final engineering and construction. C. Lentz reviewed some of the projects that were added to the TIP since the last update. Many projects are added between full updates through individual funding programs like Transportation Alternatives and CMAQ. C. Lentz explained that he had updated the fiscal constraint approach since the last TIP update to make it more intuitive. The previous approach was to show the amount of funding programmed for projects in the region and compare it to a theoretical proportion of federal funding that could be allocated to the region. This created an inaccurate perception that the region wasn't getting all the funding it should. Strafford MPO gets a certain amount of funding to program new projects but overall, the statewide funding allocation is more flexible and context-specific. A new approach assumes that the amount of funding for projects programmed in the region in any given year is the amount of funding that will be spent – no more no less. That amount can change through amendments, but it assumes fiscal constraint because dollars programmed and dollars spent will be the same.

C. Lentz described the updates to the Metro Plan, which will cover 2021-2045. The Metro Plan includes the 4 TIP years, the additional 6 years that comprise state Ten Year Plan, and the “out years” beyond 2031. The out-years projects were updated with more detailed cost estimates and within the fiscal constraint target of 10.01% of the statewide federal aid apportionment. C. Lentz noted that SRPC had just hired VHB as an on-call engineer to help improve scopes and cost estimates and program more projects in the Metro Plan.

J. Boudreau asked if the Metro Plan is ready for a sudden availability of federal funds (e.g. an infrastructure stimulus package). C. Lentz responded that the Metro Plan conservatively assumes a slight, steady increase in available federal funds based on a trend over the past decades, and the plan cannot include more projects than could reasonably be expected to be funded in each year. There is no guarantee when additional funding will be available, however it was important to develop projects to be ready for funding opportunities like TAP, CMAQ, or others. Part of the purpose of the Metro Plan is to have projects ready to be implemented when funding is available.

C. Lentz reviewed the comments he had received since the public comment period began and asked if there were any other questions or comments from committee members. He noted that there hadn't been a STIP amendment for nearly 12 months and that impacts progress on many projects, so approving the update was critical.

M. Bobinsky made a motion to close the public hearing  
 Seconded by D. Hamann  
 Vote: unanimous in favor via roll call vote

**4. Action Items**

4.1 Minutes from February 19th, 2021

D. Hamann made a motion to approve the minutes as written.  
 Seconded by M. Bobinsky  
 Vote: A. Capello Abstaining, otherwise unanimous in favor (via roll-call vote)

4.2 Candidate Ten Year Plan projects (final vote for submission to NHDOT)

C. Lentz reviewed the candidate projects, cost estimates, and available funding. There were five projects that needed to be discussed and selected for funding. The region had \$4,901,449 to fund proposed projects so not all of them could be submitted to NHDOT for inclusion in the draft Ten Year Plan. TAC had discussed two possible scenarios for funding projects based on a possible change to the scope of the proposed widening of NH11 in Rochester.

**Scenario 1 – original Rochester NH11 widening scope**

Barrington	NH125/NH9 sidewalks	\$ 1,253,514
Rochester	NH11 Widening (3,200 ft scope)	\$ 4,538,029
Farmington	Sidewalk network expansion	\$ 990,160
Milton	sidewalk expansion (Dawson and Silver St)	\$ 684,080
Durham	Main St/NH155A intersection	\$ 1,596,500

Under scenario 1, the only funding possibilities are Rochester alone, or the other four projects – no other combinations.

**Scenario 2 – reduced Rochester NH11 widening scope and cost**

Barrington	NH125/NH9 sidewalks	\$ 1,253,514
Rochester	NH11 Widening (2,100 ft scope)	\$ 2,800,000
Farmington	Sidewalk network expansion	\$ 990,160
Milton	sidewalk expansion (Dawson and Silver St)	\$ 684,080
Durham	Main St/NH155A intersection	\$ 1,596,500

C. Lentz explained that staff from Rochester and SRPC had met with NHDOT staff who had confirmed that the revised scope of the NH11 widening project was agreeable to all parties. This eliminated “scenario 1” and allowed for much more flexibility in the final decision about which projects to fund. C. Lentz said the TAC had made the following recommendation to the Policy committee:

*The Rochester, Barrington, and Milton projects should be funded through the Ten Year Plan - with the expectation that Rochester find a way to cap the federal funding portion for the Rochester project at \$2.8 million.*

C. Lentz also reviewed the ranking of projects based on TAC and Policy scoring:

Municipality	Scope	Score
Rochester	Widen 3,200 feet of NH11	70.57
Barrington	Install sidewalks between town center and middle school	65.57
Farmington	New sidewalks in three separate sections that will expand the connected sidewalk network	62.46
Milton	Construct 2,770 linear feet of sidewalk to enhance pedestrian connectivity between the town center, school, and other community church.	56.01
Durham	Intersection safety improvements. Signal or roundabout are potential alternatives. ***	55.09

C. Lentz noted that TAC members had discussed the projects in-depth and choosing between the various projects had been challenging. B. Fisher explained that the Farmington project provided an important expansion of the sidewalk network that was critical for the safety of students walking through the downtown to local schools. It was also a part of Farmington’s efforts to revitalize the downtown. C. Lentz noted that downtown Farmington was also a no-bus zone for local students. A. Capello explained that Farmington’s municipal buildings are all within 1 mile of each other and walkability was a major part of revitalization planning.

S. Diamond said walkability in Barrington’s town center was the primary goal for the planning board. He said the proposed project would construct the town’s first sidewalks and the town was fully in support.

D. Hamann described the need for the proposed NH11 widening project in Rochester. The lack of sidewalks makes walking the route unsafe and traffic congestion is a regionally recognized problem.

J. Czysz noted that the Barrington, Farmington, and Rochester projects combined – as originally proposed – were over the regional allocation by \$142,225. A. Capello said of the three sections of new sidewalk proposed in the Farmington project, the ones on Elm St and the northern part of Main St were the most important to the town for expanding walkability. He said the section

proposed for the southern part of Main St (from Paulson Rd to the Public Safety Bldg) could be removed for the project so the Barrington, Rochester, and Farmington projects could all fit within the regional allocation.

M. Williams noted that there was no Milton representative at the meeting to advocate for the town's project and said he was uncomfortable making a final decision that would eliminate the project from funding without their input. J. Czysz acknowledged that it was difficult, but she noted Milton was not a dues-paying community and had not appointed any representatives to the Policy Committee [which is possible even without paying dues]. They have an active TAC member, but no commissioners.

D. Landry asked if there was any quantitative evidence (such as a pedestrian count) for the need for the new sidewalks proposed along NH11 in Rochester. He expressed concern that the new infrastructure would be used to an extent that would justify the investment. The expense of winter maintenance was also a consideration. C. Lentz noted that doing a pedestrian count where there aren't sidewalks was misleading since the lack of sidewalks would discourage pedestrians. D. Hamann said he drives the corridor every day and regularly sees pedestrians along the shoulder. He added that sidewalk maintenance is a priority for Rochester.

S. Pesci said it was too late in the process to be having this level of detailed discussion about candidate projects – that should be ironed out earlier on. He agreed that ongoing maintenance responsibility should be carefully considered by municipalities. He suggested that projects had been discussed in enough detail and the committee should move to a vote.

C. Lentz noted that there was a general proposal on the table to fund the Rochester, Farmington, and Barrington projects with Farmington's reduction of their project's scope.

M. Williams said he thought Milton made a strong case for their project at the recent TAC meeting, and that's likely why TAC included the Milton project in their initial recommendation. He asked that in the future, more detail about TAC's discussion about projects be provided to Policy for their final discussion and vote so members can understand the context of TAC's recommendation. C. Lentz said he would do so.

B. Fisher made a motion to fund the NH11 widening project in Rochester, the sidewalk project in Barrington, and the reduced Farmington project (only the sidewalk segments on Elm Street from Main St (NH153) to Lone Star Ave; and Main St [NH153] from Lincoln St to Webster St – removing the segment on Main St [NH153] from Paulson Rd to the Public Safety Bldg.)  
Seconded by D. Hamann.

Vote: Michael Williams abstaining, otherwise unanimous in favor via roll call vote

S. Pesci reiterated the need to have detailed discussions about the merits of proposed projects earlier in the decision-making process. J. Czysz agreed but noted that the Ten Year Plan process had become more protracted in recent cycles as SRPC and other RPCs had been relying on engineering support from NHDOT. This creates much more detailed scopes and cost estimates, but the process has extended with multiple steps. J. Boudreau said municipalities must understand that the Policy committee makes the ultimate decision in cases like this, so only having TAC representation reduces

a municipality's chance of funding and detracts from the process. C. Lentz noted that SRPC had just begun working with VHB to provide on-call engineering services so the project development and discussion process would be improved. He thanked TAC and Policy members for being so engaged in the discussion and decision-making process.

#### 4.3 Draft 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program and 2021-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update

B. Fisher made a motion to approve the draft 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program and 2021-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan as presented.

Seconded by S. Diamond

Vote: unanimous in favor via roll call vote

#### 4.4 Draft 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program

C. Lentz gave a presentation highlighting the draft Unified Work Program (UPWP) for fiscal years 2022-2023. It is a contract developed with NHDOT comprising the next two years of transportation planning efforts funded through federal planning dollars. C. Lentz said the overall structure of the UPWP was the same as previous contracts. The updated UPWP will include more specific descriptions of deliverables associated with individual tasks. SRPC will be increasing focus on several planning areas: climate resilience and disaster recovery planning, equity planning, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, congestion analysis, and travel demand modeling. He noted that the UPWP includes a new study to be funded through Federal Transit Administration to update the regional Coordinated Plan for human services transportation.

S. Diamond asked about the future funding of corridor studies (in particular NH125). C. Lentz said the current Ten Year Plan still includes funding for corridor studies but the process has been stalled by COVID-19. He said he expects communication from NHDOT's consultant to compile regional priorities soon.

P. Nelson asked where planning for electric vehicle charging fits in the UPWP. C. Lentz said it wasn't as explicitly mentioned, but staff are working on this issue. There are tools to be developed to identify ideal locations for new chargers throughout the region. C. Lentz noted that SRPC has participated with a legislative effort to plan expansion of the charging network. D. Hamann noted that expansion of the vehicle charging network will require investments in the electric grid. Members discussed the long-term challenges of expanding electric vehicle charging.

C. Lentz said the draft UPWP was under review by NHDOT and FHWA there might be small edits and funding adjustments in the finalization process with NHDOT. He asked if the committee would be comfortable approving the draft UPWP with the possibility of small changes.

D. Hamann made a motion to approve the draft 2022-2023 UPWP as presented

Seconded by B. Fisher

Vote: unanimous in favor via roll call vote

## 5. Project Updates

### 5.1 **Commissioner skills matrix**

S. Casella reviewed the matrix included in the meeting packet that highlights the range of traits and skills of current SRPC commissioners. The matrix lists demographic information and the professional experience of commissioners to identify what they bring to the SRPC planning process. She said the survey to collect this information was still available. J. Boudreau said he was impressed by the range of skills of commissioners, and they would be an asset moving forward as SRPC embarks on new efforts. D. Hamann suggested that S. Casella resend the survey to commissioners to get more input.

#### 6. **Other Business**

C. Lentz reminded members that TAP applications were due to NHDOT that day by 11:59pm. TAC will be scoring the TAP projects and Policy will be reviewing the scored projects for final discussion and vote.

J. Boudreau said the new SRPC resilience sub-committee was going to be distributing a survey in the near future. He added that SRPC would be hosting learning sessions around resilience issues as well. He thanked SRPC staff for all the effort they put into the proposed plans and processes to help commissioners make decisions.

#### 7. **Commissioner Roundtable** – Updates from your community

Are there ways that SRPC can help your community recover from COVID-19?

P. Nelson asked if there were data on the percent of people vaccinated against COVID-19 in NH.

R. Dewey provided a link in the zoom meeting chat to NH's state website with detailed data about COVID-19 infections, fatalities, vaccinations, etc.

#### 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**

B. Fisher made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by S. Diamond

Vote: unanimous in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50am