

## MINUTES

### Rockingham Planning Commission MPO Technical Advisory Committee October 28, 2021

#### RPC Offices 156 Water Street, Exeter Virtual Participation via Zoom meeting

**Members Present:** R. McDermott (Hampton Falls); J. Hale (Hampton); P. Coffin (Kingston); D. Sharples (Exeter); S. Casella (Portsmouth); R. Nichols (COAST); M. Scruton (Greenland); T. White (NHDES); P. Maloney (FHWA); L. Levine (FHWA); Leah Sirmin (FTA);

**RPC Commissioners Present:** R. Srinivasan (Seabrook); B. Kravitz (Hampton); J. Johnson (Stratham); A. Brubaker (Hampton Falls); P. Britz (Portsmouth)

**Staff:** D. Walker (Transp Mgr/Assistant Director); S. Bogle (Sr. Transp Plnr); C. Matthews (GIS/Transp. Analyst); T. Roache (Executive Director)

1. Meeting convened at 9:00 a.m. and introductions were made.
2. Minutes of September 23, 2021

*Coffin moved to approve the Minutes of September 23, 2021 as presented; Sharples seconded.  
SO VOTED.*

3. FHWA/FTA Transportation Planning Process Review – Paul Maloney (FHWA)/Leah Sirmin (FTA)

Paul Maloney and Leah Sirmin asked TAC and Policy Committee members a series of questions related to MPO processes and performance as part of the MPO's Planning Review. Questions and responses are summarized below.

#### How do you see the TAC process affecting or benefiting your community?

- Ravi Srinivasan – New to the process and the committee. Mostly listening and reporting back. After some time will be in better position to comment.
- Barbara Kravitz – Kudos to Dave and Scott in structuring the work, giving TAC members opportunity to speak to preferences. Thinks process works well.
- Richard McDermott – They keep us on task.
- Rad Nichols – Have worked with the MPO for 25 years. Lucky with RPC and longevity of staff and the job they do. Project programming for transit is different than for highway and

- bridge projects. Transit operates on the fringe of the MPO process particularly in NH as funds come directly from FTA to agency rather than through NHDOT. Aside from transit, most challenging is that lots of work by communities goes into bringing projects to the table and then perhaps only one or two get funded. Can be disheartening.
- Peter Coffin – Different between the rural communities and the urban communities. Rye had a good project this year. It's hard to say that a given good project is not going to get done because there just isn't enough funding. Example of Kingston project that keeps not making the cut. We need to be investing more to allow needed projects to get done. We seem to be planning for a downgrade of road conditions.
  - Dave Sharples – Has been around for many years including with SRPC and now RPC. Planning process at RPC is good, staff does a great job. Well organized. Detailed memos explain requirements. That said Dave still has projects he was pushing ten years ago that are languishing because there isn't enough money.
  - Paul Maloney – There are a lot of factors in getting projects funded that are beyond the control of the RPC. It's really beyond the scope of the MPO to ensure that projects get funded. Can present at GACIT process.
  - Joseph Johnson – New commissioner from Stratham. Relatively new to the process. Mostly listening.
  - Paul Maloney – Do you (Joseph) feel well informed by the staff?
  - Joseph Johnson – Thinks the information is there if people seek it out. He's interested in transportation in general and getting further engaged.
  - Andrew Brubaker – Feels Dave, Scott, Tim at RPC provide a lot of great information on the process. Charts, graphs, whole planning process is well explained. Committees are well informed.
  - Rad Nichols – From my perspective they've done a good job of getting people to the table even though they have a limited chance of getting their project funded.
  - Leigh Levine – Here to listen to the comments.
  - Peter Britz – Staff keeps Commissioners well informed.
  - Stephanie Casella – New to process in RPC region and new to Portsmouth.
  - Jennifer Hale – Echo others comments on effectiveness of staff. From town perspective there's a challenge in meshing how town specific projects like sewer upgrade integrate with projects that come forward through the MPO process. Example of Hampton Seabrook Bridge project that is much needed and proceeding well but current design will require moving sewer line that was only recently upgraded. Question of who pays for relocation.

Are there any comments about the partners? Could any be doing something different or something more helpful?

- Barbara Kravitz – Echo what Richard and Jen Hale have said. Appreciate that staff are willing to actually come into the towns to a PB or Select Board meeting when there is something critical and a briefing is needed. One difficulty in Hampton and Hampton Beach in particular is that many current needs are big ticket items. More than can be accommodated in the regional allocation for the TYP in any given cycle. It would be helpful if there can be attention to how mid/large projects can be funded when they don't fit into the suballocation. How can they be spread out to accommodate them? Intersection of US1/NH101 intersection realignment.
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- Paul Maloney – Need to work through state DOT on projects like that. Have seen projects that exceed regional target move forward. Can be different funding sources like HSIP. Consultation with NHDOT on large projects
- Dave Walker – The NH101/US1 project has actually been added to the Ten Year Plan, but there is an ongoing challenge with funding medium and large projects given the regional allocation budgets.
- Rad Nichols – Challenge to compare highway projects and transit projects apples to apples. The evaluation criteria are different and the current criteria don't fit transit.
- Leah Sirmin – Does Tim White from NHDES have any thoughts as a stakeholder partner?
- Tim White – Regarding the challenge of getting projects put forward and funded, at the end of the day all the TAC members have a better understanding of just why the process is as difficult as it is. RPC communities are fortunate to have staff with as much experience and seniority as they do. Opinion based on six years at DES and twelve years prior at one of the other MPOs.

One of the things with the review is asking staff about outreach to disadvantaged communities. How is the process doing in that regard? Underprivileged, minority, low income.

- Richard McDermott – Hampton Falls is trying to address the needs of older folks in town. Building 55+ condos.
- Scott Bogle – Noted outreach to NAACP Seacoast Chapter and Racial Unity Team to ask for assistance with engagement for Age Friendly Communities project as well as upcoming LRTP update. Lots of prior work with older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Rad Nichols – Over time one thing that's become more challenging is the accuracy of the data identifying those subsets of our communities. Data are becoming less and less reliable as the Census changes its methodology. The American Community Survey is a much smaller sample size than the old Census Long Form, and margins of error can be very high when looking at small communities and small subsets of the population within those communities. Makes it more challenging to set goals, measure performance. Wish that that ACS data were stronger to support these Civil Rights work.

#### **4. Regional Transportation System Issues and Needs – S. Bogle**

Scott Bogle provided an overview of the process for the current update to the MPO Long Range Transportation Plan, including discussion at the last TAC meeting. Both the TAC and Policy Committee will be asked on multiple occasions for input in the process, both as part of up front data gathering and later in reviewing draft chapters. Today staff want to engage the TAC in a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of the regional transportation system. Discussion of the four SWOT analysis questions took about 40 minutes and results are attached at the end of these minutes.

#### **5. 2023-2032 Ten Year Plan GACIT Hearings Update - D. Walker**

Walker provided an assessment of how the GACIT hearings had been attended and the types of comments that were being provided by the public. A reminder of the change in dates for the Hampton and Salem hearings was also given.

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**6. Discussion of Topics for future TAC meetings – D. Walker**

Tabled to the December 2, 2021 meeting due to lack of time

**7. Project Updates**

Not discussed due to lack of time.

**8. Open Discussion/comments:**

None.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dave Walker, Recording Secretary