

# GPCOG Executive Committee

## AGENDA

**Wednesday, January 13, 2021**

**Noon – 1:30 p.m.**

Click below to join the meeting by Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83280526656?pwd=UVJ4T2xQbmJROFNlbWFpNytNaHdXUT09>

Passcode: 376167

Or join by phone by calling: +13017158592

Webinar ID: 1 301 715 8592

Note: As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 PACTS and GPCOG is holding all committee meetings via [Zoom conferencing technology](#). We remain committed to full public access and participation in our meetings through remote access during the COVID-19 crisis. Remote meetings will be held in accordance with the requirements of [LD 2167, Public Law Chapter 618](#).

- 1. Welcome and Introductions – Nat Tupper, President**
- 2. Acceptance of 11/9/20 Minutes (Attachment A)**
- 3. Public Comment**

Residents of the region are invited to share up to 3 minutes of comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.
- 4. Nominations for Executive Committee - 5 min.**
- 5. Executive Director’s Report (Attachment B) – 10 min.**
- 6. Spotlight: Resilience Corps – 10 min.**

This month’s project spotlight will be presented by Julia Breul, Resilience Corps Program Manager.

## **7. Federal Funding (Attachment C) – 15 min.**

### Staff Report:

On December 27, 2020 President Trump signed into law a \$900 billion COVID-relief package and \$1.4 trillion government funding package. Both packages were included in a single bill – each package included transportation funding that could benefit our region.

A summary of the transportation components of each package is included in Attachment C. This information is drawn from Chris Hall’s analysis and summaries developed by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Committee members will discuss the regional opportunities in the recent federal legislation, as well as how to best prioritize and pursue these opportunities.

### Recommended Action:

Confirm transportation funding priorities and strategies to secure new regional funding from recent federal legislation.

## **8. Partnership with MaineDOT – 25 min.**

### Staff Report:

MaineDOT requested an opportunity to re-introduce itself to GPCOG’s Executive Committee and discuss the MaineDOT - GPCOG partnership and projects and opportunities in the region. Tom Reinbauer, Director of Public Outreach and Planning, and Steve Cole, Regional Planner, Regions 1 & 2, will join us.

Recommended Action: For discussion only.

## **9. Revenues from Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program - 15 min.**

### Staff Report:

The Maine Department of Community and Economic Development requested Maine’s Economic Development Districts administer CARES Act economic relief funds to small businesses and non-profits. GPCOG performed this service in four rounds, distributing over \$67M through 1,469 grants. 117 of these grants were to area non-profits and the balance went to small businesses. To administer these grants, the economic development districts were paid a fee-per-application.

GPCOG earned approximately \$520,000 in fees. Staff estimates approximately \$400,000 remains to be allocated.

	<b>Grants</b>	<b>Administration</b>
Phase 1	\$ 34,887,248	\$ 249,349
Phase 2	\$ 14,663,293	\$ 114,500
Phase 1 +	\$ 4,496,181	\$ 55,800
Tourism	\$ 13,345,220	\$ 100,750
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 67,391,942</b>	<b>\$ 520,399</b>

Recommended Action:

Allocate \$400,000 in administrative fee revenue.

**10. Next Strategic Plan - 10 min.**

Staff Report:

GPCOG adopted a [5-year strategic plan](#) in May 2017. It expires in May 2022.

A lot has changed since 2017, particularly in the last year as our region has faced unprecedented public health and economic stress due to the pandemic. The agency has also evolved. As we prepare to develop the FY22 agency budget, we should decide whether to incorporate an update to our strategic plan into our priorities and budget, and if so, define the level of effort and resource to devote to the work.

Recommended Action:

Decide whether to update GPCOG’s strategic plan for adoption in May 2022. If GPCOG decides to update the plan, provide preliminary guidance to staff on resource allocation to incorporate into the draft FY22 budget.

**11. Items for Next Agenda - 5 min.**

Executive Committee members will share ideas for upcoming agenda items. On the horizon:

Mar 10: FY22 Priorities

April 14: FY22 Budget – First Draft

Executive Director’s Annual Performance Appraisal

- May 12:                   FY22 Budget – Final Recommendation to General Assembly  
                              FY22 Officers and Executive Committee Nominations  
                              Adoption of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy  
                              FY22 Meeting Calendar
- May 26:                   General Assembly and Summit

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- February 10
- March 10
- April 14
- May 12
- May 26, 2020 – General Assembly and Summit

**Attachment A**

**GPCOG Executive Committee  
MINUTES**

**November 11, 2020**

**In Attendance:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Belinda Ray	Portland
Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Tony Plante and Josh Kochis	GPCOG Staff

**Welcome**

Nat Tupper, President, opened the meeting, which was held via Zoom.

**Acceptance of 10/14/20 Minutes**

Matthew Sturgis moved approval of the 10/14/20 meeting minutes. Susan Witonis seconded. The roll was called, and all were in favor.

**Public Comment**

No public comment was provided.

**Executive Director's Report**

Kristina announced that Claude Morgan did not win re-election in South Portland, and thanked him for his great service on GPCOG's Executive Committee.

GPCOG is working with United Way and Southern Maine Community College to explore a potential proposal for the Maine Working Communities Challenge, which is a Federal Reserve Bank economic opportunity available to

support low income people in specific priority communities including five in Lakes Region and four in Greater Portland. GPCOG has hired Craig Freshley to facilitate a meeting on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of November.

Kristina provided an overview of the front-page Portland Press Herald article featuring the Maine Mall development plan. GPCOG staff and the City of South Portland worked together on the plan.

In the recent elections, the City of Portland passed four out of five progressive referendums. Belinda Ray commented that she worries that affordable housing will be more challenging to build and that businesses will move or shut down because of the minimum wage requirements during an emergency order.

GPCOG has welcomed the AmeriCorps Resilience Fellows who have started in their projects. An update will be presented to the group in January. Tony Plante is assuming the duties of Chief Operating Officer and will be responsible for Human Resources, IT, performance management, in addition to his other project responsibilities. The annual Welcome and Congrats ceremony will be virtual this year with the addition of a video montage of newly elected officials expressing their priorities for their communities.

FACTS has adopted reforms to collapse the number of committees and to add representation of community transportation leaders, environmental and bike/pedestrian specialists. Matt Sturgis commented that this will help collective meeting fatigue. A multi-modal funding framework is being developed to program transportation investments.

### **Spotlight: Economic Recovery Grants**

Josh Kochis presented an overview of GPCOG's work to distribute Economic Recovery Grants to small businesses and non-profits in the region. GPCOG is administering this federal CARES Act funding on behalf of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. This work will continue for the next eight weeks.

Josh showcased the benefit and challenge of administering this program. In the first round of grants, 735 were approved in Cumberland County representing \$35 million dollars in grant funding. GPCOG is now administering a second round. The wording of certain questions was challenging for non-native English speakers, so GPCOG staff took extra care to ensure all businesses had equal access to the funding.

### **Addressing COVID**

COVID-19 cases are climbing quickly as Maine enters the winter season. In this discussion, the Executive Committee discussed what GPCOG should do to augment its current efforts.

Currently, GPCOG staff continue to work remotely. GPCOG is also promoting and supporting a Winter Dine initiative. Westbrook has created a great promotional video; GPCOG and other partners, including Portland, Yarmouth and Falmouth, have requested DECD grant funding. South Portland is leading an effort to create a public service announcement that encourages people to take public health precautions and tells businesses that resources are available for grants and loans. The region's transit agencies are collaborating on an initiative to

tell customers about the safety precautions the agencies are taking to keep vehicles safe. Tony Plante is working with public works departments to develop mutual aid to share snowplow operators.

Nat asked if there are outdoor dining safety issues to be concerned about and mentioned the uptick in vandalism in Yarmouth. Matt noted that Cape Elizabeth has retained strict control over access to municipal buildings, and has increased intensity of mask wearing. Belinda asked if the GPCOG website is still being used for COVID resources. Kristina answered that GPCOG is not putting effort into the website's resources since so many others have information available.

### **Public Access to Information**

Sue asked if we are required to stream meetings on youtube, and Chris Hall replied that there are no requirements to use any specific platform. By using Zoom, and posting meeting links, public access rules are being followed.

### **Project Development Fund**

Maine should be prepared to put economic stimulus money to work with 'shovel ready' and 'shovel worthy' projects. With the change in federal administration, more infrastructure funding may be available. GPCOG has proposed to MaineDOT and the Governor's Office of Innovation and the Future that the state establish a fund to design and engineer projects so they qualify for stimulus investments.

In terms of making this fund a reality, Belinda suggested we prioritize regional projects, coordinate among partners, and mobilize cities and towns to advocate. The timeline for another stimulus bill would not be until January when the new Congress convenes.

Nat asked if PACTS already had projects queued up that are shovel ready. GPCOG's Transportation Engineer, Elizabeth Roberts is compiling a list of PACTS projects that are ready, or could become ready with an investment in engineering and design.

### **FY20 Dues Use**

From FY20 dues, \$50,000 is available to allocate. Belinda suggested to keep the funds in a 'rainy day' account. Matt and Sue agreed. Nat offered that the rainy day funds could be drawn on if there were a regional issue that needed action, such as public health, housing, and shelter issues.

Matt moved to allocate the \$50,000 for an emergency rainy day fund. Sue seconded. The roll was called and all were in favor.

### **Adjourn**

There is no December meeting, and the next will occur on January 13<sup>th</sup>. At 1:28 p.m., Matt moved to adjourn and Belinda seconded. All were in favor.

## Attachment B

# Executive Director's Report

### Strategic Priority – Serve our Members

- **Profile Piece on GPCOG's Value to Members.** The Portland Press Herald published an excellent piece about our collective work: [Regional council evolves to help communities meet bigger challenges.](#) It quoted three of the region's managers: Matt Sturgis, Nathan Poore, and John Hawley. This article was followed by an editorial in the Portland Press Herald and Kennebec Journal: [Greater Portland Council of Governments shows how communities can work together.](#)
- **COVID Coordination.** The region's city and town managers continue monthly discussions on responding to the public health and economic challenges posed by the pandemic. Most recently, Tony is working with public works directors to develop mutual aid agreements for sharing plow drivers, to allow for continued snow plowing if drivers become ill.
- **Sustainability Technical Assistance.** Under the leadership of Sara Mills-Knapp, GPCOG's Sustainability Manager, GPCOG has launched a new service for municipalities designed to help cities and towns cost-effectively launch sustainability projects and develop climate plans.
- **Regional Voice.** GPCOG has proposed the state establish a Project Development Fund in order to help move shovel-worthy projects to shovel-ready. GPCOG shared a proposal with MaineDOT for "recovery zones" that would align multiple state investments to support villages and centers.
- **Upcoming events:**
  - **1/27 8 a.m.: Coffee with COG – Transit Innovation for Post-Pandemic.** We'll host the general manager of Louisville, KY transit and the director of the national think-tank, Transit Center.
  - **2/25 5:30 p.m.: Chairs in a Circle,** a leadership training for Mayors, Chairs and Vice Chairs with Craig Freshley, focused on budget priorities in tough fiscal times.
  - **Third week of March: Transit Tomorrow Release.** The final long-range public transportation plan will be released at a close-out event.

## Strategic Priority – Lead the Region Toward Sustainable Prosperity

- CARES Allocations for Transit.** On 1/5/21, PACTS approved \$11.1M in funding for regional transit. The majority of the funds will flow to the region’s seven transit providers to offset revenue losses and enhance actions to protect the riding public from COVID-19. About \$1M will invest in transit innovations, piggybacking on first and second round projects. Some of these projects are being managed by GPCOG, and are highlighted in yellow below:

REVENUES: PACTS CARES Act Funding		\$ 53,022,637			
BUDGETED EXPENSES		CARES Ph. I	CARES Ph. II	CARES Ph. III	CARES Ph. IV-VI
		Feb-Jun 2020	Jul-Dec 2020	Jan-Jun 2021	Jul 2021-Dec 2022
<b>Priority One: Maintain Regional Transit Service</b>					
Fill Transit Losses					
Fund Net Loss for Public Transit Agencies					
	Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit	\$ 618,674	\$ 236,458	\$ 275,080	
	Casco Bay Lines	\$ 2,683,915	\$ 1,921,168	\$ 2,562,291	
	METRO	\$ 3,861,373	\$ -	\$ 848,647	
	Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority	\$ 5,086,103	\$ 2,140,075	\$ 3,161,126	
	Regional Transportation Program	\$ 181,682	\$ 333,000	\$ 240,000	
	South Portland Bus Service	\$ 753,455	\$ -	\$ 55,499	
	York County Community Action Corporation	\$ 432,404	\$ 138,485	\$ 187,677	
	Relief Funds for Concord Coach		\$ 1,633,418	\$ 1,770,234	
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 13,617,606</b>	<b>\$ 6,402,604</b>	<b>\$ 9,100,554</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Priority Two: Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency</b>					
	Program CARES Funds	\$ 40,000			
	Post-Pandemic Planning	\$ 60,000			
	Virtual Engagement	\$ 25,000			
	COVID Best Practices Implementation			\$ 15,000	
	Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit		\$ 120,002	\$ 32,475	
	Casco Bay Lines		\$ -	\$ 171,000	
	METRO		\$ -	\$ 419,000	
	Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority		\$ -	\$ -	
	Regional Transportation Program		\$ -	\$ 38,980	
	South Portland Bus Service		\$ -	\$ 91,528	
	York County Community Action Corporation			\$ 12,171	
	Health and Safety Investments for Volunteer Driver Programs		\$ 7,000		
	Public Education and Customer Communications (18 month cost)		\$ 200,000	\$ 140,000	
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 125,000</b>	<b>\$ 327,002</b>	<b>\$ 920,154</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>Priority Three: Transit System Innovation</b>					
	Transit Together, including addition of microtransit feasibility study		\$ 380,000	\$ 120,000	
	Improve Access and Safety for Older Adults, People with Disabilities, People of Color		\$ 60,000	\$ 75,000	
	South Portland Shopper Links			\$ 23,000	
Rapid Transit Corridors					
	Feasibility Study			\$ 25,000	\$ 800,000
	Portland Transit Signal Priority			\$ 32,500	
	South Portland Transit Signal Priority			\$ 151,000	
Universal Mobility App					
	Automatic Passenger Counters			\$ 660,000	
	Autonomous Vehicle Pilot Project			\$ -	\$ 500,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 440,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,086,500</b>	<b>\$ 1,300,000</b>
<b>Priority Four: Municipal Budget Assistance</b>					
	Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit		\$ 52,500		
	METRO		\$ 423,688		
	South Portland Bus System		\$ 77,297		
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 553,485</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGETED EXPENSES</b>		<b>\$ 13,742,606</b>	<b>\$ 7,723,091</b>	<b>\$ 11,107,208</b>	<b>\$ 1,300,000</b>
<b>BALANCE OF AVAILABLE CARES FUNDS</b>		<b>\$ 39,280,031</b>	<b>\$ 31,556,940</b>	<b>\$ 20,449,732</b>	<b>\$ 19,149,732</b>

- **PACTS Committee Restructuring.** The changes approved by PACTS in October will go into effect in late January when the existing Policy Committee appoints a new Policy Board. Applications for certain Board seats are open to the region’s residents who can offer environmental, active transportation, and equity perspectives: [PACTS Committee Member Application \(google.com\)](#)
- **Prioritizing Transportation Funds.** PACTS has almost finished developing a new “funding framework”, which is a scoring process to award federal funds to transportation projects. The draft framework is intended to be more objective, transparent, and easier to understand than the existing process. Several transit providers objected to the framework. In December, the agencies and PACTS representatives met and reached conceptual agreement. Three of the seven transit providers subsequently objected to the write-up of that agreement.
- **WinterDine.** In partnership with the cities of Westbrook and Portland, as well as the regional Chamber and Visit Portland, GPCOG launched WinterDine, an effort to support our region’s restaurants and cafes through the winter. Here’s the website: [www.MaineWinterDine.com](http://www.MaineWinterDine.com). Here’s the Public Service Announcement that will begin running: <https://vimeo.com/494136344>. And here’s the Channel 8 story on the effort, featuring Westbrook’s Economic Development Director, Dan Stevenson: <https://youtu.be/sLQh5YC9rhI>
- **Partnership with Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center.** Through GPCOG’s work to administer Maine’s Economic Recovery Grants, we forged a new partnership with the Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center to provide technical assistance to immigrant-owned and led businesses and non-profits.

## Strategic Priority – Operate with Excellence

- **Staffing updates.** We’ve recently hired Vincent Edwards as our new Administrative Assistant, to provide much-needed support to Josh Kochis, Finance Director. We’ve posted for two new positions: [Senior Transit Planner](#) to support the CARES-funded transit projects and [Senior Planner](#), to enhance the team’s municipal planning expertise.
- **Public education and media coverage.**
  - Jan. 6. MaineBiz on the recent allocation of CARES funds to the region’s transit network: [Southern Maine Transit Gets \\$11M in Federal Stimulus Funds](#)
  - Dec. 28. The Bridgton News: [Comprehensive plan long overdue](#)
  - Dec. 18. Scarborough Leader: [Transportation options discussed in Scarborough](#)

- Nov. 17. Portland Press Herald: [Resilience Corps to help local governments through pandemic](#)
- Nov. 9. Channel 13: [Award winning plan helps shape future of the Maine Mall](#)
- Nov 9. Portland Press Herald: [A plan to transform the Maine Mall just won an award, but can it be done?](#)
- Oct. 27. The Forecaster: [New study to look at passenger ferry between Portland, South Portland](#)
- Oct. 12. Portland Press Herald: [South Portland study to consider ferry service to Portland](#)
- **Grants & Contracts development.** Below is an inventory of the grants received for FY21 and pending grants that have been submitted since the start of FY21.

<b>FY21 Grants and Contracts Development</b>		
July 2020 through June 2021		
<b>Approved</b>	<b>Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>U.S. Economic Development Administration:</b> To help fund pandemic recovery and resiliency work in the GPCOG region through expanding the loan programs, growing the new Greater Portland Resilience Exchange, and helping communities expand broadband	GPCOG	\$ 400,000
<b>Cumberland County Community Development Block Grant Program:</b> To fund a regional Covid-19 relief loan program.	Center for Regional Prosperity	\$ 300,000
<b>City of South Portland MicroLoan Program:</b> To facilitate the city's microloan programs	GPCOG	\$ 60,000
<b>Town of Yarmouth MicroLoan Program:</b> To facilitate the town's microloan program	GPCOG	\$ 100,000
<b>CARES Act Transit Planning:</b> To fund assessment to improve the efficiency of the transit network and to lead a regional communications campaign to recover transit ridership.	GPCOG	\$ 640,000
<b>Corporation for National Service (AmeriCorps):</b> To launch the Resilience Corps	GPCOG	\$ 217,000
<b>Brownfields RLF Supplemental FY21-FY23:</b> To provide loans and limited subgrants for cleanup of areas designated as brownfields.	GPCOG	\$ 200,000
<b>Maine Technology Institute:</b> To launch the Digital Infrastructure Frontiers Series with Maine Broadband Coalition	GPCOG	\$ 20,000
<b>Department of Transportation- Rural TA:</b> To provide transportation technical assistance to municipalities outside the PACTS region.	GPCOG	\$ 84,500
<b>Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry- General:</b> To provide land use planning technical assistance to inland municipalities.	GPCOG	\$ 15,130
<b>Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry- Coastal:</b> To provide land use planning technical assistance to coastal communities and to fulfill the tasks outlined in the Coastal Work Plan.	GPCOG	\$ 33,157
<b>US Department of Energy Clean Cities:</b> To support Maine Clean Communities program.	GPCOG	\$ 90,000
<b>Submitted</b>	<b>Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Brownfields Assessment:</b> To assess contamination on two sites, one in Westbrook and one in South Portland.	GPCOG	\$ 300,000
<b>National Endowment of the Arts Our Town Program:</b> To support a second round of "Creative Shelters" installations celebrating diversity through original art on bus shelters in Greater Portland.	Creative Portland	\$ 100,000
<b>Combined proposal to 4 funding sources (Connect Maine, Maine Community Foundation, Island Institute, Northern Forest Center) :</b> To launch a statewide data collection initiative to assess broadband speeds	GPCOG	\$ 52,000
<b>Mosaic Movement Infrastructure:</b> To fund "Mainers Advocating for Racial and Environmental Equity".	Center for Regional Prosperity	\$ 152,500

## Attachment C

### Key Transportation Elements in New Federal Laws

Staff Analysis  
Date: 1/06/21

#### **Transportation elements included in the \$900 Billion COVID-19 Relief Package**

- Overall, the bill provides \$45 billion to the transportation sector.
- Approximately \$9.8 billion is allocated to state departments of transportation (DOT); Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) funds are available until Sept. 30, 2024.
  - Beyond STBGP eligibilities, funds are also available for preventive maintenance, routine maintenance, operations, personnel, including salaries of employee (including those employees who have been placed on administrative leave) or contractors, debt service payments, availability payments, and coverage for other revenue losses.
  - Approximately, 14% of these highway funds are sub-allocated only to localities over 200,000 in population. State funds can also be transferred to public tolling and ferry agencies.
- Provides \$15 billion in transit aid primarily destined for local governments with about \$13.3 billion for urbanized areas and \$1 billion for rural areas, a program run by state DOTs.
- Provides \$2 billion for airports, most of which is directed towards large commercial airports.
- Provides \$15 billion for airlines to support payrolls, \$1 billion to Amtrak, with \$655 million for the Northeast Corridor and \$344 million for the national network, and \$2 billion split between the motorcoach, school bus and ferry industries.

#### **Transportation elements included in the \$1.4 Trillion government funding package:**

- Provides \$86.7 billion for DOT—\$553 million above FY 2020.
- Provides \$49.1 billion for the Federal Highway Administration, \$166 million below 2020 levels, most of which (\$46.4 billion) is sub-allocated to states and local governments as part of the

federal-aid highway program and is consistent with the one-year extension of the FAST Act at FY 2020 funding levels. \$2 billion is set aside for discretionary Highway Infrastructure Programs, \$166 million below FY 2020.

- Includes \$13 billion for the Federal Transit Administration, \$47 million above FY 2020 levels.
  - \$2 billion is appropriated Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program, \$36 million above FY 2020 levels.
  - Restores the 80% federal share for CIG grants, which the administration had lowered to 51%.
  - \$516 million for Transit Infrastructure Grants programs, which received a \$6 million increase.
- Includes \$2.8 billion for the Federal Railroad Administration, \$27 million above FY 2020 levels; \$375 million is for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program, which is \$50 million above FY 2020 levels. The Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair is to receive flat funding of \$200 million.
- Funds Amtrak at \$2 billion, separate from the aid included in the COVID-19 Stimulus package. Of that funding, \$700 million is for Northeast Corridor Grants and \$1.3 billion is for National Network Grants.
- Includes \$1 Billion for the National Infrastructure Investments discretionary grant program, as well as cost-share waivers for grants in rural and areas with high levels of poverty.
- Contains a five-year reauthorization of the DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, which lapsed in 2019.