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**Strafford Metropolitan Planning Organization
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
SRPC Office, Rochester, NH
FINAL**

November 4, 2011 Minutes

Present: Bill Hoke (NHDOT), Leigh Levine (FHWA), Rad Nichols (COAST), Paul Lockwood (NHDES-ARD), Melodie Esterberg (Rochester), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Kevin Russell (NHDOT-District 6), Laurel Cox (Lee), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Connie Brawders (Barrington), Stephen Pesci (UNH) and Diane Hardy (Newmarket)

Members Not Present: Chris Parker (Dover), Wallace Dunham (Madbury), Don Vachon (New Durham), Patrick Carroll (Rollinsford), James Campbell (Durham) and David Sharples (Somersworth)

Staff: Cynthia Copeland (Executive Director) Marc Ambrosi (Transportation Planner) Marilyn Barton (Executive Assistant), Michelle Auen (Regional Planner) and Dan Camara (Senior GIS/Transportation Analyst)

1. Introductions

Chairman M. Esterberg opened the meeting at 9 am and introductions were given around the room.

2. Staff Communications

D. Camara stated SRPC is currently advertising an open position for a temporary transportation position which includes data collection and analysis and assisting M. Ambrosi, C. Copeland and D. Camara with any work they need help with.

M. Ambrosi noted the last GACIT public hearing was held at the Rochester Community Center on October 27, 2011 and there was a solid turnout with great comment and can be viewed in its entirety on governmentoversite.com

C. Copeland congratulated M. Barton and D. Camara on their four and five year anniversaries with SRPC, respectively.

3.1 Approval of Draft Strafford MPO TAC September 9, 2011 Minutes

The chairman asked for a motion to approve the draft Strafford MPO TAC September 9, 2011 minutes. R. Nichols made a motion and J. Hotchkiss seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

3.2 Unified Planning Work Program Updates-Recommendation to Policy Committee

M. Ambrosi stated the SMPO is seeking a TAC recommendation to the Policy Committee for approval of updates to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

M. Ambrosi noted that to allow for work and the appropriate reporting to be completed, it will be required to add a number of tasks and subtasks to be listed. M. Ambrosi stated a subtask under 210 "Metropolitan Transportation Plan" allows for work on the "Project Portfolios & Project Database". M. Ambrosi stated a new task in the 500 Category for "Intermodal Transportation Planning" will also include subtasks for "Rail Planning", "Aviation Planning" and "Port Planning". M. Ambrosi noted this was recognized as a major oversight when we were working to develop the NH Northcoast Rail project as part of our CEDS effort during the TIGER III round of grants. M. Ambrosi stated these changes would have no impact on the overall funding or funding designated for each category.

S. Pesci noted these were good changes and supported them. S. Pesci stated in regards to the project portfolios that perhaps there could be a standardized report included to make it easier to understand and have a grasp of scale. C. Copeland stated it should also be sorted by sources of funding. S. Pesci asked about CMAQ funds that are transferred from FHWA to FTA: are they authorized or obligated by the federal government? L. Levine stated the thought they were transferred and then obligated but would check on that and let everyone know. M. Ambrosi stated there was more of a breakdown between specific activities and would assist in reporting more clearly and noted there would be no shifting between categories. L. Levine stated with federal planning dollars and surface transportation general activities, there needs to be a connection to surface transportation.

The chairman asked for a motion for approval of updates to recommend to the Policy Committee. R. Nichols made a motion and D. Hardy seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

3.3 Prospectus Update

M. Ambrosi stated the SMPO is seeking TAC recommendation to the Policy Committee for approval of updates to the Prospectus. M. Ambrosi noted the recent adoption of revisions to Rule ENV-A 1500 by NH legislators triggered an update to the SMPO Prospectus document to account for rule change and as part of the change, other changes were made to update the document. M. Ambrosi went over the changes which included addition of language in section 8, Amendments to the Prospectus to allow for future technical revisions to happen without requiring the full forty-five day public notice period. M. Ambrosi also noted the updating of section 4.6, Transportation Planning and Air Quality Conformity to account for attainment of the eight hour ozone standard by the June 2010 deadline and to add language about the Interagency Consultation Process and updating of language in section 6.4 Air Quality Conformity. M. Ambrosi stated there was a need for updating section 7.5.3 TIP Amendments Exempt from the Public Involvement Process to account for the revised 40 CFR 93.126. L. Levine noted on page forty-two of the Prospectus under 7.5.3-it currently reads, "TIP Amendments Exempt from the Public Involvement Process; another word should be used such as "Administrative Modifications". R. Nichols stated he supports flexibility but supports intent for the MPO to use longer comment periods as there is a need to educate the public. The Chairman asked for a motion for

updates to the Prospectus and recommendation to the Policy Committee. R. Nichols made a motion and D. Hardy seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

4.1 S/TIP Amendment #4

M. Ambrosi stated has the SMPO has made a request to NHDOT for Amendment #4 to include the Spaulding Express project and this request was done on behalf of COAST. M. Ambrosi stated this project would allow COAST to utilize CMAQ funding awarded in the early 2000s but left untouched due to lack of local matching dollars. The SMPO has updated the off model air quality analysis to account for an altered bus route and working with NHDOT and NHDES to make a new air quality determination for the amendment.

R. Nichols stated he met with officials at the Shipyard last week and COAST is looking to start two routes in January 2012 and there will a big event with Shipyard officials in March 2012 and Shipyard employees are excited about it. R. Nichols stated originally it was decided the bus routes would be from Rochester; however COAST has learned there is a gentleman who currently has a side business where he is already doing this and didn't want to ruin his business. R. Nichols noted this person currently is charging the maximum allowed government reimbursable rate of \$230 per month. R. Nichols stated beginning soon that rate would be reduced to \$125 per month and COAST would be charging \$120 per month if ridden daily or \$3 each way, initially and is open to the general public.

D. Camara handed out an air quality analysis worksheet for the new bus service and went over it.

4.2 Draft Surface and Air Transportation Reauthorization Bill under Consideration

M. Ambrosi stated there are a number of topics being discussed for the Transportation Reauthorization Bill that may have a significant impact on the SMPO and Strafford Region. M. Ambrosi stated one of those impacts is consolidation of programs and increased flexibility. M. Ambrosi noted one area of potential concern is the consolidation of funding programs from around one hundred to roughly thirty and this change would be intended to make it easier for states to spend transportation funding on their priority areas for the transportation system but may result in negatively impacting a number of programs that are critical to the Strafford Region such as CMAQ, TE and HSIP and most meaningful to communities. C. Copeland noted NH gets the minimum amount of money set aside, as it is based on population and noted ten million dollars was received for the whole state and people need to know how important the money is. R. Nichols stated smaller MPOs and transit systems still have to meet the same standards as larger MPOs. S. Pesci stated these programs are important because losing them would allow the larger projects such as I- 93 to absorb money lying around and the smaller projects would suffer.

A discussion ensued regarding the status of existing MPOs with less than a 200,000 population. This bill may also include rules that redefine population requirements necessary to be considered an MPO. The proposed changes would raise the population threshold from 50,000 to 200,000. The status of the SMPO could be in jeopardy depending on whether or not existing MPOs with populations under 200,000 would be grandfathered in. C. Copeland stated the majority of MPOs are small and are connected with county government in the rest of the country, unlike NH. C. Copeland stated AMPO's position is existing MPOs should be grandfathered with a choice to opt in or opt out. C. Copeland stated existing MPOs under the threshold would have a choice to do all the requirements of an MPO or opt out and the state would take over the functions.

D. Camara spoke about the status of 5307 FTA Transit funding use for operations and noted the area of concern is with the release of the new 2010 Census UZAs next spring, some of NH's UZAs have the potential to become part of the Boston UZA, thus affecting the population factor of FTA's funding formula. It was noted with the possibility of the Boston UZA becoming part of NH's southeastern UZAs; transit providers such as COAST may potentially lose the flexibility to use these 5307 funds for operating expenses, which is approximately fifty percent of their operating budget. This revenue shortfall would certainly mean cuts in service and staff and have negative impacts affecting the local economy. R. Nichols noted he received an email from Andrew Zabel from Senator Shaheen's office, regarding an update to Section 5307. R. Nichols stated the Senate Banking Committee is working on a draft reauthorization bill which would move 5307 funding flexibility for operations from a population-based threshold to a transit fleet size threshold. R. Nichols stated this would give fleets under seventy-five vehicles the ability to retain the flexibility to retain fifty percent of 5307 funds on operations. R. Nichols stated by limiting COAST to fifty percent, this would cause a \$500,000 federal funding shortfall of their operating budget.

5.1 Coordinated Plan Update

M. Ambrosi stated he and M. Auen are working together regarding an update for the Coordinated Plan which is part of the Long-Range Transportation Plan. M. Ambrosi stated it is on an expedited schedule and there would be a public notice going out in January with approval in February 2012. M. Ambrosi stated M. Auen is taking the lead on the project and attended the ACT meeting on Wednesday, November 2, 2011 and provided demographic data. M. Auen noted this update would include updated graphics, tables and profiles and updating of service providers in the region. M. Auen stated the goal is outline a new set of goals and next steps to accomplish and was working with Scott Bogle of Rockingham Planning Commission and would have a working draft ready for the next ACT meeting in December.

5.2 5304 Park and Ride Study

M. Ambrosi stated there was no meeting and the steering committee would be meeting in the next couple of weeks and there would a draft outline soon for the toolkit. L. Cox asked if there were any updates to the Lee Park and Ride. M. Ambrosi stated NHDOT was in discussion with the landowners of the proposed site and has not heard back yet.

6. Other Business

L. Cox asked about any updates to the Lee Traffic Circle improvement project. M. Ambrosi stated it was not included in the Ten Year Plan; however it is probably still going forward and would check with Stuart Thompson of NHDOT and provide updates at the next meeting.

D. Hardy stated Newmarket is going forward with their T/E project, the Skybridge project and they have hired an engineer, Dubois King. D. Hardy noted they have learned there are a few issues and will cost more for the project than originally anticipated and the Town will either have to scale back on the design or seek additional money.

J. Hotchkiss noted the bridge repair in Milton on Rt. 125 is almost completed and should be done in a week.

R. Nichols stated the Dover Fast Trans would no longer have CMAQ funding by the end of June 2012 and COAST is in discussion with the City about going forward. R. Nichols stated the project was very successful and were looking into carrying forward quite a bit of the services. R. Nichols stated COAST set

another ridership record for the year – 465,000 and expect growth of another eight to twelve percent and staff continues to grow as well and noted staff would increase by twenty to thirty percent within the next year.

C. Copeland stated she wanted to invite NHDOT or the Turnpike Authority to speak to the Policy Committee after learning at the last GACIT public hearing in Rochester that the Dover interchange reconfiguration phase of the Newington-Dover Little Bay Bridge Project is currently unfunded and will necessitate a toll increase to complete. C. Copeland stated this came as a major surprise because as recently as last spring we were assured the only unfunded portion of this project may be the General Sullivan Bridge rehabilitation. C. Copeland noted the Strafford region has supported paying into the toll system as long as the funding stays in the NH turnpike system as it exists currently. C. Copeland noted she would be sending a letter out requesting this.

R. Nichols stated there is a public notice that states the GACIT Committee will have two hearings- November 15 and 30, 2011 and suggested attending it. M. Ambrosi noted comments are due to NHDOT by November 10, 2011.

D. Camara stated SRPC sent out two signed copies to the IBI group and now waiting for them to sign and send back and then the update can get started. D. Camara noted he is looking for volunteers to be part of the Working Advisory Group and ideas for projects. D. Camara also noted if a project is not in the ITS plan, it cannot be in the Ten Year Plan.

7. Adjournment

The Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11 a.m. J. Hotchkiss made a motion and R. Nichols seconded that motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Marilyn Barton, PHR
Recording Secretary