

GPCOG Executive Committee

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

noon – 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

Amended 5/17/23 by changing date of meeting and adding information to item #10

In-Person:

Greater Portland Council of Governments

970 Baxter Boulevard, Room 201

Portland, Maine

(Lunch provided)

Remote:

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86844969864>

Phone: 1 301 715 8592

Webinar ID: 868 4496 9864

*Participating by phone? Use *9 to raise your hand and *6 to unmute.*

As of April 26, 2022 GPCOG and PACTS are holding committee meetings in hybrid format, both in person at GPCOG's offices and via webinar. The remote portions of all meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of GPCOG Executive Committee policy, [LD 1772](#), [PL 2022 Ch. 666](#), and [1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1](#).

1. Welcome

This meeting is being recorded and will be made available at gpcog.org/AgendaCenter.

2. Public Comment

Members of the public are welcome to provide up to three minutes of public comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.

3. Approval of the 4/25/23 Meeting Minutes (Attachment A)

4. Spotlight: GPCOG Radio Show **10 minutes**

Teagan Betori, Communications Specialist, will discuss GPCOG’s new radio show, called [Let’s Connect Greater Portland](#). The show is on WMPG (90.9 FM) every Thursday at 11:30 a.m. and available as a podcast on Spotify.

5. Executive Director’s Report (Attachment B) **5 minutes**

6. FY24 Executive Committee Members and Officers **10 minutes**

Staff Report:

At the GPCOG Annual Summit on May 25, the General Assembly will appoint the members of the Executive Committee and its officers. The GPCOG bylaws call for an Executive Committee of 9 to 11 members, and:

“Each member of the Executive Committee shall be a representative of a member municipality or County of Cumberland to the General Assembly. The Executive Committee shall include a mix of elected municipal officers and senior municipal staff, the majority of which shall be elected municipal officers and shall reflect a geographic balance and diversity of the GPCOG membership.”

Officer positions are President, First Vice President, Second Vice President/Treasurer.

The nominating committee recommends the below slate for FY24.

1. Jarrod Maxfield, **Windham** Town Council - President
2. Mary Fernandes, **Casco** Select Board – First Vice President
3. Krista Chappell, **Gray** Town Councilor – Second Vice President
4. Jerre Bryant, **Westbrook** City Administrator
5. Mark Dion, **Portland** City Councilor
6. Kate Lewis, **South Portland** Mayor
7. Carmen Lone, Chair, **Bridgton** Select Board
8. Matthew Sturgis, **Cape Elizabeth** Town Manager
9. Nat Tupper, **Yarmouth** Town Manager
10. Sue Witonis, **Cumberland County** Commissioner
11. Viktoria Wood, **Chebeague Island** Town Administrator

Recommended Action:

Recommend proposed slate of Executive Committee members and Executive Committee Officers to the General Assembly.

7. Regional Prosperity Plan (Attachment C) **15 minutes**

Staff Report

The U.S. Economic Development Administration designated GOCOG as the Economic Development

District (EDD) for Greater Portland over 10 years ago. One part of GPCOG’s responsibilities as EDD is to produce a 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies document (CEDS). The plan must be adopted by the Executive Committee before the end of June. Chris Hall, Director of Regional Initiatives, will present the draft CEDS entitled *Greater Portland’s Regional Prosperity Plan 2023-2028* for members review, comment, and adoption. [This is a link to the full text](#). Attachment C includes a summary version.

Recommended Action

Review, modify as needed, and adopt the region’s Prosperity Plan.

8. Impacts of Member Withdrawal from GPCOG (Attachment D) 20 minutes

Staff Report

In early April, South Portland’s City Manager made GPCOG aware of his proposal to eliminate the City's dues and membership in GPCOG as part in the City’s FY2024 budget. At its April 25th meeting, GPCOG's Executive Committee discussed South Portland’s potential withdrawal from GPCOG and raised questions about both the impact of South Portland’s potential withdrawal on GPCOG as an agency, but also on the city and the region. This was followed by a request for more detailed information and a discussion at our next Executive Committee meeting.

Attachment D provides an analysis of which benefits are exclusive to member communities, and what the impact would be on the region of a member withdrawing.

Recommended Action

Review the impacts of member withdrawal from GPCOG for both the withdrawing municipality and for other GPCOG members.

9. Scope for Strategic Plan Update (Attachment E) 10 minutes

Staff Report

At the February 28th Executive Committee meeting, members offered input on how to scope the strategic planning process to update GPCOG’s current 5-year [Strategic Plan](#). The group said that GPCOG should focus on its traditional role of planning, regionalization, and member services, while noting that GPCOG should continue work on climate and social equity and racial inclusion.

At today’s meeting, Executive Committee members will consider a proposed scope of work for updating the strategic plan.

Recommended Action

Review, modify as needed, and adopt a scope of work for developing GPCOG’s next 5-year strategic plan.

10. Advocacy Positions on New Bills 5 minutes

Staff Report

Since the last meeting of the Executive Committee three pieces of legislation have been printed that staff would like Committee direction on. They are:

[LD 404](#) Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council.

[LD 1450](#) An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council

Staff is recommending GPCOG support for both bills. Please see our [proposed testimony here](#).

[LD 1934](#), *Resolve, to Improve the Coordination and Delivery of Planning Grants and Technical Assistance to Communities in Maine*, directs the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future to review opportunities for structural changes in the organization of State Government and to make recommendations that will result in the improved coordination and implementation of planning grants and technical assistance programs for communities in this State and regional planning and development organizations.

Staff is recommending that GPCOG support of LD 1934 because it offers an opportunity to improve the currently siloed, uncoordinated approach to state funding of regional implementation of state and federal policies.

Recommended Action

Review and take action on proposed GPCOG advocacy positions on LDs 404, 1450, and 1934.

11. FY24 Meeting Calendar

5 minutes

Staff Report

The proposed FY24 meeting calendar is below. The Executive Committee meets eight times during the year. For those eight months, most meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month from 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. There are some exceptions to avoid holidays and vacations.

September 5, 2023 – “Kick-off the year strong” retreat (11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.)

October 17, 2023

November 14, 2023

January 16, 2024

February 27, 2024

March 19, 2024

April 23, 2024

May 14, 2024

May 30, 2024 – General Assembly

Recommended Action

Adopt the FY24 GPCOG Executive Committee meeting calendar.

12. Other Business

Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings

May 25, 2023 – 2 p.m.	General Assembly and Summit at St. Joseph’s College in Standish
September 5, 2023	Fall Retreat Executive Director’s Performance Goals

Board and committee members, the public, and other stakeholders are encouraged to subscribe to the GPCOG Executive Committee calendar at gpcog.org/Calendar.

If you require accommodations to review materials or participate in this meeting (such as captioning or interpreting—at no cost to you), please contact: (207) 774-9891 or transportation@gpcog.org

Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will help us to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

Attachment A

GPCOG Executive Committee

MINUTES

April 25, 2023

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Krista Chappell	Gray
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
John Hawley	Naples
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Mark Dion	Portland

Welcome

Jarrold opened the meeting.

Executive Session

Nat moved the Executive Committee enter into executive session under Title 1 MRS Section 405(6)(A) for the purpose of conducting the executive director's performance evaluation and discussing the executive director's contract. Sue seconded. All were in favor. The group entered Executive Session at and reconvened in public session around 12:30 p.m. Nat moved entering the public session, Sue seconded. All were in favor.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Acceptance of 3/21/23 Minutes

Sue moved approval of the 3/21/23 meeting minutes. Nat seconded. A roll call was conducted. Carmen and Krista abstained, with the remaining members all in favor.

Spotlight: Short Term Rental Member Service

Paul Johnson, Economic Development Director, walked through a demonstration of new software that will enable municipalities to see short-term rentals on the market, license them, charge fees, and enforce non-compliance. Paul noted that GPCOG could centralize this service for all GPCOG's members, that we are piloting this for free with any interested member for a year, and after a year, GPCOG would offer the service for a fraction of the cost of commercial products.

Several Executive Committee members expressed interest in piloting the new product, including Yarmouth, Gray, and Bridgton. Kate said that GPCOG staff should connect with South Portland staff to share with them that this new member service is available. Nat noted that Code Enforcement Officers are booked solid; Carmen agreed and Krista offered that it's always important to notify CEOs. Jarrod asked whether there is any liability to GPCOG for offering the product, and Paul said that GPCOG is consulting with its attorneys on that question. Kate reminded the group that many short-term rentals are corporately owned and are negatively impacting the available housing stock for Mainers. Kristina reinforced this point and said there is an opportunity for more communities in the region to regulate short-term rentals.

Executive Director's Report

Kristina said that Krista is submitting an op-ed to the Portland Press Herald on the importance of local journalism to local government. Look for it in Sunday's paper. GPCOG just received notice from the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development that it will serve as the Domestic Trade Recovery Administrator and will distribute \$6M to qualifying businesses over the next year. She reminded everyone of the May 25th Annual Summit and requested communities bring a 1 minute success to share with the plenary session. She thanked Yarmouth for the latest contribution to the Safe in Maine Fund. The Council just voted to allocate \$20,000, joining Westbrook, Cape, and Scarborough investments.

FY24 Budget

Kristina introduced the goals the draft budget seeks to accomplish, noting the budget is \$5.2M, reduces staff by 1 FTE (senior level), and continues the Resilience Fellows program for municipal members and the region at the level of 10 FTEs. Josh Kochis, Finance Director, walked through the document in detail.

Jerre asked what the impact of South Portland withdrawing from GPCOG will be. Kristina said that it will reduce GPCOG member dues by \$55,000, and will reduce the member services GPCOG can offer, in general, and will also reduce the local match available to attract federal funding to the region.

Matt celebrated that the budget shows an increasing diversification of sources of revenue over the years. Krista echoed this and noted that she is impressed that the budget increased so little given inflationary pressures. She asked about the status of Gray joining PACTS, and Kristina said that it's not possible since the geography is set via federal methodology.

Nat moved to recommend to the General Assembly that the draft FY24 budget be adopted. Krista seconded. The group agreed that the Executive Committee doesn't need to review the budget again at the May meeting, and expressed its hope that the General Assembly will receive the budget for review earlier in May. The roll was called and all were in favor.

Matt moved to postpone that last two items on the agenda to the May meeting due to lack of time left in the meeting. Sue seconded. All agreed. Matt moved adjournment. Sue seconded. All were in favor and the meeting ended at 1:30 p.m.

Attachment B

Executive Director's Report

Strategic Priority – Serve our Members

- **Annual Summit** – Mark your calendars for an in-person event on May 25, 2 p.m. at St. Joseph's College in Standish. Bring your community's 1 minute of "What Works!"
- **Opportunity for Ped/Bike Federal Grants.** Staff convened PACTS communities to discuss how to approach a federal funding opportunity for investments in safety improvements to the region's roads. The managers at the meeting generally felt that a municipality or small group of municipalities could submit an application for implementation funding and that GPCOG could submit a regional application for planning & demonstration projects. This strategy could help maximize our chances for federal funding. Recall – there are separate funding pots for planning & demonstration and implementation and an entity can only apply for one or the other. Municipalities are kindly asked to submit brief project descriptions through [this portal](#) by Thursday, May 11 at 3:00pm.

Strategic Priority – Regional Prosperity

- **Advocacy**
 - **LD 1721** - GPCOG has continued to support housing initiatives including Senator Duson's bill to expand state funding for the construction and operational support of permanent temporary housing in locations across the state. GPCOG and members will offer testimony at the 5/12 hearing on the bill.
 - **LD 1426** – Support for proposal to shift reimbursement of General Assistance from 70% to 90%. Testimony below.
 - **LD 1559** – Support for proposal to increase state funding for bus public transportation. Testimony below.
 - **LD 1729** - Potential support to extend lifetime of TIFs. This has been supported by the Metro Region Coalition. Draft testimony below.

Strategic Priority – Operate with Excellence

- **Recruitment.** Laura Qualey has joined as our new Regional Transportation Planner. Prior to joining GPCOG, Laura was Manager of Client Site Services at BaselineES, LLC, an engineering firm focused on food retail HVAC and refrigeration, based in Yarmouth. Laura grew up in Falmouth.
- **Grants & Contracts.** News since our April meeting includes:

- GPCOG was awarded \$350,000 to provide application technical assistance to businesses and distribute approximately \$6M in Domestic Trade Recovery Grants. The grant money is intended to help COVID-19 affected businesses in the construction, trades, logistics, manufacturing, agriculture, fishing and forestry, information, clean energy, and retail (includes wholesale) industries. The grants will be used to increase access to markets (think money for trade shows, social media support, sales channel support, marketing strategy, materials, and matchmaking).
- Naples selected GPCOG to develop its comprehensive plan.
- Americorps. GPCOG was awarded \$276,000 for 12 AmeriCorps members who will increase the capacity and impact of municipalities and agencies through the Resilience Fellows program. The Fellows will increase municipal and regional capacity for community and environmental resilience, with specific focus on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

LD 1426 – Submitted Testimony

May 5, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Support of LD 1426, *An Act to Secure Housing for the Most Vulnerable Maine Residents by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal General Assistance* and LD 1664 *An Act to Increase Reimbursement Under the General Assistance Program*

Dear Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Meyer, and Committee members;

Please accept this letter as the testimony of the Metro Regional Coalition (MRC) in support of LD 1426, *An Act to Secure Housing for the Most Vulnerable Maine Residents by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal General Assistance*, and LD 1664 *An Act to Increase Reimbursement Under the General Assistance Program*.

The MRC is a longstanding collaboration between the cities of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook, and the towns of Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Gorham, and Scarborough, staffed by the Greater Portland Council of Governments. The MRC focuses its work on issues impacting Greater Portland, from housing and homelessness to municipal and regional partnerships wherever possible.

Over the past several years the MRC has worked to help manage the increasing number of unhoused people in our region. But increasingly our communities are struggling to provide the shelter and services needed by a continuously expanding number of unhoused people.

We need your help.

Specifically, we need two things. One is very simple – we need your fiscal support. Please increase state reimbursement of municipal General Assistance costs from 70% to 90%, and provide additional financial reimbursements, as suggested in both bills we are supporting today. Municipalities all over the state need this policy change.

Our second request is more complex, but equally urgent.

The expansion of unreimbursed General Assistance costs is an unsustainable burden on the local property tax. And despite the heroic efforts made by municipal staff and nonprofit and faith partner organizations to support unhoused people in our region, the use of General Assistance as the backbone for supporting unhoused people is already broken.

We believe General Assistance was never designed or intended to serve as an all-purpose support system for a rapidly expanding population of unhoused people suffering multiple disruptions in their lives. GA works to help people through short-term disruptions in life, but it is unable to serve as the primary housing and support services program for people suffering long-term disruptions in housing and other life circumstances.

Our members, and municipalities across the state, need your help to shift these unsustainable burdens away from GA and the local property tax towards a better system that more effectively helps everyone who needs housing and other support for long periods of time.

That new system can be designed in many ways. Partnerships between all levels of government, and with nonprofits, faith leaders, and the general community are all available to build a better networked support system that does not rely on GA at its center.

But to be clear, additional state funding will be needed to end the current overreliance on GA and replace it with a state and federally funded partnership model to support unhoused people with long-term needs.

You have many complex bills before you today. But our position is a simple one.

As you work to make changes to General Assistance today, we ask you to shape a better system for tomorrow. A system to sustainably provide housing and support services to people in long-term need. A system that combines state and federal resources with local and regional expertise and moves away from the current over-reliance on GA as the default support system for unhoused people.

We know this is a difficult request, but the alternative is that our current system, despite best efforts, will continue to fall short of what unhoused people need, and deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views, and please let me know if the members of the MRC can provide anything more to support your important work on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Michael Foley
Chair, Metro Regional Coalition
Mayor, City of Westbrook

LD 1559 – Submitted Testimony

Testimony of the Greater Portland Council of Governments In Support of
LD 1559, *An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit Systems by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding*
April 25, 2023

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Andrew Clark, Transit Program Manager at the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG). I am here today to speak on behalf of GPCOG in support of a portion of LD 1559, *An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit Systems by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding*.

GPCOG serves 25 municipal members in Cumberland County, from Sebago Lake to Casco Bay, as well as Saco, Biddeford, Arundel, and Old Orchard Beach through the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS). We deliver transportation, land use, sustainability, and economic development services to our members and their communities.

Our testimony today focuses on Section 12 of LD 1559 which provides a one-time General Fund appropriation of \$25 million dollars to increase subsidies to bus transit agencies for operating and capital purposes, and an additional \$13.6 million dollars to the Department of Transportation for bus transit operating costs and the creation of two new positions at the Department to support transit planning assistance.

As we testified to you on LD 259, in our work supporting PACTS we see firsthand how disruptive the pandemic has been for our public transportation providers. Although federal relief funding (CARES and ARPA) helped transit agencies “weather the storm” of the pandemic, ridership has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, which is particularly challenging for bus transit operators who serve vulnerable populations dependent on bus service for work, wellness, and life’s necessities.

Continuing levels of depressed ridership, coupled with rising costs, could signal the beginning of a fiscal cliff which will disproportionately hurt vulnerable people and will also reduce our region’s future capacity to build well-located growth and development in tandem with robust transit services.

The solution is to increase operating funding to \$6.6 million per year to cover the immediate short-term need, and to also provide \$25 million in state subsidies for bus transit agencies operating and capital funds. These state investments will ensure that agencies are not forced to reduce services at a time when we need them to do more than ever.

These funds will also bring Maine’s investment in public transit closer in line with national averages and help public transit agencies invest in well-located housing and sustainable transportation projects, advancing state housing and climate policies like *Maine Won’t Wait*.

At PACTS, we are ready to deploy new state funding in public transit. We have already engaged in a detailed public process to identify and prioritize future public transit investments, and worked hard to reach consensus among transit providers on how new funding can be used in the most fair, effective, and efficient ways possible.

All we need is your support. For all these reasons we urge you to support the passage of Section 12 in LD 1559. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support, and please let me know if we can do anything to advance your work on this important legislation.

LD 1739 – Draft Testimony

Testimony of the Greater Portland Council of Governments in Support of
LD 1739, *An Act to Extend Development District Tax Increment Financing Districts*

May XX, 2023

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and Members of the Taxation Committee, my name is Christian Roadman, Senior Planner at the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG).

I am here today to speak on behalf of GPCOG in support of LD 1739, *An Act to Extend Development District Tax Increment Financing Districts*.

GPCOG serves 25 municipal members in Cumberland County, from Sebago Lake to Casco Bay, as well as Saco, Biddeford, Arundel, and Old Orchard Beach through the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS). We deliver transportation, land use, sustainability, and economic development services to our members and their communities.

Earlier this week GPCOG's Metro Regional Coalition, comprised of the cities of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook, and the towns of Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Gorham, and Scarborough, voted unanimously to endorse LD 1739 and to urge you to do the same.

Extending expiring tax increment finance districts with a focus on affordable housing and transit will provide municipalities with a substantial new tool for advancing well-located development that is more economically within reach of people without high incomes.

As you know, many housing projects need financial support to make the economics work, and LD 1739 would help in that regard by focusing on housing TIFs. The bill would also encourage the more widespread use of transit TIFs, again facilitating the kind of well-located and well-supported housing growth that communities are trying to encourage.

As a regional planning agency, GPCOG sees the need to support more housing at every level of affordability with innovative policies like the one in LD 1739. At our meeting yesterday, several municipal representatives said that if LD 1739 becomes law they anticipated using it as a valuable option for expanding housing choices in our region.

GPCOG has been working with our member communities to implement the state-level housing policy changes that began last year with LD 2003. As we do, we often find our members asking what more they can do to bring forward housing that all parts of the community can afford.

LD 1739's enactment would add another valuable policy tool to the municipal housing toolkit, and for that reason we urge you to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1739.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this bill, and please let me know if we can do anything to advance your work on this important legislation.

Attachment C

Greater Portland's Regional Prosperity Plan 2023-2028

Summary Version

Introduction

This document, called *Greater Portland's Regional Prosperity Plan 2023-2028*, is the Greater Portland Council of Government's (GPCOG) 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) document, produced as part of GPCOG's work serving as the Economic Development District (EDD) for the Greater Portland region. This Plan reflects broad and varied input from the public, the region's public and private economic development interests, GPCOG members, and the contributions of many public, private, and nonprofit partners.

In plain terms, this Plan is a tool for everyone in our region to use as they work toward greater prosperity, a more inclusive economy, and more durable economic resilience in the face of an ever-changing future. It is a framework for progress, not a silver bullet. To succeed, it challenges us all to collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate to make our region stronger.

It's a collaborative framework because most of the challenges and opportunities facing our region require greater coordination and combined effort from all corners of our community.

It's a framework for resilience because our region needs to be better prepared to work together to understand our economic vulnerabilities, to assess our economic risks, to prepare to avoid those risks where possible, and to recover quickly from those risks when they strike.

Over the next 5 years, GPCOG will work with our entire region to implement this Plan, either acting as the lead agency for some key initiatives, or as the coordinating backbone organization when other partners are taking the lead. In all cases, GPCOG's role as convenor and catalyst will support implementation of this Plan and GPCOG will be responsible for the evaluation of its progress.

Ultimately, this Plan will be successful if it serves as a valuable tool for economic decision making in our region, encouraging diverse partners to work more closely together toward shared economic growth, greater inclusion and equity, and more effective economic resilience.

We hope you find this Plan useful as a way to connect to our region's network of economic development efforts and to the resources and priorities that define our region's future. We also hope it serves as a gateway for you to add your own contributions to the future of our economy.

Three Strategic Priorities - *Where are we going?*

Our community has articulated three strategic priorities that this Plan reflects as their vision for every part of our region, and for everyone in it:

- A. **An economy that welcomes innovation and the future, and by doing so, supports our existing employers and their workers, as well as new jobs and investment.**

- B. **An economy that is intentionally more equitable and seeks to actively promote the inclusion of previously excluded people.**
- C. **An economy that is more resilient through everyone’s continuing commitment to prepare for economic disruptions, and for recovery from disruption.**

Since recovering from structural weakness in the 1970’s, our region’s economy has grown and proven durable over several decades. But it has also been slow to change, resistant to including everyone, and unprepared to plan for the unexpected. And not every part of our region has been as fortunate as the most prosperous parts of our region.

Our three strategic priorities of innovation, inclusion, and resilience work together to build on our strengths and address our weaknesses. They extend over the next 5 years, and into the decade ahead, and they are immediately actionable. Most importantly, they reinforce each other and support each of the six key initiatives outlined below.

For example, a more inclusive economy not only expands equity, but it also increases available, qualified workforce, adds entrepreneurial energy to emerging economic growth, and demonstrates the application of resilience and development strategies in the context of newly empowered people in our regional economy.

In the current post-pandemic environment, change is upon us, sometimes in unexpected ways. As we prepared this Plan, we heard loud and clear that our opportunities depend on embracing change together, and on building a more collaborative, inclusive, and nimble approach to today’s economy, and tomorrow’s.

So how do we turn these strategic priorities into reality?

Six Key Initiatives – *How do we get there?*

This part of our Plan explicitly describes how our region will work together to achieve our strategic priorities through six specific, measurable key initiatives which include a wide range of activities and partners and envision long term commitment to outcomes that extend over the next 5 years and beyond.

1. Expanding the economy through innovation.

This initiative aims to bring jobs and investment to the region, focusing on emerging technologies coupled with the region’s natural resources, traditional industries, and existing economic sectors that can benefit from accelerated adoption of emerging technology. Working through GPCOG’s Regional Prosperity Advisory Committee:

Action Steps:

- A. Convene the region’s economic development actors with emerging technology leaders and assess growth opportunities for new and established employers.
- B. Establish targets for job growth and investment based on assessment. Track progress annually.

- C. Successfully identify and pursue state and federal funding support for private sector investments and job creation in targeted economic sectors.
- D. Promote existing and establish new technology education offerings for existing employers to increase uptake of technology and innovation in traditional economic sectors.

2. Expanding the region's workforce.

This initiative responds to the priority needs of our region's economy today – workers and housing. The two deficits are linked, and this initiative addresses both with action steps that focus on worker attraction, worker housing, worker education and skills training, and tracking results.

Action Steps:

- A. Connect the existing Live & Work in Maine programming with regional partners working through GPCOG staff and the GPCOG Regional Prosperity Advisory Committee. Establish an existing worker attraction baseline for the region and measure effectiveness of linking regional economic development networks with existing programming.
- B. Advance existing GPCOG Housing Strategy (see Appendix A) through coordination with regional economic networks, emphasizing identification of well-located development opportunities and leveraging all resources and technical support to accelerate housing construction. Also coordinate and leverage existing federal housing programs with new regional initiatives and coordinate infrastructure expansion with housing growth wherever possible (see Initiative #4).
- C. Extend connections to existing workforce training programs into underserved or unconnected economic sectors through regional economic development networks, working intentionally to promote economic inclusion (see Initiative #3).
- D. Advance a regional Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program for communities and sectors without an active BRE and use it to support employee attraction and retention.

3. Expanding economic inclusion.

This initiative focuses on bringing previously excluded people into full participation in our region's economy. It addresses historic discrimination, and leverages opportunities to expand jobs, investments, and entrepreneurial energy that is already present in our region.

Action Steps:

- A. Create educational programming for excluded populations that closes gaps in their understanding of and access to traditional economic development resources, including lending and small business technical assistance. Working with partners with lived experience, and partner organizations serving excluded populations, GPCOG staff will provide backbone support to this ongoing effort.

- B. Create new defined pathways for excluded people to start or expand their own businesses, and to gain employment opportunities in existing or newly emerging economic sectors. Working with exiting small business technical support providers, higher education, and state agencies, GOCOG's staff will provide convening and organizational support, including expanded Disadvantaged Business Enterprises programming at GPCOG.
- C. Expand existing economic networks to include previously excluded people and utilize their inclusion to better understand economic resilience from their perspectives. GPCOG will act as regional network convenor and catalyst for regular focused discussions on inclusion. GPCOG will initiate programming to give excluded people information about, access to, and voice within regional economic networks.

4. Expanding Critical Infrastructure.

This initiative identifies and closes gaps in our region's existing infrastructure needed to support growth, leveraging, and coordinating new investments to best reduce those deficits in ways that advance our strategic priorities. Innovation-driven growth, an expanded workforce, and a more inclusive economy all rely on efficient, effective investments in infrastructure which enable well-located development that supports every community, and everyone, in our region.

Action Steps:

- A. Map deficits in sewer, water, transportation, and broadband infrastructure needed to support development and existing employers throughout our region.
- B. Assemble and maintain a list of shovel-ready and shovel-worthy infrastructure investments.
- C. Align new infrastructure investments with other infrastructure needs, and with existing and emerging economic development opportunities including workforce housing investments.

5. Expanding development tools and collaboration.

Our region, and state, have not deployed economic development policies as much as we could. Existing tools could be more flexible and are not fully understood in all quarters. New tools could be added to local, regional, county, and state development strategies. Additionally, existing local, regional, county, state, and federal programs and funding opportunities are not as well integrated and leveraged as they could be.

This initiative seeks to expand understanding and use of the existing economic development toolkit, identify opportunities to expand the toolkit and make it more flexible, and increase collaborative use of existing and future development policies and programs.

Action Steps:

- A. Educate the region's economic development community about existing programs and policies.

- B. Identify best practices in programs and policies that would expand flexibility of existing tools or meet a defined deficit or gap in existing local, regional, or state economic development policies and practices.
- C. Provide an ongoing forum and clearinghouse for coordinating and leveraging existing local, regional, county, state, and federal development programs and funding.

6. Expanding regional resilience.

This initiative advances regional resiliency in two ways. First, it seeks to expand resilience planning by creating a diverse forum for ongoing evaluation and discussion of foreseeable economic disruptions so that future disruptions can be avoided or mitigated. Second, it seeks to advance emergency preparedness by convening and supporting ongoing emergency disaster readiness.

Action Steps:

- A. Convene public, nonprofit, and private sector representatives to establish a permanent roundtable for the purpose of assessing regional economic risks, evaluating regional response strategies for potential disruptions, and communicating their finding to the entire region.
- B. Convene an annual emergency preparedness effort, based on existing work by partners, designed to expand their reach to all employers and employees in the region, thereby improving their emergency response readiness.

Conclusion – *What happens next?*

This Plan is the combination of many voices and many perspectives. By examining our strengths and weaknesses, by looking at the opportunities and threats facing our region, and by distilling all of that into strategic priorities advanced through key initiatives with specific action steps this Plan creates a framework for action that the entire community can engage.

And that is the intent of the exercise – “*Where are we going?*” and “*How do we get there?*” aren’t rhetorical questions. They are a pathway forward in an uncertain world, designed to be explored together.

With the adoption of this Plan by GPCOG, in July of 2023 we will begin convening and catalyzing – the things GPCOG does best – around the priorities and initiatives outlined above. We will track community engagement and successes and monitor the need for updates and changes in direction.

Most importantly we will be cheerleaders for working together and pressing on, even if the going gets tough.

In 5 years, we hope and expect this Plan will have contributed energy and vision to your efforts to make our region’s economy more innovation-driven and prosperous, more inclusive and equitable, and more resilient to the next disruption, no matter which direction it comes from.

If so, that success will be yours, and ours, together. We look forward to the journey.

Attachment D

Impacts of Member Withdrawal from GPCOG

Members of GPCOG’s Executive Committee requested information about the consequences of a community withdrawing from GPCOG, both for the withdrawing community, in this case South Portland, and for the rest of GPCOG’s membership.

Recalling GPCOG’s structure helps answer these questions.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The premise of any council of governments is that municipalities can achieve more by working together.

Member municipalities gain access to decision-makers, information, and resources that are unavailable when acting alone. By working collectively, municipalities create leverage to attract state and federal funding and coordinate regional work in response to crises and opportunities.

The region and its voice are stronger when all its communities are at the table. Losing a municipal member diminishes the entire region in all these aspects. And losing the departing municipality’s leadership and perspective weakens all the surrounding communities, making their efforts to advance solutions together more difficult and less impactful, particularly in Augusta. The benefits GPCOG secures for the region are magnified by each participating member.

When a member departs, it also weakens itself. Its staff and elected leadership would no longer participate in shaping ongoing work and state policy on shared priorities like housing, homelessness, housing asylum seekers, climate change, managing growth and development, and regional resilience.

MEMBER DUES

GPCOG was formed in 1969 under state law that enables municipalities to voluntarily form a COG and use it to support their communities and their region. Membership in GPCOG is based on paying annual dues.

As a result, any GPCOG activities that are supported by dues are only available to member municipalities. As you’ll see in the table on page 20, the list of member benefits is significant.

Member communities benefit from the shared investment they make. It would be unfair to extend benefits to non-member communities that are paid for by other members.

In addition, GPCOG uses member dues to match state and federal funding opportunities. Losing member dues diminishes GPCOG's ability to leverage state and federal dollars for our region, disadvantaging all communities in our region.

STATE & FEDERAL RESOURCES

GPCOG's geography as a council of governments is not fully aligned with our responsibilities when GPCOG delivers state and federal programs.

For example, GPCOG is the Economic Development District for Greater Portland, and those federal program requirements apply irrespective of COG membership. GPCOG's EPA Brownfields program is an example.

In these instances, a municipality's withdrawal from COG membership severs GPCOG's connection to municipal officials and staff but leaves the service and program delivery in place. Where resources are limited, as they usually are, GPCOG will allocate limited resources with a preference to member municipalities. In the case of South Portland, the City currently has a direct voice in allocation decisions through its representation on the GPCOG Executive Committee, which approves brownfields investments, and on the Loan Committee, which awards small business loans. The opportunity to serve on these Committees is a privilege of membership.

Some of GPCOG's existing federal and state programs have been awarded to our region without reference to COG membership. The geography of beneficiaries was defined in the grant application. For example, coastal resilience funding from the National Wildlife Foundation requires work in the geography proposed in the grant. Another example is state Economic Recovery grants that GPCOG administered during the pandemic.

In these instances, work will continue in non-member municipalities unchanged, but future grant applications will likely be geographically scoped to include only members.

Finally, the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System was established by the federal government. COG membership is not a requirement for PACTS membership and does not affect PACTS participation in any way. If a PACTS member withdraws from GPCOG, however, there is a financial and fairness issue that would need to be addressed with that member: GPCOG member dues are used to partially match Federal Transit Administration planning funds for PACTS.

IMPACT ON GPCOG'S BUDGET

If South Portland were to withdraw from GPCOG, the agency would have to adjust its FY24 budget to account for the loss of \$55,000 in member dues. The details of what expenses would need to be cut from the budget would need to be developed.

What is clear is the loss of revenue will reduce member services and negatively impact GPCOG's ability to attract federal grants that benefit the region and require a local match. In the FY24 budget, \$344K in dues leverages \$3.2M in state and federal funding – almost a \$1: \$10 ratio. A large portion of that is transportation, so if that

was subtracted from the ratio, the leverage ratio is \$1 dues: \$4.50 leveraged. For reference, below is the FY24 proposed member dues budget:

	Dues	Leveraged	Total
Member Services	\$ 243,000	\$ -	\$ 243,000
General Member Services	\$ 73,000	\$ -	\$ 73,000
Sustainability	\$ 40,000	\$ -	\$ 40,000
Housing Choices	\$ 70,000	\$ -	\$ 70,000
Advocacy	\$ 40,000	\$ -	\$ 40,000
Metro Regional Coalition	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000
Match for Regional Work	\$ 344,598	\$ 3,227,842	\$ 3,572,440
Transportation	\$ 74,186	\$ 2,001,430	\$ 2,075,616
Economic Development	\$ 70,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 140,000
Brownfields	\$ 19,000	\$ 780,000	\$ 799,000
Resilience	\$ 123,551	\$ 332,000	\$ 455,551
Land Use Planning	\$ 17,861	\$ 44,412	\$ 62,273
Match for New Grants	\$ 40,000	Unknown	\$ 40,000
TOTAL	\$ 587,598	\$ 3,227,842	\$ 3,815,440

PROGRAMMATIC IMPACTS ON WITHDRAWING MEMBER

The table below details which services to municipalities can be accessed by members and non-members. Caveats and details specific to South Portland are provided in the footnotes.

Funding Source	Beneficiaries	Resource/ Activity	Access if not a GPCOG member?
GPCOG Member Dues	Member Communities	GPCOG Executive Committee	NO
		Metro Regional Coalition	NO
		GPCOG Loan Committee	NO
		Southern Maine Managers	NO
		Chairs in a Circle	NO
		Planners Roundtable	NO
		Sustainability Professionals Roundtable	NO
		Economic Development Directors Roundtable	NO
		Public Works Directors Roundtable	NO
		Communications Officers Roundtable	NO
	Member communities	Cooperative Purchasing	NO

Funds secured with member dues or designated for use by a council of governments		Resilience Corps Fellows	NO¹
		Planning and Data services	NO
		Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Implementation	YES²
External funds secured without member dues	Member communities prioritized. If a funding source, laws or regulations require the inclusion of non-member communities, GPCOG will funnel resources directly to residents or businesses without geographic preference.	Economic development/small business loans	YES³
		Climate Ready Casco Bay	YES⁴
		Brownfields assessment and cleanup funds	YES⁵
		Broadband, Digital Equity	YES⁶
PACTS Funding	PACTS Communities	PACTS Boards & Committees	YES

¹ These positions are heavily subsidized by member dues. Host fees cover a small portion of the total cost and none of GPCOG’s program management costs. If South Portland withdraws from GPCOG, the contract for their current Resilience Corps Fellow would be terminated effective 6/30/23. South Portland has hosted full time Fellows three years in a row, providing 1 FTE per year to South Portland each year.

² While work with South Portland businesses, SMCC, etc., will continue, work with municipal staff will stop.

³ Resources are limited. GPCOG’s resources for small businesses will be available to businesses in the withdrawing members’ boundaries, but South Portland would no longer have a seat on the Loan Committee, which reviews and approves loans.

⁴ The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant proposal included South Portland in its geographic service area. South Portland can continue to participate. Future grant applications will prioritize members.

⁵ GPCOG relies on ongoing relationships with member communities to help cultivate opportunities to focus Brownfield dollars and complete projects. South Portland could still apply for funding for GPCOG’s current grant, since South Portland was written into the geography for the grant. South Portland would not be included in GPCOG’s project cultivation process, which is funded by member dues. South Portland also would no longer have a seat on the Executive Committee, which is the body that awards brownfields grants and loans.

⁶ Preference and priority is oriented toward members, particularly smaller, more rural communities.

Attachment E

GPCOG 2030 Strategic Planning Process *Draft Scope of Work – 4/12/23*

Project Purpose

As GPCOG approaches the completion of its current [Strategic Plan](#) in FY24, much has been accomplished, but much has changed.

The pandemic upended a period of growth and stability, forcing cities and towns to quickly address challenges and encouraging them to position themselves for large amounts of federal funds. Housing unaffordability has grown from a concern to a crisis. The climate crisis continues to build. Economic uncertainty persists, structural racism has come into sharper focus, and newly arriving people present long term opportunities for our vitality, but short-term challenges to meet their needs.

The agency will develop its next 5-year strategic plan based on what staff, members, partners, and the state need and want from GPCOG. This strategic planning process will

- (1) clarify GPCOG’s role in this rapidly changing world,
- (2) set goals for what GPCOG should achieve by 2030, and
- (3) position and structure GPCOG, and our region, to achieve these goals.

Scope of Work

Task 1. Assess the Agency

This task will assess GPCOG’s impact since the adoption of the 2017 Strategic Plan and evaluate the agency’s current capabilities and deficits. Each activity will be informed by input from members, stakeholders and staff through focus groups, interviews, and workshops. Activities include:

- A. Understand Impact. Senior staff will compare what the 2017 Strategic Plan anticipated GPCOG would accomplish to what GPCOG has done in the last six years. This assessment will include an examination of GPCOG’s evolving role, particularly as the agency was called on by members to respond to disruption. GPCOG’s issue-based teams (member services, transportation, planning, sustainability, economic development) will prepare short assessments of each program area.
- B. Understand Capacity. GPCOG senior staff will produce an analysis of the agency’s current capacities and capabilities, including an overview of the agency’s existing commitments and its capacity to take on additional tasks.

- C. Understand Capability. This activity will analyze GPCOG’s strengths and weaknesses.
- D. Define expectations. GPCOG’s community engagement team will gather input from members, partners, and other stakeholders to assess the organization’s alignment with stakeholder expectations. Focus groups will be held with different groups of stakeholders including: municipal elected officials and senior staff; state and federal partners; regional organizations; community-based organizations, Community Transportation Leaders; and staff.⁷

Deliverable: A summary report will describe GPCOG’s impact to date, its current capacity and capability, and its alignment with member and stakeholder expectations.

Task 2. Scan the Horizon

The senior management team, with consultant assistance if needed, will identify key trends in the region that require attention, and will propose best practices to respond to emerging trends, including successful practices of regional councils around the nation.

- A. Understand Trends and Disruption. This activity will review futurist literature to identify what trends will likely continue and what disruptions, stresses and shocks our region should anticipate.
- B. Identify Promising Approaches. This activity will review websites and strategic plans of high-performing regional councils and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, with follow-up interviews with councils’ senior staff and staff of the National Association of Regional Councils and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The purpose is to learn what strategies, programs and investments are working to advance regionalism, racial and economic equity, improve transportation and housing choice, preserve natural resources, develop a strong economy, reduce emissions, and improve resiliency.

Deliverable: A summary report on external trends and on best practices from regional councils.

Task 3. Make Choices

Using the input on stakeholder expectations of GPCOG, and the organization’s performance, capacity and capability from Task 1, and using information about what’s on the horizon for the future from Task 2, the Executive Committee and staff will workshop together to identify what GPCOG should stop doing, start doing, and continue doing. We will also identify work that could be handed off to other entities.

Deliverable: Write up of results of “stop, start, continue” exercise.

⁷ To avoid overtaxing stakeholders with multiple outreach efforts, we plan use the focus groups as an opportunity to gather input on the role GPCOG should play in the future and on the priorities for GPCOG’s work. This data will inform upcoming tasks in this scope of work.

Task 4. Set Goals

This task will define the goals and outcomes GPCOG should achieve by 2030. Input will be used from the previous three tasks to develop these goals.

- A. Refine vision, mission and values. The Executive Committee and senior staff will review GPCOG's current vision, mission, and values and refine them, as needed. Particular input will be sought from GPCOG's internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group which has been developing GPCOG's values.
- B. Define strategic priorities. The Executive Committee will prioritize GPCOG's work, and define 3 – 5 priorities for the agency. These priorities will inform the agency's goals for 2030.
- C. Develop SMART goals. GPCOG's 2030 goals should use the SMART model, being Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timebound.

Deliverable: Vision, mission, values, priorities, and achievable goals for 2030.

Task 5. Identify Strategies and Resources

Strategies will be developed to achieve the 2030 goals.

An element of this task is for senior staff to make any recommendations necessary to set the agency up to achieve the goals. Staff will assess whether any restructuring is needed of the organization. Staff will also evaluate the costs and revenue needs associated with GPCOG's operations, organizational changes, and any new initiatives that emerge from the goal setting process. This task will occur at this point in the process so that cost containment, revenue generation, and funding strategies can be included in the final strategic plan.

Deliverable: Strategies, including funding and organizational structure strategies

Task 6. Explain and Name

GPCOG is hard to understand, and sometimes can overwhelm with its scope of work. In this task, GPCOG's communications team will develop a clear narrative describing what GPCOG is and does.

As part of this work, the Executive Committee will consider whether to change GPCOG's name. GPCOG has been called "GPCOG" for half a century, and that history is important. However, there are some alienating aspects to the agency's name. The Executive Committee will consider whether these drawbacks warrant exploring a possible name change. If it's decided that GPCOG should consider changing its name, that work will be done parallel to the development of the strategic plan so any potential name change will happen as part of the plan.

Deliverables: a) Short narrative describing GPCOG and b) decision on whether GPCOG should pursue an organizational name change, and possible name change

Task 7. Final Plan

This task will generate a final strategic plan to be adopted by the Executive Committee.

Deliverable: Five year strategic plan

Staffing and Funding

As scoped, staff believe we can do the majority of plan development in-house. There may be a need for limited support from a consultant for research on best practices.

Estimated total budget: \$35,500

Staff time: \$35,000

Meeting costs: \$ 500

Timeline

This work would be done in FY24, starting in July with gathering stakeholder input and research for Tasks 1 and 2, and presenting the first draft of the plan in April of 2024. The stars indicate key Executive Committee decision points.

		July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Task 1	Assess the Agency	█										
Task 2	Scan the Horizon	█										
Task 3	Make Choices				★							
Task 4	Set Goals						█	★	█			
Task 5	Identify Strategies & Resources									█	★	
Task 6	Explain and Name										█	★
Task 7	Final Plan										█	★