



SWRPC

Southwest Region
Planning Commission

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Transportation Advisory Committee

Transportation Advisory Committee

January 6, 2025
2:00 p.m.

Southwest Region Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot Street, Keene, NH

Kendall Lane, Chair
Keene

Frank Sterling, Vice Chair
Jaffrey

Susan Ashworth
HCS Community Services

Brian Barden
Dublin

Michael Kowalczyk
*Monadnock Region Rail
Trails Collaborative*

Alfred "Gus" Lerandeau
Swanzey

Don Lussier
Keene

Leandra MacDonald
Peterborough

Cheryl Mayberry
Walpole

Karey Miner
Winchester

Ed Smith
Hinsdale

Ruth Ward
Stoddard

with

John Kallfelz
NHDOT District 4

and

Lucy St. John
*NHDOT Bureau of
Planning & Community
Assistance*

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Minutes of November 4, 2024
- III. Transportation Program Updates
- IV. Presentation: Keene Project #41590-NH Route 101 Improvements
- V. Other Matters
- VI. Next Meeting: March 3, 2025
- VII. Adjourn



**Southwest Region Planning Commission
Transportation Advisory Committee**

Draft Minutes

November 4, 2024

Present: Kendall Lane, Chair, *City of Keene*; Frank Sterling, Vice Chair, *Town of Jaffrey*; Susan Ashworth, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Brian Barden, *Town of Dublin*; Sara Carbonneau, *Town of Winchester*; Leandra MacDonald, *Town of Peterborough*; Cheryl Mayberry, *Town of Walpole*; Ed Smith, *Town of Hinsdale*; Lucy St. John, *New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Bureau of Planning & Community Assistance*.

Staff Members Present: J. B. Mack, *Assistant Director*; Jack Ahern, *Associate Planner*; Sarah Bollinger, *Planner*.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Kendall Lane called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

II. Minutes of October 7, 2024 Meeting

Motion: To approve the minutes of October 7, 2024 as presented.

Motion by Sara Carbonneau, seconded by Frank Sterling. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. FY 2027-2036 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan Scores and Preliminary Ranking of Regional Priority Projects

J. B. Mack announced that seven TAC members had submitted scores for the FY 2027-2036 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP) regional priority project nominations. He requested feedback on the scoring process. Kendall Lane indicated that the *Regional Project Review Guidance* document was a very helpful resource. No other feedback was provided. J. B. informed the TAC that SWRPC can submit up to two proposals within the SWRPC's budget limit of \$4.9 million plus one additional project.

J. B. Mack moved on to the final scores for each project. The Marlborough proposal for Improvements to NH Route 124, from NH Route 101 to the Highway Garage, had the highest score at 63.85. Keene's proposal for NH Route 12/32 Intersection Improvements received the second highest score at 61.18. The North Swanzey Pedestrian Improvements proposal was third, at 56.44, and Hinsdale to Brattleboro Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements was fourth with a score of 54.33. J. B. reviewed how scores are weighted by criteria and reminded the TAC that safety is the most heavily weighted criterion.

Leandra MacDonald suggested that the TAC consider giving more weight to the resiliency criteria in the future, as it is increasingly important to infrastructure projects as storm events grow in frequency and intensity in our region. Kendall Lane stated that the equity criterion is difficult to apply in our region, as there is very little ethnic/racial diversity, though it can apply to low-income people. J. B. Mack concurred that in our case, it primarily focuses on income level.

J. B. Mack displayed the average, median, low and high scores, by criterion, for each project proposal to the TAC. He noted that the Keene NH Route 12 and NH Route 32 Intersection Improvements proposal was the only project to get a score higher than 1 for freight movement. He also made note that it is generally a positive sign when the average score and median score are similar, as it suggests less disparity among individual scores. The numbers he presented reflected this.

J. B. Mack moved on to the regional allocation of funding for this round of TYP proposals. There is \$4,996,384 in 2035-2036 dollars available (note to the reader that all dollar figures that follow are expressed in 2035-2036 dollars). He noted that SWRPC's regional priority project submitted for the 2025-2034 TYP, Swanzey Project #44218, has a budget shortfall and would require \$1,909,141 from this round's allocation to fully fund that project should the TAC wish to fully fund the project. This would leave \$3,087,243 for new projects in the FY 2027-2036 TYP, which is enough to fund scaled-down versions of the four projects that the TAC reviewed and scored. J. B. asked if the TAC anticipated that they would want to fully fund project #44218 as the TAC has in previous TYP rounds for underfunded projects, and there was consensus from the TAC that they would likely fund the project.

J. B. Mack explained that SWRPC asked the Town of Marlborough Selectboard what it views as the most critical aspects of the NH Route 124 project since the cost of the full extent of the original proposal far exceeded what was available in funding. J. B. explained that Marlborough had prioritized segments 1 and 3, which include drainage improvements on NH Route 124 limited to the developed area at the bottom of the hill from approximately 40 Jaffrey Road to the Minnewawa Brook and the pedestrian improvements along NH Route 124 from Pleasant Street to Laurel Street. These two segments are estimated by VHB to cost approximately \$2,821,500 and will fit in SWRPC's TYP budget along with addressing the shortfall for Project #44218. J. B. noted that there are two options for the drainage improvements, an option that includes an open ditch that takes a straighter path to the brook, and a 60 inch underground pipe that follows the east side of NH Route 124. J. B. noted that VHB anticipates the NH Department of Environmental Services, during the environmental review of the project, will likely prefer the open ditch option due to its straighter course, but that it will require the acquisition of an unoccupied property in its path. The drainage infrastructure upgradient from this part of the project will need to be addressed at a later time or with different funding sources, as it requires extensive reshaping of the land that exceeds what current funding can support. The improvements to the NH Route 101/124 intersection were the lowest priority and therefore left out of the project to reduce costs as well. Leandra MacDonald asked if the bridge on NH Route 124 over the Minnewawa Brook was assessed as part of the engineering done for this project. J. B. responded that it was examined and is not in need of repairs or replacement at any point in the near future. Kendall Lane asked if the VHB examined a roundabout option, and J. B. responded that VHB didn't feel there was enough room to accommodate one without significant cost so it wasn't looked at.

Kendall Lane indicated that the way projects were segmented, and the purpose for doing so, were not entirely clear in the proposals and presentations. J. B. Mack responded that projects were segmented because SWRPC assumed there may be challenges to funding many of the candidate projects in their entirety. He went on to explain that VHB's cost estimates were finalized a few days ahead of SWRPC's deadline to send cost estimate information to the TAC for their scoring exercise. The short window resulted in SWRPC needing to obtain feedback from the towns on prioritized segments while the TAC was reviewing and scoring the projects. During this round, all towns were amenable to funding parts of their full projects, making it so that SWRPC would not have to nominate a project that was underfunded to the FY 2027-2036 TYP.

J. B. Mack noted that the Keene proposal for improvements to the NH Route 12 and NH Route 32 intersection will cost up to \$3,057,000, the number for which represents the more expensive option, a signalized intersection. SWRPC staff recommend using this more conservative number, even if the project ends up being a roundabout. J. B. noted that Keene sent a letter to SWRPC in October updating their cost proposals for this project so that the project would connect with the Town of Swanzey's planned sidewalk on NH Route 32, but when Swanzey was asked to prioritize segments of sidewalk for its TYP nomination, NH Route 32 did not end up being a top priority. Furthermore, the addition of the sidewalk would exceed available funding. As a result, Keene's newly presented estimate with the new NH Route 32 sidewalk is not recommended.

Based on consultation with Town of Swanzey officials, J. B. Mack noted that the Swanzey proposal for pedestrian improvements in North Swanzey could also be reduced in scope to fit within budget. Segments 1, 3 and 7 are the Town's priorities. These include sidewalk improvements on NH Route 12 from the Keene town line to the traffic circle at the intersection with Lake Street, sidewalk improvements on the full extent of Lake Street, and the realignment of the intersection of Lake Street and NH Route 32. The project will cost approximately \$2,949,100 with this reduced scope. Kendall Lane asked if there is enough right-of-way on Lake Street to support sidewalk installation. J. B. responded that VHB expected that there was enough room and minimal right of way needed, mostly for construction easements.

Sara Carbonneau indicated that she would be against including a project in the submission to NHDOT just for the sake of sending the maximum number they are allowed to. She noted the gap in scores between the Marlborough and Keene proposals as opposed to the Swanzey and Hinsdale projects, suggesting only to submit the two that scored best. J. B. Mack responded that there may be unknown factors uncovered by NHDOT during their review process, which may affect the feasibility of any of the projects. As such it would be advantageous to include three options as a contingency.

Motion: To make a preliminary recommendation to NHDOT that explains that the SWRPC TAC intends to fund the \$1,909,141 shortfall associated with Project #44218 with its \$4,996,384 program allocation for the FY 2027-2036 TYP, and furthermore, submits three projects for NHDOT review in the following rank order: Marlborough NH Route 124 Drainage Improvements and Pedestrian/Cycling Improvements (Segments 1 and 3) at an estimated cost of \$2,821,500; Keene NH Route 12 and NH Route 32 Intersection Improvements (without additional NH Route 32 sidewalk construction) at an estimated cost of \$3,057,000; and Swanzey Pedestrian and Cyclist Improvements (Segments 1, 3 and 7) at an estimated cost of \$2,949,100.

Motion made by Frank Sterling, seconded by Kendall Lane. Approved by unanimous vote.

Leandra MacDonald asked for clarity on how the shortfall on Swanzey project #44218 had happened, and if it had been engineers who had mis-quoted the project costs. J. B. Mack explained that the TAC was aware at the time of submittal that it would be over budget, but decided that it was important to fund the project in full. A decision was made during the last TYP cycle to add the full project to the FY 2025-2034 TYP and address the budget shortfall at a later point in time either through another grant program or additional TYP funding.

IV. Other Matters

J. B. Mack informed the TAC that at least one member will likely not continue to serve on the committee by the end of 2024. He asked that any members planning to depart let him know within the next few weeks

because rosters will be developed for the next calendar year. Discussion arose around the number of members appropriate for the committee to operate optimally. J. B. noted that NHDOT has suggested in the past that the TAC should strive to have one member from each municipality in the region but explained that it would be incredibly difficult to run a meeting with a 34-member committee. Several TAC members agreed. J. B. further explained that SWRPC's intent is to include people from a variety of towns with different population sizes and from different geographies, and that SWRPC seeks candidates that think regionally as opposed to coming to meetings to represent just one town.

Lucy St. John announced that there is a new round of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) open for applications. She noted that the TAP letter of interest is due by December 6, 2024, a mandatory TAP workshop will be held in January and TAP applications are due January 24, 2025. She also mentioned the upcoming Alstead 43566A & 43566B Public Official Meeting to discuss reconstruction of NH 123A on November 12th at 5:00 p.m.

J. B. Mack spoke on the TAP funding and said he would be sending out a reminder email to towns that SWRPC has an on-call engineering firm to assist towns in developing project concepts and cost estimates in preparation for the TAP round. Leandra MacDonald asked when the funding for an awarded TAP project would be received. Lucy St. John indicated that TAP projects are added to the TYP and projects awarded this round would likely begin to receive funds in 2027.

V. Next Meeting: January 6, 2025

J. B. Mack announced that the next TAC meeting will be held on January 6, 2025.

VI. Adjourn

Chair Kendall Lane adjourned the meeting at 3:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Ahern, Associate Planner



Agenda Item III

Date: January 6, 2025
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 6th meeting.

- a. **Draft Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP), 2027-2036:** Following the November 4, 2024 SWRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, staff submitted a cover letter and backup materials relating to the TAC's top three ranked regional priority TYP projects to the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Currently, NHDOT is reviewing scopes of work and cost estimates for all regional planning commission priority projects and aims to provide its feedback by February 2025.
- b. **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), 2025:** NHDOT announced in December 2024 that it received 37 letters of interest from municipalities interested in the 2025 federal TAP round. Altogether, the total request for federal funds was over \$43 million, however, only \$24 million is available. At least a 20% local match is required for all TAP projects. Among the proposals, the average total project cost was slightly more than \$1.4 million with projects estimates ranging from \$4.3 million to \$0.7 million. NHDOT will be holding a mandatory training workshop for the municipalities in early January and final applications are due January 24th. The deadline for regional planning commissions to submit ranked regional projects is April 25th. NHDOT has released an application and scoring rubric, which proposes that 20% of the application's score be based on meeting regional planning goals. In the SWRPC Region, Alstead, Antrim and Keene have submitted letters of interest.
- c. **"Next Generation" Transit System:** SWRPC, with the support of its project consultant and input from the Advisory Task Force (ATF) and public, has narrowed down a list of potential governance and operating models for an expanded Monadnock Region transit system. Over the past seven months, the ATF convened three times and a second public meeting was held to solicit input on project activities and outcomes. The next step is to evaluate and select the most appropriate model for the Region. Preliminary meetings were held with Cheshire County to gauge its interest in managing or sponsoring an expanded system. In addition, four additional organizations were identified as potential system operators and will be approached to gauge their interest in managing the system. At the same time, an outreach campaign will be conducted to build political will among communities, key stakeholders and the public to financially support the expanded transit system.
- d. **Antrim Road Surface Management System and Pedestrian Inventory:** In August 2024, SWRPC contracted with the Town of Antrim to provide Road Surface Management System (RSMS) technical assistance, a Pedestrian Infrastructure Inventory, and a comprehensive Pavement Preservation Plan. RSMS is a data-driven process for managing paved roads that

incorporates pavement-preservation principles into planning for pavement maintenance. The field data collection and inventory deliverables are completed, and SWRPC has begun to discuss repair scenarios with the Town. The Pavement Preservation Plan is expected to be completed and made available to the Town in early 2025.

- e. **Regional Trail Map:** Beginning in July, SWRPC began coordinating with the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative (MRRTC), the City of Keene, the Monadnock Conservancy, and other stakeholders to develop a Regional Rail Trail map. The map includes all publicly accessible rail trails in the Monadnock Region, suggested parking locations, trail segment distances, and more. The other side of the map will have an expanded view of the City of Keene's trail network. The project will be finished by the end of 2024. The MRRTC's intention is for the maps to be printed and distributed widely to regional partners, including local bike shops, ahead of the warmer months.
- f. **Hinsdale-Brattleboro Existing Bridges Coordination:** Following the ribbon cutting for the new General John Stark Memorial Bridge between Hinsdale, NH and Brattleboro, VT in December, the two towns, SWRPC, Windham Regional Commission and other stakeholders were contacted by NHDOT requesting guidance for the final design of Project #12210D to rehabilitate the Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana bridges. At the time of writing, NHDOT is also working with local officials and the regional planning commissions to discuss the possibility of leasing a portion of both bridges through a request for proposals process.
- g. **Timber for Transit Project:** In the summer of 2024, SWRPC was selected for award through the Northern Border Regional Commission's Timber for Transit Program, which aims to connect local transportation infrastructure needs with the regional forestry economy, particularly through demonstrating applications of engineered timber products in the transportation sector. SWRPC's proposal focused on providing project-specific engineering and other pre-development technical assistance to Cheshire County municipalities interested in exploring the feasibility of timber-based construction for a range of transportation-related infrastructure. The award was formalized in the fall through execution of a grant agreement and SWRPC recently received a "Partial Notice to Proceed," which authorizes the agency to move forward with initial phases of the project. A first step will be to form a project work group, which will advise SWRPC staff over the course of the grant. Work group activities are anticipated to include providing input on RFP development and vendor selection as well as prioritization of projects for engineering technical assistance, among other tasks. SWRPC staff would like to enlist one more members of the TAC to serve on the project work group. More information about the project will be available soon on the SWRPC website.
- h. **Road Stream Crossing Assessment Protocol Improvement Project:** SWRPC has partnered with the New Hampshire Geological Survey through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to update Marlborough and Winchester stream crossing assessments and develop tools to assess and prioritize stream crossings based on their flood risk and other factors like financial resources and protection of wetlands. Later, the tools developed will be offered to municipalities throughout the State. The project will be completed by February of 2026. In December, SWRPC met with Marlborough and Winchester to discuss previous and ongoing efforts to collect data about road/stream crossings (i.e. culverts and bridges). Input received will inform an updated assessment protocol to be developed further with support from the University of New Hampshire Technology Transfer Center.
- i. **Monadnock Regional Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (MRCC):** The MRCC has convened six times since the last update was given to the TAC on MRCC activities back in May 2024. MRCC input was solicited on the "Next Generation" Transit System project during multiple meetings. The MOOver CEO presented to the MRCC at its November meeting on its experiences launching microtransit services in Windsor and Brattleboro, VT and lessons that may be applicable to establishing microtransit in the

Monadnock Region. During the next two months, the MRCC will be focused on its application to NHDOT for Section 5310 funding (transportation for seniors and people with disabilities) for RCCs for the SFY 26-27 two-year funding cycle. It is anticipated that applications will be due by mid-March, 2025. NHDOT has allocated approximately \$304,000 annually to support transportation and mobility management services. SWRPC will need to consider whether it wishes to continue providing mobility management services on behalf of the MRCC which it has done since 2022.

- j. **Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST)**: At the November meeting of the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) Steering Committee, awards were made to two communities in our region to implement complete streets projects. The Town of Marlborough was awarded \$48,750 for pedestrian safety improvements at the intersection of NH 124 (Jaffrey Road) and Pleasant Street (including overhead lighting upgrades and a button-activated warning light called a rectangular rapid flashing beacon). The Town of Swanzey was awarded \$51,250 to install similar beacon systems at three intersections of the Ashuelot Rail Trail and Matthews Road. Such systems can reduce pedestrian crashes by 47% and increase motorist yield rates up to 98%. Both projects are proposed to be completed by the end of 2025. The MAST Annual Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29th at 3:30 p.m. at SWRPC.

In addition to the above, SWRPC staff and TAC members may suggest other transportation-related updates during the January 6th meeting.

Recommendation

For your information.



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Agenda Item IV

Date: January 6, 2025
To: Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Staff

RE: Presentation: Keene Project #41590-NH Route 101 Improvements

Background

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation is moving forward with a plan to make improvements to NH Route 101 from east of Optical Avenue to Branch Road (Project #41590). The project will involve the reconstruction of the state highway, improvements to stormwater runoff in the area, expanded shoulders, the replacement of the bridge over the Branch River and the relocation of the intersection with Swanzey Factory Road. NHDOT's Project Manager and engineers from Clough Harbor will present the project at the January 6th meeting to provide a detailed overview of the project and answer any questions.

Recommendation

For your information.