

Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 2nd 2020

9:00 – 11:00 AM

Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Rochester, NH

The meeting was called to order at 9:03am

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 2020-17, 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 845 7090 3562, or by clicking on the following website address:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84570903562>

- *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 603-994-3500 (ext. 106) 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

Chris Parker (Dover), Scott Kinmond (New Durham), Lucy St. John (NHDOT), Leigh Levine (FHWA), Tim White (NHDES), Rad Nichols (COAST), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Michael Hoffman (Newmarket), Arthur Capello (Farmington)

Staff

Jennifer Czysz, Colin Lentz, Jackson Rand, Rachel Dewey, Stephen Geis, Alaina Rogers

2. Staff Communications

J. Czysz and C. Lentz gave several updates on SRPC staff and projects.

3. Action Item(s)

3.1 Minutes from September 11th 2020

M. Bobinsky made a motion to approve the minutes as written.

Seconded by C. Parker

Vote: A. Capello and M. Hoffman abstaining; otherwise unanimous in favor (via roll-call vote)

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Presentation by Alaina Rogers and Stephen Geis - 2020 Data collection program recap

S. Geis and Alaina Rogers gave a presentation on several data collection efforts throughout the 2020 season. S. Geis described the traffic counting work completed – over 130 counts set for NHDOT, plus multiple supplemental counts. He noted that anyone can look up existing traffic volume data on an NHDOT website that is updated weekly:

<https://nhdot.ms2soft.com/tcds/tsearch.asp?loc=Nhdot&mod=>

S. Geis noted that the new SRPC field work vehicle made a huge difference in the logistics of counting, and Rachel Dewey developed a traffic count dashboard that made it easy to track completed and incomplete counts.

S. Geis explained he had also been working on sidewalk assessments. SRPC staff had completed a detailed, comprehensive sidewalk assessment in Rochester. That assessment was incredibly detailed so they simplified it for a region-wide sidewalk assessment. The region-wide assessment looked only at ADA accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act - e.g. is a segment or crosswalk accessible for a wheelchair) and condition. S. Geis and A. Rogers had recently completed these assessments in Dover and Somersworth – primarily focused on the locally-owned sidewalks. NHDOT staff are working on assessments for state-owned sidewalks. S. Geis demonstrated an online dashboard showing the progress on regional sidewalks assessments. He also displayed how the sidewalk condition maps would look like.

A. Rogers presented about SRPC's project "Promoting Outdoor Play". She explained that the project was a continuation of SRPC's "Pathways to Play" project and both were funded through the NH Children's Foundation. The goal of the project is to create a complete inventory of recreational sites in the region and develop a publicly available website with the information. She said SRPC still needed volunteers to complete the assessments of recreation sites. The assessments can be done from smartphone or other mobile device using an app that Jackson Rand from SRPC developed.

A. Rogers explained that she was working on an inventory of the street trees in the central business district of Dover. The project is being done in partnership with Liz Durfee (who is a planning consultant and a former SRPC staff member). She said the data would be used to analyze the city's street tree canopy, for planning future tree locations, and for a street plan for the central business district.

M. Hoffman asked if the dashboards demonstrated were online. S. Geis said the current dashboards were only designed for use by staff to track data collection progress. R. Dewey added that she intended to have a public dashboard for traffic counts by next summer. The ultimate goal is to include more public dashboards with data and information. J. Rand added that the Promoting Outdoor Play project will have a public dashboard where people can view all the recreation sites online. He noted that the data collection for the project will be continuing through the winter, then in spring he will be working on a story map that will guide people on recreation sites. Users will be able to visit the story map, research recreation sites, and type in an address to find and visit sites easily.

S. Kinmond asked if J. Rand had been in touch with Southeast Land Trust about the Birch Ridge Community Forest in New Durham, which is currently under development. J. Rand said he had been collecting data in New Durham the other day and couldn't find the site. He said he had contacted SELT but hadn't heard back. S. Kinmond said he would get in touch with them to make sure the site is included.

M. Bobinsky asked if the municipalities will get a report once sidewalk assessments are completed. He noted Somersworth would want to use that information for budgeting and to assess ADA compliance. S. Geis said he would provide the sidewalk data to Somersworth when it was complete. It will be compatible with the city's GIS data. J. Czysz noted that SRPC's regional sidewalk assessment was not intended to result in detailed ADA compliance, mostly to give a general assessment of sidewalk accessibility for wheelchairs and similar users. The comprehensive assessments done through the Statewide Asset Data Exchange System (SADES) give a complete picture of ADA compliance (including the prescribed layout and slope of curb ramps). She said SRPC's regional sidewalk assessment was meant to be more high-level and faster to complete.

4.2 C. Lentz explained that SRPC was working with NHDOT and their consultant to provide input on the statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. He said NHDOT and the consultant had requested each RPC to review data and network analysis results to provide 10 priority locations for recommended bicycle safety improvements in the region. Such improvements could comprise a wide range of possibilities: from simply moving a fog line, physically widening a shoulder, creating a striped bike lane, or even recommending a separated bike and pedestrian path. C. Lentz noted that these improvements will likely be included in the plan as recommendations; there is not specific funding associated with the plan. This is the first time that a comprehensive analysis of New Hampshire's highway network will inform a statewide bicycle and pedestrian plan. C. Lentz explained that this feedback is due from RPCs at the end of October so there won't be time to do in-depth analysis with TAC members, but SRPC staff will be looking at the bicycle network in detail. He said he wanted input from TAC members about how they should prioritize the 10 recommended locations for bicycle network improvements. There are four main criteria for identifying and prioritizing potential sites:

- Safety – Segments with a known fatal collision or other demonstrated bicycle safety hazard

- Connectivity – Segments where an improvement project would close a gap between two existing network sections
- Access – An improvement would provide direct access to a school or activity center
- Public Input – A project has been requested or identified as a critical missing gap in the network by the public

C. Lentz asked committee members if they had a preference for which criteria should be used to prioritize bicycle improvement sites.

M. Bobinsky said Safety and Connectivity should be the top criteria. He said it was important to be cognizant of where bike lanes were proposed. The complete streets project on NH108 included consideration for bike lanes in several locations. That is a high-volume, high-speed corridor and it should be carefully considered whether to mix bicycles with vehicle traffic from a safety standpoint.

R. Dewey reiterated that NHDOT was looking for a broad range of projects; not just new locations for bike lanes.

C. Lentz said staff would be getting their “homework” from NHDOT soon and would use the criteria in the order presented; focusing on safety and connectivity first.

5. Other Business

J. Czysz noted that SRPC had posted a draft update to the Public Participation Plan for public comment. It is on the SRPC website and there are hard copies at the Dover and Somersworth city halls and public libraries. She noted that the main updates to the document were focused on virtual public involvement. New language was needed to ensure SRPC could continue to hold public meetings without a physical location under emergency situations (like the COVID-19 pandemic).

C. Lentz reminded committee members about NHDOT’s Road Safety Audit program. The program is focused on locations on public roadways that have had crashes resulting in fatalities and serious injuries. C. Lentz said it’s an annual program and the deadline for applications is December 1st. He said the application is straight-forward but local crash records are critical to demonstrate the causal factors for crashes at locations. He said to get in touch with him about potential locations and he can help with applications.

C. Lentz described a training opportunity through the UNH Technology Transfer Center focused on highway safety improvements. He said he would send out information for the six-part series: there will be a webinar style training with presenters every Tuesday morning between October 13th through November 3rd.

6. **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.

7. Adjournment

M. Bobinsky made a motion to adjourn

Seconded by A. Capello

Vote: unanimous in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am