

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)

February 7, 2023

9:00 a.m.

Approved Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Jessa Berna	Y
PACTS Southern – Public Works/ Engineering	Tom Milligan	Y
PACTS Central – Municipal	Matt Sturgis	Y
PACTS Central – Planning/ Economic Development	Nell Donaldson, Chair	Y
PACTS Central – Public Works/ Engineering	Melissa Hutchins	
PACTS Western – Municipal	Bob Burns	
PACTS Western – Planning/ Economic Development	Amanda Lessard	Y
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Katherine Kelley	
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Nathan Poore	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Erin Zwirko	Y
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	
Transit	Hank Berg	
Transit	William Gayle	Y
Transit	Tom Reinauer	Y
Transit	Chad Heid, vice chair	
MaineDOT	Ryan Neale	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Mireille Kabongo	
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	Y

1. Welcome

Nell Donaldson opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of the January 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes

William Gayle moved to approve the January 10, 2023 meeting minutes as written; Tom Milligan seconded. All members present were in favor.

4. Staff Report

The Regional Complete Streets Policy was unanimously adopted last month by the Policy Board. Staff will begin work on implementation with the goal of being ready for the Fall 2023 call for projects.

Transit Together was also unanimously adopted by the Policy Board. Staff and transit providers will work on implementation, with improvements expected in 12–18 months.

The additional Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) funding item went to the Policy Board last month and the Board approved one-third of the \$1.2 million. The items approved were time- and budget-sensitive priorities. Staff will be sending out a survey to get more guidance on how the remaining funding should be prioritized before returning to the Policy Board in March.

Public outreach meetings have been completed for Vision Zero; public input is still being accepted through the website (<http://www.visionzerogreaterportland.org>). Staff are drafting the action plan with the goal of bringing a draft to RTAC in April. The overall goal is to have this policy adopted in time to apply for implementation funding in Fall 2023.

Staff received nine applications in response to the November call for projects—three transit system enhancement projects and six complex roadway/multimodal projects. The applicants will present their projects to the seven-member volunteer scoring committee—transit applicants will present on February 8 and roadway/multimodal applicants will present on February 27. RTAC members are welcome to attend. Staff acknowledged there were issues with the online application and will look into solutions for next year. Also next year, roadway/multimodal applicants will need to complete some design work—up to preliminary horizontal/vertical alignment complete (HVAC), which is about 25% design—before applying. This new requirement was one of the recommendations from the Complex Projects Task Force, which RTAC recommended for approval in May and the Policy Board adopted in September.

Looking ahead to the next few months, RTAC will review the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Collector Paving Program project costs for the southern subregion, PACTS Municipal Partnership Initiative (MPI) projects, a PACTS Year in Review, and the draft Vision Zero plan. In May, RTAC will review the nine applications for funding and make a recommendation to the Policy Board. William Gayle asked for more information on the Year in Review. Aubrey Miller, GPCOG staff, responded that it will be an overview of all of PACTS' work—projects that were funded, projects that have started construction, plans that were completed, and other accomplishments from calendar year 2022.

5. Project Update: Regional Complete Streets Policy

The Policy Board directed staff to develop a Regional Complete Streets Policy in 2019, and the work was included in the 2020–2021 and 2022–2023 Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs). The policy ties in with other PACTS initiatives including Connect 2045 and Vision Zero, and State and federal efforts. MaineDOT approved its Complete Streets Policy in 2014 and USDOT has identified Complete Streets as a Planning Emphasis Area and produced guidance about how Complete Streets should be the default approach to planning streets. FHWA has produced new guidance that MPOs spend 2.5% of Metropolitan Planning (PL) funding on increasing safe and accessible options for multiple travel modes for people of all ages and abilities.

RTAC reviewed the draft policy in July and recommended it for approval. The Policy Board reviewed the policy in July and formed a Complete Streets Subcommittee to address a few concerns. The subcommittee met three times to make recommendations clarifying how the policy would apply to the PACTS Municipal Partnership Initiative (MPI), Collector Paving Program, and Complex Projects processes. The subcommittee also recommended minor revisions to the language regarding advisory and appeals committees, and revised the disproportionate cost definition to match FHWA guidance. The Policy Board unanimously approved the revised Complete Streets Policy and associated revisions to the PACTS MPI and Collector Paving Program policies in January. The Complete Streets Policy will be applied for the first time to the Fall 2023 call for projects.

No public comment was made.

Tom Milligan thanked staff and the subcommittee for their hard work. He expressed concern about how reviews not deemed to be complete street will be handled by staff. Nell Donaldson replied that staff will be acting as a technical resource rather than an overseer, partnering to help municipalities identify where complete street elements can be implemented.

6. Project Update: Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study

The Gorham-Westbrook-Portland corridor is the first of four corridors identified in Transit Tomorrow to be evaluated for rapid transit investment. Rapid transit for this study means bus or rail service that provides direct and frequent service with limited stops. For example, a trip on rapid transit would take about the same amount of time as a car ride to reach your final destination.

This study includes a needs and opportunities assessment; development of mode and alignment alternatives; evaluation of costs, impacts, and benefits; and robust public engagement throughout. The end products will be a locally preferred alternative (corridor and mode) and an implementation plan and strategy for advancing the project.

The purpose of the Gorham-Westbrook-Portland rapid transit project is to provide fast, reliable, and frequent transit service that connects Gorham, Westbrook, and Portland's major transportation and/or activity centers. The project started with a broad study area that will be narrowed down. The team started by looking at existing conditions as to where people live and work, zoning, forecasted population and job growth, existing railways and roadways, wetlands, habitat (plants and animals), water resources, historic and cultural sites and districts, public parks and recreation, and public water supplies and aquifers.

Staff held an agency scoping meeting and two (2) public meetings, engaged the public in five (5) languages, held six (6) pop-up events, and administered a survey. Over 150 people engaged in person and the team received 350 survey responses. Staff also held interviews with eight (8) jurisdictional entities and ten (10) community organizations.

The survey results show that stakeholders' top goals are to reduce pollution; provide access to jobs, education, services, and other opportunities; reduce traffic congestion; and make taking transit more convenient and attractive than driving. The places people most want to access are schools/colleges, downtown Portland, transportation hubs, healthcare services, Gorham, and more. The survey results also show that people want rapid transit to be on, in order, Route 25/Brighton Ave, existing rail, or Route 302/Forest Ave.

The team is performing a three-step alternatives analysis process. The first step was a quick, high-level screening of all the suggestions about where rapid transit should be located to remove those that did not meet the project purpose of connecting Gorham, Westbrook, and Portland (20% of options were removed). The remaining 17 segments entered the next step of the analysis—a tier 1 evaluation—to test different alignments in each section. The team will check in with the Project Advisory Group and other stakeholders after the tier 1 evaluation is complete. The team will conduct a second round of public engagement in March, which will be virtual (details can be found at www.rapidtransitforme.org). Then the third step of the alternatives analysis—a tier 2 evaluation—will be conducted, putting together the winning segments from the tier 1 evaluation and comparing entire routes with one another.

No public comment was made.

Tom Milligan noted that once a route is determined, funding will be essential. Ericka Amador, GPCOG staff, responded that part of the implementation work plan includes going after funding. She added that there are funding opportunities out there, and conversations have begun with municipalities regarding local match to be more competitive for funding. Chris Chop, GPCOG staff, added that funding will be competitive, but the region's financial request will be lower than most regions around the nation.

7. Other Business

Ericka Amador, GPCOG staff, announced that she has accepted a position with the City of Boulder, Colorado, and will leave GPCOG at the end of the month. She thanked RTAC for its work.

8. Adjourn

With no objections, the meeting was adjourned.