

PACTS

Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation Committee

2009 High Priority Projects Committee Meeting Notice

October 31, 2007
1:30 p.m.

PACTS, 68 Marginal Way, Portland

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Notes from September 5th meeting
3. Status reports on national commissions at work, and MaineDOT's *Connecting Maine Plan* and I-295 Corridor Study
4. FY 2009 Annual Appropriations Earmarks
5. 2009 Short List of High Priority Project Proposals
 - A. Comments received from the general public and the Technical, Planning and Transit Committees
 - B. Proposal updates
 - C. Action
 - D. Next Steps
6. 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

Notes from September 5th Meeting

The following people attended: Rick Michaud (Chair), Gary Williams, Dave Cole, Bob Burns, Dan Coyne (Congressman Allen), Jennifer Duddy (Senator Collins), John Bubier, Amanda Stearns, Mike Bobinsky, Mike McGovern, Tom Milligan, Donna Larson, Tom Meyers, Paul Niehoff, David Willauer, Julia Dawson, Jonathan Labonte, and John Duncan.

We skipped the status reports item.

Rick Michaud reviewed the nine candidates as described in the meeting packet. Donna Larson and Mike McGovern asked questions about the I-295 proposals. Julia Dawson responded. Gary advised that MaineDOT was aiming to complete a draft of the I-295 Corridor Study final report this month.

Donna described an updated cost estimate for an upgrade of Exit 20 of I-295 in Freeport. She reported that the Town has studied the need for this several times, that it would have a significant economic benefit, and that MaineDOT and DEP have been monitoring that location for 15 years. She asked that the proposal be added to our list of nine candidates given that the cost estimate exceeds the \$10,000,000 threshold established at the July meeting. The members discussed the request. Rick Michaud suggested that we welcome all proposals that meet our criteria.

John Duncan reviewed the criteria used by staff in ranking the candidates:

1. Cost more than \$10,000,000.
2. Study is done, and has a scope and excellent cost estimate.
3. Strong public support.
4. Regional benefit (economic and environmental).
5. MaineDOT supports.
6. Not fundable by Turnpike.

Staff answered many questions about the “PACTS Staff Summary and Assessment” of the nine candidates in the meeting packet. In addition:

- Jonathan Labonte answered questions from John Bubier about the Biddeford interchanges proposal.
- Mike McGovern supported the staff’s high ranking of the Veterans Bridge reconstruction. He suggested adding funds for a CBITD ferry replacement.
- Tom Meyers asked about the six years needed for MaineDOT to finance the Veterans Bridge reconstruction. Gary Williams explained, and added that MaineDOT would support seeking High Priority Project funds for it.
- Rick asked staff for a ranking of the Freeport Exit 20 candidate. John responded that he would not place it in the top three. Gary asked if it is structurally sound. Donna suggested that the proposal might be added to the \$50,000,000 I-295 candidate on the list.

- Gary made a request for MaineDOT input after we have shortened the list to two or three proposals. He would like MaineDOT to suggest some “names” for the proposals with the intent to keep the proposal names relatively general in scope.
- There was a discussion of the funding for the Gorham Bypass and the potential spur to Gorham from the Turnpike.
- Mike Bobinsky asked about the rail line being contemplated in the passenger rail candidate on the list. Mike McGovern asked Gary about the prospects for funding the operations of the Downeaster and the proposed extension to Brunswick.
- Tom Milligan described the Biddeford proposal on the list.

After further discussion, the Committee members endorsed the staff’s ranking with the following changes:

- to move the Veterans Bridge proposal from second to first,
- to move the “Buses and paratransit vehicles” from first to second, and to add “ferry”, and
- to insert the Freeport Exit 20 candidate in sixth place.

The members asked staff to circulate the revised draft list of candidates to the PACTS Transit, Planning and Technical Committee during October. Rick Michaud stressed that the list is still a preliminary draft, and that we should consider additional proposals that might get offered.

John Duncan asked for feedback on the decision making timeline in the meeting packet. Jennifer Duddy offered to ask one of her colleagues and to get back to us. Mike McGovern suggested that we try to keep to the schedule in the timeline.

The members decided the meet next on October 31st with the intent to pick three candidates to submit for consideration by the PACTS Policy Committee in November. (The Policy Committee would adopt a list for the purpose of seeking support from Councils and Transit Boards throughout the region during 2008.)

Status reports on national commissions at work, and MaineDOT’s *Connecting Maine* plan and I-295 Corridor Study

Gary William and Dale Doughty will brief us.

The MaineDOT public meetings regarding the recommendations in the I-295 Corridor Study are on November 13th (Yarmouth) and 20th (Brunswick), and December 11th (Portland).

FY 2009 Annual Appropriations Earmarks

In February of 2006 and 2007 PACTS submitted three proposals for FY 2007 and FY 2008 Annual Appropriations Earmarks from Congress. We were unsuccessful both times.

We intend to submit again next February for FY 2009 annual funding. We will discuss the process for developing the list of proposals at the meeting.

2009 Short List of High Priority Project Proposals

A. Comments received from the general public, and the Technical, Planning and Transit Committees

The next two pages are the candidates map and summary sent to the Technical, Planning and Transit Committee for review and comment at their October meetings.

The Planning Committee, which met on October 4th, did not discuss this topic because they spent so much time on other items.

Julia Dawson briefed the Technical Committee met on October 9th. She responded to several clarification questions.

John Duncan briefed the Transit Committee on October 11th. The members discussed the coordination of PACTS and MaineDOT efforts regarding the proposal for buses, ferry and paratransit vehicles. They asked GPCOG staff to contact MaineDOT staff in that regard. Judy Harris suggesting dropping the column-heading word “enough” in the summary sheet. (Done.) Some members noted that they had read about our list in the blogosphere. People talked about how we will provide the public with adequate context and an explanation of our ranking process when we go out to seek public comment on the short list.

During October we received lengthy emails from seven members of the public. They had learned of our draft list from our meeting packets sent to the Planning, Transit and Technical Committees. We have replied to them all.

The emails are in a separate file included in this meeting packet. Here is a summary:

1. Markos Miller (Portland) – Supports the transit and passenger rail proposals, and the Veterans Bridge proposal with bike/ped improvements. Opposes all the other road proposals.
2. Christian McNeil (GrowSmart) – Same as Mr. Miller.
3. Ken Whitney (Cranberry Isles) – Same as Mr. Miller and Mr. McNeil, and proposes bus lines to Gorham/Windham and Freeport/Brunswick.
4. Jon Graback (Portland) – Recommends higher than 8th priority for passenger rail. Supports some widening of I-295 in Portland. Questions some of our cost estimates. Has heard that Maine’s environmental community is planning to file a legal challenge under the STPA and NEPA regarding any plans to widen I-295.
5. Elizabeth Trice (Portland) – Sees the Veterans Bridge rebuild as a great opportunity to create a good bike and pedestrian crossing.
6. Mark Sauerwald (Cumberland) – Same as Ms. Trice.
7. John Brooking (Westbrook) – Same as Mr. Sauerwald and Ms. Trice.

B. Proposal updates

Staff has no significant proposal updates.

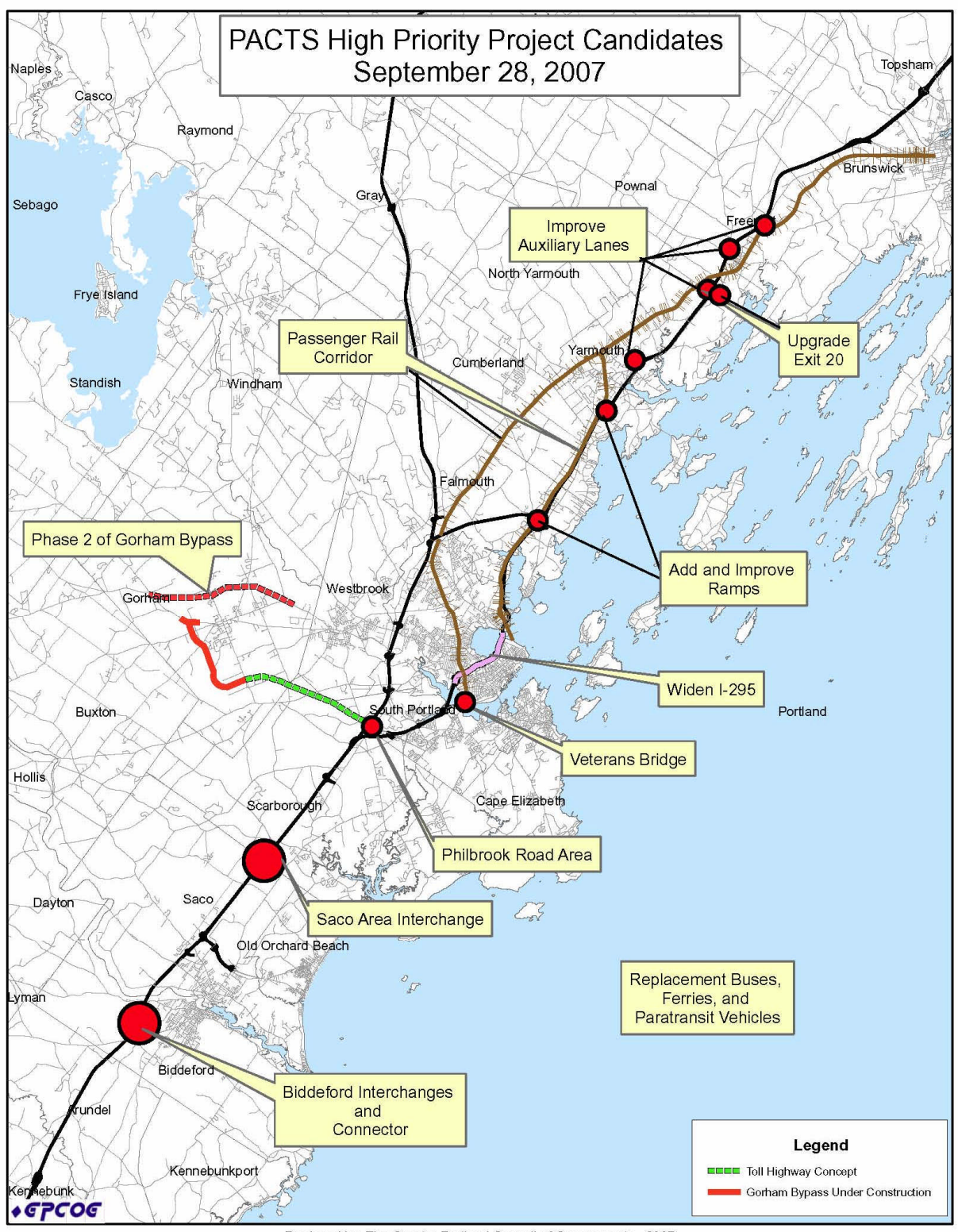
C. Action

If there are no significant loose ends, then a motion would be in order to recommend three (?) projects to the Policy Committee. Staff recommends a set of projects whose total cost ranges between \$50 million and \$100 million.

D. Next Steps

October	Pick three projects. Ask staff to seek the support of MaineDOT's Commissioner Cole.
December	Submit three project recommendation to the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee adopts the list for the purpose of seeking support from Councils and Transit Boards throughout the region.
January	Hire a marketing consultant.
February and March	Consultant creates promotion plan and materials.
March to May	Staff presents to area Councils and Transit Boards, and asks for their endorsement of the three projects during the next two months. Staff also presents to other groups in the region.
June	We meet informally with Congressional Delegation.
Fall 2008	After receipt of support from all Councils and Transit Boards, submit formally to the Congressional Delegation.

PACTS High Priority Project Candidates September 28, 2007



Produced by: The Greater Portland Council of Governments - 2007