



Metro Regional Coalition Agenda

September 14, 2021
Noon to 1:30 pm
Via ZOOM Conferencing

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85676857436>

Webinar ID: 856 7685 7436, or call 646.558.8656

Note: As of March 31st, 2020, PACTS and GPCOG will be 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](#).

Participants are reminded that this meeting will be recorded and posted on the GPCOG website.

1. Welcome and introductions (5 minutes)

Chair Amy Kuhn will call the meeting to order and ask attendees to briefly introduce themselves.

2. Acceptance of minutes from the May 11, 2021 meeting (Attachment A)

3. Public Comment (3 minutes per person)

Residents of the region are invited to share up to 3 minutes of comment on any topic, including items on the agenda.

4. Presentation and Input on Connect 2045 (20 minutes)

Staff report: GPCOG Senior Planner Rick Harbison and Director of Community Engagement Zoe Miller will brief members on [Connect 2045](#), GPCOG's regional long-range transportation plan which launched earlier this summer. They will also engage Coalition members in an interactive activity to help inform the plan's vision and goals.

Action: Information and opportunity to provide input into regional long-range transportation planning.

5. Housing Update (15 minutes)

Staff report: GPCOG Senior Planner Vanessa Farr will share a brief update on the work of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions ([Commission website](#)). She will also preview work she is doing later this fall to track progress on housing choice growth in the region.

Action: Information and policy input opportunity.

6. MRC Priorities for 2021-2022 (Attachment B) (30 minutes)

Staff report: Members will discuss their review of last year's MRC priorities (please see Attachment B below) and consider keeping, amending, removing, or adding priorities for the coming year. Member discussions will be converted into a draft MRC Work Plan by staff for final adoption at the October 12th MRC meeting.

Action: Set MRC priorities.

7. Other Updates (10 minutes)

Staff report: As time allows

8. Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings

All meetings from Noon to 1:30 pm on Zoom

October 12, 2021
November 9, 2021
December 14, 2021
January 11, 2022
February 8, 2022
March 8, 2022
April 12, 2022
May 10, 2022
June 14, 2022

Attachment A



DRAFT

Metro Regional Coalition Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2021

Noon to 1:30 pm

Via ZOOM Conferencing

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Amy Kuhn, Chair	Falmouth
Nathan Poore	Falmouth
Scott Morelli	South Portland
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Kate Snyder	Portland
Michael Foley	Westbrook
Travis Kennedy	Cumberland County
Guest:	Auburn Mayor Jason Levesque
For GPCOG:	Kristina Egan, Chris Hall, Vanessa Farr, Julia Dubovsky

1. Welcome and introductions

Amy Kuhn called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes

Matt Sturgis moved acceptance of the minutes from the April 13, 2021 MRC meeting, seconded by Michael Foley. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3. Public Comment

George Reault offered comments on housing and land use.

4. Presentation and Housing Discussion with Auburn Mayor Jason Levesque

Guest presenter Jason Levesque has served as Mayor of Auburn since 2017. In his January 2021 [State of the City](#) speech, as a part of his growth agenda, he called for the creation of 2,000 new affordable market rate homes in Auburn.

Given the many similar housing issues facing Auburn and Metro Regional Coalition communities, Mayor Levesque was invited to share Auburn's experiences, lessons learned, and insights. The Mayor's PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes.

The Mayor framed his remarks with a review of Auburn's situation before he took office, noting the need for greater growth and vitality.

He described a process that included development of a strategic plan, creation of a new brand for Auburn, and the identification of obstacles to growth. Using data and substantial public engagement, the city produced a 2020 report detailing the path forward.

The plan recognized that Auburn already possessed many advantages, but critically lacked population. The plan responded with a focus on market rate housing growth, streamlined municipal regulations, municipal staff reorganization and restructuring, and dedicated communications efforts to educate residents, understand their concerns with a growth agenda, and respond to those concerns effectively.

The plan also included incentives for market rate housing development, including \$1 million dollars in grants to developers, free or reduced cost city land, and other incentives including a veteran's incentive.

The Mayor discussed how the plan has accelerated discussion of zoning changes in the city, advancing form based code approaches that offered greater flexibility for development, and proposing to simplify Auburn's zones by reducing the number of different zones from 32 to 8. He identified other zoning changes that have either been implemented or are in the process of adoption, including elimination of secondary dwelling unit restrictions, and elimination of parking requirement in parts of the city.

To further advance land use reforms in Auburn the City is currently engaged in an intensive 4 month Comprehensive Plan review focused on housing, transportation, and recreation. The review combines an emphasis on equity with expanded public engagement, and the Mayor hopes that the city Council will approve the next set of comprehensive plan changes before the end of this year.

In sum, the Mayor's goal of 2000 new market rate housing units is already happening, with 100 units built and another 150 units in the pipeline for construction. Using a careful analysis of existing municipal capacities, Auburn has determined its current services can accommodate growth up to 30,000 residents (a gain of more than 6,000).

As a result, the Mayor also hopes that 2000 new market rate homes will produce additional revenues that can also lower property taxes by as much as 20 percent over time.

During Q&A, and in conclusion, the Mayor stressed that land use policies have restricted the supply of housing in Auburn, limiting growth, and reduced equity and opportunity in his community. His efforts are focused on educating Auburn residents about the benefits of growth and addressing market rate development opportunities (he indicated the city is not addressing subsidized housing at this point), and ‘building for people, not cars.’

By doing so he hopes to support equitable expansion of prosperity in his community, and open the doors to future growth in Auburn.

Attachment – Mayor Levesque’s PowerPoint



GPCOG
Presentation.pdf

5. Broadband Update

Andrew Butcher, GPCOG’s Director of Innovation and Resilience, is leading GPCOG efforts on broadband expansion. Andrew’s work includes staffing for the statewide Maine Broadband Coalition, and close collaboration with the legislature’s bipartisan Broadband caucus and the Mills Administration’s implementation of new broadband investments.

Andrew, along with Travis Kennedy from Cumberland County, updated members on the rapidly evolving local, regional, state, and federal opportunities to expand connectivity. Andrew highlighted a number of programs and opportunities, including:

Funding

- Federal
 - Funding is coming from various federal agencies including NTIA, USDA, EDA, FCC
 - Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
 - Eligible households can enroll through an approved provider or by visiting <https://getemergencybroadband.org>.
 - For more information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, please visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>
- State:
 - Connect Maine Community Planning Grants. [Open now through May 27th](#)
 - Infrastructure / expansion grants likely to include another open round this summer
 - Use of 2020 Bond funds
 - Maine Connectivity Authority - \$150M: Pending legislative approval and organizational development
- Local

- Federal U.S. Treasury Interim rules on the American Rescue Plan Act shared on 5.10: [All the info](#).
 - [Broadband info pg. 69-77](#).
 - Lots of flexibility on a local level. Encouragement for regional collaboration, municipal network,
- Maine Community Foundation - ideal for community planning processes. [Open again in summer '21](#)

Policy

- [LD 1484](#): The Maine Connectivity Authority. More robust State Authority to own and finance middle mile assets
- [LD 1432](#): The Municipal Gigabit Fund: Restructure existing fund to incentivize ultra-high speed and municipally owned networks.
- [LD 1219](#): Setting up a third party administrator to track, maintain and facilitate the one-touch make ready pole attachment process.
- Connect Maine designation of 100/100mbs for broadband standards Written comments must be submitted by emailing Connect.ME@maine.gov with the subject Public Comment

Sample Language to include: " ____ (town/municipality) supports the Connect Maine designation of 100/100 mbs as a way of enabling a more robust, reliable, and future oriented standard for the State's connectivity needs."

Speed testing

- Generate real time insights to help inform community planning and funding development. [Take, share, and reshare the speed test.](#)

Digital Frontiers

- Learn about Municipally Owned Networks on Thursday May 13th and May 20th. [Register here.](#)

Main Broadband Coalition

- Policy, Programming, Partnerships.
 - Bi-weekly Legislative Caucus sessions: See them [here](#):
 - Regional Dialogues to prepare for ARPA opportunities at a regional scale.
 - Get more involved. www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org

Capacity via GPCOG

- Lakes Area RFP for technical assistance building from ongoing education and engagement

- Resilience Corps: Current Fellows supporting Broadband in Harrison, Naples, Standish, Sebago
 - Interested in hosting a fellow starting in November 2021? Contact Julia Breul at j.breul@gpcog.org

6. Adjourn

At 1: 31 pm Amy Kuhn adjourned the meeting by unanimous roll call.

Attachment B

Metro Regional Coalition 2020 - 2021 WORKPLAN

COVID-19

Goals:

- To meet the needs of member communities for response and recovery
- To obtain state and federal aid for local governments
- To provide a network for sharing ideas and support

FY21 Deliverables:

- Increase federal aid to state and local government to support response and recovery
- Align with state initiatives and resource opportunities

Actions:

- 1) Continue to advocate with Mainer Congressional delegation.
- 2) Continue to advocate with state lawmakers and the Governor.
- 3) Work with the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee to align state and regional investment priorities and programs.
- 4) Continue to share experiences and insights for mutual support.

Homelessness

Goals:

- To house more of the homeless in the Greater Portland area
- To more equitably distribute the responsibility of caring for the homeless across municipalities

FY21 Deliverables:

- Increase the number of supportive housing developments outside of Portland
- Explore and define a means of municipal or county financial contribution to support homes services in Portland
- Develop a coordinated regional plan for responding to acute and chronic homelessness events through partnership with the Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency.

Actions:

- 1) Develop a MOU or emergency response agreement for homelessness through CCEMA inventory and planning development.
- 2) Advocate for additional state resources and supportive policy in Augusta, particularly regarding the new Homeless Services Center in Portland
- 3) Meet with elected County and local officials to find agreement on a funding mechanism for regional financial support of Portland homeless services.

Integrating MRC work with State Economic Recovery Plans and Transportation Priorities

Goals:

- To better coordinate local land use, transportation, economic, and resilience strategies with state and regional efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic's economic and social impacts
- To connect MRC efforts with the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee's recommendations and state implementation efforts.

FY21 Deliverables:

- MRC will become a regional implementing partner with the Mills Administration's statewide economic recovery efforts.
- MRC members will become active participants in implementing PACTS' Transit Tomorrow plan.
- MRC members will engage in the development of PACTS' Long Range Transportation Plan.
- MRC members will engage with the development and implementation of 'recovery zones' which will focus investments in transportation, broadband, housing, and economic development in corridors that promote compact, diverse growth and preserve/expand open space.

Actions:

- 1) Continue to meet with state economic development officials to define specific local and regional implementation opportunities;
- 2) Expand Transportation planning engagement opportunities to ensure 'corridor' participation as growth and recovery opportunities are identified; and
- 3) Facilitate public engagement designed to educate and support new approaches to development, and re-shape public resistance to changing land use patterns.
- 4) Work in collaboration with the GPCOG-led Resilience Recovery Roundtable as it defines and implements 'recovery zones' throughout the region.

Expanding Housing Choices

Goal:

- To expand housing choices and increase the supply of workforce housing in MRC communities for low- and middle-income households in the region by 10% by 2025.

FY21 Deliverables:

- MRC members and the public are regularly educated on the need for expanded housing choices in our region.
- Continued implementation of the existing joint commitment of MRC communities to diversify housing options.
- Ensure that housing, economic development and public transportation decisions are more closely integrated, and made in a regional context when possible

Actions:

1. Publish a 2021 report on expanded housing choices based on the individual progress reports of MRC member communities,
2. Work with individual MRC members to implement their municipal resolutions on expanded housing choices
3. Work with partners in the region, including the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce and the United Way of Greater Portland, to expand public acceptance of well-planned housing and transportation growth.

Racial Equity (conditioned on acquisition of additional resources)

Goals:

- To educate communities about the reality of racial inequality in our region
- To understand how greater racial equity can be achieved in our region
- To create opportunities for local governments to take action to increase racial equity.

FY21 Deliverables:

- Secure funding for a local assistance program to assist individual municipalities in addressing racial inequality.
- Continue webinars on aspects of racial inequality in our region.
- Offer local governments and regional partner organizations opportunities to participate in pilot efforts to improve racial equity in their organization and community.

Actions:

1. Raise funds needed to do racial equity work.
2. Provide a pilot program to one or more MRC municipalities, modeled on GPCOG's opioid prevention work, that supports local education and action to reduce racial inequity.
3. Continue webinar series as needed and practicable.

MRC's Effectiveness

Goals:

- To increase the consistent participation in MRC activities by all seven communities
- To increase the consistent participation in MRC activities by the chief elected official, chief administrative official, and other Councilors

FY21 Deliverables:

- High level officials from all communities engaged

Actions:

- 1) Focus meetings on decision-making