

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization

Combined meeting of the MPO Policy Committee Meeting & SRPC Commissioners

Friday, May 21st 2021 9:00 – 10:30 AM
Remote Zoom Meeting

The Chair of SRPC has found that, due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2021-08, SRPC and committees thereof are authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order.

SRPC is utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in the meeting as follows:

[Click here to access the meeting online](#)

Telephone-only Access: +1 646 558 8656 and Meeting ID: 833 2937 9249

These instructions have also been provided on the SRPC website at www.trafford.org. If anybody is unable to access the meeting, please email clentz@trafford.org or call (603) 994-3500. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

1. Introductions	5 mins
2. Staff Communications	5 mins
3. Public Hearing – Draft 2021-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan	15 Mins
4. Action Item(s) [Motion Required] 4.1. Approve draft minutes from April 16 th 2021 4.2. Approve the Draft 2021-2045 Metro Plan	5 mins
5. Discussion Items 5.1. Update Regional Planning Priorities for Ten Year Plan and legislative process	20 mins
6. Project Updates	5 mins
7. Other Business	5 mins
8. Commissioner Roundtable – Updates from your community What should SRPC be focused on for COVID-19 recovery planning that would help your community?	5 mins
9. Citizen’s Forum – Citizens of the Strafford region are invited to speak on the subject matter of the meeting. Statements shall be limited to three minutes	

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Include a description of the accommodation you will need including as much detail as you can. Also include a way we can contact you if we need more information. Make your request as early as possible; please allow at least 5 days advance notice. Last minute requests will be accepted but may be impossible to fill. Please call (603) 994-3500 or email srpc@trafford.org.

Rules of Procedure

*Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization, and
Strafford Economic Development District*

Meeting Etiquette

Be present at the scheduled start of the meeting.

Be respectful of the views of others.

Ensure that only one person talks at a time. Raising your hand to be recognized by the chair or facilitator is good practice.

Do not interrupt others, or start talking before someone finishes.

Do not engage in cross talk.

Avoid individual discussions in small groups during the meeting. When one person speaks, others should listen.

Active participation is encouraged from all members.

When speaking, participants should adhere to topics of discussion directly related to agenda items.

When speaking, individuals should be brief and concise.

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission & Metropolitan Planning Organization holds both public meetings and public hearings.

For public meetings, guests are welcome to observe, but should follow proper meeting etiquette allowing the meeting to proceed uninterrupted. Members of the public who wish to be involved and heard should use venues such as citizen forum, public hearings, public comment periods, outreach events, seminars, workshops, listening sessions, etc.

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization

Policy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 16th 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 Policy 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.
- *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
- *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

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

Guests

Shanna Saunders (Rochester),

Staff

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

2. Staff Communications

C. Lentz noted that the Strafford MPO meeting would be relatively short and members would adjourn and reconvene as the RPC commissioners.

3. Action Items

3.1 Minutes from March 19th 2021

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

Seconded by M. Richardson

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

3.2 Review TAC scoring of proposed Transportation Alternatives projects

C. Lentz presented the results from scoring of the three candidate TAP projects proposed in the region (Rochester, Dover, and Durham). He noted that the SRPC results would inform the final NHDOT scoring, but the committee's decision at this meeting would not be the final decision about which project gets funded. That decision rests with the Commissioner of NHDOT. C. Lentz said scorers had expressed that all three projects were excellent, and it was difficult to compare them. All three scored high and were very close in scores.

D. Landry made a motion to accept the TAP scores and send them to NHDOT

Seconded by D. Hamann

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

4. Project Updates

4.1. **Upcoming Metro Plan public comment period**

C. Lentz reminded members that the Metro Plan was in public comment and would be up for a vote following a public hearing at the May Policy meeting.

5. Adjournment

At 9:30 the members transitioned from MPO business and reconvened as the Strafford RPC commissioners to discuss candidate projects for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

Memo

May 2021 Policy Meeting Prep

The RPC phase of the Ten Year Plan development process has concluded and the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) will soon begin meeting with NHDOT to discuss funding priorities and individual projects. GACIT members will host public hearings around the state in the fall prior to submitting the draft Ten Year Plan to the Governor near the end of the calendar year.

This is an opportunity to review and update overall regional and statewide goals and priorities for transportation development. Below are the goals in the Metro Plan organized by theme area. I've also included the most recently adopted regional priorities that were used for advocacy during the GACIT and legislative process in 2019-2020. Please review the draft MTP goals and current regional priorities before discussion at the Policy meeting.

Overall System Performance Goals

- Maintain and improve the reliability of the highway system.
- Reduce congestion and travel delay.
- Increase accessibility to alternative modes of transportation.
- Increase safety for non-motorized modes of transportation.

Infrastructure Condition Goals

- Keep public roads in good condition.
- Restore or upgrade bridges and culverts in critical condition.
- Prioritize planning and projects focused on adapting to climate change and improving infrastructure resilience.
- Increase adoption of alternative transportation modes to reduce wear and tear on roads.

Safety Goals

- Reduce the number of crashes on public roadways that result in fatalities and severe injuries.
- Reduce the number of crashes involving non-motorized users and build safer streets where bicycle and pedestrian activity is high.
- Reduce motorcycle crashes.
- Proactively identify high-crash locations.

Intra-Regional Public Transit Goals

- Increase funding for public transit.
- Promote ridership on regional public transit.
- Increase frequency on existing public transit routes.
- Increase service coverage and coordination of demand-response transit service for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Coordinate new development with public transit access.
- Increase transit access for seniors and people with disabilities.

Inter-Regional Transit Goals

- Improve linkages to existing intercity bus service for pedestrians, cyclists, and local transit.
- Support policy and develop projects that expand inter-city bus service to new destinations.

- Increase capacity of active railroads in the region to increase frequency of passenger and freight rail service.

Economic Linkages Goals

- Improve multimodal connections that increase mobility and accessibility of people and freight.
- Support the development of walkable community centers that promote local businesses and create a sense of place.
- Increase capacity of existing rail infrastructure for passenger and freight.
- Increase economic resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Housing and Jobs Goals

- Increase public transit service in the region.
- Support coordination of affordable housing development with public transit and multimodal transportation improvements.
- Improve accessibility for non-motorized modes, especially in areas with low income and limited transportation options.
- Increase workforce mobility.
- Build resilience in areas where people are most vulnerable to climate change.

Population and Demographics Goals

- Increase transportation independence for a growing number of seniors.
- Increase access to jobs and essential services for people with low income and limited vehicle access.
- Increase funding for public transit.

Regional priorities as presented to the Governor's Advisory
Commission on Intermodal Transportation in 2019

BARRINGTON
BROOKFIELD
DOVER
DURHAM
FARMINGTON
LEE
MADBURY
MIDDLETON
MILTON



NEW DURHAM
NEWMARKET
NORTHWOOD
NOTTINGHAM
ROCHESTER
ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

October 31, 2019

The Honorable Andru Volinsky,
Chair, New Hampshire Executive Council
107 North Main Street
State House, Room 207
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Councilor Volinsky:

The Strafford Regional Planning Commission serves 18 New Hampshire municipalities as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (Strafford MPO) in regional transportation planning and project development. This includes Wakefield, Brookfield, Middleton, Milton, and New Durham in District 1; Strafford, Farmington, Rochester, Somersworth, Rollinsford, Dover, Madbury, and Durham in District 2; Northwood, Nottingham, Barrington, and Lee in District 4; and Newmarket in District 3. Agencies such as the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) and the New Hampshire Departments of Transportation (NH DOT) and Environmental Services (NHDES) are also active members of the Strafford MPO.

The draft Ten Year Plan focuses on pavement preservation and bridge maintenance and we echo the importance of these issues. A recent survey of the Strafford region showed that road conditions and pavement maintenance were top priorities for residents of the region. The Strafford MPO Policy Committee having conversation about additional policy goals for a comprehensive regional planning effort. This letter includes draft planning priorities that will support the development of Strafford MPO's 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (a regional long-range transportation plan). We're providing a selection of priorities that are relevant to the development of the 2021-2030 Statewide Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan. This letter also includes comments from Strafford MPO representatives regarding Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funding in the Ten Year Plan.

Multimodal Network Development

Assets and Opportunities:

COAST and UNH Wildcat Transit, along with other transit options, allow a range of residents to reach regional destinations for education, health care, employment, nutrition, recreation, and civic engagement. Municipalities are emphasizing development of local bicycle and pedestrian routes.

Challenges:

- Workforce mobility for large employers.
- Managing traffic congestion in a growing region.
- Lack of transportation services for the rising numbers of seniors and those recovering from opioid addiction.

We advocate for:

- Increased consideration of multimodal development in the Statewide Ten Year Plan— moving people and freight (not just cars) and maintaining mobility of residents. We have heard from municipal economic development staff that businesses and developers place a high priority on direct access to public transit, and it has a role in the affordability and desirability of housing.
- Increased transportation options for seniors and those recovering from opioid addiction.
- Support for communities to implement local and regional multimodal trail networks that incentivize alternative modes of transportation, contribute to economic development, and promote healthy activity.

Public Transit

Assets and Opportunities:

The Strafford region has the richest mix of public transportation options in New Hampshire: fixed-route and demand-response bus service, passenger rail, intercity bus, and a growing network of bicycle routes.

Challenges:

- Public transit lacks meaningful state funding for operating support and federal funding has not increased substantially in recent years. However, operating costs for the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation have increased significantly for the past decade.
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), COAST is required to provide door-to-door transportation for people in its service area who cannot reach bus stops because of a disability. Demand for this service has grown by 880% since 2009. This has resulted in a 645% increase in cost to COAST; ADA service now represents 25% of COAST's operating budget.
- COAST's access to federal funds relies on local matching funds from municipalities in its service area.
- COAST is currently ineligible for turnpike funds.

We advocate for:

- Increased capital and operating support for public transit providers that more closely reflects their needs and ensures consistent, responsive service for users. Sustained support of public transit operating costs is critical for the growing urban areas of New Hampshire.
- COAST to be considered as a recipient of turnpike funds due to their contribution to its level of service. We ask that the council discuss the use of turnpike toll credits for matching federal dollars for public transit.
- The municipalities who rely on public transit service to continue their economic development goals.
- Seacoast residents who take public transit because it is more cost-effective and better for the environment; because they are in a one-car family; or because they cannot drive.

Turnpike

Assets and Opportunities:

New Hampshire's turnpikes are a model for self-sufficient transportation systems. The turnpike generates its own revenue through user fees and helps NHDOT leverage federal funds while state matching funds are limited.

We advocate for:

- Continuing work on the Newington-Dover project. As the Southern gateway to the Strafford region, the Little Bay Bridges and adjacent highway infrastructure are a critical access point for commuters, freight traffic, and visitors who are driving economic development.
- Safe and reliable access across the Piscataqua River for pedestrians and cyclists; this is a top priority of the MPO.

Rail

Assets and Opportunities:

The seacoast region is the only part of New Hampshire with passenger rail service that connects residents to metropolitan centers in neighboring states. Passenger rail continues to be a missed opportunity for New Hampshire.

Challenges:

- The Amtrak Downeaster service receives no financial support from New Hampshire, yet is at-capacity transporting New Hampshire residents for employment and recreation in Boston, MA and Portland, ME.
- At-grade rail crossings present a complex safety challenge for several Strafford region communities.

We advocate for:

- Increased support for passenger/commuter rail development. This could lead to significant benefits for highway congestion reduction, access to jobs, and local and regional economic development.
- Increased collaboration with the New England Passenger Rail Authority to continue improving passenger rail service in the Seacoast. This includes projects (such as improved rail siding) to increase the frequency and reliability of service, greater access through park and rides and public transit connections, and incentives for local transit-oriented development.

Safety

Assets and Opportunities:

The potential reduction in loss of life, not to mention the economic and social costs of unsafe highways cannot be ignored. The Highway Safety Improvement Program provides much-needed direct access to funding for local safety improvements through a straight-forward, timely process; Strafford MPO has had great success helping municipalities access funding.

Challenges:

- Safety and accessibility for vulnerable users like cyclists, pedestrians, and people with disabilities is inconsistent across a network that still favors cars and trucks.
- Regional Planning Commissions and even state agencies that play a role in improving transportation safety do not have adequate access to crash records and other data they need to identify dangerous areas and find solutions.

We advocate for:

- Continued support of local and state efforts to improve safety and connectedness of the transportation network. Safety improvements for all users of the statewide highway network is a top priority of Strafford MPO.

Infrastructure Resilience

Assets and Opportunities:

NHDOT developed a Transportation Asset Management (TAM) Plan assessing risks to transportation infrastructure from various threats.

Regional Planning Commissions have analysis tools and expertise that can help coordinate local and statewide planning efforts to improve resilience.

Challenges:

- Climate change is already affecting New Hampshire's transportation infrastructure. Major storms are occurring at higher frequencies and past events have revealed vulnerabilities of roads and bridges. The seacoast has seen increased flooding, sea level rise and storm surge.
- A transportation system dependent largely on a single travel mode cannot respond effectively to sudden disruption or damage to the system (such as a large storm or other disaster).
- The preparedness of individual municipalities may depend on limited local resources. This variability in local preparedness is a regional concern if major routes travel through small communities.

We advocate for:

- Using NHDOT's TAM plan, modeling tools from Regional Planning Commissions, and local vulnerability assessments to identify the most vulnerable links in the network to mitigate inevitable impacts of climate change, ensure recovery can be rapid and effective, and to prioritize infrastructure investments.
- Investing in multi-modal networks. A transportation network with multiple options for traveling between destinations reduces the economic and social impact of severe weather events and reduces the cost of emergency response and recovery.
- Investment priorities in the Ten Year Plan should focus on infrastructure resilience – especially where critical roads, bridges, and rails are vulnerable to impacts. This includes supporting local efforts to increase transportation resilience.

Corridors

Assets and Opportunities:

- The current Ten Year Plan contains funding for corridor studies starting in 2021.
- There are several corridors that are priorities of the Strafford MPO: NH 125, NH11, US4, and NH108. Strafford MPO will be working with partner regional planning commissions and NHDOT to develop a regional process for prioritizing corridors. These corridors serve an important purpose for regional and interstate commerce and are primary routes for residents and visitors.
- NH108 provides important local connectivity between the urbanized cities of Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth, linking the Strafford region to the University of New Hampshire, Newmarket, and the Great Bay. NH108 could be considered the “spine” of the Strafford region, and some of the greatest potential for economic development and mobility improvements exist along the corridor.
- NH11 is an important regional route that links the City of Rochester through Farmington and New Durham to Alton. It is the primary northbound alternative to NH16 in the region and it carries large numbers of tourism traffic to the Lakes region.
- US4 provides a direct link from the Strafford region to Concord.
- Route 125 is an important link for several rural communities, including Barrington.

Challenges:

- US4 bisects the Town of Northwood, effectively separating it into northern and southern halves and creating a barrier to local travel. Careful consideration to balance local planning priorities and freight traffic along US4 is critical for Northwood’s local economy, safety, and quality of life.
- NH125 is the only alternative to NH16 for direct north-south travel and it links the City of Rochester to NH101 in Epping. NH125 carries high volumes of freight traffic. High traffic volumes and speeds conflict with local development efforts. One critical bottleneck is the intersection of NH125 and NH9; a local nexus point of commercial and residential development in Barrington.
- In recent years the Route 11 corridor has experienced significant congestion related to local commercial development.

We advocate for:

- Support for comprehensive corridor planning based on collaboration between, NHDOT, Regional Planning Commissions, and municipalities. This is needed to ensure that economic development, local transportation, tourism access, and freight movement do not conflict as corridors grow.
- Ensuring that current corridor studies and projects have adequate funding to implement planned improvements, including the Dover-Rochester-Somersworth NH108 complete streets project (project # 29604)

Alternative Fuels

Assets and Opportunities:

Alternative fuels have tremendous potential for positive impacts to public health and safety, cost of living, local and statewide economic development, and ultimately security of the transportation system.

Challenges:

- Ground-level ozone continues to be a serious health problem in New Hampshire (especially during the hot summer months, when the tourism season is in full-swing and people want to enjoy the rural New Hampshire experience). About half of all emissions that cause ground-level ozone to form come from on-road vehicles.
- The I93 capital corridor has seen recent investment in alternative fuels infrastructure, but a gap exists between the Dover-Rochester-Somersworth urbanized area and tourism destinations in the eastern White Mountains. As more people switch to alternative fuel vehicles, they will be limited by the availability of fueling stations; we want them to come contribute to our economy.
- Strafford MPO members have acknowledged and discussed the need to consider continued impacts to revenue generation from increased vehicle fuel efficiency and alternative fuels development.

We advocate for:

- Protecting clean air for visitors and residents by promoting adoption of alternative fuels should be a top priority.
- Development of infrastructure for electric vehicles. This has the benefit of using the existing power grid. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure is a significant opportunity for public-private partnerships, and is being requested by private users, businesses, and municipalities. This emerging market requires increased collaboration between transportation and electric utilities stakeholders.
- Alternative fuels development to be considered as an investment priority supported by the Ten Year Plan.

Individual Projects

The projects currently in the Ten Year Plan remain priorities for the Strafford MPO. One of these includes funding in FY2028 for a study at NH155 and Madbury Rd in Madbury (project #41596). This intersection is a significant safety hazard and a priority for the towns of Durham and Madbury. We would like the study to be advanced as rapidly as possible.

Strafford MPO submitted four projects that are included in NHDOT's draft Ten Year Plan. These projects were developed in collaboration with municipalities and prioritized for the draft plan by the Strafford MPO Policy Committee:

1. Rochester: Intersection improvements at the sequence of Charles St/NH 125 (Columbus Ave) and Old Dover Rd.
2. Dover: Pedestrian and accessibility improvements along Chestnut St
 - a. Strafford MPO also supported inclusion of a soundwall project in Dover along the Spaulding turnpike. This is separate from regional funding for new Ten Year Plan projects.
3. Somersworth: Pedestrian improvements along W. High Street and High Street to connect schools to the downtown.
4. Northwood: Intersection improvements at School St (107) & US 4/US 202 Intersection.

CMAQ funding

The draft Ten Year Plan proposes flexing 25% of available CMAQ funds (\$2.2 million) to support some projects that are important but do not address the purpose of CMAQ or would not be considered CMAQ-eligible activities. As a general policy, Strafford MPO does not support flexing CMAQ funds to non CMAQ-related activities (as defined by the Federal Highway Administration). Strafford MPO requests that funding be retained for CMAQ-eligible activities and for the statewide corridor study program with the expectation that the corridor studies will use current practice for emission reductions and installation of electric vehicle and other alternative fuels infrastructure. Further reduction of available funding for CMAQ-eligible projects will discourage potential applicants from submitting quality projects.

Strafford MPO recognizes that transportation funding is limited and NHDOT is responsible for recommending a complicated equation to balance competing needs. CMAQ-eligible improvements and preservation of highway infrastructure are not mutually exclusive objectives and should not be in competition for funding. Many CMAQ eligible activities could help reduce the impact on highways and the cost of maintenance. Transportation infrastructure preservation should have adequate funding. It is incumbent on the New Hampshire legislature to develop revenue sources to balance these needs with sufficient resources.

This letter is not intended to propose a specific solution to limited funding, but to raise issues that are important in the Strafford region. These issues are part of an evolving conversation about how to fund transportation in New Hampshire that needs to continue in the future. Strafford MPO looks forward to being an active participant in that conversation.

Sincerely,



Victoria Parmele, Chair

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization

CC by email: Michael Cryans, Russell Prescott, Ted Gatsas, Debora Pignatelli
Commissioner Sheehan & William Watson, NHDOT
Strafford MPO Policy and TAC committees
John Cloutier, Chair of Public Works & Highways Committee
Senator David Watters, Chair of Senate Transportation Committee
RPC Executive Directors