


**NRPC APPROVED MINUTES**  
**NRPC TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**01/10/18**

**Members Present:**

Gordon Leedy, Town of Amherst	Tim Cummings, City of Nashua
George Theborge, Town of Hudson	Wayne Husband, City of Nashua
Mark Chamberlain, Town of Lyndeborough	Tom Lacroix, City of Nashua
Kyle Fox, Town of Merrimack	Sarah Marchant, City of Nashua
Dawn Tuomala, Town of Merrimack	Jeff Gowan, Town of Pelham
Julie Chizmas, City of Nashua	James Vayo, City of Nashua

**Others Present**

Suzanne Fournier, Brox Environmental Citizens	Leigh Levine, FHWA
Nate Miller, SNHPC	Lucy St. John, NHDOT
James Battis, NRPC Commissioner	David Smith, NHDOT
Karin Elmer, NRPC Commissioner	Elizabeth Strachan, NHDES
	Wendy Johnson, NHDOT

**STAFF PRESENT**

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director	Jen Czysz, Assistant Director
Gregg Lantos, Principal Transportation Planner/MPO Coord.	Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner
Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager	Ryan Friedman, Senior GIS Planner
Karen Baker, Program Assistant	

**CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Lantos called the meeting to order at 12:04 with introductions.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 13, 2017 MEETING**

Czysz referred to the minutes of December 13, 2017 included in the agenda packet as Attachment 1. She asked if there were any corrections. Leedy motioned with a second from Husband to approve the minutes. All were in favor and the motion passed.

**F.E. EVERETT TURNPIKE PROJECTS DISCUSSION ON COST INCREASES AND SCOPE OF PROJECT WIDENING*****David Smith – Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Turnpikes and Project manager for the Turnpike Open Road Tolling Project***

Lantos introduced Smith. Smith greeted the TTAC and provided a summary of project #16100 – Open Road Tolling Conversion at the Bedford Toll Plaza. This project consists of converting the F. E. Everett Turnpike toll plaza in the Town of Bedford to an Open Road Tolling (ORT) facility. Improvements include plaza widening (one toll booth on east side only), rehabilitation of the entire toll plaza to remain, roadway widening and ORT implementation. The conversion will require the demolition of six toll lanes (5 booths) in the center of the plaza to accommodate the four ORT lanes (two 12'-lanes and 10' shoulders in each direction).

He explained what is necessary to get it done, measures to be put in place, and areas that would need to be addressed. He provided info on the costs associated to do this and conceptual and final cost estimates. Smith noted that the project is 100% turnpike funded and no toll increase is needed to support the project. He also noted that DOT is looking into long term improvements for the project to avoid having to address them down the road or in the too near future; for instance, painting the canopy, replacement of the concrete slabs,

maintenance ramps, etc. He noted that all these pieces along with inflation led to the increase in the project cost. Lastly, he did state that the project is ready to advertise.

Smith stated that Massachusetts (MA) just converted to All Electronic Tolling (AET) which had not been supported in the past in NH. He added there is some support in NH now, but there would need to be some type of legislation in place to study AET. He noted that the capital cost for converting to AET would be less than for ORT. Lantos asked if the support for AET is just financial. Smith stated that there are a lot of benefits and changes in operations to go this route. It would mean that cash customers who don't want to do autopay, can be billed through the mail, and this means additional administrative costs. He added that there are also other operational aspects, plus it is more efficient and safer due to less crashes. Smith said you would see a reduction in what is collected but would be overcome by surcharges and fees. With the current structure, it would be a net zero.

Minkarah asked if DOT did an analysis of AET in MA. Smith said yes, but they got limited feedback from MA and that their AET system is relatively new. Lantos felt that if there is no financial difference, he would prefer ORT for those who have privacy concerns. Smith stated that there is a significant capital cost difference noting that AET is about half. He added that they have done studies and for the long term, it makes sense.

Leedy referred to previous presentation by Waszczuk on ORT options and feasibility in Merrimack vs. Nashua. He asked if this will have impacts on Merrimack. Smith said there would be no impact on Exit 10 or 11 and that it came about as an improvement of the system overall. Smith noted that the toll increase proposal was shot down. Strachan also pointed out the environmental benefit of both ORT and AET due to less idling.

Chizmas stated that she read the 2015 NHTB Study and Assessment of ORT which stated that AET was not feasible unless moved south of Exit 11. Smith said at the time that it was studied, it was not as feasible as we feel it is now. We studied it again but it has not been updated because legislation stated that we were not authorized to even do the study. He added that now it is feasible at this location. Chizmas asked if it would still capture the Airport Access Road. Smith said it could, but there would have to be a lot of communication and coordination with other agencies. Miller asked when this might happen. Smith said AET discussions are a long way out and they would need to go through a legislative process and then they would revisit the study. He added that their focus right now is re-working the TYP due to the lack of interest on the toll increase. Miller asked if it was a fair statement to say that the AET project is in limbo until this question is resolved. Smith said yes. Miller noted that the Airport would be opposed to tolling Exit 13. Marchant asked if the widening and ORT are one project. Smith said the projects are independent of each other. Battis asked if this included the impact of the widening and if adjustments for this were built in. Smith said yes and there are no implications or constraints to the widening north or south.

For project specific information use the following NHDOT link:

[https://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/bedford16100/documents/16100\\_info\\_sheet\\_01172018.pdf](https://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/bedford16100/documents/16100_info_sheet_01172018.pdf)

***Wendy Johnson - Project Manager of F.E.E. Turnpike Widening from Exit 8 to Bedford***

Lantos introduced Johnson. Johnson greeted the TTAC and provided a project status of the Nashua-Merrimack-Bedford F.E.E. Turnpike Widening from Exit 8 to Bedford. She summarized the project location noting that it starts in Nashua and extends approximately 14 miles to the I-293 interchange in Bedford. The intent is to widen the 2 lane gap segments to 3 lanes in each direction. There are 3 segments: South - 1.5 miles, Middle - 5.3 miles, and North - 1.3 miles: a total of 8.1 miles. The funding is 100% from the Turnpike Capital Improvement Program. The objective is to improve capacity, safety and address bridges. The areas targeted for improvement

have had no or little work done since original construction in the 1950's. The project is in the preliminary design stages and alternatives are being evaluated.

Johnson noted that gap segments will be evaluated for noise and there will be sound walls for all three segments. She also noted that the original estimate for this project was done in 2001 (south segment not included) with an updated planning level cost of \$70mil in 2010. There will be public info meetings in February with a public hearing targeted for March 2018 and a project advertising date of December of 2020.

Johnson also noted that a 2% inflation rate was used on some items, but bridges and sound walls were not inflated because at the time, they did not know what they were building. On other items, there was only a 1% inflation rate increase. The pavement costs, bridge by sq. ft. costs, some items were not known. Environmental constraint requirements were not included in the 2001 estimate resulting in a \$3million environmental cost being added and another \$3.6million for erosion costs. Johnson stated that once all these costs were updated correctly, including the \$3.9million inflation cost on sound walls, along with revised bridge costs; this resulted in a big jump in the overall cost of the project. She noted that the inflation rate is not to 2026 on the handout, but it does reflect in the TYP. Chizmas asked if this cost included ROW or engineering. Johnson said it did not. Battis asked if this included widening of the breakdown lane. Johnson said it included the outside shoulder and median. Elmer asked if consideration was taken into account for future widening of bridges to accommodate a fourth lane. Johnson stated that mainline bridges can be done, but Wire Road and Baboosic Lake Road cannot because there is no room for a 4<sup>th</sup> lane. Smith commented that the increase in cost was constrained as much as possible and they looked at options and costs to build bridges to accommodate widening for today. Leedy asked if multimodal accommodations are accounted for on those roads. Johnson stated that the Baboosic Lake Road bridge is planned with sidewalks on the south side and maybe on the north with shoulders on both.

There was discussion between Fox, Johnson and Lantos on the need for 4 lanes and the overpass bridges in Merrimack if not re-constructed. Lantos stated that he did some 30-year TransCAD modeling using 1.5% and 2% land use growth rates. He noted there was sufficient capacity with the 3 lane configuration using a 1.5% growth rate, but there were capacity issues in the peak hours using a higher 2% growth rate. Lantos added that that a 2% growth rate was unlikely but if we did achieve it, there would be a need for that 4<sup>th</sup> lane in the future. He added that from 2000-2010, there was less than half percent growth rate projected out to 2040. Marchant asked if it was possible to run an analysis with rail. Lantos stated that you would just deduct 1000 per day. Marchant felt it would be a nice piece of data to have. Lantos said that he could run that. Johnson stated that when DOT ran their analysis, they used a growth rate of 1.24%. Lantos commented that 1.24% seems like a more reasonable rate to use and that he used a higher rate.

Smith stated that it would be a good opportunity to hear perspectives on the bridges and a 4<sup>th</sup> lane at the hearings. A member asked what the cost was for an additional lane. Smith stated that lane miles and cost is similar in nature to I-93 which has a cost of about \$800M. A rough cost estimate for the Everett would be about \$485M for 12 miles.

Lantos asked Johnson if she was pretty confident of the timeframe for the widening. She said pretty confident and additional costs have been factored into the timeframe. She added that she is looking at strategies to move forward the environmental process and ROW process aspects of the project.

Miller asked about the ITS Corridor-wide from Nashua to Concord project and what these projects were doing that the widening project is not. Smith said that portions are being done; prioritized big bang for your buck elements to supplement the corridor project or include for a 2<sup>nd</sup> corridor-wide improvements for the future.

Tuomala commented and asked, if in 25-30 years you will be back a capacity issues with the 3 lanes and have to rebuild the 2 bridges again, is it really cost effective. It was noted that rebuilding the Baboosic Lake Road overpass would be particularly disruptive given the location of Merrimack's town hall, police station and schools. Smith stated that it is cost effective for today, adding that if you go wider, you also have to go higher. Johnson encouraged the group to state your concerns and push for the bridge widenings if that's what you feel is necessary in a letter to the Executive Office and at the public meetings. Include your concerns regarding the disruptions to the businesses on Baboosic Lake Road (Town Hall, Police Department, Schools). Tuomala asked if a motion from TTAC, in addition to a letter be helpful. Smith and Johnson stated that they are not going to take a position and it is up to TTAC. Elmer asked Johnson and Smith whether changing the bridge capability for 4 lanes would impact the timeline needed for construction. Johnson said no, just cost. Husband commented on the uncertain future for traffic in NH, adding that roadway improvements are less sexy due to fiscal constraint issues and that we may be planning for something that may never come to fruition.

### **STATE FREIGHT PLAN PRESENTATION BY LUCY ST. JOHN, NHDOT**

Lantos introduced St. John. St. John greeted the TTAC and provided a brief presentation on the State Freight Plan. St. John explained the reason we need a freight plan is that in order for each state to access National Highway Freight Program funding and obligate freight formula funds, they are required to develop a State Freight Plan. St. John noted that at the completion of the State Freight Plan, you should have an improved understanding of:

- The types and routes of freight travel within, out and through NH;
- More detailed congestion/ travel delay data;
- Improved mode-share details;
- The role of NH's freight system within the larger regional/national and international freight system;
- Commodity/economics data

St. John noted the public outreach efforts conducted and moving forward as part of the Plan and members involved in the State Freight Advisory Committee. She also noted the information gathering of plans, documents and data aspect from plans and studies from various statewide agencies including RPC plans and data, NHDOT plans, traffic data, bridge, rail and rail lines condition data, existing deficiencies and restrictions, trends and commodities flow data. St. John summarized the draft NH Freight Plan Goals & Objectives and reviewed the highway, rail, airport and port infrastructure in NH. St. John stated that she was looking for feedback from TTAC on the following questions:

1. What are some of the challenges that face New Hampshire regarding freight movement and planning for freight?
2. Where are growth areas in the region and City of Nashua?
3. What are the greatest barriers and bottlenecks for efficient freight movement in the Region and City of Nashua?
4. How will land use planning decisions affect, influence and address freight planning issues in the Region and City of Nashua? For example urban design elements, zoning regulations, noise, parking and etc.
5. What suggestions do you have engaging the public and others in this conversation?

Chizmas asked if she had seen or is looking at changes resulting from increased with home delivery by Amazon. St. John said part of the general discussion is to adapt to those changes. Levine stated that Formula Funds identify projects that will use the funds, and asked whether DOT would have to go through the TYP and MPO processes and how she would envision this process working. St. John said DOT is waiting for the plan to be finished and that she did not have a concrete answer for that but it will have to be addressed. Marchant

commented on a major issue in Nashua with the west freight rail spur stressing the horrible condition of the tracks. She asked if dollars could go to private entities to fix the tracks. St. John said those components are being looked at but she was unsure about the private entities getting receiving dollars to repair tracks. Chizmas asked if funds other than freight funds could be used, what is eligible and whether there is any new money. She also sought to get a sense of timelines and where to make improvements. Levine stated that the money is already being apportioned but can't be spent until the Plan is approved. He added that there is \$4.5M in new funds.

#### **TMA PROGRAMMING PROCESS DRAFT UPDATE**

Lantos provided a brief update on the Draft TMA Programming Process. He summarized the draft agreement sections proposed for replacement which are the establishment of a TMA Committee and TMA Committee Duties. He noted that this would entail sub-allocated funding to be divided between the SNHPC, Nashua RPC, and Rockingham Planning Commission utilizing a formula based on 50% population and 50% federal-aid eligible lane miles in the urbanized area. Lantos pointed out that NRPC Communities comprise 71% of the population of the Nashua UZA and 67% of the federal-aid eligible lane miles. He also noted that RPC is included since small portions of Salem & Hampstead in Nashua UZA. Lantos stated that sub-allocated funding can be programmed according to existing processes within each MPO without the need to form a new joint policy committee for this purpose. Lastly, Lantos referred to the PowerPoint slides included in the agenda packet and reviewed the estimate of TMA sub-allocated funding.

#### **STAFF UPDATES**

Waitkins informed the group that NRPC's listing of 2017 Federally Obligated Projects has been posted on the NRPC website. Waitkins also reviewed the projects in the January Minor Revision:

- **Regional Projects:** Nashua (60900C) Nashua Transit System Fleet Replacement / Decrease of \$3,420 in SFY19 due to a decrease in inflation.
- **SNHPC MPO Projects:** Salem–Manchester (14800a,b,c,h) I-93, various projects due to a decrease in inflation and funding type change.
- **Statewide Projects:** FTA (5310) Capital Program / Updated figures based on FTA apportionment funds. Nashua UZA apportionment taken out -\$765,843,
- 16 total statewide projects which is part of the delighting project to reduce the number of streetlights. (Minkarah noted that Amherst has been informed that a significant number of lights are proposed for removal along 101, 101A and 122 and that letters from the DOT regarding removals may be coming to other communities.).

Lantos informed the group that the update to the MTP season is coming up along with project solicitation.

#### **ADJOURN**

Motion to adjourn came from Chamberlain with a second from Fox. The meeting ended at 1:41pm.