

STRAFFORD

Metropolitan Planning Organization

**Policy Committee
Meeting Minutes
Friday, November 19, 2021,
9:00 – 11:00 AM
Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Hybrid Meeting
Rochester, NH**

1. Introductions

Chair David Landry called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

Members attending in person: Bill Fisher; Farmington, Tom Crosby; Madbury, Richard Michaud; Somersworth, Joe Boudreau; Rochester, Barbara Holstein; Rochester, Michael Williams; COAST, Glenn Davison; DOT, Michael Bobinsky; Somersworth, Dave Landry; Dover

SRPC staff members attending in person: Colin Lentz and Jennifer Czysz

Members participating remotely: Tim White; DES, Peter Nelson; Newmarket

Staff participating remotely: Rachel Dewey, Stephen Geiss, Jackson Rand, Nancy O'Connor, Blair Haney and Megan Taylor-Fetter

2. Staff Communications

J. Czysz distributed a memo to members regarding a Legislative Service Request that is relative to municipal representation on regional planning commissions. She explained that there is no action required today, it is being brought to the members attention for future discussion. J. Czysz explained that while the language is not yet available, representatives from SNPC had a chance to speak with one of the prime sponsors and learned that this proposal, as it is submitted, is to change the current tier that determines the number of commissioners appointed from each municipality. For the majority of our communities, that would cut representation in half. For other RPC's this proposed change would create an imbalance of representation between smaller and larger communities. J. Czysz shared statistics on what current representation is and how that would change if this bill is approved. She explained that while we do not need to take immediate action, Commissioners are urged to review this with their communities. J. Czysz stated this will be discussed at the upcoming Commission meeting so that SRPC has direction to advocate one way or another when the Legislature convenes in January.

3. Items Requiring a Vote

3.1 Approve draft minutes from October 15th 2021

B. Fisher pointed out a minor correction to which his vote was not included in a motion. M. Bobinsky MOVED to approve the minutes of October 15, 2021 , M. Williams SECOND, All members present and remote voted unanimously in favor.

3.2 Approve Transit Safety Targets

C. Lentz shared a memo on the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan. He explained that transit providers are required to set targets for safety to look at the number of injuries and fatalities, the rate of those occurrences and the number of safety events and the reliability of the system. He further explained that MPO's are also required to set those. COAST has set targets in their updated safety plan. C. Lentz stated that the proposed action is to recommend that the MPO Policy Committee support those targets. COAST has a good record with no fatalities, low injury rates, and good system reliability.

M. Williams MOVED to approve the Transit Safety Targets as presented, M. Bobinsky SECOND. All members present and remote voted unanimously in favor.

4. Items for Discussion

4.1 Investing in Infrastructure & Jobs Bill Overview

C. Lentz stated that the President just signed an infrastructure bill authorizing 500 billion dollars in new spending. He shared a page from the National Association of Counties website and stated it is a useful site for information on the different funding programs and the individual pieces of the bill. C. Lentz stated that the bottom line now is to have projects ready to go. Any number of projects that are potentially in each municipality could have a funding program that is in the infrastructure bill. The bill includes a bit more equity for smaller communities. There are programs that bundle projects relevant to multiple communities. C. Lentz concluded that getting projects ready to go is the order of the day.

4.2 Planning and project development for funding readiness

C. Lentz stated that the GACIT Phase is not finished, there is one more meeting but we are looking at the project development timeline. C, Lentz continued we need to get a list of preliminary projects by June. SRPC has a contract with VHB for engineering support. C. Lentz stated that he spoke with the project manager at VHB and they require about six months to go through projects so VHB should have a list of preliminary projects by June. At the December TAC meeting there will be discussion on a new and approved approach to projects

and their development. The next big part for Policy and TAC is to look at the quantitative process and agree that it makes sense.

J. Czysz asked G. Davison if at the GACIT hearings, the current Ten Year Plan as proposed was looking at portions of the infrastructure bill and developing a fiscal constraint for the Ten Year Plan, so some of what is in the infrastructure bill is already incorporated in the current Ten Year Plan that's working its way through the system. Is that correct?

Glenn answered that J. Czysz was correct. NHDOT used the bill put forward by the Environment and Public Works congressional committee to develop the fiscal constraint for the draft Ten Year Plan. The final infrastructure bill included additional funds: 45 mil for bridges and 2.5 additional money for electric vehicle infrastructure development. NHDOT is working with GACIT to bring that money into the Ten Year Plan based on their recommendations. NHDOT is recommending that additional funds be used to advance underfunded projects.

J. Czysz asked G. Davison to clarify if the changes that GACIT is working on right now with NHDOT, is that going to pull in the bridges and electric vehicle infrastructure funds pools of funding or are they going to remain separate from the plan?

G. Davison responded that the bridge funds will be incorporated but they need to discuss the electric vehicle funds further.

The members engaged in conversation on provisions and funding for existing projects.

C. Lentz stated he reached out to Northern New England Rail to meet with them to ask what projects they have for rail improvements.

P. Nelson suggested that the SRPC website include a set of resources on what is happening with this infrastructure budget.

4.3 Infrastructure resilience: Planning strategies and how pay for proactive improvements as a region

C. Lentz stated that it is imperative we do something about improving the resilience of infrastructure against storms, old culverts, old bridges, infrastructure in general; we need to take a proactive approach. C. Lentz stated it is going to be expensive. Multiple communities may rely on a piece of infrastructure not within their borders. Is there a way to think about collectively funding projects. The big picture steps are to complete an inventory of vulnerable infrastructure and then develop and authorize rapid-approval funding.

B. Fisher expressed concern that his community, Farmington, already struggles to fund their own projects.

P. Nelson suggested a starting point would be to create a data base on the SRPC website of vulnerable infrastructure and the communities impacted. In addition, create a system for calculating the risk impact for priority setting.

Discussion ensued on the potential use of the travel model for identifying the priority of vulnerable infrastructure.

5. Other Business & Updates from Staff

C. Lentz informed the committee that the final GACIT meeting has been rescheduled to December 8 at 2:30 p.m.

6. Commissioner Roundtable – Updates from your community

K. Kasper stated that the Town of Lee is excited about new bike lanes in the community.

T. Crosby stated that the new bridge will be completed by the end of the year.

M. Williams stated COAST does not run on Thanksgiving Day.

J. Czysz stated that she has been meeting with municipalities as part of a 'road tour'. Several meetings are scheduled for December. Commissioners will be invited to attend those meetings in their communities. This is part of an initiative to learn what the needs of communities are and to provide information on what SRPC has to offer.

7. 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

There were no citizens attending

8. Adjournment

M. Williams MOVED to adjourn seconded by R. Michaud. All in favor , none opposed