



Strafford Regional Planning Commission News

JANUARY 2004

Transportation Enhancement Project Update

The State Transportation Enhancement Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet February 11, 2004 to finalize the review process and set a date for public hearing on the projects. Historically, applicants have been invited to present their project at the hearing. The presentations play an important role in the funding of the projects. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend.** The timeline for the remainder of the project selection process is as follows:

February 2004 - TE Advisory Committee holds Public Hearing for input on the projects.

March 2004 - TE Advisory Committee makes project selection.

April 1, 2004 - TE Advisory Committee submits recommendations to the Commissioner of NHDOT.

April 15, 2004 - NHDOT Commissioner submits recommendations to Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation.

May 15, 2004 - Governor's Advisory Committee selects projects for inclusion in the 10 year plan.

June 15, 2004 - Regional Planning Commissions include the selected projects in their Transportation Improvement Plans.

September 2004 - Conformity and approvals where applicable.

SPR Funding

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation has released the guidelines and schedule for the FY 2004 Statewide Planning & Research (SPR) program. A total of \$250,000 in federal funds is being set aside for special studies to be proposed and managed by the Regional Planning Commissions.

Previous projects funded through the SPR program for the Strafford Regional Planning Commission include the Route 11 Access Management Study in Rochester, Farmington and New Durham; the One-way Studies in Dover, Durham, Rochester and Somersworth; and the Route 4 Access Management Study in Barrington, Lee, Nottingham, and Northwood.

During the last funding cycle there was strong interest in submitting a proposal to study access management along the Route 125 corridor from Route 101 north to the Maine state line. This would involve partnering with the Rockingham Planning Commission and coordination with communities along the corridor. At that time, SRPC Commissioners voted to keep the Route 125 Access Management Study as the second priority for the region. Interest remains very strong in this project.

If other communities and organizations are encouraged to contact Tim Roache at troache@strafford.org, or (603) 742-2523 to discuss possible project applications. Detailed guidelines and schedules for this program are available at www.strafford.org.



Transit Advocacy Group

Would you like to see more public transit service on the Seacoast? A local transit advocacy group is in its formative stages. If you utilize the existing transit system or would just like to promote and help expand existing service in the area, we want to hear from you! Email us at srpc@strafford.org.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Amendments

Two STIP amendments are open for public comment until January 29, 2004. STIP Amendment 7 contains two projects that are considered Full Amendments and require a public hearing. STIP Amendment 8 includes emergency repairs to the Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth/Kittery.

In STIP Amendment 7, the first project requiring a public hearing is **Route 108 in Dover at Long Hill Road**, which adds a left turn lane. The project scope has expanded to include signalization, channelization, and raised medians. The project area has been expanded to include the intersection at Rte 16B. The result is a one-year delay to 2006, and a cost increase to \$1.5 million. Dover Planning Department staff have coordinated with NHDOT on this project, and are in agreement with the amendment as proposed.

The second project proposal is widening the **Hampton Ramp Toll Plaza at the Rte 101/I-95 interchange** to eight collection lanes, including roadway approach and departure widening to accommodate increased traffic demand. This widening will necessitate the expansion of the existing bridge, resulting in project construction delay from 2004 to 2005. The cost will increase from \$3.5 million to \$5 million. Please note: this is NOT the main Toll Plaza on I-95.

Several projects in the SRPC region are included as *expedited amendments* under STIP Amendment 7 and are not required to be included in the public hearing.

Two projects in this category are related to the implementation of **electronic toll equipment**. The statewide installation of electronic toll equipment and signage in Rochester, Dover, Hampton, Nashua, and Hooksett is under contract, but the expenditure of funds was delayed from FY03 to FY04. The project cost increased by \$2.35 million. The **implementation of EZ Pass** is still on schedule, and will be completed statewide by Spring 2005. The funding category changed from Turnpike to Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) to utilize federal funding that is lapsing (and would be lost) due to delays in other CMAQ projects, particularly the Nashua rail projects. The associated sign installation for EZ Pass Toll Collection System was also delayed from 2004 to 2005. Project cost decreased by \$1 million.

The following projects are delayed by one year (2003 to 2004) and have received cost adjustments:

Rochester: Strafford Square US 202A/Walnut Street.

Rochester: Bike pedestrian path on B&M Railroad Land.

Rochester: NH 108, South Main Street reconstruction from Whitehall Road to Columbus Avenue.

Rochester: NH 125, Signal coordination from Brock Street to Lowell Street.

Dover: NH 108, Construct a bike path along rail line from rail station to NH 108/Bellamy Park.

Madbury: NH 155, Replace bridge over B&M Railroad 114/084.

Durham & surrounding communities: Construction of CNG fueling station

STIP Amendment 8 is a result of the need for emergency repairs to the **Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth**. The proposed project provides interim repairs to structural steel on the Memorial Bridge. The project is being added to the STIP at an estimated cost of \$300,000.

A public hearing on these STIP amendments will be held January 29, 2004 at 7:00 PM in the Newak Room of the Exeter Town Office. If you would like more information on any of the STIP Amendments listed above, contact us at srpc@strafford.org.



PRSR STD
AUTO
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
DOVER, NH
PERMIT NO. 276

2 Ridge Street
Suite 4
Dover, NH 03820-2505
USA

tel: (603) 742-2523
fax: (603) 742-7986
e-mail: srpc@strafford.org
web: www.strafford.org

“Planning and action for sustainable development and an improved quality of life.”

Transportation Demand Management

As mandated by the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NHDOT is in the early stages of developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Newington-Dover project (Little Bay Bridges). A major component of the EIS process is the alternatives analysis, that examines ways to improve the transportation deficiencies present on the bridges. NHDOT and its consultant, Vanasse Hangen and Brustlin (VHB) will investigate alternatives from “doing nothing,” to adding additional lanes, to examining the prospects of transit and rideshare. The last-mentioned alternative is known as Transportation Demand Management (TDM).

Transportation Demand Management is a set of transportation planning strategies that result in more efficient use of transportation resources. Policies and programs are aimed towards reducing vehicle trips to an area rather than increasing capacity of a transportation system. Examples of TDM Measures are:

Rideshare:

- Carpool
- Vanpool
- Transit
- Rail

Parking Programs:

- Reduce/preferred parking costs for carpools
- Provide secure bicycle parking

Employer Programs:

- Compressed work weeks
- Tele-commuting
- Flex-time
- Company vehicles for work related trips
- Guaranteed ride home programs
- Ride matching
- Subsidize commuting costs for vanpools and public transit
- Provide showers for walkers and cyclists

Perhaps no other project lends itself to implementation of TDM strategies like the Little Bay Bridges project. Socio-economic, recreational resources, and environmental constraints, such as the confluence of Little Bay and Piscataqua River, severely limit the number and scope of the alternatives that can be considered, and increase the cost of the overall project. The presence of Great Bay results in circuitous alternate routes that in most cases are infeasible and have their own set of constraints that limit their ability to relieve congestion at the bridge.

The beauty of Transportation Demand Management strategies is that they can be implemented in relatively short periods of time and for less money than the replacement of the bridge.

Much of the power to implement TDM strategies is in the hands of the businesses and residents of the region.

As individuals we can, to the extent practicable, adjust our schedule to travel during off peak hours. We can share a ride with a co-worker. We can utilize COAST and Wildcat Transit services and advocate for more service. During warmer months we can try a commute by running an errand by bicycle.

Employers can support TDM strategies through a number of programs listed above. In addition, employers and employees can partner in the Commuter Choice Initiative that provides a tax benefit resulting in savings for commuters and employers.

Employers can create a Commuter Choice Program to incorporate transit/vanpool benefits, qualified parking benefits, and/or parking cash out options. The program can include all or any of these benefits.

To find out more about the Commuter Choice Program, visit www.fta.dot.gov and select Commuter Choice.

TDM is not the total solution for the problem on the Little Bay Bridges. A number of geometric deficiencies exist in the project area including substandard profile, shoulder width, and substandard merge, diverge, and weave distances. The existing structure does not meet current seismic standards for the area. An investment needs to be made to correct these deficiencies.



Developing and implementing effective TDM strategies as part of the overall solution on the Little Bay Bridges could reduce the size of the investment needed.

For more information on TDM strategies and programs, visit www.greaterportsmouthtma.com or email us at srpc@strafford.org.