


NRPC APPROVED MINUTES
NRPC TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
03/11/15

Members Present:

Colleen Mailloux, Town of Amherst
 Tom Bayrd, Town of Hollis
 John Cashell, Town of Hudson
 Jason Hoch, Town of Litchfield
 Rick Seymour, Town of Merrimack
 Wendy Hunt, Milford Improvement Team
 Bill Parker, Town of Milford
 Raymond Blethen, Nashua Transit System

Chris Clow, City of Nashua NTS
 Steve Dookran, City of Nashua
 Wayne Husband, City of Nashua Traffic
 Sarah Marchant, City of Nashua
 Jeff Gowan, Town of Pelham

Others Present:

Paul Lockwood, NHDES
 Leigh Levine, FHWA
 Carol Macuch, NHDOT

STAFF PRESENT

Tim Roache, MPO Coordinator
 Matt Waitkins, Field Data/Transportation Planner
 Ryan Friedman, Senior GIS Planner

Jen Czysz, Senior Regional Planner
 Karen Baker, Program Assistant

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Tim Roache opened the meeting with introductions at 12:07pm notifying the group that Jen Czysz would be handling the TTAC meetings going forward.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 11, 2015 MEETING

Roache referred to the minutes of February 11, 2015 included in the agenda packet as Attachment 1 and asked for a motion to approve. Gowan moved to approve the February 11, 2015 minutes with a second from Husband. All were in favor.

TEN YEAR PLAN (TYP) PROJECT PRIORITIES – CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Czysz referred to the memo included in the TTAC Agenda packet recapping that at the February TTAC meeting, members worked to identify projects to be reviewed. Projects were selected from the existing 2015-2024 TYP and the 2015-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Additionally, she said there were a handful of new projects submitted. Projects that are in the current 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) have been established as priority projects and currently in progress, have been excluded from the review process. The focus of the review is on Federal Aid eligible projects. The goal is to have all 9 RPC regions have a consistent rating system and have projects ranked with the criteria established. She reviewed the list of projects under consideration with the group.

The next step is to move onto project scoring and determine how to integrate new projects in with the existing projects. Roache reminded the group that they are in a position to advise policy makers on anything transportation; referring to the projects list. He added that they can also suggest a priority for big picture items; ex. Exit 36S, Route 101A, etc., but they need to be consistent with priorities. Husband said he submitted a few jobs but did not get confirmation. Gowan had the same issue. Czysz said to watch for red boxes around any part of their form which means there needs to be information in those boxes. Gowan was unsure on whether a project was eligible for state, federal or other funding. Roache said that will be figured out later and that the whole scoring process will be based on the federal aid projects process. Macuch confirmed this. She added that the last round was more ahead of schedule, so we don't expect to have a prioritized project list for the Executive Committee until April, but will present the full list to the Commission next week.

Cashell asked if there were any ideas on how to address the big projects as he felt the Rail project was a big priority. The feeling was that the Rail Authority's priority was getting the rail to Manchester. Cashell questioned if it is a higher priority than the 2nd crossing of the river? There was further discussion on the big project priorities. Blethen felt that the ranking may not take into account 5 small projects and their impact as opposed to 1 large. Hoch commented that he would hate to see bigger projects getting put into a different bucket for fear that they may get lost. Roache felt a policy decision from the Commission would be the way to go but he would need a recommendation or letter from TTAC. He asked the group to think about this for the next meeting.

There was discussion on handling smaller vs. larger projects and how to prioritize them. The recommendation from TTAC was that all projects be scored then categorize the top priority projects that are not already listed in the current Ten Year Plan as follows:

1. *Projects most likely to be incorporated into the new TYP:* Top priority and most feasible projects that will yield the greatest benefits to the region while not exceeding the total available funding (NRPC's estimated annual share is \$2,381,665 or \$23.8 million total for the 10-years).
2. *Priority projects that exceed the available funding:* Those project eligible for federal aid funding but were further down the priority list or exceeded the funding available. These projects would be on "standby" for when additional funding becomes available.
3. *Projects that may be eligible for other funding sources:* A separate listing of projects that might be eligible for CMAQ, HSIP, TAP, State Aid, or Turnpike funding.
4. *Larger Policy Level Considerations:* There are many projects that will need additional revenue beyond what is typically available in the traditional Ten Year Plan process. These might include larger projects such as rail and highway widening.

Czys asked for volunteers to score the projects. Hoch from Litchfield, Cashell from Hudson, Parker from Milford and Marchant from Nashua volunteered to assist NRPC staff in project scoring, with final results available for the April TTAC and NRPC Executive Committee meetings. Roache said the goal is to be consistent year to year. Czys said she would get something to the scoring committee early next week and that final priority projects are due to NHDOT by the end of April 2015.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

STRAVA Data for Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

Matt Waitkins and Ryan Friedman provided a presentation on STRAVA Data for Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning. Waitkins informed the group that NHDOT purchased one year's worth of bicycle GIS data from STRAVA, a company that has an application designed for smart phones and other personal GPS tracking devices that allows users to track bicycle activities. The data provides an additional way to look at bicycle transportation in New Hampshire and how and where bicyclists are traveling in the state and Nashua region. At the conclusion of the presentation Roache asked if there were any questions and if anyone had any ideas on how to use this data. He felt that there was some value in it for safety, as an example by looking at areas that are being avoided and find out why. Lockwood asked about similar applications competing with STRAVA. Friedman said there are many. He added that they may be taking this to the transportation Planners Collaborative in the future. Blethen felt the app provided decent data on safe roads. Friedman felt the data can only get more robust. Roache added that a subset may also be useful and asked the group to let us know if they want NRPC to look at your town.

NH Capitol Corridor Rail and Transit Study

Czys informed the group that the NH Department of Transportation released the Final Report of the Capitol Corridor Rail study last month that analyzed the benefits and costs associated with various rail and transit alternatives connecting Concord to Boston. The study focused on three rail alternatives and one bus

option, as well as the no-build maintenance of status-quo. The next steps would be more outreach before singling down to one alternative. She asked TTAC to share their thoughts on the four rail and transit alternatives as listed below:

- *Manchester Regional Commuter*: Extends existing MBTA service from Lowell, MA to Manchester, NH with stops at South Nashua, Nashua Crown Street, and the Manchester Airport. Service would include 16 weekday trains for Manchester and 34 for Nashua. The report concluded while this was one of the most expensive options, it provided greater benefits.
- *Nashua South Commuter*: The minimum service possible would extend existing MBTA service to Nashua, operating 20 weekday trains. This was the least expensive of the rail options and would provide the least benefit, however, is the first phase of the Manchester alternative.
- *Intercity 8*: Four daily intercity passenger rail round trips between Concord, NH and Boston with stops in Manchester, the Airport, Nashua Crown Street and South Nashua. While one of the most expensive options overall, this would be the least expensive option to provide intercity service and provide a basis for expanded service in the future.
- *Bus on Shoulder*: This option is a low cost and low benefit alternative that would depend upon a decision from Massachusetts to allow for construction of bus on shoulder highway lanes.

Czys said she would like to take a recommendation to the Commission. Roache felt the first bullet was the preferred alternative for the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority (NHRTA) but that would be discussed at the March NHRTA meeting. Marchant felt the group should make a recommendation to the Commission to send a letter. Czys reviewed the alternatives with the group. Lockwood asked where the Nashua stop is. Roache said it was not clear from the study of where the stops for Nashua are. Manchester stops are established as the Bus Facility and the Airport. Mailloux felt that of the 4 alternatives, there would be more benefit to the region if they ran to Manchester (it would pull more commuters off the road). Blethen felt it would need to be designed for quick trips and hubs need to be close to rail stations. Roache said if there is no recommendation from the TTAC this time, there will be more discussion at the April TTAC and he would be looking for a recommendation. He added that the RPC's need to be more aggressive. Dhima asked for a show of hands on who was for rail to Manchester. After further discussion, Mailloux motioned to recommend approval from the NRPC Commission to support the Manchester Regional Commuter Option given its potential to provide the greatest benefits to residents in the region, potential to reduce traffic along FE Everett Turnpike by providing rail options in both Manchester and Nashua, and in recognition that rail is essential for clean air. Further, TTAC members moved that a statement of support also include the recommendation that during the next phase of feasibility studies, more consideration be granted to investigating where to site rail stations to maximize connections with transit routes and tie into the airport. Additionally, there should be further study of to look at lay over facility locations to ensure minimal disruption to residential neighborhoods. All were in favor and the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Gowan informed that Gleason was not re-elected to the Pelham Board of Selectmen and that we may lose a Commissioner. He suggested NRPC reach out to Pelham Selectmen to see if we can keep him on as Commissioner.

Parker motioned to adjourn with a second from Cashell. The meeting adjourned at 1:32 pm.