



Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

438 Dubuque Street, Manchester, NH 03102-3546, Telephone (603) 669-4664 Fax (603) 669-4350
www.snhpc.org

Minutes of the METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE PLANNING COMMISSION

April 27, 2021
11:30 A.M.

Meeting Held via Zoom due to COVID-19

MEMBERS VIRTUALLY PRESENT

William Herman	Auburn
William Duschatko	Bedford
Charles Fairman, Alt.	Bedford
Bryan Lord, Alt.	Bedford
Bill Jean, Alt.	Bedford
Richard Snow	Candia
Deb Munson	Chester
Robert Cote	Deerfield
Jeff Moulton, Chair	Derry
John O'Connor	Derry
David McPherson	Derry
Linda Kunhardt	Francestown
Alfred Eisenberg, Alt.	Francestown
Jo Ann Duffy, Alt.	Goffstown
Barbara J. Griffin	Goffstown
Cutler Brown	Hooksett
Brian Battaglia	Londonderry
Deb Lievens	Londonderry
Arthur Rugg	Londonderry
Suzanne Brunelle	Londonderry
Peter Capano	Manchester
Raymond Clement	Manchester
Mark Suennen, Secretary	New Boston
Tom Clow	Weare
Peter Griffin, Vice Chair	Windham
Dean Williams	Central RPC
Tim White	NHDES
Mike Whitten	MTA
Lucy St. John	NHDOT

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Paula Marzloff	Auburn
Jeffrey Porter, Alt.	Auburn
Barbara Salvatore, Alt.	Bedford
Andrew Hadik	Chester
David Litwinovich	New Boston
Jen Cysz	Strafford RPC

MEMBERS ABSENT

David Danielson	Bedford
Frederick McGarry	Deerfield
Richard Tripp	Derry
Patrick Behen	Francestown
Jennifer Vadney	Francestown
Henry C. Boyle	Goffstown
Richard G. Marshall	Hooksett
Martin Srugis	Londonderry
Kevin McCue, Alt.	Manchester
Dan O'Neil	Manchester
John Hiltz	Windham
Leigh Levine	Fed. Hwy Admin
Tim Roache	Rockingham Plan. Cmsn
Tim Murphy	SW RPC
William Rose	NHDOT

STAFF VIRTUALLY PRESENT

Sylvia von Aulock	Executive Director
Carl Eppich	Pr. Transportation Planner
Adam Hlasny	Sr. Transportation Planner
James Vayo	Project Manager

STAFF PHYSICALLY PRESENT

Nathan Miller	Deputy Executive Director
Linda Moore-O'Brien	Office Administrator
Zachary Swick	Senior GIS Analyst

MEMBERS PHYSICALLY PRESENT

Al Hall, III	Candia
David Pierce, Treasurer	Goffstown

GUESTS VIRTUALLY PRESENT

Patrick Herlihy	NHDOT
George Sioras	Town of Derry
Rebecca Hebert	Town of Bedford
Rebecca Harris	Town of Bedford
Jeff Foote	Town of Bedford DPW
Dave Derrig	Citizen

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Moulton called the MPO meeting to order at 11:33 A.M. and read the required statement regarding electronic meetings due to the State of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Roll call was taken in conjunction with the minutes.

ACTION ON MINUTES OF MARCH 23, 2021

Motion by Mr. Hall to approve the minutes for March 23, 2021, seconded by Mr. Capano. Vote was taken by roll call. Motion carried, with Messrs. Duschatko, O'Connor and McPherson abstaining.

OLD BUSINESS (none)

NEW BUSINESS

Regional and Statewide Rail Updates

Mr. Patrick Herlihy, Director of Aeronautics, Rail and Transit at NHDOT, provided updates on rail-related activities.

He began on the Capitol Corridor passenger rail initiative, specifically the preferred service option, Manchester Regional Rail. This option features stops in South Nashua and Crown Street in Nashua, a stop in the Bedford / Manchester Airport area, and a stop in Manchester. Of the service options studied in 2014, this service offers the highest ridership.

Mr. Herlihy also addressed the pandemic impact, saying commuter rail is the slowest of the MBTA services to recover. He discussed the 2014 versus 2021 timetable. Today, services are spread more evenly throughout the day to reduce deadhead train movements.

Mr. Herlihy noted station locations in Nashua and Manchester need to be confirmed as well as a location for train layover in Manchester. In response to a question from Mr. Capano, he stated the rail service is not anticipated to extend to Concord at this time. It was noted there would be a lot of benefits for the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport to have a train station nearby.

Mr. Battaglia inquired about the Lowell line and possible impact on Portsmouth and Portland. Mr. Herlihy replied NHDOT is focusing on the impacts to Route 3 and Interstate 93.

There was a brief discussion about the reduction of cars due to people working from home during the pandemic.

Mr. Herlihy reviewed the many steps to come in the Capitol Corridor Project Development Phase, including environmental assessment, coordination with Massachusetts, permitting, and development of a financial plan.

The financial plan is the key to success. The financial plan will carefully consider the capital and operations & maintenance costs as well as any potential federal grant funding and public/private partnership revenue that may offset those costs.

Mr. Herlihy expects a fact sheet to be available in May, and a general public meeting is targeted for November 2021.

In response to a question from Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Herlihy clarified commuter rail speeds are about 10 mph currently, and the anticipated improvements will allow travel up to 75 mph.

Mr. Herlihy then discussed the proposed sale of Pan Am Railroad assets to CSX.

He stated the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) is involved in reviewing this proposed transaction. He also noted Pan Am and Norfolk Southern are together known as Pan Am Southern Service for freight rail.

The STB has ruled this is a "significant" transaction rather than a "minor" transaction and therefore additional review requirements are now in place. This means CSX and Pan Am will be re-filing with more detailed information.

As time was running out for questions, Mr. Herlihy said he will send a summary document on this topic to Mr. Miller for distribution to MPO members.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Project Prioritization

Mr. Vayo noted that following a summary at the last MPO meeting, evaluation by the TAC subcommittee and a subsequent TAC meeting, the purpose of today's meeting is to review the recommendations and approve a TAP project prioritization. The MPO may accept or modify the TAC recommendation.

He noted that the NHDOT's state-level evaluation will happen in May and June. It is anticipated awards may be announced by the end of June.

Mr. Vayo reported that applications were received from Bedford for sidewalks; Derry for a rail trail extension; Manchester for a multi-use path; New Boston for a grade-separated rail trail crossing; and Windham for trail improvements.

He then reviewed the project rankings as recommended by the SNHPC Technical Advisory Committee:

1. Derry
2. Manchester
3. New Boston
4. Windham
5. Bedford

Mr. Duschatko said he appreciates the work done on this process, but has questions on the scoring. Regarding project readiness and support, the Bedford project is ready now. He noted a five-year-old bid (for the now-defunct Safe Routes to School Program) has been updated.

Mr. Duschatko said he feels the scoring is low, considering the connections to schools, libraries, shopping and hotels that the project would provide.

Mr. Lord said Mr. Duschatko advocates very well and reiterated comments on the connectivity and readiness of Bedford's project.

Ms. Kunhardt reported she was on the TAP Evaluation Subcommittee and said the information provided was not detailed about some aspects of the project, and drainage was unclear.

Mr. Foote said the closed drainage is in place, and it is a simple project. He consulted with a contractor and is confident in the cost estimate. The estimate is conservative, and the project can be built for the figure indicated. More letters of support could have been provided. Mr. Foote said the connections provided by the project may not be regional, but would fill a lot of local needs.

Mr. Whitten noted he has served on a lot of similar committees in the past, and noted someone has to be fifth. It doesn't mean the project is not worthy. He does not think an amendment to the scoring would close the gap with the highest ranked project.

Ms. von Aulock mentioned the committee had to score the projects on what was provided.

Mr. Jean said he appreciates the work but inquired about a re-evaluation process.

Ms. Hebert thanked the TAC, and said Bedford is not asking for the gap to be closed, just to change the numbers and have the project land wherever it lands. There was discussion about the application, connectivity narrative and the included map.

Mr. Cote commented that if the overall cost is relatively low, it would be "low-hanging fruit".

Mr. Miller said that one of NHDOT's primary considerations is the adequacy of the proposed budget to develop and construct the project. It is difficult, if not impossible, to go back and add additional funding to TAP projects later on. Mr. Miller advised that if MPO members are comfortable with Bedford's proposed budget for the project, then they should modify the project's scoring accordingly.

Mr. Vayo referenced the engineering drawings on the Bedford website- some information was not included in the application, but it was looked at.

Motion by Mr. Hall to approve the TAP project prioritization as presented.

Motion seconded by Mr. Whitten.

Motion carried with Messrs. Duschatko, Fairman, Jean and Suennen opposed and Ms. Munson and St. John abstaining.

In response to a question from Ms. Hebert, Mr. Miller said that given the pending deadline for submitting regional TAP priorities to NHDOT, there would probably not be enough time to prepare today's MPO minutes for inclusion with that submission.

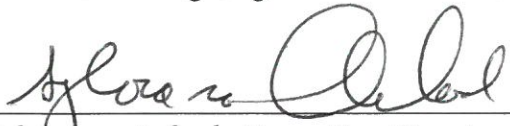
OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. von Aulock announced that SNHPC will be sending out a brief Land Use Survey soon, and to be on the lookout for it. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes.

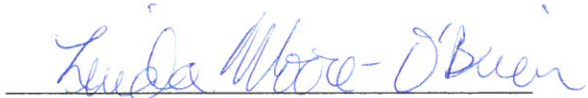
ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Herman to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Capano. Chair Moulton declared the MPO meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m. following a roll call vote.

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the April 27, 2021 meeting Metropolitan Planning Organization of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvia von Aulock", written over a horizontal line.

Sylvia von Aulock, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda Moore-O'Brien", written over a horizontal line.

Linda Moore-O'Brien, Office Administrator