



SALEM-PLAISTOW-WINDHAM TAC Committee Meeting

MINUTES

Friday, January 12, 2001
Newton Town Hall

Members Present: Merylyn Senter, Plaistow; Joe Guthrie, Hampstead; Steve Laurin, Newton; Ellen Faulconer, Kingston; Jim Turse, Salem; Becky Ohler, NHDES; and Bill Watson, NHDOT.

Others Present: Hiram Morrill, District 5, NHDOT; Shelly Winters, NHDOT Rideshare Coordinator; Jim Terlizzi, and Tony Komornick, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission; Dave Walker, Cliff Sinnott, and Roxanne Rines, RPC.

9:08 SPW TAC MEETING OPENED

1. Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves and stated what municipality they were from or the agency they represented.

2. Communications

The communications file was distributed for members to review. **Walker** stated under other business he is adding: funding issues on the I-93 corridor concerning bus service and discussion of a new TAC chair. **Faulconer** asked Walker if he had spoken with Glenn Greenwood about the Route 125 Access Management Plan. **Walker** stated no, but he will speak with him.

3. Approval of Minutes from October 27, 2000, TAC Meeting

Motion: **Senter** made a motion to accept the minutes as written. **Faulconer** seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

4. 2001-2003 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Air Quality Conformity Determination

Walker briefed members on the memorandums that were in their packets. He continued that normally the above would have gone before the TAC before going to Policy; however, there wasn't enough time before the adoption deadline. As far as he knows the MPO is making conformity, due to a new program called TIER II. The air quality conformity determination document is available for review in the correspondence file and on the RPC website.

Watson stated the four MPO's, DOT, DES, and FTA met last Friday. Overall, it seems like a complete document, with all the pieces going together well. The final document will be sent to Federal Highways, FTA and EPA today. Discussion ensued amongst members about how air quality conformity was met and attachment II.

5. 2003-2005 STIP Kickoff

Walker stated the development of the TIP is an 18 month to 2 year process, at the same time the long range plan will be updated. He distributed a handout staff received from DOT, outlining the projects that the districts and other departments submitted to Concord, to be added to the ten year plan this round. As a reference Walker distributed the full list of SPW projects that were submitted in the 2001-03 TIP process.

Walker questioned Watson about if a project is in the ten-year plan within the 2003-05 range, is it automatically in the STIP or does it have to go through the same process? **Watson** stated it should go through the same process. DOT met with all of the Planning Commissions about funding for projects and stated that NH DOT added a lot of projects in the last ten-year plan. Approximately \$180 million dollars worth of local projects statewide. DOT's message to Planning Commissions is that they have to be aware of what new projects they want added as well as re-emphasizing the priorities of existing projects.

Watson continued that every project in the approved ten-year plan is fair game for changing priority, and status. He recommended that MPO's complete an open review of submitted projects, make sure the current priorities are correct and if not this is the time to speak up. There will not be as much new project funding as there has been in the past, this is the time to arrange priorities.

- A. Review of TIP Process
- B. Project Solicitation Materials

Walker stated staff will be developing a draft TIP with a list of projects the MPO wants added to the ten-year program. He continued that a letter will going to towns soon asking them to review past projects that were not included in the ten-year plan and decide if those are their priority projects. If unfunded projects are still the towns priority, than staff is asking towns to submit letters of support for such projects. Project application forms will be sent to towns if they wish to submit new projects or change their project priorities.

Guthrie asked what happens when a project is being funded through another source? **Walker** stated if a current project that has been identified in the TIP has funding through another source the town may want to submit another project for the current TIP.

Senter asked what happened to the project to coordinate traffic signals on 125? **Walker** stated that project was included in the 1998 CMAQ round and is scheduled for construction in 2001. He continued that towns are welcome to submit new projects; however, they must remember that there isn't a lot of funding.

Sinnott asked Hiram Morrill, (NH DOT) if he had any thoughts about any particular highway project priorities that he would like the MPO to include? **Morrill** stated none that comes to mind. **Sinnott** asked what is happening with the North Policy/111 intersection in Salem, there was a plan to do some force account work? **Morrill** stated the above intersection is under construction. **Turse** stated at this point the road is stripped as a wide shoulder and paved. The center island construction and intersection reconfigurations were not completed before snow, they should be done in the spring.

Turse continued to speak about sections of North Policy Road and that as new businesses build on the road they will be responsible for improvements.

Sinnott stated he needs to speak with Jeff Brillhart about whether the planned park & rides in conjunction with I-93 are going to proceed as independent projects and should they be put into this TIP as proposals. He continued he suspects they should be. **Turse** stated he has had discussions with DOT about strengthening South Policy Street, it is not shown anywhere in the program and it should be.

Sinnott asked if members had any other specific project ideas that they want to bring up? **Laurin** stated the intersection of Rowe's corner and 108, it is a strange intersection and needs to be better defined. **Sinnott** stated the first step to complete are some onsite turning movements and traffic counts and do a signal warrant analysis, than proceed from there. **Guthrie** stated the town of Hampstead's next project will be the intersection of Route 125 and Depot Road.

Faulconer stated the town of Kingston has a 26-lot subdivision being proposed that will impact Route 125/Hunt Road intersection. It will be located off of Hunt Road but the owners are proposing to have access onto Route 125 about 100 feet from Hunt Road. **Sinnott** asked if there was anyway to discourage access onto Route 125? **Faulconer** stated she is looking into the above because the back of the property abuts Old Coach/Mill Road area. However, there are a lot of wetlands at the back of the property. She continued that if the proposed project is allowed access on Route 125, it will cause more problems at the Hunt Road intersection.

Sinnott stated on Mike Burlage's list he included widening a section of 111 from Central Street in Hampstead to the southerly most Hampstead/Atkinson town line. This would include 12 foot lanes with six foot shoulders, making the cross section uniform. **Guthrie** stated the above project will probably help the East Road intersection.

Morrill stated that in conjunction with the I-93 widening there needs to be some pavement work in Salem and Windham. **Sinnott** stated another project is the Hilldale Avenue upgrade in Atkinson, there have been some improvements, but the idea is to make it match the same in Haverhill.

Sinnott mentioned that statewide, the financial constraints are even more difficult this round than the last. He continued that on smaller intersection type projects the MPO needs to be looking at other funding sources, such as State Aid Reconstruction and Safety Program rather than the TIP.

Watson stated that DOT looked at the ten-year plan when approved and realized that a lot of the bigger projects were overly aggressive. There is possibly \$150 million dollars available for the next 10-year plan. He suggested that towns apply for projects through the TIP process and than look at the other funding sources available.

C. Project Selection Procedures

Walker stated once applications are received, staff will be conducting an involved process to review, rank, and prioritize the projects from the MPO's perspective. He reviewed attachment 3, which outlines how the process will proceed. **Walker** reviewed the list of important dates in the selection process.

Walker stated when projects are received in the office, they will be entered into a data base called TELUS (Transportation, Economic & Land Use System), which was co-developed by the Federal

Highway Administration and is an add-on to Microsoft Access. It is designed for managing and tracking transportation projects.

He continued that also included as part of TELUS is a scoring component that allows users to score and prioritize project. After the scoring and prioritizing is completed by staff, TAC will review staff's prioritization and make their own judgements. Then the same process will happen at the Policy Committee level. **Walker** reviewed attachment 3E, which described the TIP scoring and ranking process.

D. Public Informational Meeting

Walker stated a public informational meeting will be held on either January 23rd or 25th, possibly at the Plaistow Public Library for any towns needing assistance with their application forms.

E. Open Discussion with NHDOT and MPO Staff

Walker stated if an application was submitted in the last round, all staff is looking for is a letter stating that the town is still in support of the project, what number priority it is and to include any new information that may be available. Applications only need to be filled out if it is a new project.

He continued that last round TE and CMAQ projects were requested along with the TIP projects; however, this year that is not the case. TE and CMAQ projects have a different timeline and they will be kept separate to make it easier for staff to manage.

Faulconer asked what an on-shelf project is? **Watson** stated an on-shelf project shows the date the project could be advertised if additional funding were available. At the end of every cycle there are usually projects that have been delayed, when that happens DOT goes to the on-shelf list for projects. There was further discussion about TELUS and how ranking and scoring will be completed.

6. **Hampstead Park & Ride [Shelley Winters, Rideshare Coordinator NH DOT]**

Winters distributed handouts referencing the park & rides in the area. She asked if members had any ideas as to why there is a lack of use at the Hampstead Park & Ride? **Sinnott** stated he believes most of the problem is the lot is hidden behind trees and that the entrance is not well defined.

Members suggestions for increasing usage included: having tasteful signs on both 111 and 121 to notify vehicles of the approaching park & ride before the intersections; signs showing where the entrance is located; getting the local paper to do an article on the park & ride and the ride share program; distribute pamphlets to town halls and libraries; and contacting the local cable network.

Winters stated there are a lot of commuters who go to Massachusetts through Hampstead, she asked for help to identify the large employers in Massachusetts. She continued that she is also looking into using staffers for marketing park & rides and asked if the RPC could have a link from their website to the rideshare website. She stated the ride share application can be taken over the phone or is available on their website.

Sinnott asked if there was any airport shuttles that serve the area? Members were not aware of any. He continued that one of the area providers might be interested in using the park & ride if it

was worth their time. **Ohler** stated she heard that Flight Line had been looking to start service in the area.

Sinnott asked how to request a sign permit from the town of Hampstead? **Guthrie** replied a request needs to be made to the Code Enforcement Officer/Building Department. **Winter** asked members for memos with their input as to where some good locations for the signs would be.

Sinnott stated the RPC will contact Flight Line and indicate that they may want to serve this location and he continued that the office will distribute flyers to town clerk offices.

7. Regional Bike Plan Update

Walker displayed the draft bike plan network map and stated there will be five statewide public meetings to review the regional network map. The map will be finalized in time for the May bike/ped conference. He stated for further information contact Maura Carriel of the RPC office.

Turse stated the town of Salem has some problems with the Salem link. He suggested the state look at links with other roads, perhaps Lowell Road would be a better connection. Discussion continued about the bike network. **Sinnott** stated Maura will attend the next meeting.

8. Prospectus Update

Walker stated the prospectus will be updated (it hasn't been started yet) when it is completed a draft will be sent to TAC members for their comments.

9. Rail Safety Education Outreach – Portland to Boston Rail Service

Sinnott stated the local informational meetings have concluded and soon the public safety education outreach meetings will begin. There was unhappiness expressed at the Kingston meeting due to the previous handling of crossing safety concerns and the maintenance of the right-of-way.

He continued that a letter was sent to the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) notifying them of the concerns with the Kingston crossing, the general coordination of safety/emergency response, and asked them to review the safety crossings in the corridor and encourage better cooperation between the town of Kingston and the railroad. The response from the railroad was that they weren't happy with the letter. There was a call from the FRA, telling communities that they are ready to help them deal with their relationship with the railroad.

He continued that Operation Lifesaver Outreach in the communities has begun. Maura has conducted a couple of Operation Lifesaver presentations and is scheduled to do more. If anyone within a community is interested in becoming an Operation Lifesaver presenter, contact Maura.

Sinnott stated the date of start-up service is set for May 1, 2001. All the issues are not resolved, there is concern about who will be liable at the station sites. There is an upcoming meeting between the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (who is running the service) and Guilford. If the items are not resolved there, they will need to return to the Surface Transportation Board because they are at an impasse again.

10. Project Updates

A. I-93 Advisory Task Force

Sinnott stated the project is in the planning and environmental impact statement preparation phase. Officials from DOT and the consultant have attended a local officials meetings in each of the corridor communities showing the primary alternatives that have been identified for each section of the road and each interchange.

At this time, the project is being widdled down to the package of alternatives that are going to be carried forward into the EIS. A rationale report will be published within the next month, included in the report will be a description of the alternatives that will be pursued and an explanation as to why some alternatives have been dropped.

Sinnott stated staff's comments have been that there needs to be a definitive analysis of whether the future rail alternatives should be in the corridor as is being considered or should it be on the Manchester/Lawrence line. There needs to be a resolution to the above.

Sinnott stated non-rail alternatives that will be carried in the project will be expanded bus service and enhanced bus service. Expanded bus service: expanding the intercity Boston bound bus service currently on I-93, this will happen in conjunction with the construction of park & rides lots at each interchange except Exit 1. Enhanced bus service: service to the major employers in the I-93 corridor and the Woburn Transportation Center.

Sinnott stated the MPO had a project in 1995 that set aside \$144,000 to stimulate the beginning of intercity bus service from Windham and Salem into Boston. This money was "flexed" from federal highway funds into the Federal Transit Administration category to pay for the leasing of two buses over a two-year period.

The MPO and DOT Bureau of Rail & Transit selected Concord Trailways to be the operator. Concord Trailways had a condition of their acceptance that stated "until there is an available Park & Ride in Salem service will not begin.

Sinnott continued that because of the condition the project was put into suspension. The Park & Ride has run into major problems with wetland issues. The DOT is looking into building a park & ride at Exit 2, in conjunction with the I-93 widening. He continued that there is not a lot that can be done to recover the money, it is in danger of lapsing and being returned to Washington at the end of this year.

When this item was presented to the Policy Meeting, it was suggested that the MPO consider (before letting the money go) whether or not to give the money to the Methuen Park & Ride (they service the same commuters that the original project was intended for). Staff has agreed to pursue this idea with DOT and to speak with Merrimack Valley Planning Commission.

Sinnott stated the MPO would need to find an operator that would start up service in Windham, use the Methuen Park & Ride and head into Boston.

Sinnott mentioned that the DOT analysis from their I-93 consultant has suggested that even ideal conditions having HOV lanes is not in the best use of the configuration of lanes on the highway and their determination is to not recommend HOV lanes.

Komornick stated there is a meeting Friday, January 19th, between the Massachusetts and NH DOT's and Planning Commissions to discuss I-93. **Ohler** stated that she feels that DES should be

in attendance at Fridays meeting. **Sinnott** stated he will mention inviting DES to Jeff Brillhart. The meeting is at the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission office at 1:00 p.m.

B. NH 125 Corridor Study

Sinnott distributed a handout with an update for the above project and stated the consultant and DOT are working out a fee schedule for the contract, which is still at least a month away.

C. Transportation Plan update

Walker stated this item was discussed earlier in the meeting and it will be completed concurrently with this TIP cycle.

11. **Other Business**

Walker stated voting a new chair will be done at the beginning of the next meeting.

12. **Adjourn**

Motion: Senter made a motion to adjourn at 11:50 a.m. **Ohler** seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Roxanne M. Rines
Recording Secretary