

## PACTS Executive Committee

April 6, 2021

8:30–10:00 am

Meeting Minutes

Name	Affiliation	Attendance
Jim Bennett	Southern Subregion	Y
Jennifer Brickett	MaineDOT	Y
Hope Cahan	PACTS Vice Chair	Y
Erin Courtney	Maine Turnpike Authority	Y
Eric Dudley	Western Subregion	Y
Greg Jordan	Transit Committee Chair	Y
Belinda Ray	Central Subregion	Y
Matt Sturgis	PACTS Chair	Y
For GPCOG		
Chris Chop, Andrew Clark, Kristina Egan, Aubrey Miller		

### 1. Welcome

Matt Sturgis opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

### 2. Public Comment

Several members of the public were in attendance to advocate for various projects or approaches for potential federal transportation earmarks:

- Marcos Miller advocated for completing the Franklin Street redesign, saying it has been fully vetted by the public and the Portland city council and would be transformational for the region.
- Brian Eng encouraged the committee to emphasize innovation and coordination, and gave the Biddeford-Saco multimodal bridge as an example of an exciting opportunity for the region.

- Sue Ealey urged the committee to consider the synergies between the State's climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, and the mindset of building back better. She stressed the need to emphasize improved infrastructure for people walking and biking.
- Liz Trice advocated for reconstruction of the region's arterials to improve safety for people walking and biking.
- John Kachmar advocated for feasibility and design funding for a three-mile segment of the Eastern Trail through Biddeford and Saco.
- Tom Milligan spoke to the benefits of improvements at the intersection of Pearl and Elm Streets in Biddeford, noting the area as an important connection to nearby biking and walking options.

Andrew Clark said that he had received several written comments prior to the meeting, which he had packaged and sent to the committee members for their consideration.

### 3. Preparing for Potential Transportation Earmarks

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree's office reached out to GPCOG staff and asked them to identify priority transportation projects for potential federal earmarks. PACTS has no single prioritized list of projects. To identify priorities staff consulted the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Six-Year Capital and Operating Plan (SYCOP), and the 2019 PACTS Priorities of 1) improving and maintaining transit, 2) improving intersections, and 3) maintaining roads. GPCOG had also issued a call for projects in December 2020 that yielded 99 shovel-ready or shovel-worthy projects submitted by members. In developing today's recommendations, staff considered projects that 1) are core to the 2019 Priorities, and 2) would have broad regional impact.

Staff received new information the day before the meeting suggesting the earmarks may come from existing funding. If that is the case, staff recommend any project selections be made contingent on clarification that the funding not take away from currently planned and funded projects. Staff will seek further clarification. The situation is rapidly evolving and the timeframe is constrained.

Staff prepared two baskets of projects to advance to Congresswoman Pingree and MaineDOT. The first included three large and transformational projects:

- Casco Bay Lines will need a replacement ferry in the next few years. The replacement will be a diesel-electric hybrid and is estimated to cost \$12 million. Less than \$1 million of that is currently funded. The remaining unfunded portion represents a significant strain on the region's annual FTA Section 5307 funding apportionments.
- Many of the region's traffic signals are optimized and coordinated by PACTS' Regional Traffic Management System (RTMS). However, the software used on the server is outdated and no longer supported. This presents a vulnerability should a system failure occur.
- Forty percent of the region's FHWA funding is used to maintain the region's collector roadway network. There is currently a \$36 million funding deficit. Additional funding to support PACTS' Collector Paving Program could free up resources for other roadway and multimodal improvement projects.

The second proposed basket of projects included several smaller projects should those be more likely to receive funding:

- The RTMS server as detailed above
- Select segments from the Collector Paving Program backlog
- \$1 million to fully fund accessibility improvements at transit stops under the Transit Stop Access Project

Jim Bennett said projects for earmarks typically must otherwise qualify for federal funding. He supported putting one or more projects forward. Kristina Egan suggested the committee make their recommendations contingent on a clarification that the earmarks will not come from existing funding and disrupt MaineDOT's currently programmed projects. Jen Brickett said the latest information MaineDOT had received indicated the earmarks would come from existing funding. She clarified that these earmarks were related to reauthorization of the FAST Act, whereas the proposed \$2.3 trillion stimulus program and the appropriations processes were separate.

Matt asked for public comment.

- Tom Milligan said he did not support any earmarks that would affect existing funding, noting the time and effort involved in getting projects programmed.
- Brian Eng agreed with the importance of ensuring the earmarks not affect existing funding. He supported developing a list to put forward in the event of additional funding.
- Nathan Poore noted the action taken will depend on the details of the allocation formula. He noted a segment of Route 88 in Falmouth appeared to be missing from the list. He asked why the selection of collector paving projects in the smaller basket did not consider overall condition. He asked whether the 99 projects received in GPCOG's call for projects were ranked. Kristina said the smaller projects were selected based on AADT and overall cost to ensure they would provide the greatest benefit based on overall costs. The results of the 2020 call for projects were not ranked; the intent was to catalog the needs in the region and identify appropriate funding streams to advance projects. Staff will follow-up on the Route 88 segment.
- Ken Capron advocated for the inclusion of funding to support additional research of Microrail as a transit option in the region.
- Liz Trice noted that with reduced traffic speeds, travel lanes can be narrower, which reduces pavement area and maintenance costs. She added that low-cost, temporary pilot projects can help inform decision making.
- Hank Berg thanked the committee for its consideration of the ferry replacement for earmark. He noted it would free up significant funding for other transit capital and operations needs in the region. He clarified that the outgoing vessel is not unsafe but rather has become very expensive to maintain due to its age.
- Tim Wells asked whether a regional study of locations suitable for roundabouts and the benefits of roundabouts had ever been conducted. Chris Chop said a study on that topic had not been conducted before.
- Tom Milligan supported advancing collector paving projects.

Matt closed public comment. In light of the many questions staff would need to answer and limited time remaining in the meeting, Hope moved to table the discussion to a

later date; Belinda seconded. Jim suggested the public submit any additional comment in writing in advance of the meeting. On the motion, all were in favor.

#### 4. Transportation Funding Framework

At its March 18 meeting, the Executive Committee approve the Transportation Funding Framework with the understanding that FHWA funds would flow, but the region's FTA designated recipients would need to reach final agreement on the process for allocating FTA funds. On March 24, PACTS and the designated recipients agreed to the framework subject to it being revised to reflect:

- A policy of setting aside 12 percent of Section 5307 funding for system enhancement projects beginning in 2023, to be evaluated in advance of 2026
- A goal of setting aside 20 percent of Section 5307 funding for system enhancements
- A commitment by PACTS, MaineDOT, and the region's transit agencies to work together in exploring alternative funding opportunities, including:
  - Leveraging alternative federal funding
  - Pursuing discretionary grants
  - Identifying opportunities for operational efficiencies and savings

Jim moved to adopt the revised funding framework; Belinda seconded.

Matt acknowledged everyone involved and thanked them for their hard work and cooperation. He asked for public comment. Patricia Quinn echoed those thoughts and felt the policy as agreed to will be sound for future planning efforts. Eamonn Dundon noted the adoption of the framework as the important first step in advancing regional priorities. Matt closed public comment.

Jim noted the ongoing importance of finding the balance of regional and local decision making. Jen and Greg also gave their support of the framework, the process, and the work of those involved. On the motion, all were in favor.

5. Designated Recipient Status

Jim moved to tabled this item until the next meeting; Belinda seconded. All were in favor.

6. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

7. Adjourn

With no objection, the meeting was adjourned.