


NRPC APPROVED MINUTES
NRPC TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
September 8th, 2021

Members Present:

Natasha Kypfer, Town of Amherst Joan Cudworth, Town of Hollis Brian Growth, Town of Hudson Leigh Levine, FHWA Leah Sirmin, FTA Mark Chamberlain, Town of Lyndeborough Dawn Tuomala, Town of Merrimack Lincoln Daley, Town of Milford Linda Dusenberry, NHDOT Camille Correa, NTS	John Savage, NTS Wayne Husband, City of Nashua Dan Hudson, City of Nashua Matt Sullivan, City of Nashua Julie Chizmas, City of Nashua Pete Kohalmi, City of Nashua Kimberly Rummo, NHDOT Ricky Diculo, NHDES Peter Howd, Town of Wilton
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Others Present

Todd Horner, SWRPC	Angela Wesson, NTS
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STAFF PRESENT

Gregg Lantos, MPO Coordinator Jay Minkarah, Executive Director Caleb Cheng, Regional Planner III	Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner Derek Stahl, Transportation Planner Mason Twombly, Regional-Environmental Planner
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CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Lantos called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm and went the roll call of attendees by community/organization.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 11TH, 2021 MEETING

Lantos referred to the minutes from the August 11th, 2021 meeting included in the agenda packet as Attachment 1. Chizmas requested that the funding for the STEP grant on page 3 be corrected from \$42,000 to \$452,000.

Chamberlain motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Savage. All were in favor, the minutes were approved.

TIP AMENDMENT 2

Lantos stated that there have not been many significant changes to this amendment. Most notably, the Nashua STEP project is being added as project #43509 with a cost of \$564,814. Other changes include a year delay to the start of construction for the Turnpike Widening project (13761A) as well as the Turnpike bridge replacements project (13761B) in Merrimack. This is due to the reduced toll revenues statewide.

Chamberlain motioned with a second from Kohalmi to unofficially recommend to the MPO to approve the TIP Amendment 2. There were no objections, all else were in favor.

INTER-REGIONAL TRANSIT EXPANSION STUDY

Cheng stated that the rationales of the study spurred mainly from the 2019 Nashua Regional Transit Study. Other studies and surveys include the 2018 NH Employment Security Office Study and 2018 NRPC Survey of passenger

rail riders, NTS customer survey, and UMASS Lowell Survey of Nashua Area Resident Students/Employees. The objective of this study is to develop proposed routes and level of service and evaluate the feasibility of inter-regional transit services. The first step in the methodology is the input analysis. This includes incorporating data from past studies as well as outreach to NTS, LRTA, UMASS Lowell, and Middlesex 3 Coalition. The next step in the methodology process is proposing routes and services. There were 4 destinations chosen based off past/current studies which include the Lowell Gallagher Terminal, UMASS Lowell, Alewife MBTA Station, and clusters of retail employers in Bedford/Burlington Area. The vehicle would be a shuttle bus with a level of service of between 4-8 roundtrips per day. The Nashua to Lowell Gallagher route would make 2 stops before reaching the terminal including Exit 8 Park and Ride. The Nashua to Alewife MBTA Station would start at Exit 8 Park and Ride and would also stop at the Tyngsborough Park and Ride before reaching the destination. The Nashua to UMASS Lowell would start at Transit Center and stop at Exit 8 Park and Ride continuing to the Tyngsborough Park and Ride before reaching UMASS Lowell. Nashua to Bedford/Burlington Clusters would start at Exit 8 Park and Ride but would have the possibility of having multiple stops in the Bedford/Burlington area to serve specific employer clusters. The next step in methodology is determining ridership and cost estimates. For the ridership forecast an impedance model was used which includes travel data calibration and model application. The cost estimation used the NTS per mile expense, including amortized vehicle capital cost which equals \$5.55 per mile. The fare pricing is set to offset part of the operating cost but with a ridership check. For the operational analysis, there were 4 different operating models examined which include NTS/LRTA Service, Middlesex 3 TMA Partnership, A new TMA in the Nashua Region, or a private operator. The 4 models were evaluated in 4 categories which include Ridership, Regulatory, Political, and Financial and were given a score between 1 and 3 from least to most feasible. The feasibility/findings of this analysis is that inter-regional transit service would be beneficial and feasible under the right circumstances, however, regardless of the operating model, securing additional funding (subsidies/contributions) will be essential. Strategies for future implementation include exploring the formation of a Nashua Regional TMA, continue the engagement/collaboration with NTS, LRTA, NMCOG, UMASS Lowell, Middlesex 3, seek funding (possibly through CMAQ funds or local business contributions), consider a service pilot, and conduct further rider/user surveys and input. Lantos stated that the draft has only recently been completed and will be available on NRPC's website for any further personal review. Lantos emphasized that this is a feasibility study not a plan and that's why MPO approval is not needed on this. Lantos also pointed out that Covid limited the ability to complete certain surveys/aspects of this study like the Boston Express Rider surveys for example. Savage asked why the ridership expectations would be lower for a particular service provider than others if the routes are the same? Savage stated that since this would not be functioning as a regular bus route that, but rather as a shuttle bus, the ridership numbers would be the same regardless of who is actually operating the shuttle.

REGIONAL BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PLAN FINAL DRAFT

Waitkins began the plan summary by stating the purpose of the plan which is to provide guidance for the planning, development, and implementation of safe, usable facilities for non-motorized transportation in the Nashua region, to integrate bicycle and pedestrian travel into the regional transportation system, and to benefit the region by providing additional transportation options for local and regional travel. Public engagement for this plan included the 2021-2045 Nashua Region MTP, NHDOT State Pedestrian & Bicycle Transportation Plan, city of Nashua Bicycle and Pedestrian Project, Amherst Multimodal Master Plan, and the Regional Complete Streets Advisory Committee. Some main takeaways from this were that there are concerns about safety based on volume and speed of vehicle traffic near pedestrians, there's support for investments in active transportation infrastructure, and residents would walk or bike more often if there were more facilities. As outlined in the existing conditions sections, the region currently has (by Centerline Mile) 320 miles of sidewalks, 30 miles of shared use paths, .5 miles of painted bicycle lanes, and 164 miles of state/urban compact roads with paved shoulders. Waitkins pointed out that there were only 2 painted bicycle lanes that he was aware of in Nashua and if anyone knew of any that may have been missed to let him know. The bicycle level of traffic stress in the region has 36% of the roadways in either LTS 1 or 2 and 64% with an LTS of 3 or 4. Waitkins also referred to the League of American Bicyclists "Bicycle Friendliness" report card, also included in the plan, which ranks New Hampshire

34th nationally. One of the main, reoccurring themes in this plan is to incorporate systematic safety into roadway design which takes elements such as traffic volume and speed into consideration. Waitkins referred to the National Traffic Safety Board's chart displaying the likelihood that a fatality occurs in a pedestrian related vehicle accident related to the speed of the vehicle and specifically points out that at 30 mph there is a 45% chance of a fatality to occur. In addition to multi use/physically separated paths there are other complete streets policies which can have a positive effect on pedestrian/bicyclist roadway safety which include traffic calming, bridge and underpass improvements, should repair and sweeping, connections between cul-de-sacs, bike/pedestrian transit links, etc. Also included in the plan, is a bicycle/pedestrian network which displays both regional and local connections throughout the region. Additionally, future potential bicycle/pedestrian projects can be seen on the map including the Souhegan Valley Rail Trail as well as the need for improvement along NH 101A. The next steps include the continued work from the Complete Streets Advisory Committee on developing an implementation plan including performance measures and using this to track progress. Increased public awareness and support, synergies with public health issues, and political will create opportunities for implementation while the scale of the region, dominance of motor vehicles, limited staff resources, and limited funding all provide constraints to the implementation. Groth asked if the Circumferential Highway is showing up in the Bicycle/Pedestrian Network. Waitkins confirmed that it is included but that it had been discussed internally and had been decided to leave it out of the network.

The NRPC TTAC Committee unofficially recommends to the MPO to adopt the Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan document. There were no objections.

TEN YEAR PLAN UPDATE, GACIT MEETING #2 SUMMARY

Minkarah stated that there was not a full draft released yet, there was a presentation, which is available on NHDOT's website. As expected, financially it's a conservative plan as turnpike and gas tax revenues are down. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in transportation funding as a part of the reauthorization in the FAST Act, but it's not official so it can't be relied on yet. The main goal is to invest in the core strength of the system and should additional funds become available projects already in the TYP will be accelerated. There was not much change regarding projects other than the projects that we submitted are officially included with no major changes. A few of the major changes were that the safety improvements to NH 101 were under budgeted and \$1 M was added to the budget, there is a 3-year delay on the start of construction for the Turnpike Widening Project, and lastly, the draft does not include the Hudson Blvd or Circumferential Highway in it. The TAP results were released in which DOT increased funding to about \$10.7 M. Overall, 13 projects were funded and 2 which were from our region which submitted the most applications. The 2 projects selected were the Nashua Spruce St Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements and the Merrimack sidewalk improvements on DW Highway. Lastly, there is tentatively a public hearing scheduled at NRPC for October 21st at 7:00 PM. Lantos wanted to reiterate that the Hudson Blvd project was not a typical TYP project in that it was listed as a locally funded project to about \$50M, which the town has had trouble funding. Groth stated that his understanding of Hudson Blvd is that it is a DOT project that remains unfinished. Lantos responded that that's why they have the public hearings and gives them an opportunity to express these thoughts. Chizmas asked for clarification on \$13.4M total funding for 2021 TAP round which states a 4-year period. Chizmas questioned whether a TAP round will be missed due to the increased funding because typically it is a 2/3 year time frame. Minkarah stated that he believes that the next round wont be in 2 years because the funding was "accelerated" but encouraged NHDOT to comment further.



NHDOT, NHDES, FHWA UPDATES

Municipal – No Updates

NHDOT – No Updates

DES – Expect to see the State Clean Diesel Program available around the October/November timeframe.

FHWA – No Updates

ADJOURN

Chamberlain motioned with a second from Kohalmi to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.