

GPCOG Executive Committee

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

In-Person:

Greater Portland Council of Governments

970 Baxter Boulevard, Room 201

Portland, Maine

(Lunch provided)

Remote:

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86844969864>

Phone: 1 301 715 8592

Webinar ID: 868 4496 9864

*Participating by phone? Use *9 to raise your hand and *6 to unmute.*

As of April 26, 2022 GPCOG and PACTS are holding committee meetings in hybrid format, both in person at GPCOG's offices and via webinar. The remote portions of all meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of GPCOG Executive Committee policy, LD 1772, PL 2022 Ch. 666, and 1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1.

1. Welcome

This meeting is being recorded and will be made available at gpcog.org/AgendaCenter.

2. Public Comment

Members of the public are welcome to provide up to three minutes of public comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.

3. Approval of the 2/28/23 Meeting Minutes (Attachment A)

4. Spotlight: Climate Action Plans

10 minutes

Sara Mills-Knapp, Director of Sustainability, will describe efforts underway in the region to develop municipal and regional climate action plans.

5. Climate and Resiliency Round Robin 20 minutes

Staff Report

Each Executive Committee member is invited to share their city's or town's approach to building climate resilience and reducing emissions. GPCOG's Sustainability Team will be there to serve as a resource on upcoming opportunities and for questions.

Recommended Action

For discussion only.

6. Advocacy for Regionalism 10 minutes

Staff Report

Chris Hall, Director of Regional Initiatives, will discuss the current legislative session, key pending bills, and opportunities for members. He will discuss GPCOG's work to advance regionalism in Augusta, including [this recent presentation](#) GPCOG did for the Joint Select Committee on Housing with eight other regional councils.

Additionally, Chris will discuss [this request](#) from the Maine Transit Association (MTA) asking GPCOG to advocate in support of MTA's request for additional funding for transit operators' operating and maintenance expenses. The need for more operating and maintenance funding is detailed in [this letter](#) from MTA to the legislature's Transportation Committee.

Recommended Action

Decide how to respond to MTA's request for advocacy support.

7. Proposed Scope for Strategic Plan Update (Attachment B) 10 minutes

Staff Report

At the February 28th Executive Committee meeting, members offered input on how to scope the strategic planning process to update GPCOG's current 5-year [Strategic Plan](#). The group said that GPCOG should focus on its traditional role of planning, regionalization, and member services, while noting that GPCOG should continue work on climate and social equity and racial inclusion.

At today's meeting, Executive Committee members will consider a proposed scope of work for updating the strategic plan.

Recommended Action

Review, modify as needed, and adopt a scope of work for developing GPCOG's next 5-year strategic plan.

8. Executive Session: Executive Director's Annual Performance Evaluation 30 minutes

Pursuant to [1 MRS §405\(6\)\(A\)](#), the Executive Committee will enter executive session to conduct the annual performance review of GPCOG's Executive Director.

9. Other Business

Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings	
April 25, 2023	Appoint Nomination Committee for Officers and Executive Committee FY24 Annual Budget – First Draft Executive Director’s Performance Goals
May 16, 2023	FY24 Annual Budget – Final Recommendation to General Assembly Nomination for FY24 Officers and Executive Committee Adopt Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy FY24 Meeting Calendar Affirm Investment Policy
May 25, 2023	General Assembly and Summit at St. Joseph’s College in Standish

Board and committee members, the public, and other stakeholders are encouraged to subscribe to the GPCOG Executive Committee calendar at gpcog.org/Calendar.

If you require accommodations to review materials or participate in this meeting (such as captioning or interpreting—at no cost to you), please contact: (207) 774-9891 or transportation@gpcog.org

Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will help us to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

Attachment A

GPCOG Executive Committee

MINUTES February 28, 2023

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
John Hawley	Naples
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Krista Chappell	Gray
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Mark Dion	Portland

Welcome

Due to a winter storm, the meeting was remote. Jarrod opened the meeting on Zoom.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Acceptance of 1/17/23 Minutes

John moved approval of the January 17 meeting minutes. Nat seconded. Nat noted that the year date on the draft minutes is 2003 and should be changed to 2023. A roll call to accept the minutes as amended was conducted. All were in favor.

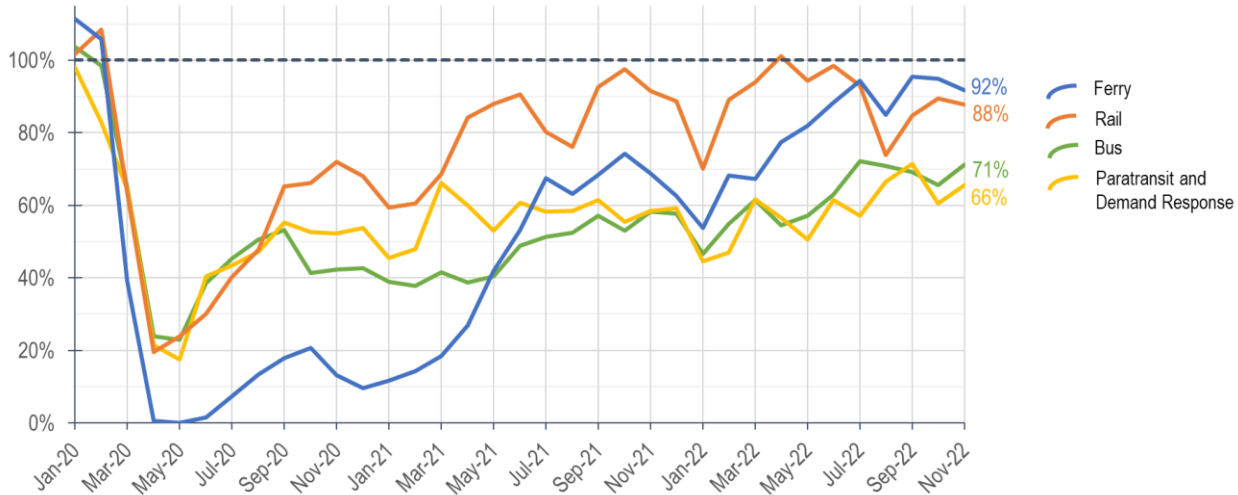
Spotlight: Ridership Recovery

Andrew Clark, GPCOG's Transit Program Manager, described pre-pandemic transit system ridership, post-pandemic ridership recovery for the region and by mode, and steps the region is taking to help rebuild ridership.

Referring to the slide deck found [here](#), Andrew discussed how ridership plummeted in March 2020. CARES federal relief funds enabled agencies to restore service levels to about 80% of pre-pandemic levels, but today ridership continues to lag behind service levels, particularly for our bus agencies. Systemwide, bus ridership ranges between 60% and 80% of pre-pandemic levels. The ferry rebounded quickly, with summer numbers exceeding baseline numbers. The rail has been slower to recover, but is looking good now. For our bus services,

there is a need for targeted investments to increase ridership, serving new people and markets. Nat thanked Andrew for a helpful summary of a tremendous amount of work.

Staff caught an error in the slide deck and provide correct ridership recovery levels as part of these minutes. See graph below:



Executive Director’s Report

John Hawley said that the recent convening of Naples, Bridgton, Casco, and Cumberland County leaders was an impactful meeting. The towns share similar issues and are on a path to having GPCOG help. The group asked GPCOG to reconvene them in the fall. Josh reported that GPCOG has raised more funding that was anticipated in the FY23 budget. Emily Ham, GPCOG’s new Community Engagement Manager introduced herself to the group.

Regional Strategy to Expand Housing Choices

Kristina recapped last month’s feedback on the draft housing strategy, noting that the group wanted a more bottom-up approach through a clearinghouse and focused more on meeting the needs of individual cities and towns. The group emphasized that municipalities can’t stop growth; we can only shape it.

Kate said the strategy is good and asked whether GPCOG has the resources to implement it. Kristina said, no – the strategy will require GPCOG to raise resources. Krista appreciated the emphasis on guiding housing to good locations, which will help combat sprawl. Nat said that the revamp of the strategy was very responsive to last month’s feedback.

He noted that ensuring long-term affordability is a challenge, and municipalities don’t have the capacity to manage covenants and other tracking of units or tenants. He suggested GPCOG explore whether there is a regional mechanism to help municipalities address this issue. Kate agreed with Nat and noted that South Portland is experiencing an explosion of short-term rentals. She said it is critical to ensure new housing is serving those who need it, not second home owners. Information from other regions could be helpful, and it would also be good to know what’s happening locally in Maine and is working (or not working). Mark built on Nat’s point and suggested cooperative housing is a good model to control costs and build equity for people. Kristina said

that staff would look to address this issue of best practices, models and tools that can ensure affordability over time.

The group reaffirmed that we need more analysis and data from a trusted, third party group, like GPCOG. Examples of needed data include: average income of people moving into new housing; impact of new housing on taxes; and models that will help control costs.

Jarrod said that LD2003 is flawed in that it's just encouraging more volume of housing places that already have housing. More rural communities can benefit from housing growth. He emphasized that we have to work together as a region because Portland and South Portland cannot solve the housing shortage on their own. More housing should go to the northern part of the state. Kate expressed concern that developers will be making too much profit.

Nat moved endorsement of the proposal as presented. Krista seconded. A roll call was conducted and all were in favor.

Revolving Loan Committee Appointment

Nat moved to appoint Demetria Pellegrino to GPCOG's Revolving Loan Committee. John seconded. A roll call was conducted and all were in favor.

Scoping the Strategic Plan

The group provided guidance on how to focus the scoping effort for the next strategic plan. Themes include:

- Focus even more on our traditional role of planning, working to link transportation and land-use to make a big impact in this area
- Obligation to work on climate and sustainability
- Help the region collectively commit to social equity and racial inclusion, understanding this is part of our regional identity
- Pursue more collective action and regional solutions. While GPCOG may not implement all the solutions, facilitate municipalities learning from each other and lifting one another up. Examples include EMS/ fire service, back-office HR support, sharing staff during this workforce shortage. Do more convenings of towns that can work on issues together.
- Municipalities are struggling with daily operations due to staff constraints. GPCOG can be the expanded capacity that municipalities need to get the work done.

Other Business

Jarrod said that he would be emailing a survey to collect input on Kristina's annual performance in preparation for her annual review.

Nat moved adjournment, and the group agreed. The meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

Attachment B

GPCOG 2030 Strategic Planning Process *Draft Scope of Work – 3/14/23*

Project Purpose

As GPCOG approaches the completion of its current [Strategic Plan](#) in FY24, much has been accomplished, but much has changed.

The pandemic upended a period of growth and stability, forcing cities and towns to quickly address challenges and encouraging them to position themselves for large amounts of federal funds. Housing unaffordability has grown from a concern to a crisis. The climate crisis continues to build. Economic uncertainty persists, structural racism has come into sharper focus, and newly arriving people present long term opportunities for our vitality, but short-term challenges to meet their needs.

The agency will develop its next 5-year strategic plan based on what staff, members, partners, and the state need and want from GPCOG. This strategic planning process will

- (1) clarify GPCOG’s role in this rapidly changing world,
- (2) set goals for what GPCOG should achieve by 2030, and
- (3) position and structure GPCOG, and our region, to achieve these goals.

Scope of Work

Task 1. Assess the Agency

This task will assess GPCOG’s impact since the adoption of the 2017 Strategic Plan and evaluate the agency’s current capabilities and deficits. Each activity will be informed by input from members, stakeholders and staff through focus groups, interviews, and workshops. Activities include:

- A. Understand Impact. Senior staff will compare what the 2017 Strategic Plan anticipated GPCOG would accomplish to what GPCOG has done in the last six years. This assessment will include an examination of GPCOG’s evolving role, particularly as the agency was called on by members to respond to disruption. GPCOG’s issue-based teams (member services, transportation, planning, sustainability, economic development) will prepare short assessments of each program area.
- B. Understand Capacity. GPCOG senior staff will produce an analysis of the agency’s current capacities and capabilities, including an overview of the agency’s existing commitments and its capacity to take on additional tasks.

- C. Understand Capability. This activity will analyze GPCOG’s strengths and weaknesses.
- D. Define expectations. GPCOG’s community engagement team will gather input from members, partners, and other stakeholders to assess the organization’s alignment with stakeholder expectations. Focus groups will be held with different groups of stakeholders including: municipal elected officials and senior staff; state and federal partners; regional organizations; community-based organizations, Community Transportation Leaders; and staff.¹

Deliverable: A summary report will describe GPCOG’s impact to date, its current capacity and capability, and its alignment with member and stakeholder expectations.

Task 2. Scan the Horizon

The senior management team, with consultant assistance if needed, will identify key trends in the region that require attention, and will propose best practices to respond to emerging trends, including successful practices of regional councils around the nation.

- A. Understand Trends and Disruption. This activity will review futurist literature to identify what trends will likely continue and what disruptions, stresses and shocks our region should anticipate.
- B. Identify Promising Approaches. This activity will review websites and strategic plans of high-performing regional councils and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, with follow-up interviews with councils’ senior staff and staff of the National Association of Regional Councils and Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The purpose is to learn what strategies, programs and investments are working to advance regionalism, racial and economic equity, improve transportation and housing choice, preserve natural resources, develop a strong economy, reduce emissions, and improve resiliency.

Deliverable: A summary report on external trends and on best practices from regional councils.

Task 3. Make Choices

Using the input on stakeholder expectations of GPCOG, and the organization’s performance, capacity and capability from Task 1, and using information about what’s on the horizon for the future from Task 2, the Executive Committee and staff will workshop together to identify what GPCOG should stop doing, start doing, and continue doing. We will also identify work that could be handed off to other entities.

Deliverable: Write up of results of “stop, start, continue” exercise.

¹ To avoid overtaxing stakeholders with multiple outreach efforts, we plan use the focus groups as an opportunity to gather input on the role GPCOG should play in the future and on the priorities for GPCOG’s work. This data will inform upcoming tasks in this scope of work.

Task 4. Set Goals

This task will define the goals and outcomes GPCOG should achieve by 2030. Input will be used from the previous three tasks to develop these goals.

- A. Refine vision, mission and values. The Executive Committee and senior staff will review GPCOG's current vision, mission, and values and refine them, as needed. Particular input will be sought from GPCOG's internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group which has been developing GPCOG's values.
- B. Define strategic priorities. The Executive Committee will prioritize GPCOG's work, and define 3 – 5 priorities for the agency. These priorities will inform the agency's goals for 2030.
- C. Develop SMART goals. GPCOG's 2030 goals should use the SMART model, being Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timebound.

Deliverable: Vision, mission, values, priorities, and achievable goals for 2030.

Task 5. Identify Strategies and Resources

Strategies will be developed to achieve the 2030 goals.

An element of this task is for senior staff to make any recommendations necessary to set the agency up to achieve the goals. Staff will assess whether any restructuring is needed of the organization. Staff will also evaluate the costs and revenue needs associated with GPCOG's operations, organizational changes, and any new initiatives that emerge from the goal setting process. This task will occur at this point in the process so that cost containment, revenue generation, and funding strategies can be included in the final strategic plan.

Deliverable: Strategies, including funding and organizational structure strategies

Task 6. Explain and Name

GPCOG is hard to understand, and sometimes can overwhelm with its scope of work. In this task, GPCOG's communications team will develop a clear narrative describing what GPCOG is and does.

As part of this work, the Executive Committee will consider whether to change GPCOG's name. GPCOG has been called "GPCOG" for half a century, and that history is important. However, there are some alienating aspects to the agency's name. The Executive Committee will consider whether these drawbacks warrant exploring a possible name change. If it's decided that GPCOG should consider changing its name, that work will be done through a separate scope of work.

Deliverables: a) Short narrative describing GPCOG and b) decision on whether GPCOG should pursue an organizational name change

Task 7. Final Plan

This task will generate a final strategic plan to be adopted by the Executive Committee.

Deliverable: Five year strategic plan

Staffing and Funding

As scoped, staff believe we can do the majority of plan development in-house. There may be a need for limited support from a consultant for research on best practices.

Estimated total budget: \$35,500

- Staff time: \$31,500²
- Consultant: \$ 3,500
- Meeting costs: \$ 500

Timeline

This work would be done in FY24, starting in July with gathering stakeholder input and research for Tasks 1 and 2, and presenting the first draft of the plan in April of 2024. The stars indicate key Executive Committee decision points.

		July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Task 1	Assess the Agency											
Task 2	Scan the Horizon											
Task 3	Make Choices				★							
Task 4	Set Goals						★					
Task 5	Identify Strategies & Resources									★		
Task 6	Explain and Name										★	
Task 7	Final Plan										★	★

² Assumes each staff member has 3 hours; each issue area director has 20 hours; and Kristina, Chris H, Tom, Emmy and Rick do the bulk of the engagement, analysis, and writing.