

Southwest Region Planning Commission

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Transportation Advisory Committee

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Swanzy

Leandra MacDonald
Peterborough

Cheryl Mayberry
Walpole

Jesse Rounds
Keene

Ed Smith
Hinsdale

Ruth Ward
Stoddard

with

John Kallfelz
NHDOT District 4

and

Lucy St. John
NHDOT Bureau of
Planning & Community
Assistance

Transportation Advisory Committee

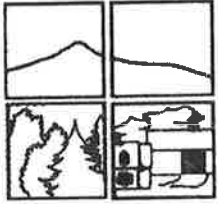
January 9, 2023

2:00 p.m.

Southwest Region Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot Street, Keene, NH

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Minutes of October 31, 2022
- III. Transportation Program Updates
- IV. Presentation: Update on Community Transportation Activities
- V. Presentation: Transit/Microtransit Feasibility Study
- VI. Next Meeting: February 6, 2023
- VII. Adjourn



Southwest Region Planning Commission

Transportation Advisory Committee

Minutes

October 31, 2022

Present: Brian Barden, *Town of Dublin*; Leslie Casey, *Town of Sullivan*; Leandra MacDonald, *Town of Peterborough*; Cheryl Mayberry, *Town of Walpole*; Ed Smith, *Town of Hinsdale*; Ruth Ward, *Town of Stoddard*; Lucy St. John (ex officio), *NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)*.

Staff members present: Tim Murphy, *Executive Director*; J. B. Mack, *Principal Planner*; Rebecca Baldwin, *Office Manager*; Henry Underwood, *GIS Specialist/Planner*.

Guest: John Byatt, *BETA Group, Inc.*

I. Welcome and Introductions

Ed Smith called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

II. Minutes of October 3, 2022

Motion: To approve the minutes of October 3, 2022 as presented.

Motion by Leandra MacDonald, seconded by Cheryl Mayberry. Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

III. 2025-2034 Ten Year Plan Project Review Process

J. B. Mack announced that today's meeting would be dedicated to reviewing the scores that TAC members arrived at for each of the five projects nominated to be considered for inclusion in the 2025-2034 Ten Year Plan update (TYP) in order to arrive at a prioritized draft candidate project list for NHDOT review and comment. He advised that should TAC not reach a consensus regarding project ranking at today's meeting they would meet again on November 7, 2022 to continue the process. TAC recommendations will be forwarded to NHDOT by November 10, 2022 and it is anticipated they will receive feedback from NHDOT by either January or February 2023.

J. B. Mack reported that nine members of TAC participated in the independent scoring of the projects in our region. He shared a sheet that reflected the scores for each of the five projects in our region, noting that the Swanzey NH 10 West Swanzey Improvements project received the highest score. He noted that he would review the scores received by each of the projects and encouraged TAC members to ask questions or provide any additional comments on each of the projects. Tim Murphy noted that scoring is an important input for determining a draft ranking of projects, but the TAC can consider other factors. J. B. Mack added

that, for example, there might be some other potential merits or drawbacks to the projects that aren't adequately reflected in the scoring criteria.

Hinsdale Fort Hill Branch Rail Trail Trestle Bridge Improvements

This project received the lowest score among the five projects. Both Leslie Casey and Leandra MacDonald expressed that the criteria used for scoring favors highway projects, and observed that transportation projects that do not rank high with regards to safety do not score well. Lucy St. John pointed out that the TAC assigns the weights for each of the criteria and can change them if they feel they are not equitable. Leslie Casey expressed concern that none of the criteria adequately consider seniors or the disabled. J. B. Mack noted that seniors and those with disabilities are not expressly mentioned in the equity and accessibility metrics, but some people may score those criteria higher for projects likely to impact these groups. He continued that this observation can be brought to the attention of NHDOT and other RPCs as input on potential adjustments to criteria guidance for the future. J. B. Mack observed that the TYP projects that score the best are the more well rounded ones. It was noted that other federal funds such as the Transportation Alternatives Program might be a better source of funding for this particular project. Cheryl Mayberry noted that when scoring for need and impact, she takes into consideration what will affect the largest amount of people.

Keene NH 12 & 32 Intersection Improvements

This project ranked fourth in the scoring. Ed Smith pointed out that he was under the impression that improvements that were made earlier connecting Lake Street to the roundabout on NH Route 12 have provided NH 32 motorists with an alternative to connect to NH Route 12. J. B. Mack noted that it would be beneficial to conduct an analysis examining the impact on safety at the NH Route 12/NH Route 32 intersection "before" and "after" the installation of the NH Route 12/Lake Street/Swanzey Factory Road roundabout. Unfortunately, available data was limited when the City of Keene nominated the project. Leslie Casey shared that she thinks the project has a compelling safety component.

Keene-Swanzey Base Hill Road

This project scored third in the scoring. Brian Barden and Leslie Casey noted that widening this road will induce traffic demand resulting in added safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists. Ed Smith said that he believed that traffic demand on this road will change when lower Winchester Street is upgraded. Henry Underwood noted that the federal functional classification for the Swanzey portion of the road is considered local, whereas the Keene portion is a major collector. However, NHDOT is reviewing a potential change to the Swanzey portion from a local road to a major collector as part of its decennial analysis of the federal functional classification statuses of highways in New Hampshire. Additionally, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides state departments of transportation the flexibility to fund off-system, local roads with federal funds. J. B. Mack added that staff learned that NHDOT is not yet in a position to determine if it would use this flexibility, and it may be disadvantageous to do so because it could potentially "shrink the pie" of where federal funds are spent. Leandra MacDonald questioned how the same road can have two different classifications. Leslie Casey noted she would like to know if residents on this road would support this project.

Swanzey NH 10 West Swanzey Improvements

This was the highest scoring project. It was noted that the high score this project received for the safety criteria clearly makes it the number one choice. There was a question about whether the pedestrian crossing improvements would be supported by NHDOT. J. B. Mack discussed NHDOT's history supporting Context Sensitive Solutions and its more recent support for Complete Streets and described the various land uses on either side of the road including residences, employers, a supermarket, post office and elementary

school. It was reported that SWRPC staff and BETA Group, Inc. discussed the project with John Kallfelz, and learned from John that something similar to this has been done in Bedford and was very successful.

Westmoreland River Road Bridge Replacement

This was the second highest scoring project. Cheryl Mayberry noted there is a great need for this project even though it does not benefit a large amount of people. Leslie Casey noted that although it is important there isn't a regional transportation impact involved and the only letter of support for the project is from Cheshire County. Brian Barden asked if the replacement bridge would be a regular bridge or a historical one. Henry Underwood noted that the bridge is eligible for the National Register for Historic Places. It was noted that the Town's Board of Selectmen prefer to have a functional bridge and BETA Group's cost estimate was based on full replacement of the bridge. Brian Barden asked if work will be done to improve Partridge Brook Road, and J. B. Mack said that he was not aware of any improvements planned for the road. A question was asked about flooding on Partridge Brook Road, and J. B. Mack reported that the Town of Westmoreland reported that the road floods every spring. Leandra MacDonald asked what would happen if the bridge were closed, and the Committee discussed the other access options to the Maplewood Nursing Home facility.

Tim Murphy asked John Byatt from BETA Group, Inc. if he had anything to add or sees anything in the scoring results that should be brought to the Committee's attention. John Byatt responded that they evaluated the costs for each of the projects, and it appears the state of repair and safety concerns are addressed in the scoring.

J. B. Mack reminded TAC members that SWRPC's assigned budget for the 2025-2034 TYP update is \$4.9 million and based on 2033 and 2034 estimated costs we would only be able to fund one of the projects. Lucy St. John pointed out that inflation rates could change as we get closer to doing a project. J. B. Mack noted that the Swanzey project's scope was reduced somewhat, and the Town of Swanzey may want to add back in certain aspects of the project using some of the additional funds. John Byatt noted that proposed medians were taken out, and J. B. Mack noted that some parts of the corridor don't have sidewalk access. Leslie Casey and Cheryl Mayberry suggested that we submit our number one ranked project as our funding choice. Tim Murphy noted that if we take that approach we could request that the remaining budget allocation be used to partially fund one of the other projects. Lucy St. John advised that we submit our #1 choice as well as a 2nd and 3rd choice as is discussed in NHDOT's guidance.

Ed Smith noted that he has a problem with recommending the Westmoreland River Road Bridge Replacement project since there are alternative means of funding available if the Town would be willing to participate in the cost. He said he believed other projects on our list do not have that option. J. B. Mack clarified that any of the projects may be eligible for other funding sources, but the Westmoreland project has already been identified by NHDOT as a candidate for the State Aid Bridge program. That program would require a 20% match from the Town and the Town is concerned about going to taxpayers because taxes went up last year for a new fire station. Cheryl Mayberry noted that Westmoreland could set-up a capital improvements plan fund to assist with this type of expense. Ed Smith noted that if the TAC awarded funding to the Westmoreland project, it could set a bad precedent with any number of towns in the future requesting regional priority project TYP funds for their local bridges. He suggested that the State Aid Bridge program, which is already available to the Town is a more appropriate funding source.

Leandra MacDonald questioned why expensive granite curbing is being proposed for the Keene NH Route 12 and Route 32 Intersection Improvement project, when curbing down the street is not granite curbing. Mr. Murphy suggested that is a matter that can be addressed as the priority project review process continues. J. B. Mack said that he feels that Leandra's question should first be raised with the City of Keene in order to better understand their position and reasoning.

Motion: To recommend the Swanzy NH 10 West Swanzy Improvements project as SWRPC's top-ranked draft regional priority project for the FY 2025-2034 TYP update for the purposes of NHDOT review and feedback. Furthermore, to submit the Keene/Swanzy Base Hill Road Reconstruction project and the Keene NH Route 12 and Route 32 Intersection Improvement project as the second and third ranked projects.

Motion by Cheryl Mayberry, seconded by Leslie Casey. Approved by unanimous vote.

IV. Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program Update

J. B. Mack provided an update on guidance received from NHDOT regarding TAC's potential participation in the scoring process. He explained that if there are two or more Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) proposals submitted from our region, TAC will be asked to rank them. The TAC's ranking will serve as one of the criteria that NHDOT is using to score CMAQ projects. He added that SWRPC currently anticipates that two to three proposals may be submitted from our region.

V. Next Meeting: January 9, 2023

J. B. Mack announced that the next meeting of TAC is scheduled for January 9, 2023.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin
Office Manager

Date: January 9, 2023
To: Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Staff

RE: Transportation Program Updates

Background

Several transportation-related items of interest are summarized below. These items can be discussed further at the January 9th meeting.

- a. Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program (CMAQ): The New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (NHDOT) deadline for CMAQ project applications is January 6, 2023. Three project sponsors submitted letters of interest for CMAQ funding for projects in Southwest NH including a letter from the City of Keene for signal upgrades to West Street, a letter from NHDOT to upgrade the T intersection at NH 9/10/12/101 in Keene, and a letter from Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS) proposing enhanced transit services for the Greater Keene area. Like the previous CMAQ round, the TAC will have the opportunity to rank projects, however, at the time of writing, it is unclear if there will be more than one project to rank. Since the letter of interest period, SWRPC has learned that HCS' project application will not be moving forward. Furthermore, it is unclear if the TAC is supposed to review and evaluate the NHDOT sponsored application. Staff have sought clarification from NHDOT on the latter and will report NHDOT's response if received before the January 9th meeting.
- b. Road Safety Audit (RSA) Proposals: NHDOT recently announced an extension to its application deadline for communities interested in RSAs to January 31, 2023. Projects selected for RSAs will be assigned to NHDOT managed traffic engineering consultants to assess unsafe intersections and segments of road and offer potential low-cost engineering solutions. Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funds are used to fund the RSAs and the funding is also considered for construction projects that are both supported by host communities and NHDOT after going through the RSA process. SWRPC is currently assisting two communities in preparing applications. The applications are for NH Route 124 in the vicinity of Milliken Road in Jaffrey and the intersection of NH Route 12, Wyman Road and Corporate Drive in Keene.
- c. Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST): MAST received one Complete Streets Implementation Grant application from the Town of Swanzey during its 2022 solicitation for projects. Swanzey's application proposes a third phase of an ongoing construction project to extend new sidewalk infrastructure in Swanzey Center. The proposed project would build a new segment of sidewalk on Sawyer's Crossing Road to Cresson Drive with a goal to eventually provide a pedestrian/bicycle only connection from Swanzey Center to the Cheshire Rail Trail. Given its status as the only project proposal, MAST has encouraged the Town of Swanzey to consider expanding its project and is awaiting an updated proposal. In addition to the Swanzey project proposal, SWRPC is currently playing a technical assistance

role for two previously funded MAST projects (from the 2021 round) by assisting Marlborough Greenville in developing Complete Streets policies, design guidelines and implementation plans. The two technical assistance projects are scheduled to be completed by June 2023.

- d. Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan Update: SWRPC continues holding corridor-based public input sessions for the eight corridors identified in the *Southwest Connects* Long Range Transportation Plan as part of SWRPC's update to the Plan. To date, meetings have been held for six corridors. The US 202 North Corridor session is scheduled for January 4th and the US 202 South Corridor session is scheduled for February 3rd. Both meetings start at 6:30 p.m. and will be facilitated through the Zoom platform. To learn more about the *Southwest Connects* update process visit <https://www.swrpc.org/swconnects/>.
- e. Planning for Electric Vehicles (EVs): SWRPC staff continue to be active participants in Drive Electric New Hampshire (DENH) Coalition meetings and discussions to learn about ongoing EV initiatives and progress throughout the state. Recently, a final draft of the New Hampshire Municipal EV Toolkit was circulated to relevant stakeholders for comments and feedback prior to publication. The aim of the document, which will be released in early 2023, is to assist NH communities as they plan for development of public EV charging infrastructure as well as fleet electrification. SWRPC staff provided feedback on an early draft in Fall 2022, which was prepared by Clean Energy NH and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). SWRPC staff have also been coordinating with the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC), which is in the process of finalizing a study on ideal and preferred EV charging locations throughout the Southern NH region. In early December, SNHPC shared its methodology and preliminary analysis with SWRPC staff which provides a model to identify preferred fast charging and Level 2 charging locations along key route corridors and near residential and retail properties as funding becomes available.

SWRPC staff are currently awaiting further guidance related to the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program. Two and a half billion dollars in funding has been allocated by the federal government over 5 years toward a discretionary community grant program which would fund deployment of publicly accessible alternative fueling and charging infrastructure for EVs along designated alternative fuel corridors and within communities. In speaking with staff at NHDES, SWRPC has learned that the state agency is unlikely to apply to the federal funding program once available; however, they have expressed they would provide support and technical assistance for local and/or regional entities interested in applying to the program. These funds are intended to prioritize rural, low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. Grant guidelines for the NEVI program are anticipated to be announced at any time.

In addition to the above, SWRPC staff and TAC members may suggest other transportation related updates during the January 9th meeting.

Recommendation

For your information.

Date: January 9, 2023
To: Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Staff

RE: Presentation: Update on Community Transportation Activities

Background

In 2022, regions across New Hampshire were given access to federal funding and support through the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) to enhance community transportation across the State. On January 9th, Terry Johnson from SWRPC staff will give the SWRPC TAC a primer on important community transportation developments occurring in Southwest NH. The presentation will summarize the State's mobility management blueprint for delivering customer-centered community transportation services, and describe how SWRPC and its regional partners have been taking advantage of the new resources and partnerships to address community transportation shortcomings in Southwest NH. TAC members will learn about the State and Regional Coordinating Councils, State and regional mobility managers and the NHDHHS' Rural Transportation Equity Project.

Recommendation

For your information.

Date: January 9, 2023
To: Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Staff

RE: Presentation: Transit/Microtransit Feasibility Study

Background

In December 2022, with technical assistance from its transit consultant Via, SWRPC reached a milestone as part of a project that evaluated various public transit alternatives in Southwest New Hampshire. The purpose of the study is to re-evaluate Keene's existing transit services as well as explore opportunities to further develop transit services in other high need areas identified in Southwest New Hampshire. The study evaluates two different models for transit service delivery: fixed route transit and microtransit. Fixed route transit describes traditional public transit services that operate on a predictable schedule and route, while microtransit describes public transit offered in set zones during a set time period that provide rides by responding to trip requests from riders through a smartphone app or through a call center.

After receiving ongoing public input from a project advisory task force as well as input from two sets of public meetings held virtually, as well as in person in Keene and in Peterborough, the final study evaluates a dozen alternatives and provides estimates and recommendations on the anticipated daily ridership, annual ridership, number of vehicles to provide service, annual cost of operating expenses, and cost per trip estimates for each alternative. At the January 9th meeting, SWRPC staff will provide a summary presentation on the study's results and discuss SWRPC's recommendations for next steps.

Recommendation

For your information.