

PACTS Executive Board

June 22, 2021

9:00–10:30 am

Meeting Minutes

Affiliation	Member	
Policy Board Chair	Matt Sturgis	✓
Policy Board Vice Chair	Hope Cahan	
Central Subregion Rep.	Chris Branch	✓
Central Subregion Rep.	Kate Lewis	
North Subregion Rep.	Bill Shane	✓
South Subregion Rep.	Jim Bennett	✓
West Subregion Rep.	Eric Dudley	

Affiliation	Member	
MaineDOT	Tom Reinauer	✓
Maine Turnpike Auth.	Erin Courtney	✓
Active Transp. Specialist	Kara Wooldrik	✓
RTAC	Tom Milligan	✓
Transit Rep.	Robert Currie	✓
Transit Rep.	Patricia Quinn	✓
Transit Rep.	Donna Tippet	✓

1. Welcome

Matt Sturgis opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Acceptance of the April 27, 2021 Executive Board Meeting Minutes

Jim Bennett moved to accept the April 27, 2021 Executive Board meeting minutes as written; Chris Branch seconded. All were in favor.

4. Chair's Report

There was no business to discuss.

5. Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) Report

Tom Milligan highlighted three items RTAC discussed at their most recent meeting:

- Concord Coach Lines Phase IV Funding Request
- Rapid Transit Feasibility Study
- Autonomous Vehicle Shuttle Pilot

RTAC supported the Rapid Transit Feasibility Study, and acknowledged that CARES Act funds should be used to both support and improve the region's transit system. The Autonomous Vehicle Shuttle Pilot was not broadly supported by RTAC, which expressed concern with the state of autonomous vehicle technology, the low expected ridership, and the use of CARES funds for the purpose.

6. Staff Report

GPCOG is seeking applications from Host Sites for the 2021-2022 AmeriCorps Resilience Corps program. The first cohort of Resilience Corps Fellows is serving various agencies, nonprofits, and initiatives until October 2021. A second cohort will serve between November 1, 2021 and October 14, 2022. Applications to host a Resilience Corps fellow are open until August 1. Questions should be directed to Julia Breul, GPCOG's Resilience Corps Program Manager at jbreul@gpcog.org

A member of RTAC requested at their last meeting that staff vet proposed items on each meeting's agenda and include specific recommendations. PACTS officers have agreed with this suggestion. In accordance with this guidance, staff will provide recommendations as appropriate in the future.

Staff welcomed Tom Milligan to the Executive Board as the representative from RTAC.

7. Approval of Concord Coach Lines' CARES Act Phase IV Funding Request

Concord Coach Lines (CCL) has requested \$1,522,583 in CARES funds to support continued operations. CCL also requested funding in Phase III, but ridership has not returned as projected. CCL's Phase IV funding request will help the service meet its projected deficit for July to December 2021. RTAC has recommended approving the request.

CCL may be eligible for a new source of federal relief through the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services (CERTS) program. Should CCL apply for and be awarded funding under this program, they may be able to reimburse PACTS for CARES funding previously allocated to them.

Tom Milligan noted that RTAC unanimously recommended approving this funding. There was concern about using relief funds to support a private company when there are other local needs, but RTAC felt that CCL provides a fundamental component of the region's transportation network.

Benjamin Blunt, Vice President of Concord Coach Lines, noted that according to the American Bus Association, the CERTS Act does not provide adequate funding to meet the industry's needs. Should CCL receive funding through CERTS, staff and Ben will be in conversation about how to return CARES funding to PACTS, subject to any eligibility constraints. Ben also noted that CCL serves many different markets but is only asking for support of the Portland to Boston buses.

Tom Reinauer moved to approve \$1,522,583 in CARES Act Phase IV funding to Concord Coach Lines as presented; Patricia seconded. All were in favor.

8. 2020–2021 UPWP Mid-Year Budget Adjustments

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a two-year work plan for all planning projects undertaken by a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) such as FACTS. It is both required and funded by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) and Federal Highway Authority (FHWA). FACTS received \$32,740 more than the expected amount of FTA Section 5303 funding for planning projects in 2021, which staff recommend be allocated to the following projects:

- \$8,538.89 to address the Transit Tomorrow budget overage
- \$7,728.38 to address the FTA Funding Framework budget overage
- \$16,472.73 to support programming of CARES funds

Bill Shane moved to approve the budget adjustments as presented; Kara Wooldrik seconded.

Tom Milligan asked whether these funds could go toward the other UPWP needs on the agenda. Staff responded that these FTA funds could not be used on the FHWA-funded projects in the other agenda items.

On the motion, all were in favor.

9. 2020-2021 UPWP Local Match

The planning funds from FTA and FHWA that are programmed in the UPWP require a 20 percent local match. For FHWA funds, MaineDOT provides a 15 percent match and municipalities provide the remaining 5 percent. Across MPOs, there is no uniform approach for collecting local match. In the current UPWP, four projects require local match:

- South Portland Waterfront
- Set-Aside for Future Plans/Studies, subsequently allocated to the Scarborough Downs study
- Regional Traffic Management System (RTMS)
- High-Crash Locations (HCL)

Currently, as approved by the Executive Committee in October 2019, local match is collected from the municipalities involved in each project. The distribution of local match for RTMS and HCL are based respectively on the number of traffic signals and the number of HCLs in each municipality. However, the RTMS and HCL projects have been trending under-budget and their budgets have been reduced accordingly. This has contributed to a potential local match deficit of \$28,832. Two options for filling this deficit are to allocate it according to the original dollar amounts for RTMS and HCL (Option 1), or to allocate it according to a weighted approach using multiple metrics for transportation, population, and employment (Option 2).

Bill asked why 1 percent of the match for the RTMS and HCL projects was expected from Cumberland when the town only contains one stoplight and a few HCLs which were not selected in this project. Staff responded that the HCL match was determined when municipalities opted into the project, based on eligible HCLs. Staff also noted that these projects have a regional impact which will affect Cumberland. Bill felt that Option 1 was the most fair distribution.

Donna Tippet asked whether municipal staff are aware of the potential changes to the local match. Staff responded that they are not, and the decisions around local match rest with this body.

Bill moved to approve Option 1 as presented; Erin seconded. All were in favor.

10. 2022–2023 Draft UPWP

Staff are developing the 2022–2023 UPWP, to take effect in January 2022. Based on feedback at this meeting, staff will develop a draft of the UPWP for approval by the Policy Board in July. After review by FTA, FHWA, and MaineDOT, the UPWP will be submitted for final Policy Board approval in October 2021.

A. Priorities

Projected funding for the upcoming UPWP is a total of \$2.7 million from federal, state, and local sources. The UPWP, as in the past, is organized around four main priorities for the region:

1. Coordination and Administration
2. Program and Seek Funds
3. Plan for the Future
4. Implement Plans and Mobility Improvements

B. Local Match for FHWA Planning Funds

Federal funding in the UPWP must be matched at 20 percent. MaineDOT provides a 15 percent match on FHWA funds, leaving a 5 percent local match to be collected from the region's municipalities. Staff proposed that this local match be distributed proportionally across the region's municipalities based on four evenly weighted metrics: population, employment, total collector and arterial lane miles, and vehicle miles travelled (VMT). This would avoid having to reallocate local match based on individual project budget changes.

C. Local Match for FTA Planning Funds

Contrary to their approach to FHWA funding, MaineDOT does not contribute match to FTA funding, so the region's municipalities must provide the full 20 percent local match for planning projects funded through FTA Section 5303. In coordination with other Maine MPOs, staff recommend that FACTS

request MaineDOT contribute a 15 percent match for FTA planning funds. GPCOG notified MaineDOT that this request could be coming soon.

Jim felt that Arundel and Raymond should contribute to the FHWA match, since they are both PACTS municipalities eligible for funding. He also felt that basing the local match weighting exclusively on cost factors was unfair considering the different ability of municipalities to fund projects based on their tax base. He suggested that a metric accounting for property valuations should also contribute to the local match distribution.

Bill felt that the number of lane miles allocated to Cumberland was excessive. He was opposed to considering property valuations due to the disproportionate weight on wealthy communities in the northern subregion. Staff noted that the lane miles were calculated from MaineDOT GIS data. The PACTS region has two distinct geographic definitions: The full planning area of each member municipality is eligible for *planning* funds. However, within the member municipalities, the Capital Management Area is a defined urbanized area in which projects are eligible for *capital* funds. This local match is related to planning funds, so all statistics were calculated for the full area of member municipalities.

Donna asked whether the UPWP priorities included bus electrification. Staff noted that MaineDOT is conducting a study on bus electrification, and staff has recommended not pursuing the purchase of electric buses until this study is complete. Donna also asked whether municipalities are accustomed to paying this local match, noting that it may be a new expense for some municipalities. Although the planning funds will begin to flow in January 2022, municipalities will likely have until June of 2022 to budget for and fund the local match.

Chris noted that the region is closely interconnected, with Portland paying extra for jobs whose workers may live in the surrounding towns. He favored continuing to allocate local match on a project basis.

Jim felt that municipalities with higher concentrations of jobs contribute disproportionately to infrastructure that residents of surrounding municipalities use.

Tom Reinauer suggested a hybrid model, dividing general planning tasks among the municipalities based on metrics while dividing expenses for specific plans and studies only among the relevant municipalities. Bill agreed.

Erin asked how the remaining 5 percent local match for FTA funds will be allocated if MaineDOT does agree to provide 15 percent. Staff said it has not yet been determined, but 5 percent of the FTA funds would only total approximately \$15,000 annually.

Matt asked about any potential updates to PACTS membership or the Capital Management Area based on the 2020 Census. Staff said any changes likely wouldn't occur until 2025.

Bill moved to request MaineDOT contribute a 15 percent local match for FTA Section 5303 planning funds; Erin seconded. Tom Reinauer abstained, all others were in favor.

Jim requested that staff analyze the options discussed for FHWA local match and report back to the Executive Board. Matt proposed reopening discussion at the August Executive Board meeting. A draft UPWP budget is due to MaineDOT in September.

Donna asked whether the exact amount of the FTA match will be available in August. Staff said it will be available at that time. The approximate match required will be \$15,000 per year, or \$30,000 total for the two-year UPWP. Donna also asked when a budget divided among the tasks will be available. Staff said that this will be presented to the Policy Board in July.

Matt requested that staff prepare resources on the FHWA local match decision by early August, so that individual members of the Executive Board can review them in advance of the August meeting.

11. Other Business

Matt asked about the current plan for resuming in-person meetings. GPCOG is currently investigating the implications of LD 32, An Act Regarding Remote Participation in Public Proceedings, which was recently signed into Maine law. Staff also plan to survey board members' preferences.

Jim announced that BSOOB has found a new Executive Director, Chad Heid.

12. Adjourn

With no objection, the meeting was adjourned.