

GPCOG Executive Committee Meeting
November 17, 2010
12:00 Noon

Members Present: Gordy Billington, Standish; Roger Bondeson, PROP; Cathy Breen, Falmouth; Peter Crichton, Cumberland County; Pat Finnigan, Portland; Derik Goodine, Naples; Colleen Hilton, Westbrook; Mike Reynolds, Raymond; Dick Wood, RC&D; Barbara York, Casco

Members Absent: Bridgton, Cape Elizabeth, Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Freeport, Frye Island, Gorham, Gray, Harrison, Long Island, New Gloucester, North Yarmouth, Pownal, Scarborough, Sebago, South Portland, Windham, Yarmouth, Portland Trails

Staff and Guests: Neal Allen, GPCOG; Maddy Adams, GPCOG; Sara Devlin, MTA; John Duncan, PACTS; Paul Godfrey, HNTB; Eben Marsh, GPCOG; Carol Morris, Morris Communications; Ann Thompson, GPCOG; Rebbeccah Schaffner-Tousignant, GPCOG

1. **Welcome & Introductions.** Gordy welcomed everyone at 12:10 p.m. Introductions were made.
2. **Minutes of September 15, 2010 meeting.** *Dick Wood moved approval of the September 15, 2010 minutes, seconded by Cathy Breen. All were in favor.*
3. **Presentation of the Gorham East West Corridor Feasibility Study.** Neal introduced the subject. GPCOG has been involved in Phase I and will be playing a larger role in Phase II. This study is compatible with our HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant.

Paul Godfrey presented a PowerPoint. Gorham, Westbrook, Scarborough and South Portland signed a joint resolution in 2007 asking for a study, specifically to assess the feasibility of a new Turnpike Spur that would connect to the new Gorham Bypass. The resolution states that existing ways to manage traffic congestion, such as widening roads and adding turning lanes, will have a negative effect on their downtowns, village centers and neighborhoods. Both Maine Turnpike Authority and Maine Department of Transportation officials believe that integrating all modes of transportation (transit, bike, pedestrian) together with changes in land use policies is an integral part of the study. The outlying areas of Buxton, Standish, Baldwin, Windham, Gray, Portland, Hollis, etc. are also involved in the process. Two roadway scenarios were identified.

A draft report will be out in January, and they will be looking for community endorsement of the report. This has been an 18-month process. It was asked where the 70% growth as predicted in the report would come from. According to Charlie Colgan's forecast, much of it will come from other places in Maine because this will be the area where the jobs are. Cathy mentioned that Falmouth has an open space plan, they have conservation zoning so that new developments will be in denser areas, and they are part of the METRO bus system. She is in favor of the bus but not all of the Councilors are in favor. Bus ridership continues to go up, but they are spending \$100,000 a year on the bus. She asked if MaineDOT or MTA could provide assistance regarding funding the bus; a huge part of the cost is landing on the taxpayers. Paul responded that one of the challenges is that the current transit system is used on a limited basis. They believe they can increase ridership by 100% through a long-term process of land use policy infrastructure investment. USDOT, FHWA and FTA are spending millions of dollars on transit but those dollars are going to denser areas. If we put a plan in action that facilitates denser development through designated growth areas, then our chances for funding might be better. If we have more riders, we'll have more opportunities for funding. (Go to www.gorhamcorridor.org to see Paul's PowerPoint.)

Mountain Division Line. Paul explained that continued rail from Portland west is the goal but there are gaps right now. There's a gap in the Mountain Division line in the Windham area. Part of what the study is recommending and trying to determine is the right sequence for rail. More regional planning and discussion is important.

There needs to be an opportunity for people to be involved. We will continue to do some education. If we don't have communities signing on board, this will not go anywhere. A process is being created where no one will be excluded. There will be public hearings on the draft report. Neal added that this is a process that can be replicated through the state. The HUD grant covers a much larger area so GPCOG will be involved because the Gorham East/West process works well with the HUD grant.

How do we take what we have and make it more viable? How do we get more people on transit? It was mentioned that our governing structure also plays a part; many regions have different governing structures. Carol asked how the municipalities felt about this idea on a 1-10 scale with 10 being not happening. Mike R. said that Raymond wants to stay a bedroom community and keep the density they have – they are car drivers. Cathy mentioned that density can be done right (mill conversions) and it can be done poorly (tenements). Carol pointed out that there are some good developers in Portland that can deal with the density issues.

John D. mentioned that he has been involved with this study effort from the start and it's a really great team. The Turnpike and MaineDOT have come up with innovative ideas. Gordy complimented MTA for having HNTB involved so quickly, and complimented the group for the work they have done to date.

4. Reports: President & Executive Director.

4A. Steering Committee meeting with Cumberland County Commissioners. The Steering Committee met with the County Commissioners and had a good meeting. They will be meeting again.

4B. Steering Committee meeting with Mobilize Maine. This is an effort funded by DECD and Fairpoint; they have hired Vital Economy, a national consulting firm, to work with them. The Steering Committee met with their team and believes that there may be a lot of potential for our region. It is a sustainable asset-based process.

4C. HUD Regional Sustainable Communities Grant. We received a \$1.6 million grant. Last week we had our first meeting of the initial partnership – 26 organizations from Kittery to Brunswick. That partnership is a work in progress. We need to develop the governance structure for the grant and have it approved by HUD; we have about three months to complete the contract process. A work plan will be developed. Cathy said congratulations and thank you, and asked if a one-page synopsis of the grant could be shared with the committee. Peter mentioned that they are looking for elected officials to participate in the process. The "region" is the PACTS planning area including Standish, Raymond, etc. and the KACTS area. The proposal is to have two co-chairs representing those respective areas.

5. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.