

# PACTS

Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation Committee



## Technical Committee Meeting Notice

June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 8:30 a.m.

PACTS, 68 Marginal Way, Portland

### Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Public Comment
3. Approve Minutes of the Joint Planning/Technical Committees, April, 2011 and the February 2011 Technical Committee Meeting
4. 12/13 Early Project Kick Off Status
5. Collector Road Assessment Update Status
6. Regional Traffic Coordination
7. TIP Project Efficiencies and Cost Committee Update
8. Information and Other Business
9. Annual Meeting: June 23<sup>rd</sup> from 12:00 to 1:30 at the USM Library, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor
10. Adjourn

*The Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Portland Urbanized Area*  
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**1. Agenda Item 3.Bothe the Joint Planning/Technical Committee April, 2011 and the February, 2011 Technical Committee Meeting**

**PACTS Planning and Technical Committees Joint Meeting  
April 7, 2011  
9:00 A.M.**

*Present:* Dan Bacon (Scarborough), Duane Scott (MaineDOT), Brooks More (Windham), Sarah Devlin (MTA), Dan Jellis (Yarmouth), Molly Just (Westbrook), Greg Tansley (Biddeford), Tom Poirier (Gorham), Jeff McEwen (FHWA), Eric Dudley (Westbrook), Bob Kahn (Trainriders Northeast), Jim Wendel (Scarborough), Gretel Varney (Portland), Elizabeth Trice (Cumberland County), Peter Morelli (Saco), Alex Jaegerman (Portland), Tex Haeuser (South Portland)  
*Guests/staff:* Matt Craig (Casco Bay Estuary Partnership), Alex Abbott (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Art Handman (Consultant), Laurie Roth (Cumberland County EMA), Rebeccah Schaffner-Tousignant (GPCOG), John Duncan (PACTS), Carl Eppich (PACTS), Paul Niehoff (PACTS), Lynne Powers (GPCOG), Nate Kane (MaineDOT)

**1. Call to Order**

Dan Bacon called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

**2. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Approve Minutes of the Joint Planning/Technical Committees, January 11, 2011**

*Dan Jellis moved to approve the minutes from the joint Planning/Technical Committees meeting on January 11. The motion passed unanimously.*

**4. Cumberland County Road-Stream Crossing Work Group**

This is a group of organizations working together to help fix match issues that were preventing the use of environmental grants for stream crossings. The idea is to find municipalities that are already working on projects – and thus willing to pay the match – and connect them with grants. Laurie Roth of the Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency, Alex Abbott from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Matt Craig from Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, Elizabeth Trice from Cumberland County, and Betty Williams from Cumberland County Soil and Water District are working together on this endeavor, brainstorming ways to work with the intersections of roads and streams and the habitat surrounding them.

Alex Abbott spoke about the surveying process, which started in 2006 and revealed that 38% of the perennial crossings in Casco Bay had severe barriers to fish passage. He said that the idea of the Road-Stream Crossing Work Group is to work together to help procure funding and technical support, hopefully for sites where there are both flooding risks and fish passage problems. The goal is to help improve infrastructure and help environmental causes. Laurie said that it is tough to get FEMA money, as there are many rules to meet. For example, federal money can't be matched with federal money, with the exception of community block grant funding. They are trying to find ways to do things like providing engineering for a project if they're unable to provide direct money for a 25% match. Alex said that one of the biggest pots of money for fish-related projects comes from NOA. They often want to steer money to river basins where salmon is listed as endangered. He characterized it as an opportunity, and that it is up to the working group and other organizations and municipalities in order to find these creative solutions and bring together smaller pots of money. Lead time is an issue, as this sort of effort doesn't work well on a crisis basis.

Laurie has distributed a 2D road tracker form to public works directors. Anytime that a town has to go out to do some work – fixing shoulder erosion, doing anything with culverts and roads, keeping track of labor and parts – they should mark it down, as hazard mitigation grants are based on a record of continuous damage. She can pass the form on to Carl and Carl can distribute it.

Dan Jellis asked if this information was available publicly, so that people can see if their culverts are listed. Alex replied that the goal is to pull it together and put it up over the summer; they hope to have a statewide database by September. Many large land owners haven't wanted their information listed, though they did allow surveyors on their land. If anyone would like their town's GIS data, they can get in touch with Alex.

**5. Form-Based Codes Work in Maine: Damariscotta and Yarmouth**

This agenda item was skipped and will be tabled until the next Planning Committee meeting.

**6. DOT MapViewer**

Nate Kane gave a brief tutorial on MaineDOT's new map viewer, showing the committee various features and how to use it. The goals behind the map viewer are: making data accessible (and not needing to be an expert in order to find the necessary information), allowing internal personnel at MaineDOT to use the data, and as a means of communication. It is not meant as a website that the motoring public uses to plan trips. The simplification study last fall was the impetus for this project. The website is <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/mapviewer>

The map viewer can quickly and easily determine road characteristics. Tex Haeuser asked if towns could have this data in shape file form; Nate said yes and to email him with requests.

**7. Preliminary 2012-2013 Study Rankings**

The study proposals, with notes from MaineDOT, were handed out in the meeting packet. Carl Eppich and John Duncan individually ranked each proposal, and then collaborated. There is a special credit category, with up to five extra points awarded for multi-municipal proposals; each of the other categories is worth five points. The \$185,000 number is conservative.

*Peter Morelli made a motion to forward this list to the Policy and Executive Committees, with a recommendation to fund the four projects scored highest by the staff. Tex Haeuser seconded the motion.*

Carl recommended including the Libbytown project in Portland, which was fifth in the rankings, saying that staff does not yet know the final number for available funds and that it is better to have more studies lined up than not enough.

*Alex Jaegerman offered an amendment to the motion to add the Libbytown proposal to the list of recommended projects. If there is more than \$185,000 available, then that project will also be considered. Robert Kahn seconded the amendment.*

Peter did not want to see Libbytown added to the original motion, as he felt that a number

of lower-ranked projects were stronger projects and said that MaineDOT seemed to have issues with it, judging by their comments on the proposals. Greg Tansley looked at proposals 5 and 6 on the list, which were Libbytown and Peninsula Way finding. He pointed out that there was just one point between them but a \$50,000 difference in cost, asking about the logic of spending \$50,000 to get a project that staff feels is an 11, or spending another \$50,000 for a finished product that only ranked one point higher. Portland ranked Libbytown as higher in importance when submitting its applications, as the intent is to improve the quality of living. Jim Wendel said that the project qualified as being more important as it related to the evaluation criteria; it may be only one point, but staff has determined that they see it as a more important project regardless of the monetary difference.

Carl talked briefly about Libbytown, saying that it is a major problem at many levels due to the exit, poor access to the Portland Transportation Center, poor walk- and bike-ability along Congress Street, and many one-way pairs. The whole area is an auto-centric neighborhood and raises major regional questions. As far as bang for buck for the region, it is probably the biggest on the list. Peter felt that everything that had been done in the neighborhood is wrong, everything that has been built needed to be fixed, and he did not want to see PACTS pay for going back and fixing that now. Alex said that Fore River Parkway has been built recently and good work was done there. It is important to make progress; I-295 has had a detrimental impact on the neighborhood, and Portland wants to try to correct some of that and make the neighborhood more live-able.

*Alex withdrew his amendment to the motion and Robert withdrew his second. Alex made a new amendment to accept the staff rankings and forward the entire list to the Policy and Executive Committees. Jim seconded the amendment. The amended motion passed with Peter and Tex voting in opposition.*

Molly Just said that this is an important item, with towns depending on this money, and she felt that this item should be given more time on the agenda. She suggested that in the future, staff provide a brief presentation on why they ranked each project the way that they did and then allow committee members some time to respond. Greg said that applicant towns used to be invited to come in and provide a 10-minute presentation on their projects, and that it was a useful opportunity for applicants to explain and provide context.

The committees belatedly *voted to substitute the amended motion for the original motion. It passed, with Tex and Peter in opposition.*

## **8. Information and Other Business**

Tonight is the third part of the transit-focused region event, at the Merrill Auditorium. Presentations begin at 6:30 P.M.

## **9. Next Meetings**

Next planning committee meeting: May 5 at 9:00 A.M.

Next technical committee meeting: May 10 at 8:30 A.M.

\*\*\*PACTS annual meeting: June 23, 12:00 to 1:30

At the USM Library (7<sup>th</sup> floor)

## **10. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 A.M

**PACTS Technical Committee Meeting**  
**February 8, 2011**  
**8:30 A.M.**

*Present:* Angela Blanchette (Saco), LaRay Hamilton (MaineDOT), Gretel Varney (Portland), Tom Errico (T.Y. Lin), Eric Dudley (Westbrook), Dale Mitchell (HNTB), Elizabeth Trice (Cumberland County), Dave Redlefsen (METRO), Jim Wendel (Scarborough), Jennie Franceschi (Biddeford), Al Presgraves (Freeport)  
*Staff/guests:* Lynne Powers (GPCOG), Paul Niehoff (PACTS), Carl Eppich (PACTS), Lori Roth (Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency), Betty Williams (Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District)

**1. Call to order**

Angela Blanchette called the meeting to order at 8:35 A.M.

**2. Public comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Approve Minutes of the October 2010 Technical Committee Meeting**

The agenda mistakenly characterized the minutes as being from October 2010; they were actually from November. *Jennie Francheschi made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2010 Technical Committee meeting. Dave Redlefsen seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.*

**4. Cumberland County Road-Stream Crossing Work Group**

A group made up of representatives from a number of organizations (including Cumberland County, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency) are currently working together to talk about how to win grants that are available to counties for wetland restoration and that could also benefit culvert replacement and road-stream crossings. The group has been meeting since April 2010 and are working together to develop a schedule and some expertise around grant writing.

Betty Williams said that the work group is looking at the data from culvert assessments/surveys done throughout the county. There is a lot of data and they are trying to work out where overlaps are between environmental needs and infrastructure needs, and if there are plans within towns for already doing some work. The group needs upcoming infrastructure public works plans from each town. They are trying to fit towns' needs into these grants as well; if they need assistance with engineering, grant writing, permitting, etc. A big piece of these grants is coming up with the match, and the hope is that if municipalities already have something planned, they can apply for the grant and use the labor that they are already doing as the match.

Elizabeth Trice said that the group is currently working on data collection, with a GIS layer for all of the priority fish passage sites in the county and another layer for most flood sites. Once they layer in planned reconstruction sites, they can see which sites are highest priority and start matching them up to grants. Laurie Roth spoke about having spent the last year working to update the Cumberland County hazard mitigation plan. She has spoken to representatives from every municipality, primarily public works directors, and found out what their biggest issues are. It's a twofold project: broad-based questions about what the

biggest flooding issues are, and a narrower scope of what FEMA will allow towns to use for hazard mitigation grants. The idea proposed by the work group is that rather than working on narrow focuses separately, they will come together and use the map of sites with overlapping interests. There could be a site with four areas of flooding that could be improved by one project, which would hopefully both mitigate flooding and help fish projects. The group would like to identify projects where public works departments are planning to do work in the future, then prioritize, then look at grants and see what would apply to the situation. Then when grants are released, they will know what projects qualify and will be ready to go.

Dale Mitchell asked what the process would be if towns didn't have a planned project at these needy sites; if it would push prioritized sites out of the running. Betty said that the group would make the proposal to the town anyway, letting them know about the opportunity. Most of these grants are a 50/50 match; some are 25%. So far, the group is just working with Cumberland County, but York County has expressed interest. Angela felt that getting municipalities' work plans might be harder than anticipated. The group will have to be constantly updating their files. Eric Dudley pointed out that a lot of culvert replacement is done as a maintenance effort, and Westbrook doesn't have a two-year plan.

Elizabeth said that the group has talked about coming up with a list of 50-100 high priority sites and passing them on to municipalities so that they could be kept informed of work happening there. They can provide the GIS layer with high priority sites. Jim Wendel would like to see the group work closely with MaineDOT and PACTS; he said that the outreach to public works departments or town engineers would have to be repetitive to keep the dialogue open. Dale suggested passing the combined priority lists to PACTS staff who can distribute it to communities, who can see if they have any projects that fit. He cautioned that otherwise, the group could wind up with a huge unwieldy layer.

##### **5. The High Cost of Federally Funded Projects Update**

Municipal representatives, PACTS staff, and Gorrill Palmer are looking at the administrative, design, and construction of federal- and state-funded projects, and working with MaineDOT and FHWA, to figure out how to do more with the same amount of money. The group has had several meetings so far and is studying when a project is done locally versus when MaineDOT does it; what the costs are and why. They are going to meet with the MaineDOT commissioner. Paul Niehoff's opinion is that if PACTS funded projects as locally administered projects (LAP's), there would be better communication and more efficiency and MaineDOT would have just one person to deal with on all LAP's. He does some of that now, with project ID forms and three-party agreements.

Dale wasn't certain that PACTS as a local administrator was going to save costs. He said that the department keeps putting more of the administrative responsibility on consultants and if PACTS took on LAP's, some kind of additional agreement would have to be set up. Then the consultant and municipality are still involved and the MaineDOT project manager is still involved, and you're just adding yet another party. Jennie said that there are often duplicative efforts in state-run projects, giving the example of two inspectors on-site being paid to do the same job, and wanted to see the process paired down. Al Presgraves cited the example of a 50% administrative cost on a sidewalk project that MaineDOT did in Freeport, and thought that the option of administering locally through PACTS should be discussed.

Dale agreed that the discussion should happen and felt that the direction should be process-related, not “can PACTS do this more efficiently.” He said that the process itself needs to be mended. Jim has been doing LAP's in Scarborough and said that the advantage has been getting the project going and doing project development, which saves time. But he cautioned that it is not a way to circumvent rules and regulations; that they're in place to prevent fraud and leave all parties able to prove that money was spent well.

Eric thought that LAP's slow the process down, and that it would be best not to do LAP projects unless they're very small, and that if they are, they're taken on locally. LaRay Hamilton said that a lot of high costs are from restrictions and requirements, testing, and certifications, and wasn't certain that project management is where money will be saved. Jim felt that the benefits of an LAP management team at PACTS would lie in time savings, not in monetary savings. Paul said that there are some restrictions that can't be discussed, but that there are others where, if municipalities and PACTS need to go to FHWA and have a discussion about, they need to be doing that. The cost team that they put together will almost certainly end up with at least the Maine FHWA representative at the table.

**6. Pros and Cons of PACTS Administering PACTS Funded Projects (LAP's)**

This item was discussed in agenda item 5.

**7. Information and Other Business**

There was no information or other business to share.

**8. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 A.M.

**Agenda Item 4. 12/13 Early Project Kick Off Status**

Concurrent with the MaineDOT's new initiative the PACTS Policy Committee recently voted to approve an important new policy to incentivize signing of Three Party and LAP agreements sooner.

The DOT received FHWA's authorization to utilize preconstruction funds to begin projects statewide this summer before the 12/13 funds would have become available in October. This is a new policy for DOT and is based primarily to allow projects to be developed sooner and therefore allow bidding earlier in the year.

For similar reasons PACTS, on a somewhat parallel track, drafted a new match incentive policy to promote earlier signing of agreements to enable starting project development much sooner and also save money. The new policy as originally written would have allowed a 10% match for projects when agreements were signed by July 19<sup>th</sup>, 20% for projects with signed agreements between July 20<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> and 30% after December 31<sup>st</sup>.

After a lengthy discussion with the DOT at the June 7<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting about the timing of the policy, revising the three party language and in order to allow our communities more time to enter into the agreements, that policy was modified. The current scenario is, DOT will have three party or LAP agreements to the communities by June 30<sup>th</sup> and the affected communities will

have until August 31<sup>st</sup> to sign them reflecting the 10% match. After that date the match will be 20%.

However there is one caveat which is the actual match for the PE and RW stages of the project will be 25% because FWHA authorization was at the programmed ratios of 66% federal, 9% state and 25% local. This is a negligible amount for most projects because the majority of our projects are collector paving projects.

Communities have been asked to decide which projects, if any, will be managed under the LAP program. This is important in order for the correct agreements to be drafted within a tight time frame.

### **Agenda Item 5. Collector Road Assessment Update Status**

PACTS staff and Gorrill Palmer met recently with the pavement management and GIS sections within DOT to discuss data exchange, condition data and various ranking options based on road conditions and various other attributes. The following is excerpted from the subcommittee's first meeting last December.

*“We all are in agreement that the Collector Assessment is one of the most important regional initiatives PACTS has completed. The report certainly addresses our original intent of looking at entire system and ranking the collector roads based on the various parameters we included for the report. However, we discovered while programming our 12/13 collector pavement preservation projects that the ranking system developed for the overall inventory was not best suited for selecting preservation candidates. We will now embark on a process to better develop ways and obtain data to improve the process and allow for a better selection process for the candidates being considered.*

*Discuss what information will be available and from whom for the next study and how best to obtain the data and the when it will be available, how best to utilize the data and what weight the data should hold in a ranking system. We will then develop that ranking system or systems.*

*We have begun looking into the schedule and what may need to be completed for us to begin programming the collector roads for the 14/15 Work Program. For discussion purposes the draft schedule looks like we would begin the report update in the fall of 2011 and work on it using project data from the 2011 construction season and begin assessing the DOT data around the same time. Field work and ground truthing would take place the spring of 2012 with the draft report available say June/July for programming projects in September 2012 for the 14/15 Work Program.”*

Gorrill Palmer will begin working with DOT sometime this summer or early fall. We can decide when it may be appropriate to reconvene the subcommittee.

### **Agenda Item 6. Regional Traffic Management System (RTMS) Phase 2: Biddeford and Saco and future expansion**

Early this spring, PACTS with the cities of Biddeford and Saco hired VHB to develop the second phase expansion of the RTMS for corridors within Biddeford and Saco. This second phase study has inventoried and evaluated signals and their controllers at 25 intersections for tiered (phased)

physical and technological improvements to coordinate the traffic signals and improve traffic flow. The goals and intent are to improve (reduce!) travel time, reducing gas usage, saving motorists money and reducing emissions, and improving safety for pedestrians. Additionally such a system presents an opportunity for signal priority and preemption for transit and emergency vehicles respectively. The recommendations and full RTMS Phase 2 report will be available at the July Technical Committee meeting.

Background:

The Phase 1 RTMS concluded with a final report in December of 2009, and evaluated 63 intersections primarily along commuter routes into Portland: Congress Street from Westbrook to Libbytown in Portland; along Brighton Avenue from Westbrook to USM; along Riverside Drive in Portland; and along Forest Avenue from Prides Corner in Westbrook to Park Ave in Portland. PACTS secured over \$1.4 million for these projects, with Brighton under construction currently, and outer Congress Street, inner Forest Avenue, Riverside Drive, and 3 intersections on Payne Road in Scarborough (vicinity of Cabelas) going out to bid this year.

Topic for Today:

The Maine Mall coordinated system (South Portland and some of Scarborough) is a Nastec based traffic signal system. The recently developed plan for RTMS 1 currently being implemented is an expansion of the Nastec system, with the outer Congress Street section to be connected to the centralized computer that runs the Maine Mall system. The intention in the future is to connect all the coordinated Nastec equipment in the region to this system. Each municipality will have access to their respective traffic signals within their boundaries.

There are a significant amount of newer Econolite brand traffic signals in Biddeford/Saco, as well as Eagle brands which requires different software but the software works for both Econolite and Eagle traffic signals, the thought process being competition is still afforded within the region and we are not held hostage by one manufacturer.

So far the Phase 2 project has presented the possibility of using 2 different centralized signal software systems in the PACTS region:

1. The Nastec based central system in the commuter corridors to Portland from South Portland, including the Maine Mall, (again part of Scarborough) and along Congress Street and Brighton Avenue from locations in Westbrook in to Portland, and on Riverside Drive and Forest Avenue in Portland.
2. A Centrac (Econolite) central system in Biddeford and part of Saco. This system can also run other brands of signal equipment, with the exception (or limited ability) of the Nastec signals.

If outlying communities not included in RTMS Phase 1 (major commuter routes into Portland) or RTMS Phase 2 find that having this second software to be a benefit to them, feedback on this position would help guide the direction as the Phase 2 study will include this in its recommendations.

**Agenda Item 7. TIP Project Efficiencies and Cost Committee Update**

The following is MaineDOT Commissioner Bernhardt's charter to review project efficiencies resulting from our meeting with him this past February. The team has met four times and a draft report of the Team's findings is underway. This initiative is a very positive collaboration between all parties involved in project selection, funding, development and construction.

DRAFT  
CHARTER

REVIEW OF MPO PROJECT PRIORITIZATION,  
SELECTION, SCOPING, ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION DELIVERY  
OF FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

Background:

Over the past few years, there are concerns by MPO's and MaineDOT that more needs to be done to streamline the process and reduce the costs of MPO Federally Funded projects. In furtherance of this need, PACTS established a working group to come up with ideas for consideration of the Department and FHWA. These ideas were shared with MaineDOT Commissioner David Bernhardt and Chief Engineer Kenneth Sweeney on February 28, 2011. It was agreed that a team would be formed to review the ideas presented and expand the review to the entire process of identifying and delivering transportation improvements in the MPO areas with Federal and State transportation funding.

Mission:

The team will examine the present process of delivering transportation improvements from planning/selection through completion and audit of Federally Funded improvements and make recommendations for changes with documented benefits to the Commissioner for his consideration by July 15, 2011.

Team:

Joyce Taylor, P.E., Director of Project Development, MaineDOT  
Peggy Duval, Acting Director of BTSP, MaineDOT  
Cheryl Martin, FHWA  
John Duncan, PACTS  
Jim Gailey, South Portland City Manager  
Bill Shane, Cumberland Town Manager  
Jim Hanley, Pike Industries, Inc.  
AGC, Mark Barnes, Shaw Brothers

Resources:

The MaineDOT will provide staff support and funding for this effort within available budgets. If other resources are necessary, the requests will be sent to the Director of Planning, MaineDOT for approval.

