



**APPROVED – MINUTES  
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
Held at the NRPC Office  
9 Executive Park, Suite 201, Merrimack, NH  
March 19, 2014**

**Members Present:**

Michael Dell Orfano, Amherst	Dan Del Greco, Merrimack	Dan Kelly, Nashua
Martin Michaelis, Amherst	Karin Elmer, Merrimack	Mary-Ann Melizzi-Golja, Nashua
James Battis, Hudson	Margaret Morris, Merrimack	Daniel Moriarty, Nashua
George Hall, Hudson	Janet Langdell, Milford	Diane Sheehan, Nashua
Rich Maddox, Hudson	Mike Fimbel, Mont Vernon	Ed Gleason, Pelham
Thomas Young, Litchfield	Roger Houston, Nashua	Dave Hennessey, Pelham

**Others Present:** Dave Maclaughlin

**Staff Present:**

Kerrie Diers, Executive Director	Jen Czysz, Senior Regional Planner	Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager
Tim Roache, Assistant Director	Karen Baker, Program Assistant	

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

Chairman Elmer called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM with introductions.

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

There were no members of the public present that wished to speak.

**HEARING – STIP AMENDMENT #5**

Roache reviewed STIP Amendment #5 to the adopted Nashua Metropolitan Area 2013-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). NRPC is proposing to amend to the TIP is to account for changes to projects within the Nashua region and to maintain consistency with the Statewide TIP (STIP). Only one project in the Nashua Region was included in STIP A5; East Hollis Street project #16314 which is to construct a multi-lane roundabout at the intersection of East Hollis Street, Bridge Street and Canal Street. The proposed amendment is to delay FY2015 and 2016 construction funds each by one year and adjust funding amounts between fiscal years to remain consistent with the current schedule and cost estimates.

Roache reviewed the various Statewide projects. He referred to the Scenic Byway Corridor Management project that was removed from the TIP for 2015-2016 and would be rolled into the TAP program because of MAP 21. He stated that the proposed amendments to the projects in the Nashua region are necessary to ensure that the TIP and STIP reflect the anticipated project schedule and maintain fiscal constraint requirements. NH DOT confirmed that fiscal constraint has been maintained and the proposed changes made by STIP Amendment #5 do not trigger a new conformity determination and that the 2013-2014 Air Quality Analysis adopted October 17, 2012 continues to be valid. Roache informed the group NRPC placed a legal notice in the Telegraph & on the NRPC website accepting public comments through Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>; no comments were received. Roache concluded saying that on March 12<sup>th</sup> TTAC recommended that the Commission approve STIP Amendment #5.

Langdell questioned if the money was being taken away that was originally in the Scenic Byways. Roache said it was being consolidated at the federal level along with TE & Safe Routes To School monies. Fimbel questioned the air pollution in downtown Nashua at Library Hill & Main Str. Roache said that has not been an issue and has remained in attainment with the CO well under the threshold for about 20 years. He added that

unless the standards change, the last air quality analysis is the last that will be done. Gleason had concerns about whether amendments would change due to the proposed gas taxes. Moriarty had several questions about where the money comes from listed in the STIP Amendment, who says where it goes, and if it was similar to the CIP process that the City does and once approved, the Alderman take it from there. Roache explained the process, what the MPO does and how they can drive the process, providing some examples. Maddox questioned whether the MPO is able to drive the process. Gleason motioned with a second from Kelly:

THAT the STIP Amendment #5 to the adopted Nashua Metropolitan Area 2013-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) be approved.

The motion **carried** with 6 abstentions.

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – DECEMBER 18, 2013**

The Chair asked if there were any comments on the minutes of December 18, 2013. It was moved by Langdell and seconded by Young:

THAT the minutes of December 18, 2013 be approved.

The motion **carried** with 1 abstention.

### **NASHUA REGIONAL PLAN**

#### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Diers gave a brief overview of the Regional Plan process to date and introduced Jen Czysz who provided a PowerPoint presentation to the group on the Existing Conditions Chapter. Below are some of the highlights from the presentation:

#### **WHO WE ARE - POPULATION**

- *Regional population growth was flat over the last decade at less than 0.5% growth between 2000 and 2010.*
- *For the first time in nearly 100 years, the 2010 Census showed a lower percent growth in the Nashua Region than in Hillsborough County or the State.*

#### ***Percent Change of Population Mix – Nashua Region 2000-2010***

All of the region's net population growth between 2000 and 2010 was in age groups age 45 and older. The share of children and young adults in the region declined. According to the U.S. Census, New Hampshire surpassed West Virginia last year as the nation's 3<sup>rd</sup> oldest state. Our median age is now 42, almost a full year older than reported in 2010. Only Vermont and Maine are older. No other state aged at a faster rate.

#### **WHO WE ARE – HOUSEHOLDS**

Traditional households are on the decline. A non-traditional household type that's been getting much attention is the so-called multi-generational household type, or household containing three or more generations. In the Nashua region, 3% of the overall households meet this definition, although Hudson, Litchfield, Merrimack, and Pelham have proportionately more. This compares similarly to the statewide average of 2.8% but lower than the rate of approximately 5% nationwide.

**Implications:** Will there be an increased demand for accessory dwelling units? Do we have the appropriate mix of housing types to meet demand? 61% of our stock is single-family, and there is at least some multi-family development across most of the region. Overall numbers show Nashua has 72%, or almost 3/4ths, of the regions multi-family housing units.

Langdell asked about the housing pie chart in regards to condos and how it is defined. Czysz said that it may be lumped in with single family. Hennessey felt that there was an overlay missing because the percentage of non-married households was different and whether families under 18 were included. He added that the numbers were also skewed because of the housing market and provided some additional statistics. Langdell suggested some reasons for the skewed results. Dell Orfano asked if there was a pie chart for underserved housing options or underserved populations. Czysz said not yet, but part of that would be conjecture. She added that she could do a chart on affordability. Langdell said it did not make sense if you compare the charts to the posters hanging in the conference room. She asked if a housing analysis chart could be done for increasing groups based on affordability. Czysz said it could be done for families. Moriarty asked if the median income was the same across the chart. Czysz said it depended on the community. Langdell said it was not community specific and felt the greater Nashua median income was used.

#### **WHO WE ARE – TRANSPORTATION**

Residents of the Nashua Region are significantly more likely to drive alone to work than their national peers. 83.3 of residents commute by alone by car in the region, compared to the national average of about 76 percent. Is this because residents prefer driving alone or because the region lacks many other viable alternatives? In gathering public input for the regional plan a dominant theme was that Nashua Region residents would like to have more transportation options made available in the region. Residents have consistently called for safer areas to walk and bicycle, a regional public transit system and commuter rail service to Boston.

#### **WHO WE ARE – ECONOMIC VITALITY**

Students in both the region and the state outperform their national peers in assessment tests. In both 2010 and 2011, NH ranked second in the nation in SAT scores, which is notable because a higher percentage of students (about 77%) take the SATs in NH than in other states.

NH state assessment scores for the 10 public high schools in our region were weighed by student population and showed that students in the region were 5.8% more likely than their state peers to score proficient in math and 5.6% more likely to score proficient in reading. The region's writing scores matched the state average.

According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the median household income for a family of 4 in the Nashua region is \$92,700. The Nashua Region has the 28<sup>th</sup> highest median income out of the 300 + regions that were delineated by HUD.

#### **WHO WE ARE – ENVIRONMENT**

The people of the Nashua Region tend to enjoy living in rural, quiet places that feel like small towns, but also like to have access to conveniences of more urban settings, such as restaurants, shopping, and job centers.

#### **WHAT WE'VE HEARD HOUSING**

**What Works:** Good supply of rural, single family housing, Strong sense of community character, Options for senior housing, Excellent models in the region – Nashua and Milford, Desirable neighborhoods, Excellent access to amenities – beach, mountains, airport.

**What Needs Improvement:** Need more diversity in housing options and more rental options, flexible land use regulations.

#### **WHAT WE'VE HEARD – TRANSPORTATION**

**What Works:** Transit Service in Nashua, Parking availability, Snow maintenance, Easy access to job opportunities/Boston, Close to amenities, Responsive town governments.

**What Needs Improvement:** Too auto dependent, Lack of passenger rail, Sustainable funding source, Need better pedestrian infrastructure.

## **WHAT WE'VE HEARD ECONOMIC VITALITY**

**What Works:** Good shopping options, Safe place to raise a family, Livable downtowns, Location is great, Great community events, Lots of options for dining, No sales tax.

**What Needs Improvement:** More transit options, Marketing of region, Entry level positions, Affordable education, Night life, bigger venues.

## **WHAT WE'VE HEARD ENVIRONMENT**

**What Works:** Water resources and infrastructure are strong, Regulations exist to protect water resources, Small town, rural feel to region, Lots of local committees looking at energy, conservation opportunities.

**What Needs Improvement:** Confusion about federal stormwater requirements, Aging infrastructure, Need to prepare for severe weather events on a regional scale.

## **DRAFT REGIONAL BUILDOUT**

Diers informed the Commissioners that in addition to existing conditions, NRPC also looked at what the region would look like under complete buildout and introduced Siskavich to provide an update. Siskavich handed out a series of maps and explained that NRPC is completing a comprehensive update to its buildout analysis. Four maps (Projected Development, Current Conditions, Year 2040, and Complete Buildout) were passed around to show a theoretical growth projection for the region modelled in Community Viz software. Three GIS inputs were considered for this model: Existing buildings/structures, constraints to future development, and generalized zoning that have been categorized by the primary or highest density permitted use (an NRPC interpretation and does not reflect official zoning). In addition, the model's growth was calibrated against a set of independent 2040 population projections. She added that a set of rules were used in the model to come up with the results on the final map.

Sheehan asked if rail was taken into account. Siskavich said no and this was more land use specific but NRPC did have a model for transportation type scenario. Diers explained that this was a projection based on the highest density and what could be under current conditions. She added that it would probably not be what actually is built. Langdell asked for variables. Dell Orfano spoke of under-utilized schools and how to utilize structure in place. Czysz said that 5 year age cohorts are available with survival rates and the model was calibrated with Community Viz. Hennessey felt it was important to have individual town data adding that this is not a growth state. Elmer suggested doing a reverse scenario based on the population decline in NH. Kelly asked if impact of rail could be added. Diers said the model does not take into consideration transportation. Dell Orfano asked if there was a year on complete buildout. Siskavich said no and that it was really hard to put a date on it. Maddox liked the maps but did not see how it was going to happen. Czysz added that the model does not have the ability to reason. Langdell asked if water & sewer could be added as a rule. Staff will continue to work on the model and results.

## **REVIEW OF DRAFT VISION AND GOALS**

Diers referred to the Draft Vision & Goals included in the agenda packet adding that if anyone had any questions, they could contact her.

## **REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

Diers asked the group to do an exercise to help provide input about where NRPC should be focusing resources and staff time going forward in the future as part of NRPC's regional strategies. Turning point clickers were handed out to the group and they were asked a series of questions and asked to select the corresponding letter for the input for each question.

Results from the Turning Point survey are listed below:

**Preserve the Region's unique and attractive quality of life by enhancing transportation systems, housing diversity and economic vitality.**

To enhance the region's **transportation system**, NRPC should focus on:

1. NRPC staff **providing technical assistance** to communities for:
  - a. Land use and site design standards to promote livable, walkable communities (0%)
  - b. Addressing congestion reduction and management (16.67%)
  - c. Increasing safety (11.11%)
  - d. Bicycle and Pedestrian planning (5.56%)
  - e. Transit Oriented Development (61.11%)
  - f. Other (5.56%)
  
2. **Fostering Regional coordination:**
  - a. Establish a regional bicycle and pedestrian committee (0%)
  - b. Expanding fixed route public transit service in the region (11.11%)
  - c. Coordinate transit service between Nashua, Manchester and Boston (11.11%)
  - d. Improving east/west travel (11.11%)
  - e. Establishing passenger rail service to the Nashua region (38.89%)
  - f. Planning for alternative fuel infrastructure (5.56%)
  - g. Northern crossing of Merrimack River (22.22%)
  - h. Other (0%)
  
3. NRPC focus on **regional data development and technical studies** on:
  - a. Road and bridge maintenance (22.22%)
  - b. Managing travel demand and reduce peak hour travel time (16.67%)
  - c. Highway safety (5.56%)
  - d. Investment in future transportation alternatives (55.56%)
  - e. Other (0%)
  
4. Overall to achieve the goal of an enhanced transportation system, NRPC should focus on:
  - a. Technical assistance to communities (11.76%)
  - b. Regional coordination (17.65%)
  - c. Data development and technical studies (52.94%)
  - d. Public education and outreach (17.65%)
  - e. Other (0%)

In planning for **housing diversity**, NRPC should focus on:

1. NRPC staff **providing technical assistance** to communities for:
  - a. Identify funding sources to plan for affordable housing (11.76%)
  - b. Model ordinances to help meet the Workforce Housing Law (0%)
  - c. Strategies for addressing large supply of single family homes (17.65%)

- d. Developing design guidelines for multi-family housing (0%)
- e. Developing model ordinances such as form based codes, performance zoning (41.18%)
- f. Provide case studies and examples (23.53%)
- g. Other (5.88%)

2. **Regional coordination:**

- a. Establish a regional housing roundtable (11.11%)
- b. Conduct outreach and education regarding housing issues (11.11%)
- c. Include updated on local initiatives in the NRPC Newsletter (5.56%)
- d. Serve as in information hub for municipalities (72.22%)
- e. Other (0%)

3. NRPC should focus **regional data development and technical studies** on:

- a. Current data on existing conditions and trends (11.76%)
- b. Assessment of current and future housing needs of residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities (11.76%)
- c. Tools and data products to help communities measure their housing needs (52.94%)
- d. Identify potential impacts of existing older housing stock (5.88%)
- e. Mapping key destinations in proximity to housing (17.65%)
- f. Other (0%)

4. To encourage housing diversity in the region, a priority focus for NRPC staff and resources should be:

- a. Technical assistance to communities (33.33%)
- b. Regional coordination (11.11%)
- c. Data development and technical studies (55.56%)
- d. Public education and outreach (0%)
- e. Other (0%)

In planning for **community and economic vitality**, NRPC should focus on:

1. NRPC staff **providing technical assistance** to communities for:

- a. Models for expedited permitting and review processes to promote economic development (22.22%)
- b. Models that provide incentives, including eased regulatory requirements or density bonuses, for economic development projects that address broader livability goals, including historic preservation or arts and cultural programming. (44.44%)
- c. Expanding broadband access (11.11%)
- d. Models for scaling regulatory requirements and permitting fees to the size and intensity of developments. (5.56%)
- e. Model to encourage development in already developed areas, particularly downtowns (11.11%)
- f. Other (5.56%)

2. **Regional coordination:**

- a. Establish a regional community and economic development roundtable (35.29%)
- b. Work to reinstate regional Brownfields program (5.88%)
- c. Provide a central forum to market the region's destination and cultural and arts activities (47.06%)
- d. Other (11.76%) Interface concerns with COC – Langdell/Development of recreational activities for younger populations – Dell Orfano

3. NRPC should focus **regional data development and technical studies** on:

- a. Current data on industry clusters (5.88%)
- b. Workforce development and training programs (47.06%)
- c. Feasibility of shared infrastructure in the region (water, sewer) (35.29%)
- d. Labor force demographics (5.88%)
- e. Other (5.88%) Tax sharing strategies – collaboration industry and community activities to share revenue – Dell Orfano

4. To promote community and economic vitality in the region, a priority focus for NRPC staff & resources should be:

- a. Technical assistance to communities (35.29%)
- b. Regional coordination (5.88%)
- c. Data development and technical studies (58.82%)
- d. Public education and outreach (0%)
- e. Other (0%)

**Enhance and protect the Region's natural resources and open space that defines our rural character.**

NRPC staff and organizational resources should focus on:

1. NRPC staff **providing technical assistance** to communities for :

- a. Developing open space plans (12.5%)
- b. Helping to design low impact development techniques (25%)
- c. Develop model regulatory policy audits for communities to use that promote best management practices (37.5%)
- d. Develop educational materials and case studies for communities to use in local planning (25%)
- e. Other (0%)

2. **Regional coordination:**

- a. Establish regional natural resources committee (12.5%)
- b. Establish a climate change and adaptation committee (6.25%)
- c. Help communities to plan based on a watershed scale (18.75%)
- d. Host workshops on environmental topics for municipal boards and state representatives (56.25%)
- e. Other (6.25%) Water -Langdell

3. NRPC should focus **regional data development and technical studies** on:
  - a. Assisting communities with resources to meet MS4 permits requirements (31.25%)
  - b. Providing technical expertise on emergency planning software such as HAZUS (0%)
  - c. Assisting towns with conducting vulnerability assessments on town resources (25%)
  - d. Assisting towns with using EPA Portfolio Manager to benchmark progress of energy consumption (0%)
  - e. Researching and developing a review checklist for subdivisions and site plans that incorporates water recharge protection and water demand management protections. (43.75%)
  - f. Other (0%)
  
4. Overall to achieve the goal of enhancing and protecting natural resources, NRPC should focus on:
  - a. Technical assistance to communities (37.5%)
  - b. Regional coordination (6.25%)
  - c. Data development and technical studies (56.25%)
  - d. Public education and outreach (0%)
  - e. Other (0%)

Dell Orfano asked how NRPC supports itself doing this. Diers explained through state and federal grants, using the energy program as an example. Elmer added that match for grants is paid by the dues. Langdell asked who coordinates transit providers for Nashua, Manchester & Boston. Diers said it is ad hoc coordination. Langdell said it would be good to have transit providers meet. Melizzi-Golja asked if NRPC was involved at all with the alternative fueling infrastructure. Roache answered not yet but that as part of the MTP, there are things that have to be considered, but we have not been asked by DOT yet. There was discussion between Hennessey & Dell Orfano about spurs to the west, a bus station, and passenger rail and freight capacity.

Diers informed the group that the 4 sub committees would be meeting later in the spring and if anyone had any interest in participating to let her know. The goal is to bring info back to group with draft chapters and start putting together strategies. By June meeting there will be a complete draft of all the chapters. Public hearings will be in September and December.

#### **8:52 PM - COMMISSIONER'S ROUNDTABLE**

The Commissioner's Roundtable held at 8:52pm.

#### **ADJOURN**

The next NRPC Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 18, 2014 at 7:00pm at the Nashua Regional Planning Commission office in Merrimack. Motion to adjourn came from Young with a second from Gleason. The meeting adjourned at 8:56pm.

Respectfully submitted

Kerrie Diers, Official Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_