



DRAFT

Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

September 8, 2020

Noon to 1:30 pm

Via ZOOM Conferencing

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Amy Kuhn, Chair	Falmouth
Virginia Wilder-Cross	Gorham
Kate Snyder	Portland
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Jeremy Gabrielson	Cape Elizabeth
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Jon Jennings	Portland
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Tom Hall	Scarborough
Jim Gailey	Cumberland County
Public	Ken Capron
For GPCOG:	Kristina Egan Chris Hall Chris Chop Rick Harbison

1. Welcome and introductions

Amy Kuhn called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the September 8, 2020 meeting

Mike Foley moved acceptance of the minutes from the September 8, 2020 MRC meeting, seconded by Virginia Wilder-Cross. Jim Gailey and Tom Hall abstained. The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote of the remaining members.

3. Zoning for Transit

GPCOG Senior Planner Rick Harbison and GPCOG Transportation Director Chris Chop presented the recommendations of [Transit Tomorrow](#), the region's long-range public transportation plan. Discussion focused on the municipal land use actions that will be required to support more transit service in the region.

Chop and Harbison shared a power point slide deck that summarized their presentation (and is also attached to the email transmitting these minutes). In addition to the slides' content, the following points were presented and discussed:

After an overview of the Transit Tomorrow recommendations by Harbison, Chop detailed the concept of rapid transit, and the opportunities it presented.

Rapid transit can be accomplished via busses or light rail. It involves increasing the frequency and timeliness of transit trips, and making the transit experience more customer friendly. Rapid transit is best designed and implemented in defined growth corridors where population density can support expanded transit, and expanded transit can support growth without expanding congestion.

Chop indicated that Transit Tomorrow has defined a number of potential rapid transit corridors, and implementation of Transit Tomorrow will include choosing a single corridor to analyze at a deeper level in preparation for the investments needed to build out rapid transit in our region.

As with any substantial transit expansion, funding remains a critical need. Federal transportation stimulus spending was identified as the most probable source of rapid transit funding, but Chop said all funding options would be examined.

Harbison discussed local land use policies in relation to expanded transit. He noted that 'smart land use' practices, such as [Complete Streets](#), were imbedded in the Transit Tomorrow work.

He also noted that Transit Tomorrow is premised on the assumption of continuing population growth in the region. How that growth manifests, for instance by additional in-migration, and where housing density increases to accommodate increasing population, are at the heart of the land use aspects of Transit Tomorrow.

15 minutes neighborhoods – i.e. locations where services and amenities are all located within a fifteen-minute walk – were identified as a desirable design template that local government can embrace to support Transit Tomorrow.

Harbison showed maps of identified growth corridors in our region that can serve as the backbone for these land use innovations – please see the slide deck. He also showed maps of existing land use zoning that suggest more density-friendly zoning will be required to build out many existing growth corridors to their full potential.

Harbison explained that GPCOG is already executing ‘transit-oriented development’ (TOD) plans – one recently completed for South Portland, and another in progress for Biddeford/Saco.

TOD plans are like a master plan with a focus on transit – they offer a vehicle for communities to modify zoning to support greater density and thereby target investment into development corridors. TOD plans also allow a community to include other values, such as open space protection and complete streets integration of alternative transportation modes.

In this way, transportation planning can be connected to housing choice expansion and economic recovery and resilience goals in individual communities, and in sub-regions.

Members questions and comments raised additional points, including:

- Regional coordination and joint action will be needed to move this study to action in our communities.
- Federal CARES Act funding has provided resources to advance this thinking.
- A facilitated process at PACTS will move forward the discussion of choosing a corridor for deeper study and evaluation – member participation was very welcome.
- GPCOG presentations like today’s were offered to all members’ Councils.
- Look for a big wrap-up event for Transit Tomorrow before the end of the year.

Next steps. Staff will work with individual members to set up GPCOG presentations to Councils as requested. If any member wants to ask for a presentation please contact Rick Harbison at rharbison@gpcog.org

4. Homelessness Update

Members discussed the MRC letter sent to Governor Mills in support of the proposed Portland Homeless Services Center. The letter was well received, and discussions continue between the Administration and the City regarding state funding for the Center.

Jon Jennings briefed members on recent developments in Portland. He thanks Jim Gailey and Cumberland County for their help in securing an alternative site for people who were staying at the Expo. He also noted the City’s thanks for Maine Housing’s commitment to pay for a wintertime hotel to house 150 people.

He said the Riverside Homeless Service Center remains ready, pending funding as noted above. He also noted that Oxford Street Shelter is full and asked that communities take note of that.

Mayor Snyder emphasized that the County and Maine Housing resources are temporary, and a permanent regional and state solution is still needed.

Members agreed strongly that the financial burden of providing for people suffering homelessness should not fall on Portland alone – it should be borne regionally. Various ideas were discussed, including greater engagement at the county level.

Members discussed the lack of awareness of this problem outside the MRC meeting room among senior municipal officials. They agreed that an informational forum designed to better inform regional municipal officials would be a welcome way to advance the search for a regional solution.

Jon Jennings also reminded members that state rental assistance has been exhausted, and Portland's rental assistance efforts (\$250,000 already, and another \$500,000+ being considered) will only last a few months at most. When evictions resume and rental assistance is unavailable, homelessness will increase, adding to the current crisis.

Next Steps: Members agreed that GPCOG will organize a forum for elected and senior appointed municipal officials on the scope and magnitude of the homelessness crisis in the region. The forum will be focused on mobilizing greater regional support for shared financial responsibility for the homelessness crisis in our region.

5. Finalizing the FY21 Coalition Work Plan

This item was deferred until the next meeting for lack of time.

6. Adjourn

At 1: 39 pm Amy Kuhn adjourned the meeting by acclamation.

Upcoming Meetings

Nov 10, 2020 12:00 PM
Dec 8, 2020 12:00 PM
Jan 12, 2021 12:00 PM
Feb 9, 2021 12:00 PM
Mar 9, 2021 12:00 PM
Apr 13, 2021 12:00 PM
May 11, 2021 12:00 PM
Jun 8, 2021 12:00 PM