

Appendix A
Public Comments

Appendix A – Public Comments

This appendix includes the comments received on *Destination Tomorrow* from the onset of the Plan's development in 2000 through the last public comment period in March 2003. Comments were received from the general public, municipalities and from various agencies. The appendix is divided into four parts.

1. List of dates for each of the presentations made and forums held for the Plan.
2. Summary of the comments received.
3. Paraphrasing of individual comments.
4. Letters of comment received.
5. Plan Summary document and the nine Issue Papers

Part 1 – List of Presentation and Forum Dates

- February 26, 2003 – Bayside Development Committee presentation at Portland City Hall
- February 19, 2003 – Senator Collins presentation
- February 10, 2003 – Portland City Council presentation
- January 28, 2003 – Public forum, Portland Public Library
- January 27, 2003 – Falmouth Town Council presentation
- January 24, 2003 – Maine Turnpike Authority Board presentation
- January 22, 2003 – Portland Peninsular Transit Committee presentation
- January 21, 2003 – Public forum, Barron Center, Portland
- January 16, 2003 – City Affairs Committee, Portland Chamber of Commerce
- January 13, 2003 – Cumberland County Commissioners presentation
- January 7, 2003 – Cape Elizabeth Planning Board presentation
- January 6, 2003 – Congressman Allen presentation
- December 20, 2002 – Casco Bay Island Transit District presentation
- December 17, 2002 – Joint workshop of the Gorham and Scarborough Town Councils
- December 12, 2002 – Public forum at Scarborough Town Hall
- December 11, 2002 – Joint workshop of the South Portland and Cape Elizabeth Councils
- December 9, 2002 – Westbrook City Council presentation
- November 27, 2002 – Regional Affairs Committee of the Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce presentation
- November 20, 2002 – GPCOG Executive Committee presentation
- November 14, 2002 – MEREDA presentation
- March 7, 2001 – Greater Portland COG Transit Forum
- March 8, 2001 – Public forum, Barron Center, Portland
- December 13, 2000 – Scarborough Town Council presentation
- December 11, 2000 – Portland City Council presentation
- December 5, 2000 – Gorham Town Council presentation
- December 1, 2000 – Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce
- November 30, 2000 – Barron Center, Portland
- November 29, 2000 – Scarborough Town Hall
- November 27, 2000 – South Portland City Council
- November 21, 2000 – Falmouth Town Council
- November 20, 2000 – Westbrook City Council
- November 17, 2000 – Casco Bay Island Transit District
- November 16, 2000 – Portland Chamber of Commerce, City Affairs Committee

Part 2 – Summary of Comments Received

During the development of the Plan, 121 comments from approximately 50 individuals, municipalities or agencies. The comments were broadly grouped in several categories to facilitate understanding the tenor of the comments. Part 3 contains a paraphrasing of each of the 121 comments.

Comment Category and Number of Comments Received

| Category | # Comments | Category | # Comments |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Roads | 15 | Process | 8 |
| East-west travel | 12 | Parking | 5 |
| Rail (passenger and freight) | 4 | Turnpike toll barrier | 3 |
| Passenger (public) transportation | 41 | Bicycles and pedestrians | 4 |
| Planning | 7 | Other | 11 |
| Land use | 11 | | |

Roads

Fifteen comments generally related to roads were received. Five comments dealt with the problem of congestion; two of which suggested options to alleviate the problem. Two comments dealt with safety; one that suggested an option to improve safety. Five comments were expressed towards new roads: two supported a specific new road (including one for the South Portland Gorham toll-road concept); one stated a belief that “developing transit is a poor excuse for not building roads that should have been built 40 years ago;” one opposed new roads in general; and one advocated keeping all options for I-295 open. One individual suggested using PACTS funds as one means of encouraging neighborhood street design that promotes interconnections for local traffic but that discourages cut-through traffic. Lastly, there were two general road comments.

East-West Travel

Six comments expressed support for new east-west roads; four of these were specific to a Gorham Bypass. (Another comment that is listed in the “roads section” liked the concept of a toll road between South Portland and Gorham.) Only one comment of opposition to new east-west roads was expressed.

Two comments expressed frustration over the length of time that it is taking for new east-west connections; one comment questioned the need for two Gorham bypasses and one comment dealt with the poor condition of east-west travel. Lastly, one comment expressed a concern over whether PACTS stance on the South Portland to Gorham toll road concept was in keeping with the requirements of the STPA.

Passenger Rail and Freight Rail

Four comments were received on passenger or freight rail. Two pointed out the importance of rail to the region as a whole; a third urged the Plan to promote more rail from the south; the fourth described the Plan’s recommendations for passenger and freight rail as appropriate.

Passenger (Public) Transportation

We received 41 transit-related comments, the largest number of comments in one category. Eighteen of these comments advocated for greater reliance on passenger transportation. These comments included a need for increased funding, increased service frequency and expansion of service areas, and a belief that the Plan was weak on the topic of passenger transportation. Nine comments expressed a belief that expansion of the passenger transportation system was either not warranted or that the Plan's passenger transportation recommendations were appropriate. Seven individuals felt that a consolidation of the transit operators was needed. The last seven comments covered future planning, safety and signage.

Comments in support of increased reliance on passenger transportation.

- Five stated a belief that more funding was needed for passenger transportation.
- Six advocated for increased service areas and/or more frequent service.
- Three felt the Plan was either weak on transit or neglected the issue.
- Two advocated meeting much of future transportation demand with transit alternatives.
- One said there was a need for greater east-west transit.
- One suggested bringing back the trolleys.

Comments generally in support of maintaining the status quo

- Two liked the transit recommendations contained in the Plan.
- Seven expressed their belief that expanding the passenger transportation system was not warranted; five of these comments were directed to passenger transportation in suburban towns.

Comments in support of consolidation of transit agencies

- Seven suggested that a consolidation occur between the transit agencies; these suggestions ranged from two or three operators consolidating to a region-wide consolidation.

Comments on future planning, safety and signage

- Two stated a need for a “detailed and specific public transit plan.”
- One advocated for carefully weighing the costs of passenger transportation against those of other options.
- One suggested the need to forecast future transportation system demand if a “strong public transit system” were developed.
- One stated a need for more signage and shelter at bus stops.
- One stated the danger of having to catch a bus on Brighton Avenue due to heavy traffic
- One suggested a test of the viability of smaller buses to replace larger buses.

Planning

Two of the seven planning-related comments were regional in nature: one suggested “direct regional control;” the other said to be “fully mindful of” transportation systems from Brunswick south to the Maine New Hampshire border. A longer-term focus was suggested, as was one that was proactive in addition to being reactive. One person thought that the Plan essentially ignored the roadway system in the City of Portland, while another comment thought that the Plan demonstrates an appropriate balance between improving mobility and service within the region.

Lastly, one comment detailed a dilemma currently facing transportation planning in southern Maine and other regions with a relatively modest population base and a roadway system that is

near capacity in many places. The population base acts as a constraint to the development of public transportation systems, while at the same time, actions to relieve pressure on the roadway system may actually increase traffic and congestion and increase the constraint to developing public transportation.

Land Use

Nine of the eleven comments related to land use were generally supportive of initiatives recommended by *Destination Tomorrow* that support sensible, increased density of development or a greater alignment between transportation investments and land use policies. One of these comments recommended the use of targeted investment strategies to help in the coordination of land use planning decisions and transportation investments. Another recommended providing advice and technical assistance to communities for the designation of growth areas with respect to arterials and major collectors. A third recommended that master plans for areas should include recommendations for land use and the siting of facilities and development, particularly with respect to the existing roadway system.

One comment was opposed to policies that promoted denser development. Another comment pointed out the negative impact that highly traveled residential streets are having on neighborhood character and livability.

Process

Eight process-related comments were received. One stakeholder group – the Independent Transit Network (ITN) – believes they should be included in the Plan. Greater boldness in the Plan’s proposals was suggested, as was prioritization of the Plan’s 84 strategies. One person wondered why there wasn’t greater coordination between the Plan and the Peninsula Traffic Study, as they are both being done by the same consultant, Wilbur Smith Associates, and why there were no PACTS committee members present at the public forum. It was suggested that the Plan be presented to municipal planning boards. Lastly, there was support and appreciation expressed to PACTS for the Plan.

Parking

Five parking comments were received. Four of these pointed out the extent of the “parking problem,” with two making suggestions for reducing the magnitude of the problem. The fifth comment was a general comment in support of park-n-ride lots.

Turnpike Toll Barrier

Three comments were offered on the concept of a toll barrier on the Turnpike. Two liked the concept of a “toll-free” zone, while the third opined that a toll barrier would be bad for the Town of Scarborough.

Bicycles and Pedestrians

Four comments promoting greater enhancements for bicyclists and/or pedestrians were received.

Other

Two comments were made regarding issues of safety and accessibility for pedestrians crossing roads and for the elderly who no longer drive, respectively. Two comments of environmental concerns were made: transportation air emissions as the primary source of air impacts and non-point source pollution from road run-off. Two sprawl-related comments were made: one said

that the Plan promoted sprawl; the other said that sprawl is a political word that ought not be used. Other comments included: travel speeds on I-295, the need for more multi-family housing, our addiction to cars, the need for more state dollars for transportation investments. One comment inquired into the town-to-town analyses that were done.

Part 3 – Paraphrasing of Individual Comments

The following suggestions, comments and questions are from written submissions or from notes taken by staff at public forums and other outreach meetings and presentations.

Passenger (Public) Transportation

- Annual statewide subsidy of one-half to three-quarters of a million for transit is woefully inadequate.
- If there is not enough money to maintain the transit system, why not use gas tax revenues for it. [This use is constitutionally prohibited.]
- Issue Paper #9, “The First Six-years” lists only \$6 million for passenger transportation. That is too low an amount.
- Reallocate future transportation funding to include at least 30% for transit.
- Raise the gas tax and use the additional revenue to fund transit investments.
- [I am] “extremely disappointed in how little research and how low a priority public transit alternatives have been given”
- [We should] “... satisfy most of the future additional transportation demand with new transit alternatives.”
- “I strongly recommend that a detailed and specific public transit plan be developed and incorporated in the *Destination Tomorrow* report.”
- We need to get autos off the road ... to do this we need a “public transit system that people will use and will want to use.”
- Portland is the only town/city with an adequate transit system. Increase the frequency and time of service similar to that of METRO’s FAST service. Make the bus schedules easier to understand.
- Perhaps smaller buses could be used to increase bus frequency and routes.
- The Plan should consider bringing back trolleys. “People ride buses because they have to, people ride trolleys because they want to.”
- Need an intra-mall shuttle bus for Maine Mall.
- We need greater frequency of bus service and bus routes including suburban towns. More choices for the transit dependent.
- The Portland Peninsula needs a rapid transit system. The location of Portland Transportation Center (Sewall Street) is too remote.
- Bus service should be more frequent and on more routes.
- More east-west public transit is needed. Bus service to Gorham does not go far enough west.
- The Plan has good public transit ideas. I am a non-car owner.
- Do coastal [suburban] towns like Falmouth and Cumberland really want public transportation?
- Should METRO and the South Portland bus services be consolidated?

- The bus systems should be consolidated.
- ZOOM and Portland’s transit services need to be consolidated.
- ***Destination Tomorrow*** should suggest the merging of bus services.
- Transit systems need to be consolidated.
- The bus system must be regionalized.
- Transit providers should be consolidated.
- The Plan is weak on public transportation.
- ***Destination Tomorrow*** needs to include additional forecasts of regional transportation conditions if a strong public transit system was developed.
- I “urge that expanded comprehensive planning of a transit-based set of solutions be included” in the PACTS agenda and Plan to augment the positive steps that PACTS has already taken in the Plan for public transportation.
- “Public transportation do[es] not work and will never work to solve Greater Portland’s transportation problems. Public transportation sounds great and is pushed by special interests as the solution but beyond the hype, people will not use it.
- Transit is not a great option for us.
- Bus service to Windham will fail, just like it did in 1983.
- Likes the transit ideas in the Plan.
- Transit is not affordable for Gorham.
- Healthy skepticism about feasibility of transit in Cape Elizabeth.
- Skeptical about transit subsidies for suburban towns.
- Waiting for a bus on Brighton Ave is unsafe. The public transit is out of date.
- The Plan is mostly a “road project,” its only mention of public transportation is for commuter buses.
- The various potential options for the passenger transportation system detailed in the Plan should be “fully considered and weighed against the broader costs of other options.”
- There needs to be signage at every bus stop, and benches too with at least partial enclosures at all supermarket stops.
- A “very controlled experiment” with taxis, mini-vans or mini-buses instead of regular buses should be done.

Roads

- Grade separation at the “overlap” in South Gorham (Routes 22 & 114) is a viable option.
- Build a new road on the old Mountain Division rail line.
- MaineDOT urges PACTS to “keep the door open to any and all possible solutions to the congestion and safety issues affecting the I-295 corridor.”
- Like toll road concept [between South Portland and Gorham].
- Greater Portland’s roads and traffic are a nightmare. “Basically, I feel that there isn’t enough work and construction being done to address traffic needs.” (Most of this person’s specific comments about locations were focused on Portland.)
- The Plan does not address either Ocean Gate or the I-295 Connector.
- “Public transportation sounds good, but requires great subsidy and is no excuse for not building roads that should have been built 40 years ago ... great for Portland which has a modern roadway, but not for Gorham and points west which need new roads.”

- Route 302 traffic flows fairly smoothly between the Portland/Westbrook line and downtown north Windham. There should not be curb cuts allowed directly onto 302 anymore – they create too dangerous a situation.
- Morrill’s Corner is horrendous. Prohibiting certain left-turn movements would greatly enhance the functioning of the intersection.
- Why not use more rotaries to control traffic problems at intersections?
- Is anyone looking at traffic in Windham? Traffic in Windham can be as bad or worse as traffic in Portland.
- Portland’s arterials are clogged; we are faced with tough transportation decisions.
- We should avoid building new roads.
- Use [some] PACTS funds as a means of encouraging neighborhood street design that promotes interconnections for local traffic but that discourages cut-through traffic.
- The Philbrook Road, Maine Mall Road intersection [near Chillis] is dangerous. There needs to be more signage to direct drivers to I-95, I-295 and to local access.

East-West Travel

- East-west roads that circumnavigate Gorham and Standish villages are needed.
- We’re choking on air pollution from slow-moving east-west traffic. We need an east-west connection.
- Any roadway building/widening project that facilitates towns to the west becoming bedroom communities to Portland should be discouraged.
- Brighton Ave [where I live] is badly congested. East-west travel is poor.
- We need not one but two east-west highways.
- The Gorham Bypass is sorely needed. It is unfortunate that some people will be negatively effected by a bypass, “but this is necessary for the benefit of a large number of residents from numerous communities.”
- Do we need two Gorham bypasses?
- We need a Gorham bypass.
- Frustration over the length of time for development of the Gorham bypass.
- Will it take another 41 years for a Gorham Bypass to be built?
- Need a new road to Gorham and one to Windham.
- The Plan appears to favor tax-payer supported mobility improvements over those that would be funded through a toll or user-pay system. This policy seems to run counter to the first two of Maine’ Smart Growth Principles. In addition, this policy may not be in complete keeping with the STPA [Sensible Transportation Policy Act]; such a flaw would likely result in a costly and time-consuming battle. The Plan should study all alternatives in keeping with the STPA. MaineDOT supports the PACTS position of allowing for future study of a toll road between South Portland and Gorham should other alternatives fail to alleviate problems of congestion. [These comments are focused on the conceptual toll road between South Portland and Gorham.]

Planning

- Transportation planning [in general] has too short-term a focus.
- In addition to be reactive to current needs, the Plan should also be proactive in attempting to shape how our transportation system will look and function in the future.

- I recommend that PACTS, in its planning activities, “be fully mindful of, and coordinated with, transportation systems from Brunswick south to at least Wells ... and perhaps Portsmouth.”
- The area’s modest population base and a “road system that is at or above capacity represent a real problem for Portland.” The modest population base “is a constraint for mass transit development.” Expanding the road system to alleviate congestion may actually increase traffic and make Portland become “vehicle habitat rather than a people-scaled and people friendly place.”
- ***Destination Tomorrow*** should go beyond its advocating for regionalism and ask for “direct regional control.”
- The Plan has done well in considering transportation in the towns surrounding Portland but has done virtually nothing for transportation in Portland.
- ***Destination Tomorrow*** “appropriately focuses on themes of measures to improve the overall level of mobility and service within the area.”

Land Use

- MaineDOT “urges that PACTS communities conduct a self-evaluation to identify and ultimately revise existing land use policies that directly or indirectly contribute to sprawl.
- The Plan does not adequately consider quality of life. Development like Falmouth Crossing is more compact but we don’t want to be so close together.
- Plan should include more investment in public transportation and affordable, walkable compact neighborhoods.
- Use targeted investment strategies to help in the coordination of land use planning decisions and transportation investments.
- Provide advice and technical assistance to communities for the designation of growth areas with respect to arterials and major collectors.
- Master plans for areas should include recommendations for land use and the siting of facilities and development, particularly with respect to the existing roadway system.
- The Plan should “support more efficient land use patterns.”
- Heavily traveled residential streets such as Brighton Avenue are splitting neighborhoods.
- Most development should occur as dense, mixed-use development.
- MaineDOT “strongly encourages” PACTS to pursue the development of its proposal to develop a land use/transportation investment policy.
- The Plan represents the best attempt to date to link the independent processes of transportation and land use planning.

Process

- MaineDOT urges that the Plan’s 84 strategies be prioritized, and that implementation priorities be established.
- Independent Transit Network (ITN) should be added to the Plan.
- The Plan should be bolder in its proposals.
- How come there are no PACTS committee members present? They should be present at these public forums.
- The Plan should be presented to municipal planning boards.

- Since the same consultant [Wilbur Smith Associates] is working on the Plan and the Peninsula Traffic Study, why isn't there better coordination between the two?
- You [the developers of the Plan] are going too fast with the Plan. You need to slow down. You don't have enough money.
- The MaineDOT expresses its overall support and appreciation to PACTS for *Destination Tomorrow* recognizing the Herculean effort that it took and the recognition by the PACTS communities of their interdependence.

Passenger Rail and Freight Rail

- Light rail from Portland to points west has "great utility."
- The Plan should do more for getting rail from the south.
- Freight movement is important to the health of the region.
- The Plan describes appropriate support and proposal for improving and expanding passenger rail services and rail freight services.

Parking

- Surface parking [in Portland] should be eliminated or consolidated.
- Parking is a real problem in Portland. We are drawing in more cars but there is no place for them to park. We need to get people out of their cars and into public transportation.
- Tax parking on the Peninsula and in downtown Portland. Reduce the demand for parking.
- Parking in Portland is a problem.
- Park-n-ride lots are a good idea.

Turnpike Toll Barrier

- Like a toll-free area on the Turnpike.
- Will a toll-free zone on the Turnpike really divert much traffic from I-295?
- Toll barrier idea would be bad for Scarborough.

Bicycles and Pedestrians

- Glad to see that pedestrian and bicycle enhancements are included in Plan.
- Have more paved shoulders for bicycles.
- Bicyclists do not belong on roadway shoulders; they belong on roadways – roadways that need to be wider to accommodate them.
- Bicycling should be improved. Some roads could be pedestrian-only roadways.

Other

- The Plan should include safety issues for elderly drivers, and consider alternative transportation perspectives for the elderly who no longer drive.
- Pedestrian crossings are dangerous because cars do not yield to pedestrians.
- Did the Plan analyze traffic flows between towns?
- The Plan promotes sprawl.
- We are addicted to cars.
- The Plan needs more state dollars.
- Sprawl is a political word that the Plan should not use.

- Tough to keep the speed down on I-295.
- Expanding the road system also increases the amount of impervious surface that adds to the problem of non-point source pollution.
- We need more multi-family housing.
- “Air emissions from transportation are the primary source of air impacts in our region.”

Part 4 – Letters of Comment Received

Attached.