


DRAFT MINUTES
NRPC TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
April 14th, 2021

Members Present:

Natasha Kypfer, Town of Amherst Eric Hahn, Town of Amherst Tad Putney, Town of Brookline Troy Brown, Town of Litchfield Mark Chamberlain, Town of Lyndeborough Dawn Tuomala, Town of Merrimack Caleb Cheng, Town of Hudson – NRPC Cassie Mullen, Town of Mason – NRPC Lincoln Daley, Town of Milford Camille Pattison, NTS Leigh Levine, FHWA Linda Dusenberry, NH DOT	John Savage, NTS Wayne Husband, City of Nashua Julie Chizmas, City of Nashua Matt Sullivan, City of Nashua Pete Kohalmi, City of Nashua Lucy St. John, NH DOT Tim White, NH DES Jeff Gowan, Town of Pelham Jennifer Beauregard, Town of Pelham Peter Howd, Town of Wilton Paul Branscombe, Town of Wilton
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Others Present

Stephanie Cronin, Executive Director – Middlesex 3 Coalition Jennifer Beck, Town of Wilton George Bower, Town of Amherst	Wendy Hunt, Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce Patrick Daniel Christopher Buchanan, Town of Amherst Eric Slosek
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STAFF PRESENT

Gregg Lantos, MPO Coordinator Matt Waitkins, Senior Transportation Planner	Derek Stahl, Transportation Planner Mason Twombly, Regional-Environmental Planner Sara Siskavich, Assistant Director
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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. The protocol for participation in the virtual meeting was presented.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 10TH, 2021 MEETING

Lantos referred to the minutes from March 10th, 2021 included in the agenda packet as Attachment 1.

Dusenberry abstained and there were no other objections to the minutes. The minutes were approved.

NRPC INTER-REGIONAL TRANSIT EXPANSION STUDY

Cheng began by giving a brief description of the study and the current status. The main purpose of the study is to look to expand the Nashua region transit system into the neighboring Massachusetts communities which would be funded through the FTA Section 5305(e) grant. Expanding the transit system into Massachusetts addresses multiple issues and offers up opportunities to improve existing conditions like traffic congestion, economic development, environmental sustainability, and social equity. The proposed routes that are being studied currently are from Nashua Center to the Lowell Gallagher Center, UMass Lowell, Alewife MBTA Station, and Burlington clusters. This study will include support from regional plans and studies including NMCOG, BMPO, and M3C. Cheng stated that a central part of this study is to perform operational analysis on regulations, funding, and

operational models. Expanding NTS/LRTA service, partnering with M3 TMA, forming a new Nashua TMA, and commercial operator options are all examples of operational models that will be explored through the study.

Cronin began her presentation with an overview of the Middlesex 3 Coalition. The Middlesex 3 Coalition is a public-private partnership and a regional economic development organization incorporated in 2012 which includes 10 municipalities as well as about 150 regional members to improve business development along the Rt 3 corridor. There are 4 subcommittees within M3C which include the Transportation Subcommittee, Education/Workforce Development, Real Estate/Infrastructure, and Economic Development. The Middlesex 3 TMA was created to address transportation issues in the M3 Communities and offer a ride-matching database, emergency ride home programs, vanpool formation assistance, transit benefits, “last mile” connections, and Shuttle services, etc. M3 TMA was started by receiving funding and splitting it equally amongst the first 5 companies that joined. The money given to the companies was about half of what was needed for the shuttle service, and this continued for the first year. Cronin stated the importance of committing to a year of service because that is the only way that potential riders will begin to make changes to their daily travel routines. Lantos stated that the area of interest for this study was focused on the Bedford/Billerica area along Rt 3 and also asked if it would be possible to share names of companies that have already expressed interest in a shuttle from Nashua to M3. Cronin responded that Mitre, Millipore, and Hanscombe Air Force would be great partners as they all do a lot of transportation work and have employees in the Nashua region. She also stated that microshuttles tend to do better compared to a regular shuttle with multiple stops. 45 minutes is the longest that a typical rider will chose to ride for and introducing a route with multiple stops makes it difficult to get riders on and off within that time frame, ultimately deterring them from using the service. Lantos responded by stating that the microshuttles seemed to be very similar to setting up a van pool and that his concern is that if you set up a microshuttle to individual companies or a small group of companies that eventually over time, those riders will change jobs and you are left to assume that the company will replace the riders which isn’t necessarily true.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS

Waitkins provided a summary of the objectives/outcomes from the TAP presentations and additional steps. He stated that the presentations will proceed alphabetically and that TTAC members will rank the projects using the link provided with only one vote per community and that this ranking is equal to 10% of the regional score. The next step is project scoring by the subcommittee which will be submitted to NRPC staff. NRPC staff will then compile the subcommittee rankings, TTAC rankings, and tally final weighted scores which will be reviewed and approved by the subcommittee to be finalized and submitted to NH DOT.

Amherst began with a presentation from Buchanan, Hahn, and Bower. Buchanan started with a brief overview of the project. The project initiative is to create two multi-modal districts with enhanced bike/ped facilities with a multi-use path to connect them. Not only is the project addressing the need to connect the two districts, but it is also being planned out in a cost-effective way by planning this projects timing along with other construction projects that are currently planned, saving up to 60% per linear foot by doing so. Buchanan stated that the core concepts of this recommendation were reiterated by several other plans and recommendations including the Amherst Pedestrian/Bikeway (2001), Transportation and Community Systems Preservations Study for Amherst, NH (2006), Clark-Wilkins Elementary & Amherst Middle Schools Safe Routes to School Travel Plan (2013), Amherst Multimodal Trail (2018), Nashua Region Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2019-2045 (2018), and the Amherst Multimodal Master Plan (2019). Hahn stated that there is a great deal of support from the board of selectmen and residents. The project will likely be completed with or without the TAP grant, however, the TAP grant will provide a rapid expansion of the network so that people will see the positives of shared streets. Bower stated the TAP grant will allow them to significantly enhance the safety of pedestrians/bicyclists on their roadways. He also stated that if you can change the perception of drivers (what they see, feel, etc.) you can change their behavior, so by adding proven bike/ped designs and features to their roadways they can improve the safety

Litchfield's presentation on the Pinecrest Rd sidewalk extension was given by Brown. He stated the 3 goals of the project are: 1) To fill the gap in the pedestrian network linking all three schools, the Town Hall complex, and Litchfield's most popular parks 2) Enhance safety of students within walking distance of Elementary/Middle Schools 3) Provide a safe pedestrian connection to the Albuquerque multi-purpose path for several neighborhoods along Pinecrest Rd. In the past, the town decided that it needed to connect the Elementary School with the Albuquerque multi-use path and constructed a sidewalk along Pinecrest Rd extending to the Middle School. The purpose of this grant would be to fill the existing 5,000 ft gap from the Middle School to the multi-use path. Reiterating the fact that the Albuquerque multi-use path is used heavily and is an integral part of their pedestrian infrastructure, Brown stated that 70% of Litchfield's residents live within a 10-minute walking distance from the path. As far as any barriers regarding construction, the extension of the sidewalk can be built entirely on an existing right-of-way, no driveways or mailboxes are allowed on Pinecrest Rd, there is moderate terrain with sandy soils, few if any utility pole relocations, and only one culvert. Gauging public interest/excitement among the public with the support of this application, there will be no issue in collecting the necessary funding for the local match.

Merrimack's presentation for the Daniel Webster Highway sidewalk extension was presented by Tuomala. The goal of the project is to provide a safe and inviting access for the town residents/visitors who would then patronize local business and visit key destinations in the Town Center Area. The scope of work will construct a total of 3,600 ft of sidewalk along Daniel Webster Highway connecting existing segments to make on continuous sidewalk. The project area would extend from Souhegan River to the 360 Plaza. There was total support from town council, as well as the town center committee, and the planning board. The police chief supports this project as well for safety reasons. As for financial readiness, the project has been outlined in the 2002 and 2013 Master Plan as well as the 2019 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Additionally, sidewalks have been included in the 2021/2027 Capital Improvement Program. The funding will be taken from the Town's Infrastructure Capital Reserve Fund for the local match. This project does not have any historic, cultural, or environmental obstacles and the town has completed two other sidewalk projects though the 2012 Transportation Enhancements Program on Daniel Webster Highway. Safety issues along this corridor include pedestrians crossing at Souhegan River without any crosswalk as well as having a high traffic volume with around 16,000 cars per day and about 1,400 during peak hours. For these reasons, advanced skill/knowledge are needed to cross Daniel Webster Hwy and have caused serious accidents in the area.

Nashua began its presentation for the multi-use path on Spruce St presented by Chizmas. If accepted, the project would provide a vital link between the Nashua Riverwalk and future Heritage Rail Trail East which ultimately then could link you to the Mine Falls Park as well as many other locations in the downtown area. Chizmas referenced the Nashua Bicycle & Pedestrian Project completed by NRPC in 2020 though which the public identified below-average grades regarding how well it accommodates biking and walking. More specifically, Main St/Downtown was an area that was identified as needing improvement. The path will provide easier/better access to important services like the town hall, transit center, post-office, senior center, etc. The scope of the project includes improving a section of existing rail with trail beginning at the Nashua Riverwalk/pedestrian bridge and ending at Temple St (approx. 400') along with enhancing the safety of Temple St crossing. Additionally, the scope includes constructing a multi-use path and landscaped buffer beginning at Temple St and ending at Heritage Rail Trail East (approx. 900'). Proposed improvements include a widening/resurfacing of existing trail, installation of HAWK system at Temple St crossing, and construction of a 10ft wide, paved, multi-use path with 5 ft landscaped buffers on the east side of the street. There are about 11,200 people and 5,100 households within the project area showing that this project is in a highly residential area. The project is supported by the Mayor Jim Donchess as well as the Nashua Senior Center and BAE Systems. Chamberlain asked whether-or-not the city intended on reconstructing Spruce St, recentering the crown to the middle of the road. Kohalmi responded that they are intending on recentering the crown.

Pelham's presentation was given by Gowan and started by explaining the importance and history behind the Abbott Bridge. It was built in 1837 and is the oldest double-arched stone ridge to survive in New Hampshire and has become a part of the community's character. Because of the age of the bridge, it is very narrow making it difficult for pedestrians/bicyclists to cross safely. This area connects the schools and town offices to the main commercial district. The project would include extending sidewalk along Old Bridge St to the Abbott Bridge which will connect with a walking path downstream to the pedestrian bridge, with another walking path on the other side which will connect back with the proposed sidewalk extension on Old Bridge St which would extend to Rt 38. There is currently a flood relief structure that is being planned on this bridge and opposed to disturbing the area twice for two different projects, it would make sense to go in and do both at one time and the TAP grant would allow for that to happen. The new pedestrian bridge would not only provide safe access for pedestrians to cross but would also allow for pedestrians to view and appreciate the historic bridge. The Pelham BOS and Pelham School District are both in support of this project. Chamberlain questioned how they were proposing to get pedestrians across Rt 38. Gowan responded that they would likely have a crosswalk where the proposed walkway meets back up with Old Bridge St where they could then cross Rt 38 on the northern side of the intersection.

Wilton's presentation was given by Beck. She began by stating that the Stony Brook Pedestrian Bridge is the keystone connecting two new urban trails on the western part of downtown and will complete the downtown western loop of the Wilton Riverwalk phases 1,2, and 3. With Rt 101 and Rt 31 running through Wilton's downtown, it leads to heavy levels of traffic which has caused numerous pedestrian and bicycle accidents. Currently, there is no easy way to cross through this area with only one auto bridge to cross with no crosswalks forcing an unsafe crossing for pedestrians. The scoping was done through comparing cost estimates from GPI Landscape Architects, Contech Engineered Solutions, and NH DOT estimates. The project is located on town owned land and donated easements but does require shoreland, stormwater, and wetlands permitting. The appropriate funding is available for the 20% local match through private donations and taxations. This bridge will fill in a gap in the pedestrian network, create an alternative route from school, attract and encourage increased foot traffic, and activate municipal parking lot. Support for the bridge is found through the Master Plan, NH DOT's TYP, NRPC's Economic Feasibility Impact Study, Plan NH Community Design Charrette, multiple approved warrants, and a unanimous BOS vote in favor of the TAP application. Chamberlain asked whether-or-not the BOS understood that it would have to pay the full \$750,000 which Beck responded they did.

NHDOT, NHDES, FHWA UPDATES

Municipal - No Updates

DES – Open solicitation round for State Clean Diesel Program with an April 19th deadline. Information can be found on DES website or can get in touch with White. At a governor council meeting on March 24th, they approved a grant agreement with Revision Energy of Portland Maine which is to construct and operate some level 2 electric vehicle chargers in Concord.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 2:17 pm.