

RPC Transportation Advisory Committee
August 26, 2021
9:00-11:00 AM

Stratham Town Offices

10 Bunker Hill Avenue, Stratham, NH

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/XzbHAheHybMEjAXN8>

Call-in Phone Line: **1-800-764-1559**

User/pin code: **4438**

1. Introductions (5 Minutes)
2. Minutes of 06/24/21 TAC meeting (**Attachment #1**) — *[Motion Required]* (5 minutes)
3. 2023-2032 Ten Year Plan (**Attachment #2**) — *[Motion Required]* – Dave Walker (20 Minutes)
4. NH Seacoast Greenway Update & National Park Service Grant Scope (**Attachment #3**) Scott Bogle (20 Minutes)
5. Long Range Transportation Plan Update – Dave/Scott (45 minutes)
6. Other Project Updates – Dave/Scott (10 Minutes)
7. Open discussion/Comments

TAC MEETING SCHEDULE For 2021 (Next meeting highlighted)

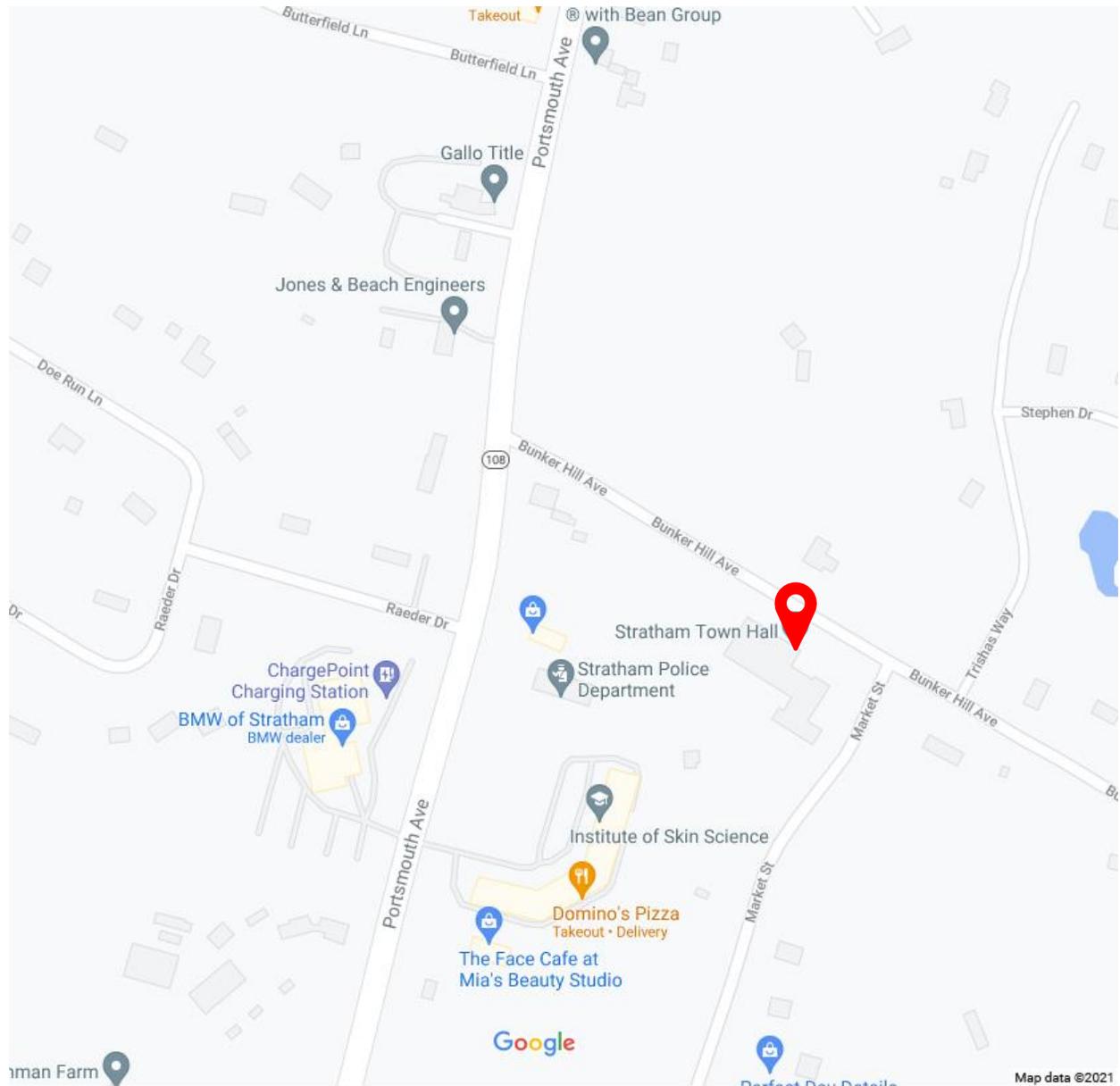
January 28	April 22	July 22	October 28
February 25	May 27	August 26	December 2***
March 25	June 24	September 23	

***Off Schedule

Stratham Town Hall

10 Bunker Hill Avenue, Stratham NH

<https://goo.gl/maps/XzbHAheHybMEjAXN8>



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MINUTES
Rockingham Planning Commission
MPO Technical Advisory Committee
June 24, 2021

Stratham Town Office
Bunker Hill Ave, Stratham NH

Members Present: R. McDermott, Chairman (H. Falls); P. Coffin (Kingston); R. Nichols (COAST); M. Conners (Stratham); D. Sharples (Exeter); K. Latchaw (Newington); M. Scrutton (Greenland); M. Stowell (PDA); J. Walker (Portsmouth); P. Maloney-phone (FHWA non-voting)

Guest: S. Ravikumer (Seabrook)

Staff: D. Walker (Transp Mgr/Assistant Director); S. Bogle (Sr. Transp Plnr); C. Matthews (GIS/Transp Analyst); A. Pettengill (Business Manager)

- 1. Chairman McDermott convened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and introductions were made.**
- 2. Minutes of March 25, 2021**

*Coffin moved to approve the Minutes of March 25, 2021 as presented; Sharples seconded. **SO VOTED.***

- 3. 2021 TIP Amendment #1 – Dave Walker**

Dave Walker gave an overview of the TIP Amendment process. He referred to a list in Attachment 2 showing the proposed changes in Amendment #1. It represents a large monetary change of \$29.9 million being added to the TIP. He continued to review individual project changes/revisions and scope changes. Dave Walker stated that fiscal constraint is being maintained and air quality conformity analysis is not necessary since the standard has been revoked for the time being. Maloney asked if the funding is being denoted by category and Walker replied in the affirmative. Coffin asked about Stimulus Recovery funds and how those affect the projects, if at all. Walker stated those types of funds don't get included in the TIP.

*Sharples moved that the MPO TAC recommend the Policy Committee approve TIP Amendment #1; Nichols seconded. **SO VOTED.***

- 4. MPO Transit Safety Performance Targets – S. Bogle**

Bogle explained FTA's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) which requires compliance for transit agencies and requires transit operators to develop safety plan and

implement Safety Management Systems. The targets deal with four areas of transit safety: fatalities, injuries, safety events, and system reliability. Both COAST and MTA are required to prepare agency targets for each of the safety measures. Some historical performance data was missing from one agency to set a baseline and develop the trend analysis, but that has been incorporated since. Discussion followed on system reliability and COVID, and demand response figures, and why this process became mandated in the first place. *Coffin moved that the MPO TAC recommend the Policy Committee approve the regional targets; Sharples seconded. SO VOTED.*

5. Seacoast Transportation Corridors Vulnerability Assessment (STCVA)– Dave Walker

Dave reviewed the goals of the STCVA project: assess impacts of sea level rise on traffic volume, roads and site of impact on roads, prepare a priority short list for more analysis, and improve the transportation planning decision making for the future. The RPC is working with NHDOT, Coastal Zone Program, UNH, and coastal municipalities to implement this project. Dave Walker reviewed the planning outcomes: understand the risks to critical transportation links along the coast, and to improve the data collection techniques. He explained how a Model from data collected will identify impacted roadways from sea level rise at different levels. That data can then be used to decide how to handle closing of roads and changes needed to the travel patterns. Sites impacted at each water level and the criteria to determine criticality of the situations include: distance to emergency services, alternate routes available, social vulnerability, distance to community facilities, and average land value per acre affected. Discussion followed.

6. Age Friendly Communities Grant – S. Bogle

Bogle stated that the RPC was chosen to receive funding to do an Age Friendly Communities project in cooperation with Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels program. The idea for Age Friendly Communities was developed by AARP and describes communities that enable people to live and thrive at every age. Southwest & Strafford Planning Commissions and the City of Portsmouth have worked on this before. Bogle reviewed the eight dimensions from the AARP model: Buildings & outdoor spaces, transportation, housing, social participation & interaction, work, communications, health & nutrition. A Steering Committee will be started and regional forums will be held. There will be a community assessment piece and then pilot projects in year two. He stated that next step is to do outreach to communities to formalize a Steering Committee. Discussion followed.

7. CommuteSmart Challenge Update – S. Bogle

Bogle stated that the Seacoast Business to Business challenge happened in May. This is an effort to get companies to compete to see which one can commute the most vehicle miles through carpool or vanpool to work. The RPC and SRPC are in charge of implementing the challenge now and it will be integrated with the statewide Commute Smart NH and combined with the Seacoast Challenge.

8. Project Updates – Dave Walker/S. Bogle

Dave Walker distributed a Projects Update memo. Discussion followed on several projects.

Meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette Pettengill, Recording Secretary

Memorandum

DATE: August 19, 2021
TO: MPO Transportation Advisory Committee
FROM: David Walker, Assistant Director
RE: Ten Year Plan

The draft 2023-2032 State Ten Year Plan is expected to be released by NHDOT at the beginning of September and will include the priority project recommended by the MPO as well as the un-finished projects that were already part of the document. The dates of the public hearings occurring this fall are also expected to be released at the September 1, 2021 meeting of the Governor's Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT). The Ten Year Plan hearings provide the public with the opportunity to hear NHDOT's presentation on the process and funding constraints, the MPO project selection process and priorities, as well as provide feedback on the draft plan. In addition to our overview of the project selection process the MPO has typically provided general comments on the content of the plan and broad transportation needs for the region. MPO comments from the last round, which remain valid, were the following:

- **Overall Funding Levels:** Maintenance and modernization of transportation infrastructure are critically underfunded in our state. The RPC has been on record for many TYP cycles supporting development of additional revenue for the transportation system - for roads and bridges, as well as for transit and for safer facilities for people walking or riding bicycles. The \$0.042 cent gas tax increase in 2014 was a positive step, but as the revenues generated from that shift to covering the principal of the I-93 GARVEE bonds, the drop in funding available for system maintenance will have a substantial impact on the state's ability keep our roads in good condition. This decline in condition will cost more to rectify and undo the work NHDOT has done over the last several cycles to expand the investment in maintenance and preservation of the system. The downside of the shift towards increased maintenance and operations funding is that, because funding has not expanded proportionately, the state is falling behind on addressing other transportation needs. Without adequate investment into current and future transportation improvement needs we may find ourselves uncompetitive and unresponsive to both residents and employers. New Hampshire motorists pay a gas tax that is, in real terms, a little more than half of what it was in 1992 to support our current transportation system. We don't believe this is sustainable.
- **Population Demographics, Changing Transportation Needs & More Complete Needs Assessment:** It is widely recognized that the rapid growth in the size of the oldest segments of our populations, together with the State's proposed strategy to encourage aging in place to manage public costs for long term care, will have profound implications in defining our future transportation system needs. Current 2040 population projections show that over 32% of Rockingham County population will be over 65, compared to 12.5% in 2010 - a 250% increase and similar increases are anticipated statewide. More importantly to transportation concerns, is

that about one fifth of people over 65 do not drive. That means we can expect an additional 12,000-15,000 non-driving seniors in the RPC region alone by 2040. Many of these residents will need other options beyond 'friends and family transport,' if they are to be able to age in place with dignity. A more robust system of alternative transportation – transit, coordinated community transportation, volunteer driver programs, etc., will be needed to meet this demand. In addition, if we are as concerned about retaining young people to contribute to our economy as we say we are, then as a state and region we should be doing more to develop these transportation options. The Department and GACIT's initiative to flex \$2.2 million/year in Federal CMAQ funds to support certain transit needs beyond typical CMAQ projects has been an important first step, but actual state investment is also needed. The RPC recognizes that it is difficult to address these future transportation needs in light of the demands of existing unmet needs, but we believe it is important that the Department's analysis of unmet needs addresses not just pavement and bridge conditions, but also unmet safety and mobility needs across modes.

- ***A Complete Streets Approach:*** Federal DOT policy calls for the incorporation of safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects and charges all transportation agencies with the responsibility to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. The RPC is currently developing a "complete streets" policy to ensure that the transportation network in the region is designed and operated with all users in mind. All projects proposed by the RPC on non-limited access highways will strive to accommodate all appropriate users including motor vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders. Adoption of a similar policy for NHDOT and the routine incorporation of a complete streets approach into design and implementation of state projects is supported by the RPC.
- ***Supporting the Downeaster Train Service:*** The Downeaster train service from Portland, ME to Boston, MA has proven itself a valuable alternative for transportation to and through southeast New Hampshire and pre-COVID was carrying 500,000 passengers a year between its 12 stations in three states with 40% of the total system ridership to and from New Hampshire. During this time, New Hampshire's investment and state support for the service has been minimal, consisting of the construction of the three stations in the state and a rail siding. The annual insurance and station maintenance costs are paid by the communities of Dover, Durham, and Exeter, and the service operating subsidy is paid by the State of Maine through their CMAQ program. The MPO urges the state of New Hampshire to provide funding through the CMAQ program, Federal Transit Administration funds from the Boston Urbanized Area, or other appropriate means for future Downeaster capital projects to help offset service expenses.

One new item that staff recommend including is a focus on climate change:

- ***Climate Change, Adaptation, and Resiliency:*** Coastal storms and flooding threaten the transportation infrastructure of New Hampshire's seacoast. These risks are expected to increase with sea-level rise resulting in frequent inundation of some assets and, eventually, daily disruptions to the transportation network and the communities with wide-ranging consequences. RPC is currently conducting a vulnerability assessment and has identified 24 locations in the seacoast where the transportation network is likely to experience disruption and damage due to sea-level rise. These include most of the east-west roads used to access the coast as well as large swaths of NH1A and NH1B. While NHDOT has begun accounting for sea-level rise and other climate change impacts in the project development and design process, there is a need for additional resources to define and scope the improvements that will be necessary to maintain a safe and functioning transportation network.

Staff request TAC input on the contents of these comments to NHDOT and GACIT. Are there other areas that staff should include in comments on the Ten Year Plan process?

Memorandum

DATE: August 19, 2021
TO: MPO Transportation Advisory Committee
FROM: Scott Bogle, Senior Transportation Planner
RE: NHSG Update & National Park Service RTCA Grant

This spring staff secured a grant from the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) for technical assistance with a series of tasks associated with the New Hampshire Seacoast Greenway (NHSG) rail trail project on the Hampton Branch corridor.

The RTCA is a program of the National Park Service designed to assist communities with conservation and recreation planning for natural areas. RPC previously secured an RTCA assistance grant in 2008 to support work on the original Conceptual Design and Implementation Plan for the NH Seacoast Greenway. Given substantial progress in the Greenway effort we were encouraged to apply again for help with current elements of the project.

We proposed a menu of five separate projects thinking NPS would accept perhaps two or three of them, but they have accepted all five and assigned a team of three staff to work with us in the coming year.

- Community connections planning
- Trail signage & wayfinding plan
- Interpretative signage design
- Trailhead conceptual design
- NHSGA development and communication strategy

The tasks are described in somewhat greater detail below.

1. Community Connections Planning

Identify desired community connections from the trail to downtowns, parks, schools, community centers, pocket neighborhoods, other trails, etc. This will include consultation with municipal staff and advocates in each community, as well as a series of community charrettes. The team leader from NPS, Julie Isbill, is based in Brunswick Maine and has developed a partnership with the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) to that provides periodic pro-bono assistance from area landscape architects for trail related charrettes. Her partner

with ASLA has agreed to help coordinate one or more charrettes for this project and recruit colleagues to help.

2. Signage Plan

The terms of the trail management agreements between the corridor communities and NHDOT require the municipalities to develop a signage plan and submit to NHDOT prior to installation of any signage. RTCA will help develop this plan and will draw on the Design Guide from the ECGA, signage practices on adjacent trails in northern Massachusetts and southern Maine, Portsmouth's city Wayfinding Plan and other resources. Types of signs envisioned include:

- Trailhead kiosks with visitor-oriented trail maps
- Mileage marker posts
- Safety signage at crossings
- Wayfinding signs at trail crossings directing trail users to services and attractions.

3. Interpretative Signage Design

Rail trails frequently feature interpretive signage informing trail users about history or ecology of the trail corridor. Numerous ideas have been proposed to date for interpretation on the NHSG ranging from the ecology of the Great Bog and Hampton Marsh to the railroad history of the corridor to the tradition of salt marsh hay production in Hampton Marsh. The park service team will help a workgroup identify a list of topics and design messaging and layout. Additional partners for this task include local historical societies, conservation commissions, and teacher at schools adjacent to the trail to identify curriculum tie-ins. .

4. Trailhead Conceptual Design

Construction of trailhead access facilities is not part of the scope for the current Hampton-Portsmouth trail design and construction project. Trailheads will need to be identified and developed by municipalities and trail advocates using private, local or federal Recreational Trails Program funding. Last winter staff assessed the potential for trailhead facilities at the 23 crossings of the Hampton Branch between Seabrook and Portsmouth. This identified nine locations with adjacent publicly owned land that could be used to develop trailheads with parking capacity. This list has been culled to four sites and will be further culled with municipal input to identify 2-3 locations for conceptual trailhead layout and first order cost estimates. There may be pro-bono assistance from ASLA partners for this project as well.

5. Organizational Development Assistance for NH Seacoast Greenway Alliance Non-Profit Group

The NHSGA is a newly formed regional non-profit trail organization that will support trail development and management through recruiting and organizing volunteers for trail maintenance, promoting the trail and private fundraising for trail development. RTCA will provide assistance in developing a communication strategy for the NHSGA and outreach materials including branding, brochure and structure for an organizational website.

The five tasks are being divided up across three workgroups that will begin work in September. There will be an opportunity to request a second year of assistance if needed. This will be a good opportunity to leverage RTCA's national expertise for some key aspects of trail development, and engage community members in planning for how the NHSG corridor will connect to their towns.

MEMORANDUM

To: MPO Transportation Advisory Committee
From: David Walker, Assistant Director and Scott Bogle, Senior Transportation Planner
Date: August 19, 2021
RE: Long Range Transportation Plan Update & Goals

The MPO is due for a full update to the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. This was last completed in 2016 with interim updates conducted in 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 to coincide with the adoption of new Transportation Improvement Programs. The intent is to time this update so that much of the background work will be complete in time for a project solicitation next summer, prioritization in the fall, and adoption in the fall/winter along with the next Transportation Improvement Program. The organization of the plan is expected to stay essentially the same but much of the information will be updated as follows:

1. **Introduction:** This chapter provides an introduction to the planning process and the scope of the work. This section will include some minor updates to adjust to current conditions but should largely be similar to what exists now.
2. **Planning Framework:** This chapter establishes the Vision, Goals and Objectives for the Plan as well as identifying the components of the performance-based planning process that we have integrated into the LRTP. Much of this section will remain the same as it is now. The Livability Principles and Vision remain valid and the Federal planning factors, performance-based approach and related measures have not changed significantly. We do want to spend some time updating and refining the goals based on input from member communities and the public, and once those are established this will necessitate other updates throughout the document to reflect any changes. The project selection criteria will need to be updated next year with any tweaks made to the statewide criteria or process.
3. **Existing Conditions:** This chapter explores current population, housing, employment, environmental and transportation system conditions. Almost everything in this section will need to be updated. Basic 2020 Census data are available and can be incorporated, and the RPC will be working on a Regional Housing Needs Assessment over the next 18 months which can be integrated as well. Updated pavement and bridge condition data, safety statistics, transit ridership and congestion data (including an updated Congestion Management Process) will also be incorporated. Substantial work in the arena of bicycle and pedestrian planning has been undertaken in the last couple of years and this will be updated as well. A more thorough walk-through of environmental factors in the region will also be included to further the integration of planning and environmental linkages in the LRTP.
4. **Current Trends and Future Conditions:** This chapter utilizes current and expected trends to project future population, housing, employment, transportation, and environmental conditions to identify needs for particular projects or types of improvements. The needs assessments will be updated and

reorganized as necessary to reflect the goals and objectives of the plan. With updated population and housing data we can adjust the population projections. More recent employment data will be utilized to extend employment projections. Different growth scenarios will be explored to understand how the transportation needs may change based on growth and development patterns.

5. ***The Constrained Transportation Plan:*** This chapter identifies the projects and programs that can be implemented based on expected costs and financial constraints. This section will be updated beginning with the anticipated revenues available to the region once the new federal funding legislation has been adopted and FHWA releases guidance. The hope is also to employ some engineering assistance to aid in improving the cost estimates for projects.
6. ***Implementation Strategies:*** This chapter lists various ways to make progress towards the vision and goals as established in chapter 2. The sections of this chapter will be updated to reflect the breakout and organization of the goals of the plan. There will be a focus on more thorough discussion of mitigation and environmental justice

The full Long Range Transportation Plan can be found here: www.therpc.org/LRTP.

Public Outreach

The intent is to conduct extensive public outreach for this update beginning with the development of an “Interested Parties” list of agencies and individuals who are stakeholders in the transportation planning process and the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan. Also proposed are:

- Multiple publicinput.com based surveys addressing the approach, goals and objectives, and other topics
- Several focus group meetings with key groups including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and freight and port representatives.
- Meetings with community staff/officials to engage them in the process and begin to identify their needs and concerns
- Discussions with the Coastal Zone Program, DES Air Resources, and other agencies to consider environmental aspects of the plan.

LRTP Goals

As part of any update to the Long Range Transportation Plan we revisit the Plan’s Goals. Ultimately the goals for the new Plan will be shaped by input collected from the regional surveys, municipal meetings and focus group interviews. That said, staff have some preliminary to update and revise the goals to focus on safety, system preservation, and environmental considerations while supporting a vibrant and economically competitive region. Below is a first cut at refining the existing goals of the LRTP which can be found in Chapter 2 of the LRPT (linked above). We will discuss the existing goals and these proposed revisions at the TAC meeting on August 26th.

Goal 1 – Safety, Health, and Security

The region’s transportation system is designed and built to support provides safe and secure travel for all users, healthy communities, facilitate active living opportunities, and aging in place.

Goal 2 – System Preservation and Modernization

The region’s transportation system is maintained in good condition and prioritizes preservation and modernization over additional highway capacity. A modernized system allows for multi-modal use and supports an innovative and economically competitive region that connects people, goods, and services.

Goal 3 – Minimize the need for travel

The region's transportation system supports land use planning policies and development patterns that promote an efficient transportation network that minimizes the need for motorized travel and reduces trip lengths.

Goal 4 – Improve trip efficiency

The region's transportation system offers equitable, reliable, and environmentally friendly transportation choices through widespread active transportation infrastructure and public transit availability that connects people to desired jobs and services.

Goal 5 – Reduce the Impacts of travel

The region's transportation system is proactive in protecting natural and historic resources and is forward-looking regarding energy use, energy efficiency, and conversion to clean and renewable energy sources.

Goal 6 – System Resilience and Adaptability

The region's transportation system has the capability to absorb stresses while maintaining normal functioning, can maintain equitable access during periods of system stress and recover quickly to full function, and can adapt from system stresses to better maintain normal functioning in the future.

Recommendation

For the purposes of the TAC meeting, staff are looking for feedback on the general content and approach for the LRTP update and ask that TAC members review Chapter 2 – Planning Framework in the existing Long Range Plan to inform the discussion.

The update will take place over approximately the next 18 months. There will be subsequent opportunities for adjustment as public input is collected and work continues to develop and refine goals and performance measures.
