

# PACTS

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## Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System

### **Policy Committee Meeting Notice**

October 16, 2008  
1:30 p.m.

GPCOG, 68 Marginal Way, Portland

#### Agenda

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Public Comment**
- 3. Minutes of the September 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting**
- 4. Regional Collector Road Assessment Study**  
  
Presentation by Tom Gorrill of Gorrill-Palmer Consulting Engineers
- 5. 2010/2011 Biennium PACTS MPO Allocation Projects**  
  
Action on recommendations from Executive, Planning, Transit and Technical Committees
- 6. High Priority Projects**  
  
Action on High Priority Projects Committee recommendations
- 7. Consent Agenda**
- 8. Adjourn**

*The Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Portland Urbanized Area*  
68 Marginal Way • Portland, Maine 04101  
Telephone: (207) 774-9891 • Fax: (207) 774-7149 • [www.pactsplan.org](http://www.pactsplan.org)

## **Minutes of the September 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**Members Present:** Bill Shane, Chair, Cumberland; Neal Allen, GPCOG; Mike Bobinsky, Portland; Dan Bacon, Planning Committee; John Bubier, Vice-Chair, Biddeford; Bob Burns, Technical Committee; Ed Clifford, Public Transportation; David Cole, Gorham; Catherine Debo, Public Transportation; Kevin Donoghue, Portland; Kathi Earley, Portland; Kat Fuller, MaineDOT; Jim Gailey, South Portland; Joe Gray, Portland; Steve Gunty, Old Orchard Beach; Tex Haeuser, South Portland; Donna Larson, Freeport; Mike McGovern, Cape Elizabeth; Ron Owens, Scarborough; Nathan Poore, Falmouth; Anna Price FHWA; Ed Reidman (for Jerre Bryant), Westbrook; Nat Tupper, Yarmouth; Conrad Welzel, MTA.

**Members Absent:** Rick Michaud, Saco; Anthony Plante, Windham; Paul Schumacher, SMRPC; Scott Tilton, North Yarmouth.

**Staff and Guests:** Mary Ann Conroy, Old Orchard Beach; Sara Devlin, MTA; John Duncan, PACTS; Mark Greene, Sanford; Judy Harris, Portland; Sue McIntyre, GPCOG; Tom Milligan, Biddeford; Chuck Baker and Jack DeBeradinis, RTP.

- (1) **Call to Order.** Bill Shane, Chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.
- (2) **Public Comment.** None.
- (3) **Minutes of May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 meeting.** *Mike Bobinsky moved for approval of the May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 meeting minutes, seconded by Joe Gray. Vote taken and all were in favor.*
- (4) **Setting the Stage for October 16<sup>th</sup> Programming of \$14,500,000.** Action on final steps to be taken to prepare for October 16<sup>th</sup> decisions. John Duncan directed the group to the white board and provided an overview of federal allocations as described in detail in the budget worksheet, included in the meeting packet. Last December 2007, MaineDOT had estimated a federal allocation of \$10,000,000 for our MPO allocation. PACTS instead based their “budget” on a conservative amount of \$9,000,000. The numbers we now have are about the same as they should have been two years ago. Congress will not be making any decisions until 2010. The MaineDOT federal estimate produces \$14,545,368 to program. This could be argued as a little risky.

A recap followed pertaining to the list of projects and costs according to the 2007 budget. We had said in 2007 if the federal amount increased we could add more monies to intersections. We had included the addition of an extra \$1 million for both the Biddeford Route 1 and OOB Roundabout projects. We confirmed the re-building of the Forest Avenue project and capped it at \$1,300,000. The Forest Avenue project is part of the National Highway System (NHS). DOT had requested that PACTS program about 1/3 of projects listed on the NHS because monies that come here come from the NHS. We are short in doing that. This is the only project that is on the NHS. We had also confirmed to fund transit and bike/ped projects that had been deferred.

Last Monday, PACTS received an official letter from the MaineDOT on the latest project cost estimates. Among projects whose costs have increased since the 2007 budget include the Forest Avenue project, the Biddeford Route 1 project and the OOB roundabout. John is inclined to stick with the cap of \$1,300,000 for the Forest Avenue project. Cost increases to the Biddeford and OOB projects are due to scope changes and inflation.

Our next Policy Committee meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup> will require action on what to do with this list and to adopt the 2010/2011 budget. Many meetings as well as public hearings have been held during the last few months. Our policy is that we have a commitment to fund the Biddeford and OOB projects for construction as long as there are no substantive increases in construction or changes in the scope. Staff is looking for direction from the Executive Committee as well as PACTS members and towns for next month's decision. Two options have been recommended by staff, as described in the meeting packet.

Bill Shane began by pointing out that the scope of projects for both the Biddeford and OOB projects had been expanded by the MaineDOT, and not the towns. The Biddeford Route 1 project was ready to go and the Old Orchard Beach roundabout had issues with right of ways. John Bubier added that from Biddeford's point of view the Route 1 project had increased because of the addition of another lane. Biddeford is not supportive of the additional lane. Since the MaineDOT's addition of another lane, the project has now increased in scope and costs. The DOT changed the scope to four lanes and says that the community has to support the costs even if the community is not supportive of that additional lane and cost. The city had said they preferred the three lanes concept with sidewalks.

MaryAnn spoke of the OOB roundabout project and noted that the scope had not changed but that right-of-ways have increased the cost. It has also been DOT practice to do a full depth reconstruction and that is what they are proposing. The project has been underestimated from the beginning but she felt that the roundabout is the least costly option for this intersection. Steve Guntz of OOB spoke of safety concerns regarding the current OOB halfway intersection. Vehicles come into town on the I-195 spur at a high rate of speed. The flow of vehicles from the spur immediately goes past the Smithwheel Road intersection and then comes into the halfway rotary. There currently is no traffic calming sense about it. This is what compounds the problem. You have 50,000 to 70,000 people a year converging to this area, which provides regional benefits, and these vehicles come streaming into this strange intersection design. Tex Haeuser commented that he would like to see projects get done. So, in a way, he is in favor of the Biddeford and OOB projects. He is in favor of roundabouts noting there is a need for more roundabouts and not costly signals and coordination of signals, etc. He also pointed out that the OOB project is part of an evacuation route. The State and MaineDOT have an interest in more roundabouts in the State. Could the DOT find some additional monies from some other entities? MaryAnn commented that as a partner with PACTS, OOB had spent local monies on two of their major roads that could have been PACTS projects, hence saving PACTS monies for other projects.

Bill noted the reality of the funding situation and advised the group to consider option 1. There might be other alternatives such as TIF monies, etc. He noted that some paving and intersection projects are ready now. Nat Tupper questioned why the OOB project is being classified as an intersection project vs. being classified as a part of the National Highway System (NHS). Is it not a dumping point for the end of a NHS? Would this be a credible argument to the State, etc.? If we do this project could we get credited from the NHS? He also asked what happens if we cap this project? Are we locking in the percentage rate? How about non-participation penalties? John pointed out that PACTS had not programmed those monies and it is not obligated yet. It should not be an issue.

Nat referred to option 2 of the recommendations and the \$3.5 million for collectors. He pointed out that the State has been holding up projects and can barely do the projects

now. How can we possibly consider dropping down to that amount? Mike M. felt that many local communities are funding paving projects. Jim Gailey said he favored keeping the collector roads at \$5 million.

John B. spoke of his support in the past for capping projects and that the capping process was to address pieces that were added to the process. He referenced the Biddeford project and noted that this budget increase was not of Biddeford's doing. Biddeford is not asking for a fourth lane. This increase in scope is solely at the discretion of the MaineDOT and FHWA. Kat Fuller said she did not agree that this was a capricious decision and said she would follow up on it. She also said that she would look into any references made to the National Highway System. On another note, with respect to finding extra monies for the OOB roundabout, she explained that just a month ago, the State was looking at a \$3 million gap in their budget between what they think they might get for revenue and what they would actually need. She also said that she would need help from OOB town officials to make sure that the town understands that this is a good project and should move forward.

Dave asked if anyone knew if it was MaineDOT or FHWA that had required MaineDOT to take it upon itself to change the scope of the Biddeford Route 1 project. Kat replied that she sensed that it was done to accommodate the traffic flow. There are some highway design standards that need to be met. But, she will follow-up and get the information before the Policy Committee makes a decision at the next meeting.

Dave spoke of future funding allocations and how we don't have anywhere near the amount of monies to do what we have. He felt that the Committee would need to change its focus and that we should maintain what we do have as much as we can. Nat said he wondered if the OOB project could be divided out in two portions such as right-of-way and hazardous materials making reference to Dave's comment to maintain the existing system.

A vote will be taken at the Executive Committee and sent to the Policy Committee. There are two options to consider. Dave requested that a third option be considered which would include revisiting the budget to include as much monies on the Collector Road Paving projects. Bill noted that this would be discussed later referencing agenda item 8. John B. commented that the Route 1 project is ready to go to construction and that he would be sitting down with MaineDOT to find a solution.

In summary, both Mike M. and Bill spoke of the many completed projects and successes that had taken place during this last year and that the PACTS group had done a good job.

- (5) **Greater Portland Regional Transportation Investments.** (Tabled. To follow agenda item 6.)
- (6) **Opportunities for Increased Collaboration between METRO and RTP.** (Taken out of order). Mike Bobinsky provided background information on the collaboration effort between the METRO and RTP with respect to collaboration opportunities. Both are facing limited funding for transit and infrastructure and are interested in transit and equipment sharing as well as organizational changes. When the manager position for RTP became vacant a letter of inquiry was sent to RTP to participate in discussions for coordination between RTP and the METRO. The two groups met in an informal setting last August for their first meeting, which provided them an opportunity for next steps.

RTP felt they needed some dialogue with their Board of Directors regarding legal issues, funding, etc. but agreed to meet again.

Kevin Donoghue asked where the authority stood as to who is the para-transit provider in Portland. Anna Price explained the FTA funding rules as it relates to transit and regional transit providers. Kevin wondered whether the City of Portland could bid for those services. Mike M. noted that two separate boards with one executive director could be an option and added that he felt it important to have a separate group of citizens to oversee those services.

**(5) Greater Portland Regional Transportation Investments.** (Taken out of order).

Update by MaineDOT's Kat Fuller regarding six major regional transportation studies and related projects.

(1). The continuation and extension of the Downeaster. NNEPRA and the State are working at appropriating an important amount to replace the CMAQ funding. With respect to the extension of the service, the Legislature created a revenue source by diverting sources from car rental fees to put into an account to repay a federal loan that NNEPRA is working on with FRA. There is also a lot of pressure being brought to the State of N.H. to put some funding in as well. Passenger ridership has increased tremendously with the Downeaster having carried 50,000 passengers in one month. Kat spoke of other options as well to replace the CMAQ monies. One eligible component could include the addition of a fifth trip. But, no decisions have been made.

(2) MaineDOT's Small Starts Study. A Portland North commuter rail line could include Portland to Brunswick and Portland to Yarmouth. When the study is completed, a set of recommendations could include commuter rail/bus rapid transit. The preferred options will be sent to the FTA as a recommendation.

(3). MaineDOT's I-295 Corridor Study and related capital projects. Portland and South Portland City Councils will be holding a joint workshop on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and will hear a briefing on the I-295 Corridor Study. MaineDOT has been working on I-295 Corridor Study for some time and the study should be completed by this winter. Other items that will be discussed at that meeting include the Downeaster, Portland North, the rising cost of energy, public comments and details on the funding outlook.

(4). The Turnpike Authority's Portland Area Turnpike Widening Analysis. Conrad Welzel reported that the MTA came to the conclusion that widening would not happen for another two or three years. There are two issues. The modernization of the corridor and capacity issues. There is a need for modernization with regards to pavement and bridges. Bridge work will begin in 2010. The basic plan has been divided into two parts. They will be dealing with the alternative analysis in 2015 and conducting a study in 2012. An evaluation of critical locations of high crash areas such as ramps, etc. will also be done.

(5) and (6). The Turnpike Authority's Gorham East-West Corridor Study and the MaineDOT's Central York County Corridor Study. Kat Fuller began by saying that the Legislature had requested the year before last to look at both the Gorham/Portland corridor as well as the Central York County/Sanford/Wells/Biddeford-Saco Corridors. The Legislation started out as "build a road". Through conversations as well as through the Sensible Transportation Policy Act they convinced the Legislature to revise the language in this resolve. Soon the MaineDOT and Maine Turnpike Authority will be

partnering to launch a land use study along with a transportation study in both of those corridor areas. Questions that will be asked include what has the growth pattern been, where is it going, what are the transportation needs and what land use management techniques have been utilized? This will include a large number of communities. MaineDOT will be working with towns within the next month through meetings, looking at the scope together and looking at what are the issues that have been outlined in each of the scopes. One big piece is going to be communication with the towns. It will take a couple of years to get through these processes. Conrad noted that they have been spending time with a draft scope to present to the public. With regards to the Gorham East-West Corridor, the Maine Turnpike Authority has been doing traffic counts in that area. Things will change with the new by-pass. Meetings will be held with affected communities starting in early November and a public kick-off event is planned for January of 2009.

Bill said he wanted to acknowledge that a 42-page report had been sent by Mike Laberge referencing most of the projects that are in the “pipeline”. The projects are sorted by town and have been updated. The only part missing is the engineer’s estimate. It is very detailed and has been a great resource. If any questions, see John Duncan.

**(7) Rising Asphalt Prices.** The group was directed to the chart in the meeting packet entitled “Liquid Asphalt Price”. Bob Burns noted that a company that supplies liquid asphalt had gone out of business. Some of the small companies still have some liquid asphalt. As of September 8<sup>th</sup>, the liquid price per ton is at \$712.00. This means that liquid asphalt in surface paving is at \$42.75 per ton.

**(8) New TIP Process Committee.** Action needed on the proposal to convene a TIP Process Committee to prepare for the next biennium. John Duncan noted that we are at a critical junction. If anyone has not been contacted and would like to participate in this process, please contact John. He encouraged the group to get involved. They are looking for volunteers. Steve Gunty and Nathan Poore have already signed up. The group would be asked to look at the current funding level and whether we should be looking at it in a new way. He would suggest looking at either managing what we have or perhaps focusing in a regional way.

**(9). Consent Agenda.** Action needed on two items. (1). Change the name of PACTS officially (in our bylaws) to the “Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System”. *Nat Tupper made a motion to change the “S” in PACTS to mean “System”. PACTS will stand for “Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System”, seconded by Dave Cole. Vote taken. All in favor. Motion passed.* (2). Accept the report prepared by John Melrose and Mark Eyerman. *Judith Harris made a motion to accept the “Leveraging Increased Funding Through Transportation Investment Partnerships” report prepared by John Melrose and Mark Eyerman, seconded by David Cole.* Discussion. Kevin asked whether the matrix had been corrected. John will make sure it is done. *The motion was accepted by consensus.*

A thank you went out to Ron Owens who will be leaving soon and retiring to Florida. Thank you Ron! You will be missed.

John commented on the increase in ridership both on the train as well as METRO and South Portland buses. It is good news.

**(10) Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

## **Agenda Item 4 – Regional Collector Road Assessment Study**

Staff Resource: Paul Niehoff

Member Resources: Bob Burns and the Technical Committee

Recommendation: Information only

### **Background**

Tom Gorrill, of Gorrill-Palmer Consulting Engineers, will give an overview of this important regional study. Ralph Norwood and others on Tom's staff have done an excellent job. They sent us a first draft of the 100-page report last week.

Tom and Ralph and their staff, Paul Niehoff, MaineDOT and the Technical Committee have been working on this study for six months. Tom and Ralph have also played a vital role in the development of the Technical Committee's project recommendations for our Collector Roads Set Aside in the 2010/2011 biennium. See below.

Starting next month, PACTS staff and our committee members will share the results of this important regional transportation report with the media, MaineDOT, town and city councils, and our state legislative delegation.

## **Agenda Item 5 – 2010/2011 Biennium PACTS MPO Allocation Projects**

Member Resource: MaineDOT and the Executive, Planning, Transit and Technical Committees

Staff Resources: John Duncan and the entire regional transportation staff

Recommendation:

To submit a PACTS MPO Allocation list of projects to MaineDOT for the 2010/2011 biennium as follows:

1. The projects presented in Tables 1 and 2.
2. The projects in the Technical Committee's October 14<sup>th</sup> collector list (to be sent to the Policy Committee before today's meeting).
3. A commitment that additional cost savings from the Biddeford Route 1 project would go to the Forest Avenue reconstruction project.
4. A commitment to fund in the PACTS 2012/2013 program the balance of the cost of building the roundabout in Old Orchard Beach provided that the scope does not change.
5. A commitment to fund in the PACTS 2012/2013 program up to 40% of the cost of the Dunstan Corner intersection project.

### Background

- A. Federal Funds Overview
- B. Key PACTS and MaineDOT Policies
- C. Collector Set Aside
- D. Intersection Set Aside

#### A. Federal Funds Overview

As we discussed last month, MaineDOT currently estimates a federal allocation at \$10,243,217. The actual amount will be set based on Congressional action in 2010.

The MaineDOT federal estimate produces \$14,636,000 to program based on the PACTS policy of programming most of the federal funds at 65% and 70% shares as shown in Table 2.

#### B. Key PACTS and MaineDOT Policies

1. Our adopted policy requires a local share of 25% for all projects except transit.

However, at the request of MaineDOT, PACTS staff is recommending that we program the two NHS projects at the 80-10-10 federal-state-local ratios in

order to be consistent with the ratios used in the 2008/2009 program and in past programs.

2. Our adopted policy is that we program 125% of the estimated cost of each project (except for Transit). This 125% is the limit of the PACTS contribution to each project.

Staff has applied the 125% contingency policy to the cost estimates for all the Collector projects, but not to the Intersection and Bike/Ped projects. We will explain our rationale at the meeting if necessary. The affected communities all are aware of this approach and have agreed to it. *In all cases the 125% limit policy applies.*

3. As we have discussed at past meetings, MaineDOT asks us to try to program one-third of our MPO Allocation funds for projects on the National Highway System (NHS). The two Forest Avenue proposals do not reach that 1/3 goal.
4. A decision to fund PCE in one biennium constitutes a commitment also to fund the project for construction in the following biennium provided that: (1) PCE does not require a substantive change in the project, (2) PCE does not discover issues that either substantively increase the cost of the project or necessitates its deferral to a subsequent biennium, or (3) the project is technically infeasible or engenders strong public resistance.
5. Last fall MaineDOT increased the State match for our 2010/2011 MPO Allocation by about \$350,000 (up to a new total of roughly \$1,000,000) and changed their policy to now provide the funds as a block grant rather than tied to projects after we program them. (MaineDOT will let us use these State funds to match federal funds as we always have – or to match local funds only.)

#### C. Collector Set Aside

The September 18<sup>th</sup> meeting packet described that the Technical Committee \$5,000,000 Collector Roads Set Aside recommendation would be to pave roads that are high up on the pavement degradation curve and that meet State standards (or substantially meet the standards). This recommendation would be a departure from the Policy Committee's "Tiers 1, 2 and 3" vote of last fall to apportion the \$5,000,000 between roads that meet modern mobility and safety standards and require only a pavement overlay, and to those requiring either substantial work to meet those standards or more expensive treatment methods.

#### D. Intersection Set Aside

Paul Niehoff worked with Sebago Technics and our members to perform Enhanced Project Scoping (EPS) on the following five candidates short-listed in May.

- Scarborough: Dunstan Corner (PE only)
- Portland: Forest Ave/Newton (Construction)
- Scarborough: Payne/Mussey (PE only)
- Old Orchard Beach: Saco Rd/E. Cummings (Construction)
- Westbrook: Cumberland Mills Triangle (PE only)

The EPS process results in PACTS staff making the following recommendations within our set aside of \$600,000 as follows (in rank order):

**Scarborough: Dunstan Corner Intersection Improvements:**

Staff Recommends: Fund PE for the project at \$263,000 in the 10/11 biennium. The construction engineering, right of way and construction cost in 2008 dollars total \$4,731,720. See recommendation above to fund in the PACTS 2012/2013 program up to 40% of the cost of this project. The Town of Scarborough is proposing to finance the remaining 60% with impact fee and TIF revenues.

**Portland: Traffic Signal located at Forest/Newton/Riverton School:**

Staff Recommends: Fund construction of a new traffic signal at this location for \$100,000. Paul Niehoff can explain how much more Portland has committed in order to make this project happen.

**Old Orchard Beach: Traffic Signal Upgrade at Saco St/E. Cummings:**

Staff recommends: Fund signal upgrade/improvements at this location for \$237,000. Paul Niehoff can explain how much more Old Orchard Beach has committed in order to make this project happen.

**Table 1: Project Recommendations for 2010/2011 Biennium MPO Allocation**

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Collectors	\$5,000,000	See Technical Committee handout at today's meeting.
Biddeford Route 1	\$3,400,000	This amount might be higher than needed.
OOB Roundabout	\$1,290,000	Current cost estimate is over \$3 million.
Portland Forest Ave.	\$2,110,000	Current cost estimate is \$2.6 million. We set a \$1.3 M cap in 2006. Forest Avenue is on the National Highway System.
Intersections	\$600,000	See list below.
Transit Set Aside	\$1,434,000	See list below.
Bike/Ped Set Aside	<u>\$802,000</u>	See list below.
Total	\$14,636,000	

*Note: Almost all of the projects below will require additional local funding beyond the amounts shown.*

Intersections (new)	Dunstan Corner PE only at \$263,000 Forest at Newton (NHS) at \$100,000 Saco at East Cummings at \$237,000
Transit (deferred)	CBITD ferry: \$300,000 S. Portland bus garage (1): \$238,000
Transit (new)	Regional bus signs and shelters: \$379,000 S. Portland transit hub: \$114,000 S. Portland bus garage (2): \$238,000 RTP three vehicles: \$165,000
Bike/Ped (deferred)	Biddeford Main Street sidewalk: \$141,000 OOB Saco Avenue sidewalk 1: \$188,000
Bike/Ped (new)	OOB Saco Avenue sidewalk 2: \$234,000 Falmouth Foreside sidewalk: \$81,000 Portland Transpo center: \$121,750

**Table 2: Staff Recommendation for Match Ratios**

*Assumptions*

1. Use all the federal and state monies available.
2. Keep the percentages as whole numbers.
3. Stick with the 2008/2009 biennium match ratios used for the Forest Avenue, and Biddeford Route 1 and OOB roundabout (as requested by MaineDOT).

Federal and state funds available: \$10,243,217 \$1,280,402

The Match Ratio column numbers are federal-state-local share percentages. Numbers in bold are the independent variables in each row.

	<u>Match Ratio</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>	<u>Federal</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Local</u>
Collector paving	65-10-25	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	\$3,250,000	\$500,000	\$1,250,000
Biddeford Route 1	70-5-25	<b>\$3,400,000</b>	\$2,380,000	\$170,000	\$850,000
OOB Roundabout	70-5-25	<b>\$1,290,000</b>	\$903,000	\$64,500	\$322,500
Forest Avenue (NHS)	80-10-10	<b>\$2,110,000</b>	\$1,688,000	\$211,000	\$211,000
Dunstan Corner intersection	65-10-25	<b>\$263,000</b>	\$170,950	\$26,300	\$65,750
Forest at Newton (NHS)	80-10-10	<b>\$100,000</b>	\$80,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Saco at East Cummings	65-10-25	<b>\$237,000</b>	\$154,050	\$23,700	\$59,250
Transit at 7% of new fed \$	80-0-20	\$896,281	<b>\$717,025</b>	\$0	\$179,256
Transit deferred projects	80-0-20	<b>\$538,000</b>	\$430,400	\$0	\$107,600
Bike/Ped at 3% of new fed \$	65-10-25	\$472,764	<b>\$307,297</b>	\$47,276	\$118,191
Bike/Ped deferred projects	65-10-25	<b>\$329,000</b>	<u>\$213,850</u>	<u>\$32,900</u>	<u>\$82,250</u>
Grand Totals		\$14,636,045	\$10,294,572	\$1,085,676	\$3,255,797
Remaining balances:			-\$51,355	\$194,726	

Staff and MaineDOT will recommend at the meeting how to address the \$51,355 over-programming of federal funds and the \$194,726 under-programming of state funds.

- Options include:
1. Reduce the federal share for certain projects and increase increase the state and/or local share.
  2. Give the \$51,355 federal funds to MDOT, and MDOT give us that amount in return in state funds.
  3. Cut the budget of a project(s). This would increase the the state funds balance shown above.
  4. Nat Tupper ideas...you know he'll have at least one!

## **Agenda Item 6 – High Priority Projects**

Staff Resource: John Duncan and Carl Eppich

Member Resources: Rick Michaud and the High Priority Projects Committee

Recommendation:

The High Priority Projects Committee recommends that:

1. The Policy Committee adopt the following list of proposals and ask staff to seek support from our 15 city/town councils, 7 transit boards and the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce. The list is not in priority order.
  - The Veterans Bridge rehabilitation/reconstruction project if MaineDOT needs additional financing for the project. The current MaineDOT estimate is \$56,000,000.
  - Purchase the transit vehicles per the PACTS Transit Committee proposal at \$22,500,000 plus an inflation factor being developed.
  - Make capital investments for “Portland North” commuter rail to Brunswick at \$70,000,000 (a rough MaineDOT estimate). MaineDOT is currently studying potential routes for this new service.
2. The Policy Committee adopt in March 2009 a final list for submission to the Congressional Delegation. The final list should be in priority order.

Note: In 2005 the SAFETEA-LU authorization provided \$30 million in federal funding to the PACTS region for Phase I of the Gorham Bypass and for I-295. The Gorham Bypass is under construction. The I-295 projects are scheduled for construction for locations in South Portland, Portland, Falmouth and Yarmouth. The recommendation below does not affect these.

The High Priority Projects Committee recommends that PACTS not propose to the Congressional Delegation that High Priority Projects funds be sought for:

- The addition of lanes (approx. 1.3 miles) on I-295 in Portland and the improvements to I-295 north of Portland outlined in the MaineDOT’s draft I-295 Corridor Study. See note above. Instead, the HHP Committee suggests to the Policy Committee that further consideration and evaluation be given toward addressing safety improvements along the I-295 Corridor using alternative measures such as message boards, other signs and pavement materials.
- Phase II of the Gorham Bypass. (MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike are about to begin a Gorham East West Corridor Study.)
- Biddeford’s and Saco’s turnpike-oriented highway/bridge proposals.
- South Portland’s Philbrook Road area highway/bridge proposal.

## Background

In July 2006, the Policy Committee directed the High Priority Projects Committee to develop PACTS region proposals for High Priority Project funding in the next multi-year federal transportation authorization. The current members are:

- Rick Michaud, Policy Committee, Chair
- Kevin Donoghue, Policy Committee
- Dave Cole, Policy Committee
- John Bubier and Tom Milligan, Policy Committee
- Mike Bobinsky, Policy Committee
- Dan Jellis, Technical Committee
- Donna Larson, Planning Committee
- Tom Meyers, Transit Committee

The High Priority Projects Committee has met eight times. The following people also attended many of the meetings:

- Gary Williams, MaineDOT Director of Policy and Research
- Staff from our Congressional Delegation
- Staff from the Maine Turnpike Authority

Gary Williams gave us updates on the work of two national transportation commissions at most of our meetings. Gary also regularly reminded the members that High Priority Project money is “not free”. He described that only \$20 million of the \$200 million that Maine got in the 2005 SAFETEA-LU was “above the line”, and that the remaining \$180 million reduced the amount of funding in the regular federal transportation programs that MaineDOT depends on to meet the needs of the state.

The High Priority Projects Committee has briefed the Policy Committee regularly, and received comments on draft recommendations last fall from the Transit, Technical and Planning Committees.

Staff conducted four public forums for this priority setting effort. The first forum, held in Portland, attracted 120 people and a lot of media attention. A petition with 440 names was submitted in support of the public transportation proposals and a bike/ped-friendly Veterans Bridge investment. We heard a broader set of perspectives at the other three forums which were attended by only 20 people.

Staff also organized a \$20,000 regional telephone survey regarding the nine project candidates in our fall 2007 draft list. The public ranked these four proposals significantly higher than the other five: the addition of lanes on I-295, the transit vehicles proposal, the commuter rail service and the Veterans Bridge project. . The survey questions and results are available at our website: [www.pactsplan.org](http://www.pactsplan.org).

Staff based their recommendations to the High Priority Projects Committee on the following five criteria. See the table on the next page. It shows a ranking system of 1 to 4. Higher scores are better. Here are the criteria and some notes.

#### Long Term Transportation Policy

- The transit vehicles score well in the context of rising energy costs and climate change.
- The Veterans Bridge project scores best based on its safety importance.
- The need for the lanes on I-295 in Portland could be reduced by diverting through traffic to a wider turnpike with a differential toll strategy?
- The commuter rail project scores low based on the risk that few people would use it.

#### Current Feasibility

- The transit vehicles score low based on the risk that municipalities will not provide the necessary funding to underwrite the expansion of service envisioned. The commuter rail project scores low based on the risk that few people would use it. For both of these a dramatic increase in gas prices would make a difference. (See our survey report for more on what people said they would – and would not do – at \$5 and \$10 gas.)
- The Veterans Bridge project is quite feasible.
- The addition of the lanes on I-295 in Portland is quite feasible.

#### Our Opinion Survey done in August

- The transit vehicles and the addition of the safety lanes on I-295 in Portland essentially tied for first place (per pages 15 and 19 in the report). The I-295 project actually did very well in people’s “second” and “third” priorities (per page 19).
- The Veterans Bridge and commuter rail and scored third and fourth on page 15.

#### The February 2008 Forum in Portland

- The public at the February forum overwhelmingly supported public transportation and a bike/ped-friendly Veterans Bridge.

#### Prospects for Other Funding Sources

- The transit vehicles and commuter rail have fewer funding options than the Veterans Bridge project and the addition of lanes on I-295 in Portland.

Top 4 HPP PROJECTS	<u>Long Term Transportation Policy</u>	<u>Current Feasibility</u>	<u>PACTS Transportation HPP Priority Survey (08/2008)</u>	<u>Feb '08 PACTS Portland HPP Forum</u>	<u>Limited prospect for Other Funding Sources</u>	<u>TOTAL SCORE</u>
New/Replace Public Transportation Vehicles	3	2	4	4	4	17
Rebuild Veteran's Memorial Bridge	4	4	2	4	1	15
More Lanes on I-295 Portland between Exits 5 & 7	2	4	4	1	2	13
Commuter Rail "Portland North" b/w Portland and Brunswick	2	1	1	4	4	12

### **Agenda Item 7 – Consent Agenda**

The Executive Committee recently endorsed MaineDOT/NNEPRA's request for a TIP amendment to use \$50,000 to buy a Quik-Trak ticketing machine and a pick up truck with CMAQ funds. This involves no increase in CMAQ funding.

Carl Eppich recently distributed an RFP to engineering consultants for our \$80,000 regional traffic signal coordination study.

Paul Niehoff and several Technical Committee members continue to meet monthly with the MaineDOT and FHWA to develop innovative and streamlined ways to develop and complete projects.

John recently distributed an RFP to consultants for our \$80,000 Tri-Community Transportation Plan for Old Orchard Beach, Saco and Biddeford.

#### State and Federal funding topics

- MaineDOT recently took a \$12 million hit in federal funding (part of a nationwide action). MaineDOT shared that pain with the four MPO's by reducing our "unobligated balance" of FHWA planning funds by \$190,000. This reduces our future access to FHWA planning funds by a relatively small amount.
- We hosted 16 people here last week for a discussion with Kate Rube, from the "T4America" advocacy group working on new directions for federal transportation policy. She was in Maine for the GrowSmart annual summit.
- Staff recently submitted comments on a 100-page "transportation report card" being drafted by the Maine Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers.
- *At last week's MPO's meeting in Bangor, MaineDOT's Ken Sweeney and Kat Fuller emphasized that they are both more than willing to receive phone calls and emails from MPO committee members regarding MaineDOT/MPO topics.*

On November 4<sup>th</sup> we will host a member workshop on the implications of being in a Transportation Management Area. The workshop will involve a panel of experts from FHWA and FTA, and two consultants who work with MPO's throughout the country. Our current analysis (still a work in progress) shows a less robust forecast for reaching the 200,000 population threshold.

Mike Bobinsky and John Duncan met with MaineDOT Commissioner Cole, his staff and the other MPO's on September 24<sup>th</sup> for a semi-annual check-in. We learned of :

- MaineDOT's interest in developing a warm mix asphalt spec.
- MaineDOT recently completed a study that they hope will enable the Delegation to convince Congress to run a pilot program in Maine for lower weight limits on the interstate
- The status of the current review being done of the MDOT Traffic Movement Permit process. It is currently on hold as participants work to get final buy-in on the advisory committee. MDOT and the MPO participants are pleased with the ideas coming out of it.

MaineDOT's Ron Roy retired on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

The collaboration discussion between PACTS, GPCOG, RTP and METRO will continue in December.

### **Recent Committee Meetings**

- Joint Transit/Planning Committee meeting
  - See Carl Eppich for details on the excellent discussion at this well attended meeting.
- Technical Committee's September meeting
  - Continued work on the 2010/2011 collector road projects list
- Planning Committee's October meeting
  - Presentation on Portland's new bicycle ordinance
  - Discussion of a Tex Haeuser TIF TOD legislation proposal
  - Final action on 2010/2011 bike/ped projects funding
- Transit Committee's October meeting
  - Continued work on specific projects to implement our Regional Transit Study
  - Discussion of status of current UPWP planning tasks
  - Decided how to program additional STP funds
  - Drafting their committee's annual report to the Policy Committee
  - Much exchange of information on many topics of interest to all at the meeting