



**APPROVED MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Executive Committee
October 21, 2015**

Present:

Dave Hennessey, Chair
Karin Elmer, Treasurer
Mike Fimbel, Vice Chair
Jim Battis
Dan Kelly

Susan Ruch
Tom Young

Absent:

Sarah Marchant

Staff:

Tim Roache, Executive Director
Jennifer Czysz, Assistant Director

Guests:

Leigh Levine, FHWA
Nick Garcia, FTA

1. Call to Order:

Hennessey called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2. Public Hearing: 2015 NRPC TMA Certification Review

Roache explained that as the NRPC MPO region grew and exceeded 200,000 persons it became a Transportation Management Area (TMA). As such, NRPC must comply with additional Federal regulations including certification every four years. Tonight is a public hearing to solicit public input on NRPC's transportation planning process. We are joined by Leigh Levine from Federal Highways and Nick Garcia from Federal Transit.

Levine gave an overview of the TMA certification review process noting that in addition to the public hearing, FHWA and FTA will be meeting with NRPC staff on November 4, 2015 to evaluate our transportation planning programs. Additionally, FHWA and FTA are accepting public comment via mail and email at NRPCReview@dot.gov through December 4, 2015. The outcome of the review will include a report summarizing commendations, recommendations and corrective actions. The process is then certified and in very rare circumstances if the process is not certified, funds can be withheld.

Specifically, FHWA and FTA are looking at the process by which transportation decisions are made and projects are planned, selected and prioritized for implementation within the region. The review includes the MPO's Executive Committee, TTAC, citizens, staff, transit operators, NH DOT, local partners, in addition to FTA and FHWA. The process includes a document review that will cover the UPWP, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Congestion Management Process, Transportation Improvement Program, and the Public Participation Plan.

At this time FHWA are inquiring whether communities have and adequate opportunity to participate in the MPO planning process? Have you been involved in the MPO transportation planning process? What are your views of the process – how is it working? Garcia noted that as only Board members

were in attendance, all present are more knowledgeable about the process, what are some of the things you think work well or could be better organized?

Elmer asked about Monday's Rail Summit hosted by Representative Annie Kuster additionally noting some efforts that have been done well in the region relative to the rail, bus companies, and airport to support economic opportunities. Fimbel noted that he would like to see more safe bike routes throughout the region to take cars off the road and promote health. Garcia asked what he saw as the greatest barrier. Fimbel replied likely it is the right of way acquisition, safety concerns, and others that prefer to only invest in roads. Additionally, Fimbel noted the need for access management along the 101A corridor in Amherst.

Kelly noted that the chart presented at the Rail Summit on the "process" toward project implementation was rather daunting, lengthy and complicated. How can we overcome that or move past them? What bearing does all the required reporting have on the end process? Garcia noted that NRPC is a high performing MPO, not all MPO's are operating at such a level, and the process is established to force a certain level of accountability and disclosure. Elmer asked, could there be an incentive program for high performing MPO's that allows regions to skip certain administrative steps to expedite the process.

Roache referred to the LPA process that is one size fits all regardless of the project or community size, which can create an administrative burden for smaller projects and communities. Levine noted unfortunately there are no exemptions allowed under the Federal regulations. Several individuals noted instances where communities are choosing to forego the federal funding process and pay for projects that would otherwise be eligible for federal funding to work more efficiently.

Hennessey noted that his hope is that the Federal Government would be a bridge between transportation planning in New Hampshire and across the border in Massachusetts. NH is frequently impacted by transportation planning decisions in Massachusetts and not notified until the traffic is backed up. Garcia noted, yes, this is something that FTA and FHWA can help with and described a similar recommendation made to the Boston TMA. Hopefully, the neighboring MPOs will reach out to NRPC. Levine also noted we could kick-start some of these discussions at the November 4th TMA review when the neighboring MPOs will be in attendance for the review.

Ruch noted that she became aware of the transportation planning process in NH after becoming a commissioner two years ago and noted that a lot of the educated public is not familiar with how the process works. After this evening's meeting she plans to return to her town and ask what town officials are hearing. She asked Roache whether NRPC staff could use additional input. Roache replied, yes, communications could always be better. Langdell noted recent outreach such as attending Old Home Days and similar events have been effective. Ruch said there needs to be a place to catalogue projects that are still needed in addition to what can be funded within the Ten Year Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan. Roache noted that NRPC does include such projects as part of an illustrative list in the MTP. Levine noted that occasionally there are other funding sources that open up, so it's good to keep a list of additional projects.

Kelly asked about projects such as Exit 36 that fall into two states. How does FHWA prioritize such projects? Levine noted that it is a local and state level decision and FHWA can serve as a broker to help with the agreements. Ruch summarized that often communities are looking for less process and more money and help could be best provided in a manner to ensure a more effective and

efficient process. Levine noted that FHWA can also help identify alternative funding sources. Roache noted that the first step to realizing Exit 36 is to get the Governors from the two states together and on the same page. Once that happens FHWA and FTA can help ensure the most efficient process. Levine noted that another goal is to reduce inactive money – projects that have been obligated and are sitting there unused. Doing so frees up funding dollars for unfunded high priority projects. Kelly asked what the process is to take those funds and reallocate them. Levine noted it would have to go through the Ten Year Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan process. Roache noted the role of the MPO is to provide that citizen input to the process.

Langdell asked whether this conversation was going to be held with the TTAC as well. Roache noted that the planned meeting with FHWA and FTA didn't work out in October but suggested that November 18th TTAC meeting was an alternative. Levine and Garcia noted that that would be possible. Ruch followed up that it is important to improve overall communications with TTAC. In addition to having FHWA and FTA at the November TTAC meeting could all be invited to the December Commission meeting. Garcia asked whether TTAC members would be attending the November 4th review.

Battis asked to clarify the boundaries that expand beyond the NRPC region. These are the TMA boundaries that are based on the Urbanized Area (UZA). The Nashua UZA includes Windham, Derry, and Londonderry in Southern NH's MPO. Roache further explained that under this situation when we are discussing transportation issues at an Executive Committee, Commission or TTAC meeting, we should have a representative of SNHPC in attendance to represent those communities. We have a MOU with SNHPC that says we'll provide this level of coordination but we are still working out the details. Roache further explained that as a TMA we have programming authority and program and include projects in the S/TIP.

Langdell followed up on the UZA boundary's role in the transportation programming process. Her perspective is that the more urbanized areas benefit more in the transportation and transit funding processes and it's the areas outside the urbanized area or even more rural parts within the urbanized that have greater need for new or additional service than Nashua Transit that is the designated recipient. Garcia noted that there are some specific transit funding sources that are restricted to rural areas. Ruch agreed with Langdell that there are needs out there in the more rural parts of the region.

Levine thanked those in attendance and encouraged all to submit comments. Czysz noted the public comment submission addresses are posted online as part of this evening's notice. She will post a more general announcement to the website that solicits input through December 4th.

3. Business

a. Minutes – September 16, 2015

The Executive Committee reviewed the minutes from the September 16, 2015 meeting. Ruch noted that Section 4 should clarify that she noted that prior conversations included holding the event on the weekend. Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Young, seconded by Ruch. The motion passed 6-0-2.

Minutes September 16, 2015 Non-public Session

The Executive Committee reviewed the minutes from the September 16, 2015 non-public session. Motion to approve the minutes as submitted by Ruch, seconded by Battis. The motion passed 6-0-2.

b. Minutes October 7, 2015

The Executive Committee reviewed the minutes from the October 7, 2015 meeting. Motion to approve the minutes as submitted by Ruch, seconded by Battis. The motion passed 6-0-2.

Minutes October 7, 2015 Non-public Session

The Executive Committee reviewed the minutes from the October 7, 2015 non-public session. One typographic error was identified for correction. Motion to approve the minutes as amended by Young, seconded by Elmer. The motion passed 6-0-2.

c. August/September Dashboard and Financial Reports

Roache reviewed the most recent Dashboard and noted that the bank balance remains strong. Statistics for staff activity is again up. Staff have attended GACIT hearings, various old home days, the Souhegan Valley Business Retention event, Milford Pumpkin Festival, facilitated a session at the HEAL conference, continued to participate in the FERC interagency calls, and many others. Roache noted that he has continued to attend Selectmen meetings to conduct introductions with several additional events coming up over the next month. Kelly suggested attending the Nashua Planning Board in addition to the Alderman.

Further LiveMaps usage exploded after the new pipeline maps were announced. Website hits are overall slightly down though. Elmer recommended including some of these online resources when speaking with Selectmen and the importance of Commissioners reposting social media posts to town pages to increase likes and hits. Ruch was concerned about the percentage of Constant Contact opens and suggested this be a topic at the Strategic Planning session to discuss how to increase readership. Hennessey noted that 30% is a good open rate.

Roache announced that in addition to the Farmers Market and PHMSA grants, NRPC was informed it was awarded an HNH*foundation* grant. The working budget includes two of the three new grants. Roache plans to bring an amended budget to the committee in November for consideration in order to present a midyear correction to the commission in December. August shows a \$8,000 loss but keep in mind in July there was a \$50,000 surplus with dues revenue coming in largely all at once for the year.

Fimbel made a motion to accept and place the report on file, second by Elmer. The motion passed 8-0-0.

d. Strategic Planning Follow Up Discussion

Roache noted that we have secured facility space at Rivier College for the strategic planning session to be held on November 13, 2015, as well as, food for the day and two possible facilitators. Czys gave an overview of an internal staff survey results. Questions focused on 3 themes: core values, operations, and staff development and included:

- Who are we?
- How do we work with others?
- What do we do?

- What do we believe?
- What could we do better as an organization?
- What could we do in the future to stay on the cutting edge?
- What gets you excited to come to work?
- How can NRPC help staff grow as a professional?

A similar survey was circulated to the executive committee. Roache asked for the Committee's thoughts on circulating the survey more widely. Ruch agreed that the survey should also be sent to commissioners. Hennessey suggested sending the full survey to planning staff. Landell would like input from the selectmen too; at the end of the day they need to understand the needs of the region. Czysz proposed a survey of four reduced questions for stakeholders such as selectmen and planning boards. The committee agreed to do so. Ruch recommended getting input from the facilitator before sending out additional surveys.

Roache asked what the Committee members are hoping to get in terms of an end product and distributed the 2015 strategic priority action items developed by Diers. Langdell noted there was a longer 2013 companion piece that could serve as a reference document. Hennessey said one issue to be discussed is what role NRPC should take on different issue items. Should the commission be taking a position? What role should NRPC play? Ruch asked what is our strategic mission? Should the commission continue the status quo? What is our role? After answering those questions, the session should then hold a fundamental discussion of how we achieve that, then make sure operations support that mission.

Hennessey added that if we are not leaders we are at least aggregators of information. Ruch noted there were several different ideas on energy projects that warrant consideration. Czysz noted that as part of the Regional Plan NRPC has adopted an Implementation Plan. The Committee asked for a link to the Implementation Plan to be emailed out to all for reference. Langdell suggested the end product needs to be a merger between operation and programming.

Roache asked if any Committee members would be willing to assist in setting the agenda for the strategic planning session. Hennessey said staff should attend for a morning discussion of "what we have" and then the Executive Committee continue in the afternoon to set direction. Langdell noted that NRPC is essentially two things, professional staff and appointed commissioners, need to bridge that gap. Langdell discussed engaging representatives from other towns. Langdell, Hennessey Ruch and Elmer all agreed to help with agenda discussions which would likely occur by phone.

e. Update on NRPC Retirement Plan

7:55 pm: Langdell made a motion to enter into nonpublic Session per RSA 91-A:3, II(a) to consider or act upon "the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee..." seconded by Battis. Roll call vote:

Dave Hennessey – yes

Dan Kelly – yes

Susan Ruch – yes

Janet Langdell – yes

Mike Fimbel – yes

Tom Young – yes

Jim Battis – yes

Karin Elmer – yes



Elmer made a motion to exit nonpublic Session at 8:15 pm seconded by Fimbel. Member Roll call vote:

Dave Hennessey – yes	Mike Fimbel – yes
Dan Kelly – yes	Tom Young – yes
Susan Ruch – yes	Jim Battis – yes
Janet Langdell – yes	Karin Elmer – yes

Battis made a motion to seal the minutes of the non-public session seconded by Elmer. Roll call vote:

Dave Hennessey – yes	Mike Fimbel – yes
Dan Kelly – yes	Tom Young – yes
Susan Ruch – yes	Jim Battis – yes
Janet Langdell – yes	Karin Elmer – yes

4. Other Business

Next meeting will be November 18, 2015.

Roache mentioned the pipeline and continuing role for the EFAC. The Executive Committee felt strongly that moving forward any quotes should be issued exclusively by Roache or Hennessey. Bigger issue will be to reenergize the EFAC and how leadership should be structured to maintain an appropriate balance. Ruch noted there may need to be membership modifications to fill vacant seats. Hennessey suggested that Roache invite EFAC to the November Committee meeting. Langdell noted that the Executive Committee needs to define EFACs charge and direction.

Elmer suggested Roache send out the original charge out to all, and pose the question of should we continue, and if so, what should we do differently. Langdell suggested Roache directly call EFAC members that haven't been active and ask why. Ruch noted as a point of order, if there are changes to the EFAC structure that needs to go back to the next commission meeting in December.

Roache suggested that communication with EFAC members recognize that we don't have enough information yet to take a position, but the work done by EFAC has been very useful and effective. However, this is just the beginning of the process. Hennessey added there have been many changes. Langdell said, as the Executive Committee, it is our responsibility to define the mission and charge of subcommittees. Hennessey further stated that subcommittees should report to the Executive Committee. Roache said he will reach out to the EFAC with 4 tangible goals reaching forward to the upcoming filings.

5. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Ruch with a second by Young. The motion passed 8-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:40.