

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization

Policy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Friday, August 20, 2021, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Hybrid Meeting
Rochester, NH

The meeting was called to order at 9:09am

1. Attendance and Introductions:

Committee Members

In person attendees: D. Hamann (Rochester), B. Fisher (Farmington), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Wayne Burton (Durham), Barb Holstein (Rochester), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), Glenn Davidson (NHDOT), Dave Landry (Dover)

Members participating remotely: S. Diamond (Barrington), Victoria Parmele (Northwood) Charlene Andersen (Nottingham), T. Crosby (Madbury), Katrina (),

Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth)-Excused

Staff

Staff attending in person: Jennifer Cztsz, Rachel Dewey, Megan Taylor-Fetter,

Staff participating remotely: Natalie Moles, Jackson Rand, Nancy O'Connor

2. Action Items

Approval of the Draft 06-08-2021 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

J. Czysz noted that the date listed on the header of draft minutes was incorrect and that the minutes presented were the 06-08-2021 minutes. D. Hamann motioned to approve the minutes with the date amended, seconded by B. Fisher. A roll call vote was taken: A roll call vote was taken: D. Hamann, T. Crosby, B. Fisher, P. Nelson, W. Burton, B. Holstein, G. Davidson, V. Parmele, J. Boudreau, D. Landry, (Katrin --- abstaining)

3. Discussion Items

Ten Year Plan Priorities and GACIT

9:15am: Steve Diamond joined the meeting remotely.

J. Czysz stated that the intention of this short presentation is to ask the Policy Committee members to confirm a set of regional priorities for the development of the Ten-Year Plan and to give feedback and guidance on how to represent their communities throughout the GACIT and legislative process.

J. Czysz continued: SRPC has moved forward with the projects approved and voted on by the Committee in late 2020. SRPC would like to share with the Executive Counselors what is important in this region and what our priorities are at the upcoming legislative public hearings. A large portion of what will be shared is the Long-Range Transportation Plan or Metropolitan Plan that was adopted in June.

D. Landry asked G. Davidson if dates have been set for the GACIT public hearings. G. Davis answered that dates are still tentative but should fall somewhere around the second week of September.

D. Landry stated that the dollars involved are set. G. Davis added that we are not advocating for more money but rather to look at how to best invest the money that we have and to make the counsel aware of the priorities.

J. Czysz stated it is critical that the priorities are communicated and advocated for at the hearings. Staff member C. Lentz will represent the Commission at the hearings.

P. Nelson stated that what is missing from this plan is the connection between transportation projects to clean energy and the electrification of transportation.

J. Czysz responded that although those objectives are not included in the adopted goals, they can be integrated in the presentation and incorporated into the next iteration of the draft plan. She added that the Increase to Economic Resilience is a good connection to electrification.

Commission members held a brief discussion on the importance of presenting the topics of clean energy and electrification and the connection they have to transportation plans.

Steve D stated that he is in favor of turnpike funding being used to support COAST. He continued by saying that there is an easy argument to be made around minimizing the impact on the Turnpike itself and diversifying our modes of transportation. S. Diamond stated that an unfunded mandate with the Americans with Disabilities Act is burdening coast-so one way or another that does need to be funded. S. Diamond continued: DOT considers rail bridges to be off network. Given the importance of rail-he is in favor of categorizing this infrastructure as part of the transportation network. Although prohibitively expensive to increase capacity by having more lines, the speed of existing lines could be improved to provide more capacity.

T. White thanked SRPC for pointing out the importance of the development of alternative fuels, the need for the development of charging stations, the emphasis on air quality and references to electrification in the letter to the counselors. T. White offered his assistance to SRPC staff and to contact him.

D. Landry asked G. Davidson for clarification on-how these projects translate down as line items

G. Davidson replied-multiregional/ bigger projects.....

W. Burton expressed concern over the current employment concerns, the housing market and how it is a major influence on the need for transportation. J. Czysz added that due to the current labor shortage, COAST is not able to hire drivers which causes a cut in routes further compounding the problem.

Members discussed the growing trend for remote employment and how that connects transportation to broadband and the need for high-speed internet. Additionally, how telecommuting saves energy, money, and time.

P. Nelson asked G. Davidson if DOT provided on-line access to projected plans and goal setting to which G. Davidson replied yes. P. Nelson added that he would like to see SRPC find ways to present that information in a public forum through the website.

J. Czysz told members she would welcome any specific questions or comments and to please contact herself or C. Lentz.

4. **Other Business**

1.3 Highlights from the Transit Study

D. Landry recommended tabling the discussion on the highlights from the Transit Study to the September Meeting.

1:4 Updates to the MPO Bylaws

J. Czysz explained that currently 91A requires a quorum to be physically present at meetings of public bodies under non-emergency situations. In the case of hybrid meetings, an in-person quorum is still required, however additional Commissioners may attend, participate, and vote remotely. For the duration of hybrid meetings, all motions must take place via a roll call vote. In the case of emergency as in the pandemic, the governor can waive requirements for an in-person quorum. The chair can only waive the requirements if a declare an emergency if for instance critical business needs to be acted on.

J. Czysz explained that the By-laws have been lightly updated to allow for remote participation and voting during meetings. Several commissioners have requested to continue to participate remotely due to health concerns. Under State law, remote participants can only vote if enabled in our bylaws. The process for amending the bylaws requires a 20-day notice prior to a vote. The Commission can vote on the proposed changes at the September meeting. The Commission by-laws have the same proposed amendments.

The members discussed the options for lowering the quorum requirements and other scenarios. It was determined that the only solution would be to amend the bylaws as presented.

5. **Staff Communications**

J. Czysz informed the Commission that SRPC received notice a \$100,000 ARPA grant allocated by GOPHER. Contracted through the Department of Business and Economic Affairs and the Office of Economic Development, the funds will go towards preparing the Housing Need assessment and Fair Housing Equity Assessment. SRPC will be working with the 8 other regional planning commissions as well as the state. The first three months will be developing a methodology and a fair share analysis.

J. Czysz thanked the members for their participation last month in the exercise presented by the economic development staff to determine priorities for implementation of the CEDS plan. The results, included with the meeting packet, will direct staff towards priorities.

6. **Commissioner RoundTable**

P. Nelson informed the members that the Town of Newmarket Counsel passed a resolution for the Town to join the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire. In addition, New Market accepted a Solarized Newmarket project and lastly P. Nelson has been working on a free application that will hopefully benefit the community and provide a live connection to an online data base.

S. Diamond reported that there was an air quality alert related to the fires out west and although we don't have control over that type of situation, we do have influence on air quality related to transportation in this area and this current situation should encourage us to move forward with air quality mitigation.

7. **Adjournment**

D. Hamann motioned to adjourn the meeting seconded by B. Fisher. A roll call vote was taken: D. Hamann, T. Crosby, B. Fisher, P. Nelson, W. Burton, B. Holstein, G. Davidson, V. Parmele, S. Diamond J. Boudreau, D. Landry, (Katrin --- abstaining)