

**PACTS Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)**

May 2, 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	
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	
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Katherine Kelley	Y
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Nathan Poore	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Erin Zwirko	Y
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	
Transit	Hank Berg	Y
Transit	William Gayle	Y
Transit	Tom Reinauer	
Transit	Chad Heid, vice chair	Y
MaineDOT	Ryan Neale	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	Y
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	Y
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	
Community Transportation Leader	Mireille Kabongo	Y
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	Y

**1. Welcome**

Nell Donaldson opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

**2. Public Comment**

RTAC member Christian MilNeil spoke briefly about a recent conversation he had with municipal government bond investors, noting that institutional investors are increasingly looking at climate impacts. He commented that the Maine Turnpike’s extension to Gorham is a red flag for investors and could affect all institutions in Maine. As transportation is currently the largest climate liability in New England, he advised committee members to hold each other accountable in meeting climate goals to avoid higher borrowing costs. Rebecca Grover noted the Maine Turnpike is not proposing the project,

but rather is doing a study of a road at the request of four municipalities (Scarborough, Portland, Gorham, Westbrook) and the Maine State Legislature.

### **3. Approval of the April 4, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

William Gayle requested a list of members of the public attending the meeting remotely. Aubrey Miller, GPCOG, noted that there were two GPCOG staff members, Jennifer Phinney, and Mike Tremblay. (Note: Members of the public fluctuate throughout meetings; full attendance rosters can be provided upon request.)

Christian MilNeil moved to approve the April 4, 2023 meeting minutes as written; William Gayle seconded. Ryan Neale abstained. All other members present were in favor. (Vote: 13-0-1)

### **4. Staff Report**

Chris Chop, GPCOG, introduced the newest GPCOG employee, Laura Qualey, a new Regional Transportation Planner with a background in engineering.

Aubrey Miller, GPCOG, reminded RTAC members that staff were still accepting nominations for RTAC Chair, Vice Chair, and liaison to the PACTS Policy and Executive Boards. Nominations, including self-nominations, would be accepted until the end of the day on Friday, May 5.

### **5. Review of FTA Funding Allocations: 2023 FYCOP and Transit System Enhancement Projects**

The annual programming of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding to support the region's transit services is one of PACTS' responsibilities. The Five-Year Capital and Operations Plan (FYCOP) is developed collaboratively by assessing agency needs, considering regional apportionments, developing a budget plan, and then seeking PACTS approval. Finally, the agencies sign a split letter which documents the agreed-upon division of FTA funding for the current year. Future out-years are included in the FYCOP for projecting and planning purposes only.

PACTS' Transportation Funding Framework establishes a policy of setting aside 12 percent—and a goal of setting aside 20 percent—of the region's FTA Section 5307 funding for Transit System Enhancement projects. For Fiscal Year 2023, agencies submitted three projects, requesting a total of \$1,115,200, or 8 percent, of the region's Section 5307 funding.

Hank Berg expressed that the lack of submitted projects was not due to a lack of ideas, but rather to a lack of local match. Andrew Clark, GPCOG, added that there was a lot of existing work; PACTS and the transit agencies were comfortable with what was submitted. Later, William Gayle emphasized the need for local support and encouraged everyone to avoid depending on the State for adequate funding.

Christian MilNeil said he would like to see a non-fiscally constrained work plan, hypothetical in nature, aimed at meeting the state's climate goals. Christian added that FYCOP goes through 2027, which is only three years from the state's deadline. Andrew Clark responded that the recent plan *Transit Together* did consider several scenarios that could help move toward those goals, along with cost estimates for those scenarios.

Kristina Egan, GPCOG, advised that there is a bill under consideration that would allocate \$6 million in additional funding toward bus services. She encouraged interested parties to vocalize their support.

William Gayle commented that the two higher scoring projects were not necessarily more innovative than the lowest scoring project, but innovation was supposed to be a focus of the funding framework. Will added that there is a great deal of collaboration and transparency in the FYCOP process.

Nathan Poore mentioned a new piece of proposed legislation, LD 1739, which would allow expiring general tax increment financing (TIF) districts to renew for an additional 30 years, as long as 51% of the funding goes toward transit or affordable housing.

Eamonn Dundon expressed discomfort with voting to advance this agenda item. He did not believe the FYCOP process adhered to federal regulations around performance-based planning, specifically with regard to open public access and participation. Eamonn expressed optimism that the process would become more transparent in the coming year but reiterated that he would vote against this item. William Gayle responded that there were public meetings when the transit agencies review the budgets line-by-line and opened the meeting for public questions and comments. William also addressed the issue of federal regulations by clarifying that the transit agencies and direct recipients are in charge of allocating the funds, while the performance-based planning aspect is part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and compliance is certified by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FTA. Eamonn noted that he believes the process is still a work in progress. Christian MilNeil briefly noted that despite being open to the public, the process does not feel accessible due its complexity. He suggested a brief memo accompanying significant funding decisions to provide an explanation that could be digestible by the public. Donna Tippet, South Portland Bus Service, speaking as a member of the public, reiterated that the transit agencies undergo an audit every three years in which their processes are reviewed for compliance. If a transit agency is found to be out of compliance, they are given a warning, and then if the issue is not resolved, they will have their funding removed.

William Gayle moved to recommend the FTA funding allocations as shown in Attachment 5-A and Table 5-3; Christian MilNeil seconded. Eamonn Dundon opposed. All other members present were in favor. (Vote: 12-1)

## **6. Review of Complex Roadway/Multimodal Projects**

PACTS has \$4,121,609 in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) capital improvement funds from its

2026 Allocation available for complex roadway/multimodal projects. PACTS also has \$1,500,000 in Holding WIN funds available to allocate to projects; these funds include unspent annual allocation from 2019 to 2022 (allocation years 2022-2025).

PACTS received six applications for the funding—five for preliminary design report (PDR) funds and one for construction funds. PACTS also has an approximately \$27 million commitment to future *construction* costs for projects it has already funded for *preliminary design report* (PDR).

GPCOG staff prepared three funding allocation options that aim to reduce or minimize PACTS' future construction funding commitment, get projects constructed, and maintain a pipeline of projects:

- **Option A** (Construction Heavy)
  - Fully funds the three existing projects with expected PDR completion dates in 2023:
    - Gorham—Main St. Signals
    - Yarmouth—Beth Condon Path
    - Yarmouth—Main St. Sidewalk (Route 115)
  - Partially funds the two existing projects with expected PDR completion dates in 2024:
    - Biddeford—Elm St. Intersection
    - Portland—Libbytown (Park Ave. / Congress St.)
  - Funds no new projects
- **Option B** (Construction Moderate)
  - Same as Option A, but decreases the amount of partial funding for Biddeford Elm St. and Portland Libbytown to fund two new projects:
    - Westbrook—Main St. Streetscaping (for PDR)
    - Falmouth—Route 1 North (for Construction)
- **Option C** (Construction Moderate 2)
  - Same as Option B but further decreases the amount of partial funding for Biddeford Elm St. to fund *an additional* new project:
    - Biddeford—Alfred St. Sidewalk (for PDR)

After some discussion, Christian MilNeil moved to recommend Option C to the Policy Board for approval; Eamonn Dundon seconded. All members present were in favor. (Vote: 13-0)

## 7. Review of Vision Zero Plan

The PACTS Regional Vision Zero Action Plan is presented to RTAC as “in-progress” due to an accelerated timeline. The next round of the Safe Streets and Roads for All federal grant program has a deadline of July 10, and the region needs an adopted plan to be eligible to apply for implementation funds. The draft plan is available as Attachment 7-A in the [May 2 RTAC Agenda Packet](#). The Policy Board will consider adopting the Action Plan on May 23.

Tom Milligan asked if there should be a note in the plan that identifies the annual safety performance targets identified by PACTS. Belinda Ray, GPCOG, considered including the table Tom referred to, but wanted to wait for feedback from PACTS officers.

Nell Donaldson asked if the plan identifies incremental improvements in safety. Belinda responded that the requirement was to either identify incremental improvements or an end goal; staff chose to identify an end goal. William Gayle, NNEPRA, expressed that it could be helpful to set incremental targets to move toward the end goal.

William Gayle also identified two metrics that could be edited. William felt that *SV4— Provide education on the correlation between vehicle size and crash severity* should be led by GPCOG. He also felt that *SR6—Support legislation that prioritizes safety for vulnerable users in road design* should avoid involving legislature in dictating engineering standards. William also felt the plan was lacking in enforcement and education, specifically that education can be implemented at an early age. Overall, he felt it was a great document.

Eamonn Dundon asked to clarify the amount of the funding application. Chris Chop, GPCOG, noted the amount is dependent on whether this is a regional or intermunicipal application, which has not yet been decided. Municipal managers will convene in the coming week to decide.

## 8. Project Update: Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study

Adopted in Spring 2021, the region's long-range transit plan—Transit Tomorrow—includes four key goals: 1) Make transit easier, 2) Create frequent connections, 3) Invest in rapid transit, and 4) Create transit-friendly places.

Rapid transit includes certain service and infrastructure interventions—such as high-frequency service and dedicated right-of-way—to deliver a service that is competitive with, or better than, car travel. The purpose of a rapid transit service along the Gorham-Westbrook-Portland corridor is to provide fast, reliable, and frequent transit service connecting those communities' major activity centers.

The project team is conducting an analysis in two parts. The Tier 1 analysis included screening several potential alignments against the project goals and number of evaluation metrics, narrowing the list to four draft alignments for further analysis in Tier 2. The Tier 2 analysis includes parameters—such as right-of-way and fleet assumptions—developed with Gorham, Westbrook, Portland, and MaineDOT,

and Greater Portland Metro, to inform the analysis that compares the four draft alignments in terms of travel time savings, ridership, and more.

After the Tier 2 analysis, the project team will work with key stakeholders to secure project support, seek adoption by the Policy Board of a "locally preferred alternative", identify any appropriate funding opportunities, and submit applications for funding. Staff anticipate seeking adoption of a locally preferred alternative later this summer or early fall.

Hank Berg inquired whether the study would include estimates of future capital and operating costs. Andrew Clark, GPCOG, confirmed that those would be included.

## **9. Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **10. Adjourn**

With no objections, the meeting was adjourned.