

PACTS Joint Planning and Technical Committee meeting
November 5th, 2009
9:00 a.m

Members present: Greg Tansley, Planning Committee Chair (Biddeford); Sara Devlin (Maine Turnpike Authority); Eric Dudley (Westbrook); Molly Just (Westbrook); Tom Errico (Policy Committee appt.); Robert Kahn (TrainRiders Northeast); Bob Malley (Cape Elizabeth); Brooks Moore (Windham); Angela Blanchette (Saco); Carla Nixon (Cumberland); Maureen O'Meara (Cape Elizabeth); Elizabeth Trice (Cumberland County); Jim Wendel (Scarborough)

Guests & staff: Russell Charette (MaineDOT); Bob Driscoll (HNTB Corporation); John Duncan (PACTS); Carl Eppich (PACTS); Ed Hanscom (MaineDOT); Bruce Hyman (Bruce Hyman Planning, Inc.); Steve Linnell (GPCOG); Paul Niehoff (PACTS); Lynne Powers (GPCOG); Rebecca Schaffner-Tousignant (GPCOG); Steve Tartre (Maine Turnpike Authority)

1) **Call to order:** Greg Tansley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Introductions were made.

2) **Public comment:** There were no public comments expressed.

3) **Future projects overview, Maine Turnpike Authority & MaineDOT**

Ed Hanscom gave a presentation on projects currently being planned by the MTA and MaineDOT. The two have been working together, recognizing the fact that if planned projects on I-295 and the Turnpike were to be executed at the same time, it could result in traffic gridlock. They have been meeting on a monthly basis since December, developing projects to maintain and upgrade highways. The work to be done includes: paving, bridge repairs and major bridge projects, interchange improvements, and off-interstate projects. Ed provided a map which is subject to change and has been changing due to financial factors. He asked that if municipalities have major projects scheduled in the immediate area of the highway system, they let MaineDOT and the MTA know, as any travel shift can affect the entire system.

Greg Tansley asked who would be handling traffic diversion plans for the Veterans Memorial Bridge project, and when the public would be involved. Ed responded that three design/build teams are currently working on proposals and preliminary designs for the bridge. The people involved in scoring the proposals will be evaluating all aspects of them, which includes traffic management. He pointed out that, at this point, it wasn't known how much of an impact the Veterans Bridge replacement will have on regional traffic; it will depend on the proposals and whether they maintain the existing bridge while building a new one. There were several questions on the traveling public and if they have someone representing them in the process. Ed and Carl Eppich answered that South Portland, Portland, and MaineDOT all have scoring teams and that people working on the project have been in discussions with a stakeholder group for a year. According to the MaineDOT RFP, there couldn't be a complete closure for more than 60 days, and partial closure no longer than two years.

After questions from the committees, Ed clarified that most of the scheduled work is maintenance and repair rather than expansion. None of the scheduled projects will add thru-lanes to the existing 295. Steve Tartre added that the Turnpike widening through Portland has been pushed off until 2016 or 2017. New bridges will have an additional lane for future widening, but there is no capacity increase for now.

Russell Charette pointed out that this was a very tight schedule, meaning that if one project were to be delayed, it could have a cascading effect on all other projects for the next 6-10 years. There were several questions on the color-coding of the project map supplied by Ed. It was agreed that Paul Niehoff would e-mail it out, along with a key explaining the various colors and what each meant.

4) **Seeking Planning Committee endorsement of pedestrian plan**

Paul sought the Planning Committee's endorsement of the pedestrian plan. Greg expressed discomfort with recommending the plan before seeing the materials. It was quickly established that there were

enough committee members present for a quorum if need be.

There have been technical issues in getting the plan posted to the PACTS website. Once it is final, there will be printed copies and it will be available online. The copy on the blog at the time of the meeting was not the final copy. Bruce Hyman added that the final draft would be posted to the website on Monday or Tuesday, November 9 or 10. Paul said that the proposal needed the recommendation of the Planning and Technical Committees to go to the Policy Committee, and, in response to a question about deadlines, said that there was no deadline for the Planning Committee to weigh in. It was established that the issue would go on the next agenda.

5) **PACTS Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Update**

Bruce Hyman gave an overview of the changes that had been made in the plan since the last time that he came before the committee in early August. The revised plan will be posted to the PACTS blog early next week and will be easily accessible via download as well as viewing online. The basic idea of the project is to take a snapshot of the region, focusing on bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, and to develop cost-effective and time-effective regional bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The 1995 plan was comprehensive, and this 2009 plan is a series of selective updates to it. A big part of the project was expanding the scope of the '95 plan, which only included seven PACTS municipalities versus fifteen.

The project is looking at bike lanes, paved shoulders, and shared use paths, along with other resources for bikers/walkers. Much of the \$80 million total price tag (spread across all communities) comes from the projected costs of adding paved shoulders to existing roads. Bruce provided a handout detailing some of the top issues of concern for follow-up, taken from conversations with municipalities and bicycle advocacy groups. While discussing that handout, some questions came up. One of the points discussed was #6, which stipulated a more comprehensive, broad look at sharing corridors rather than looking at them in a piecemeal manner. Greg asked if there had been any discussion based on what could happen if there was a transfer in ownership of the corridors. Bruce was unaware of any global discussions and believed that it would be important for someone to step up and initiate one.

Greg pointed out that the study looked at PACTS municipalities geographically as a whole rather than just at the PACTS funding area. He asked how the areas outside of the PACTS funding area will relate to this plan. Bruce replied that ideally, bike/ped plans would match inside the PACTS funding and planning areas, and that the goal is to make things line up to work together. He also cautioned that some of the suggestions made in the report relate to transit, so he wasn't sure how funding vs. non-funding would be handled. Carla Nixon said that in some cases, when Cumberland and Freeport meet, they see things that PACTS won't necessarily fund but that the municipalities are interested in. Seeing these plans on paper could lead municipalities outside of the funding area to fund these projects themselves.

Carl said that PACTS can deliver this bike/ped plan to help all municipalities coordinate their own efforts and money. PACTS won't be funding the full \$80 million price tag. It can program \$600,000 every two years, including match, for bike/ped improvements. Greg asked if an analysis similar to the report had been done for sidewalks and Bruce answered that there was no consistent sidewalk information across the region. He collected GIS data from municipalities where it was available, so GPCOG will have that data for when municipalities are developing.

There was a lengthy discussion of the inclusion of paved shoulders in the plan. Elizabeth asked why paved shoulders are on this list, reasoning that as shoulders improve roads for auto-based transport, there ought to be auto money for them. It was pointed out that the paved shoulders are a required improvement on the roadway system that also benefit bike mobility, and that they deserve at least a footnote in the plan if they are not funded by car transit funds. John said that PACTS will not provide

funds for that \$78 million in paved shoulders, but there is a \$200 million unmet need for fixing collector roads that don't meet standards.

Molly Just asked if Bruce and staff would consider taking the cost of the paved shoulders out of the bike path plan, as, for example, Westbrook isn't going to put \$4.8 million into a bike plan but may put some of that money into investing in roadways. Paul said that there are a lot of reasons that the shoulder work wouldn't be completed as a separate project. Molly again advocated for taking the paved shoulders out of the plan when sending it to the Policy Committee, as she would be doing the shoulders for roads anyway, independently of the bike plan. Tom Errico asked if paved shoulders were pulled out, and if municipalities found a way to fund the shoulders for the roads that require them, how the state would look at prioritizing roads for improvement. Paul said that PACTS prioritizes, not the state; John said to keep in mind that the roads in question are collectors, arterials, and local roads.

Carla disagreed that paved shoulders should be removed from the plan. She stated that she did not have a problem with modifying or footnoting the cost, but noted that there are examples where shoulders are for bike/pedestrian safety as much as they are for road improvements. Paul cautioned that for a path to be designated as a shared use path it has to be at least eight feet wide. Greg recommended letting Bruce and staff discuss this, and having the committee take it up again when they had the final draft of the plan for review. Carl recommended adding a separate page about paved shoulders, and including this dialogue.

In response to #9 on the list of follow-up concerns, the arena of bicycle safety, education and promotion, Elizabeth pointed out that Cumberland County, Portland, and South Portland are receiving EECBC funds that could fund some safety programs. Portland is using the money to hire a sustainability coordinator, South Portland is also discussing hiring someone, and the County hasn't made a plan yet. Portland and the County will be receiving \$600,000 each. Elizabeth suggested making a proposal for a safety plan and bringing it to the County in a bid to use some of those funds. The County doesn't have to finish its plan until March.

Robert Kahn asked if anything is being done with potential tourism, bringing people up from Boston for bicycle eco-tourism. Bruce said that this was a high priority item and cost effective regional project, identifying a couple corridors to designate and sign as a bike tourism corridor. Some possibilities are the Eastern Trail from Biddeford to South Portland, and Portland to Freeport/Brunswick. Emphasis was also placed on the bike parking recommendation of the preliminary plan, which is not a no-cost opportunity but a very low-cost one. Greg recommended putting this on the Planning Committee agenda for some sort of action. The Committee will have the final draft ahead of time to review.

6) Aerial photo initiative

At the Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, a few towns were very adamant that PACTS ought to be doing aerial ortho imagery for the region. It has been discussed in Planning and Technical Committee meetings for the last six months without a consensus on what should be done as a PACTS region. Paul and GPCOG's Donna Tippet have been talking with USGS, Maine GIS, and others, trying to gauge interest in self-supported or PACTS ortho imagery. Paul said that the general consensus seemed to be that it is a great idea, but questions about cost exist. The more communities that buy in, the lower the cost per square mile per community. The Turnpike Authority is interested, Portland is interested, and South Portland and Portland will be doing this no matter what. There is interest in York County and as far north as Harpswell. USGS ARRA funds could be applied for up to a maximum of \$500,000 to do aerial photography resulting in ortho imagery.

There was recently an e-mail from Mike Smith about PACTS and GPCOG being part of a joint application for LIDAR. Funds are also available under the same program. LIDAR is a process that

uses lasers during a fly-over to create an accurate elevation model. It's been done for the coast to map the shoreline, but this would be inland. Mike S. will be in the office at 8:30 on Tuesday morning to discuss LIDAR. He wants PACTS on board and is looking for leveraging funds to apply.

Elizabeth mentioned that the County has been discussing spectrometry flyovers. This process takes pictures at an angle, meaning that 3D images come out of it. The most expensive part is paying for the flight. She asked if there would be a way to do both PACTS' plan and the spectrometry at the same time. The costs are reasonable; the County has done it for the past three years. It's not the image-gathering that the County is being charged for, but the license for the information gathered. Elizabeth suggested that having just a little more influence could tip the scales and mean that both flyovers could be done at the same time, providing a huge resource for the area.

Greg said that the issue is a lack of coordination, asking why towns are paying singularly to get flights done when it can be paid for and organized as a region. He saw a lot of disjointed efforts and was looking for general support from the committees that they needed to be looking at it in a coordinated way. In response to a question, Paul clarified that there is a flyover taking place this fall regardless of whether PACTS/GPCOG buys in. The information will be available, but not in the resolution that PACTS wants. There was a discussion with the consultant about that but it was ultimately decided that the buy-in that the consultant offered wasn't cost effective. Paul and others have discussed doing it in April 2010, at leaf off, which is a better time to do it than the fall. There will be a small window in the spring with no leaves on the trees and the leaves from the previous fall off the ground. The economic stimulus money has a September date for conclusion. Paul asked if the towns are interested in LIDAR, ortho imagery, or both.

7) Utility accommodation policy

Greg brought up MaineDOT's new utility accommodation policy, which the Executive Committee wants the Planning Committee to weigh in on. With this new plan, when someone is doing a reconstruction project and has to relocate telephone poles, it can no longer be done via easement and has to be done in fee simple. Paul pointed out that this is an issue because it is an additional eight feet from the primary line overhead. There was general concern about the new policy, and it will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

8) Meeting adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.