

GPCOG Executive Committee AGENDA

September 21, 2021

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82855747276?pwd=ZUJMOUITTDhiTlpXcDFIbElvemdOZz09>

Or join by phone by calling: 1-646-558-8656

Note: At the direction of the GPCOG Executive Committee, all committee meetings are being held via [Zoom conferencing technology](#) due to the continuing pandemic. We remain committed to full public participation in our meetings through remote access during the COVID-19 crisis. Remote meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of [LD 32, 2021 Public Law 290](#) and [1 MRSA Chapter 13, Subchapter 1](#).

1. Welcome

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

2. Acceptance of 7/22/21 and 8/24/21 Minutes (Attachments A & B)

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. Executive Director's Report (5 min.)

5. Spotlight: What's your transportation question? (15 min.)

PACTS is launching an update to the region's long-range plan. The project engagement team will join us to get your input on what you want to know about the future of transportation.

6. Maximizing the Impact and Value of Federal Funds (45 min.)

Staff Report:

One of GPCOG's FY22 priorities, as adopted by the Executive Committee this past spring, is to help the region make the most of the tremendous volume of federal resources flowing to Maine. Significant opportunity exists for broadband, transportation, and climate investments, all of which could positively impact economic opportunity and equity in our region. Congress passed two funding packages: the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This fall, Congress is advancing additional legislation, in the form of an infrastructure bill and a budget proposal, to significantly boost funding for infrastructure, climate solutions, and more.

We will:

- review the outcomes of the 9/16/21 meeting of municipal and county leaders to explore opportunities to work together on ARPA
- provide background on GPCOG's existing role in supporting the Maine Broadband Coalition and a regional effort with member municipalities in the Lakes Region and other communities in Oxford County to plan for and catalyze broadband infrastructure investments, which will inform future decisions about the role we want to play in the coming years
- discuss other opportunities to align and pool resources
- discuss how our region might ready itself for new federal transportation funds

Recommended Action:

For discussion.

7. FY22 Workplan (Attachment C) (15 minutes)

Staff Report:

The FY22 workplan provides a full picture of GPCOG's portfolio, for committee members who want to dive into some detail. Committee members are invited to provide comment, pose questions, and suggest improvements to the draft plan before it's finalized.

Recommended Action:

Provide input into the FY22 workplan.

Adjourn

Upcoming Meetings

All meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month at noon. Upcoming meetings are noted below with potential agenda items:

October 19	Annual Retreat Strategic Planning Goals and Process
November 16	2022 Advocacy Priorities
January 18	
February 15	
March 15	FY23 Priorities Executive Director Annual Review
April 19	FY23 Budget – First Draft
May 17	FY23 Budget – Final Recommendation to General Assembly FY23 Officers and Executive Committee Nominations Adoption of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update FY23 Meeting Calendar Affirm Investment Policy
May XX	General Assembly and Summit

Attachment A

**GPCOG Executive Committee
Emergency Meeting
MINUTES
August 24, 2021**

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Mary Fernandes	Casco
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Mark Dion	Portland
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Jarrod Maxfield	Windham
Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Chris Hall	GPCOG Staff

Limited Emergency Declaration

Mark moved approval of the limited emergency declaration. Sue seconded.

Matt asked when the emergency declaration would end. The group discussed, and Matt proposed an amendment to the declaration stating that staff and GPCOG officers will consult together to decide to end the declaration and provide one week’s notice to committees. Mark seconded.

Nat proposed an amendment to strike the reference to the origin of the Delta variant and to change a reference to the City of Portland to the Greater Portland region. Matt seconded.

The group agreed to consolidate the original motion and two amendments for one vote. There was no objection. The roll was called, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 AM.

Attachment B

GPCOG Executive Committee

MINUTES July 22, 2021

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Carmen Lone	Bridgton
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Mark Dion	Portland
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Chris Hall	GPCOG Staff

Welcome

Jarrold Maxfield, Vice-President, opened the meeting, which was held via Zoom. Jerre Bryant served as chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Acceptance of 5/12/21 Minutes

The 5/12/21 meeting minutes were accepted.

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Remote Participation Policy

Chris Hall provided the staff report. The public hearing was opened. No public comment was made.

The public hearing was closed.

Nat moved approval of the proposed Remote Participation policy. Matt seconded.

Nat asked if the public will have the option to attend virtually, even if all committee members are able to be present in-person. Kristina said that all GPCOG meetings will be virtually accessible. She added that since going remote, there has been an increase in public participation. GPCOG is obtaining Owl Cameras for the conference center to ensure that people who virtually attend GPCOG committee meeting can view and hear in-person participants. The “Owl” has a camera that swivels 360 degrees so all members that are in-person can be seen and heard by virtual attendees.

Matt suggested that the first sentence of the second paragraph of the policy be emboldened to ensure members know that remote participation is the exception and not the rule. Kristina stated that GPCOG will be sending committee members template language that states what is allowed under the statute for remote attendance to Executive Committee meetings.

Jerre called for a roll call vote on the proposed Remote Participation policy. All members were in favor.

Kristina asked the Executive Committee for its opinion on GPCOG requiring masks for in-person meetings in the conference room. With some of the bigger meetings that can have up to 30 people in attendance, GPCOG staff is concerned about transmission of the Delta COVID variant. Jerre asked for clarification on whether this policy is for a specific meeting or all meetings. Kristina said for all meetings. Jerre asked how GPCOG will handle a refusal to comply with the mask mandate. Kristina said a policy hadn't yet been developed.

Kate asked if everyone will have a microphone in the conference room for Executive Committee meetings. She is concerned that if everyone has masks on, individuals with hearing impediments will not be able to understand what is being said. GPCOG has ceiling microphones installed in the conference room, so not everyone will have an individual microphone. There is a microphone that can be passed, however. GPCOG staff tested the equipment in a staff meeting and found that it mostly worked, but improvements to audio quality are needed.

Kate suggested having disposable masks in the conference room in case individuals forget to bring their masks. Staff will ensure these are provided. She also asked if we could potentially move to another space for the larger meetings that have more space and/or better ventilation. Kristina and Kate agreed that this should be researched but using other space could be costly.

With the unfortunate arrival of the Delta variant in Maine, the committee supported requiring masks in the conference center for meetings.

Approval of Contract with Catalyst Collaboratives

GPCOG has contracted with Catalyst Collaboratives (Kate O'Brien), which has a subcontract with Dustin Ward's company to provide GPCOG staff with racial equity training. In June, Dustin won an historic campaign to the New Gloucester Board of Selectmen. The bylaws state that if GPCOG is going to pay for the services of an individual who happens to be an official representative or officer, they must have the

approval of the Executive committee.

Nat moved to approve the contract with Catalyst Collaboratives. Justin seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

ARPA Priorities

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will distribute funds to municipalities, county government, and the state. There is an opportunity to align and aggregate the funds to address regional challenges, such as broadband. Homelessness and affordable housing are additional regional challenges that could be addressed through collaboration between municipalities. Cities and towns currently are working hard to figure out how to program ARPA funds. GPCOG may want to convene the Mayors, Councilors, Selectboard Members and municipal managers to talk through what municipalities might want to do together.

Tony added that he has been engaged with different groups regarding ARPA, including the managers he meets bi-weekly. While there are some immediate needs that communities are addressing, there is a desire to be deliberate about how the funding is used. Municipalities recognize that this is a generational opportunity. Individual communities might not be in the position to address these larger issues by themselves. Smaller towns might not have the ability to spend the ARPA funds due to the specific nature of the funding. These towns are now looking toward other municipalities, regions, and state to multiply the impact of their funding. Tony believes that this is a moment where GPCOG can figure out how they can help and what role they can play.

ARPA funds that have come to local government can be layered with ARPA funds distributed on a state level. Chris has identified about 20 areas where there are additional funds that could be put together with local and county efforts. There is opportunity for overlap. The state budget is one of the largest in history. The state might also see infrastructure funding in the future from Washington.

Nat said GPCOG should move forward in engaging municipalities or subsets of municipalities in conversations on how to maximize the impact of these federal funds. He believes this is at the core of what GPCOG does. These conversations will help figure out how best to use these funds that have the biggest impact regionally over the long-term. Nat suggested that GPCOG might offer itself as the contract agency, like Cable TV Franchise negotiations.

Kristina highlighted the opportunity for broadband. Like the Cable TV Franchise, GPCOG is bringing in a consultant to provide a strategy on how to put these funds to use in the Lakes Region communities. Kristina believes additional planning is needed to enable municipalities, the region and the state to effectively invest these funds.

Nat mentioned that Cumberland County was focusing on potentially building a public health infrastructure system, which he supports.

Carmen agrees with a regional approach to solving issues. However, she believes that it should be noted that solutions might differ depending on the type of municipality (urban/rural). Carmen also stated that when discussing Broadband, accessibility should also be considered. She mentions that in rural areas,



accessibility to internet will not be solved by broadband. To ensure equity, accessibility should be included in Broadband conversations.

The group was in agreement that GPCOG should convene the region's community leaders to explore how to collaborate in using federal ARPA and other funds to address regional challenges and opportunities.

Nat moved adjournment; Matt seconded. The meeting ended at 9:35 AM.

Attachment C

FY22 GPCOG Workplan

DRAFT for Executive Committee Review

Background

GPCOG's 5-year Strategic Plan was adopted in May of 2017, laying out a path to strengthen cities and towns by providing responsive member services, lead the region toward sustainable prosperity, and operate with excellence. FY18 and FY19 marked the first two years of the plan's implementation. FY20 and FY21 continued the work of the previous two years by further refining internal systems and strengthening programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic, its ensuing economic fallout, and the civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd pushed GPCOG to evolve and grow in unanticipated ways. Perhaps most notably, in 2021, GPCOG emerged as an effective investment vehicle which allocated or distributed over \$100M in pandemic relief funds while effectively organizing our region's leaders to jointly advocate for supportive state policy and federal investments.

This document starts with a high-level discussion of what we accomplished in FY18 and FY19, how our priorities for FY20 and FY21 shifted and how we responded, and then lays out our plans for FY22, the last year of the strategic plan.

If there's one take-away from the last two years, it's "expect the unexpected." While GPCOG works to consistently advance shared and sustainable prosperity through initiatives, we've learned that one of GPCOG's greatest contributions to our members and our region is the ability to turn on a dime, quickly set the table for collaborative decisions, and help us respond in a coordinated way. We aim to be forward-looking and intentional in addressing the existing and emerging needs and challenges for our region, but have learned to build space into the annual workplan to ensure GPCOG can play that critical responsive role as the world changes.

Accomplishments and Priorities

In FY18, GPCOG focused on putting in place building blocks essential to *operate with excellence*. We:

1. Built a stronger staff team, bringing on a new Finance Manager and Transportation Director, and creating a leadership team.
2. Fixed the agency's financial management challenges, including creating a healthy cash flow.
3. Integrated with PACTS, entering an agreement with PACTS to immediately integrate staff and to move the two organizations toward a full merger.

4. Led a process to boost PACTS' effectiveness, which resulted in PACTS reforms recommendations adopted by PACTS members.
5. Established two important new internal systems - performance management for staff and grants and contracts development.

While management spent a lot of time inwardly-focused, the agency also *served our members*. Our cooperative purchasing program generated savings. We provided planning and data services, and won a statewide award for a neighborhood plan for South Portland. The biggest FY18 accomplishments in *leading the region toward prosperity* were completing the first phase of the regional transit plan, *Moving Southern Maine Forward*, and revamping the gpcog.org website.

In FY19, GPCOG began refocusing from inward-facing challenges to providing more outward-focused value. The agency received its first increment of the new dues increase and intensified its focus on delivering value to members. In FY19, we:

1. Further strengthened staff capacity with a new Director of Municipal Collaboration to serve members and a new Public Information Officer to communicate to the region. We also created a high-functioning leadership team.
2. Delivered new member services to strengthen the 25 cities and towns in GPCOG, including launching Regional Voice advocacy, providing sub-regions with assistance on technical challenges, such as stormwater permitting, providing technical assistance for transit-oriented development, and offering a leadership training for local elected officials.
3. Made substantial progress on implementing the new PACTS reforms, including launching an effort to create a short-list of priority investments for the region and providing shared recommendations on the Turnpike widening.
4. Catalyzed new capital investments in the region through PACTS support of \$6M in ferry funding and \$2M for electric buses and attracting \$800,000 in new brownfields funding and \$275,000 in small business loan funds.
5. Launched *Transit Tomorrow* and the implementation phase of the short-term transit improvements with active participation from all of the region's seven transit agencies. We also published the *Southern Maine Mobility Guide* to inform residents of transportation options.
6. Began providing timely, topical, and regular information to the region by creating data-rich community profiles, regularly publishing e-newsletters, and launching a social media presence.
7. Implemented internal systems to operate with excellence, including regular financial reporting to governing boards, an agency-wide workplan, and a system for tracking and managing our work.

In FY20, GPCOG received its second increment of new dues funding, which enabled the agency to respond to two major crises. The first was the summer of 2019 arrival of asylum seekers. We worked as

a region to find temporary housing through a new Host Homes program, as well as to find permanent housing.

The second crisis came in the spring of 2020 with the outbreak of COVID-19. This brought significant new challenges to our region, Maine and the nation, requiring all of us to focus on preventing the spread of the virus and adapting to remote ways of working together. The economic recession, resulting from the pandemic, posed an existential threat to many of our region's businesses and hurt the health and economic welfare of many of our residents. The pandemic and recession further deepened the region's pre-existing inequities, and catalyzed by the murder of George Floyd, the region was called to address long-standing institutional and structural racism.

In this most extraordinary time, GPCOG identified actions to achieve meaningful economic, resiliency, and equity outcomes. While much of GPCOG's portfolio is determined by existing grants and contracts, we flexed member dues and other resources to support this urgent work.

GPCOG quickly pivoted to helping members adapt to the pandemic, leading the region in getting up-and-running virtually, as well as making excellent use of the advocacy foundation laid in the previous year to communicate our municipalities' needs to the Governor and our Congressional delegation. In addition, GPCOG:

1. Added new issue expertise to our staff capacity with a new Director of Innovation and Resilience and a Sustainability Program Manager.
2. Augmented member services by introducing "Coffee with COG" events, identifying \$165,000 owed by Spectrum to nine of our members, and offering more leadership trainings for elected officials.
3. Helped facilitate an agreement amongst three transit agencies to introduce unified fare payment and fare capping.
4. Allocated about \$20M in federal CARES recovery funds for public transportation to regional transit priorities.
5. Published an award-winning transit-oriented plan for the South Portland Mall.
6. Merged with PACTS.
7. Led and won a statewide bond issue for \$15M for broadband.
8. Crafted climate mitigation and resiliency recommendations for the Maine Climate Council.
9. Created a cohort of 23 Community Transportation Leaders to advise on regional transportation decisions that affect the lives of people who depend on public transit.
10. Grew GPCOG's impact by growing its budget by 34%.

In FY21, GPCOG's overriding focus remained on helping the region recover from the pandemic. The year saw a rapid expansion of GPCOG's capacity, almost doubling its staff capacity through a new Resilience Corps and increasing its operating budget by 10%. The team also deepened its expertise in

racial equity, and organized webinars to help the region deepen its understanding of structural racism, reaching 1000 people. Other highlights include:

1. Supported small businesses through \$67M in Maine Economic Recovery Grants, \$228K in block grants, \$187K in microloans, reaching a total of 1,515 businesses and non-profits in our region. With Westbrook, GPCOG launched a marketing program, WinterDine, to help restaurants survive the pandemic, and this program was expanded statewide by the Maine Office of Tourism.
2. Deployed a Resilience Corps of 14 young professionals to support broadband expansion and equity, climate action planning and coastal resilience, sustainability, transportation and transit access planning, affordable housing access and planning, municipal comprehensive planning, cultural and civic inclusion, economic development, and digital accessibility and communications. These efforts directly benefitted Bridgton, Casco, Harrison, Long Island, Naples, Portland, Sebago, Standish, Yarmouth and Cumberland County, and indirectly benefitted every community in the region through placements with Maine DEP, the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, Creative Portland, Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center, Black Owned Maine, Portland Downtown and Casco Bay Lines.
3. Adopted a more objective, transparent, and multi-modal framework for prioritizing regional transportation investments.
4. Continued allocating the region's \$53M in transit recovery funds, filling revenue gaps and launching initiatives to rebuild ridership, including a marketing campaign, a feasibility study of rapid transit, and Transit Together, an effort to align the region's 7 services to improve customer experience.
5. Published Transit Tomorrow, a 30-year investment plan for public transportation.
6. Worked with municipalities, transit agencies, and partner organizations to compile a list of 98 shovel-ready/shovel-worthy projects for potential stimulus funding and/or discretionary grant opportunities. The projects, totaling \$489 million, span various sectors, including transportation, waste management, power & energy, marine infrastructure, parks & recreation, and housing & social services.
7. Shaped the form and function of a new state agency, the Maine Connectivity Authority, which will allocate funding to expand high speed internet access across the state.

In FY22, GPCOG's main focus will be to help the region make the most of the tremendous volume of federal resources flowing to Maine. Significant opportunity exists for broadband, transportation, and climate investments, all of which could positively impact economic opportunity and equity in our region. Congress passed two funding packages: the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). As of this writing, Congress is advancing additional legislation

to significantly boost funding for infrastructure, climate solutions, and more. After a period of rapid and unexpected growth in FY21, GPCOG also needs to increase its internal focus on ‘plumbing and wiring,’ which is proving inadequate to keep pace with GPCOG’s external work and sustain our recently-expanded capacity over the longer term.

GPCOG’s top annual priorities are to:

1. Maximize regional impact of federal resources for transportation, housing, broadband, and sustainability.
2. Encourage and support transit agency coordination to improve customer service through *Transit Together*.
3. Expand housing choices in priority places by working with members.
4. Be resource and partner to members and the state on climate-friendly transportation, broadband, and racial equity.

In this last year of our 5-year strategic plan, we will review our progress and produce a two-year update to serve the agency in FY23 and FY24.

Detailed FY22 Workplan

This next section is organized under three major strategies of the Strategic Plan. Workplan items described in each section will support our work to emerge from the pandemic as a more resilient and equitable region.

Activities that are **grayed out** are ones that are completed, removed, postponed or incorporated in other activities.

Strategy 1: Strengthen Cities and Towns by Providing Responsive Services

Critical priorities are to:

- Provide responsive services to city and town leaders through regular peer convenings (1.1.6.1) with a focus on aligning and pooling federal funds to maximize regional impact, advocating for municipal, regional and state needs (2.3), and deploying the Resilience Corps (2.5.8)
- Support Metro Region Coalition members in meeting the regional housing goals in its joint commitment to expand housing choices and. (1.1.2.7)
- Finalize a plan for the Saco/Biddeford Mill District, which will be our signature TOD plan for this year. (1.1.2.5)
- Provide technical assistance on sustainability and high speed internet to municipalities (1.1.8.3)

Below is a full list of all priorities (x.x) and projects (x.x.x), also illustrated by year on the accompanying matrix. Specific project outcomes are shown on a separate matrix and not listed here.

1.1 Flexibly Serve Members

- 1.1.1 Responsive Member Services** –We will continue to respond to requests from members, with short turn-arounds and high quality data and analysis. In FY22, our focus will be on convening municipalities to explore collaboration to maximize federal resources and on convening Lakes Region towns to strengthen broadband service. Through the Resilience Corps (2.5.8), GPCOG will provide added capacity to host communities to advance municipal projects and to host organizations to advance regional priorities. Regional work on cable franchise will extend through the first half of the fiscal year.
- 1.1.2 Transportation Project Management** – PACTS-funded projects are actively managed by staff to ensure projects progress on schedule. For FY22, these projects include, but are not limited to: Regional Traffic Management Systems (RTMS), High Crash Locations, Connect 2045, the long-range transportation plan, the Transit-Oriented Development plans for the Saco/Biddeford Mill District and South Portland’s waterfront, the Scarborough Downs transit study, a regional Complete Streets Policy, as well as multiple transit projects funded through CARES, including the Transit Together marketing campaign, the Transit Together network study, rapid transit feasibility study, and deployment of automatic passenger counters.
- 1.1.3 Metro Regional Coalition** – We will continue to staff this effective coalition to implement its FY22 work program. Expanding housing choice (1.1.3.8) continues to be a priority, particularly after the pandemic intensified the housing crisis. GPCOG will release phase 2 of Jeff Levine’s work on municipal barriers to housing production. One FY22 communications priority is to help municipal officials and community leaders better understand the causes of the housing shortage and the remedies.
- 1.1.4 Municipal Planning** – Our goal is to have a reputation for high quality work in convening, project managing, and delivering planning services. At the outset of FY22, three proposals for comprehensive planning services, either whole or in part, are in the pipeline.
- 1.1.5 Data Services** – This task is no longer a stand-alone task.

- 1.1.6 Regional Coordination** – The goal of this work is to find shared approaches and solutions to common challenges experienced by our members. A continuing activity is regular peer roundtables for: (a) municipal managers, (b) public works directors, (c) planners, and (d) sustainability professionals. Other activities are described in 1.1.1. This is a responsive service, and we will continue to look for opportunities to help subgroups of municipalities organize themselves to take action.
- 1.1.7 Lakes Region Coalition** – We assessed member interest in building a Lakes Region Coalition, and concluded there is no need for creating it. No further action needed.
- 1.1.8 Sustainability Technical Assistance** – In FY21, we launched climate action planning as a member service, and will finish inaugural projects with Falmouth, Windham and Bridgton in FY22.
- 1.1.9 Ongoing Member Relationships** – Our goal is to know our members, deliver value, and generate demand for our services. We will meet with newly elected or re-elected officials after June and November elections, continue our many regular convenings, and hold “Coffees with COG” to create a stronger peer network.

1.2 Facilitate Regionalization

- 1.2.1 Shared Solutions** – In FY22, we will explore, in collaboration with Cumberland County, the Maine Alliance for Health and Prosperity and others the need for and potential for rebuilding the public health infrastructure in our region.

1.3 Cooperatively Purchase

- 1.3.1 Cooperative Services** – As a legacy program our goal is to continue to deliver value to members and participating communities, looking for new products and services, and resourcing the program through vendor fees and outside funding, using no member dues dollars.

1.4 Attract Grants

- 1.4.1 Municipal Grant Writing** – This is not an FY21 activity, and will likely morph into an FY22 activity, “Region Project Development” of preparing shovel-ready projects that advance the region’s priorities, rather than delivering grant-writing services to members.

1.5 Build a Strong Peer Network

1.5.1 Events & Gatherings – We hold events and trainings to create a peer network amongst our members, connect members with the private and social service sectors, and develop civic leadership. All FY22 events will be produced through the lens of regional opportunity.

- **Annual Summit:** Celebrating the Region!
- Annual **“Welcome & Congrats!”** reception for newly elected and re-elected officials
- **Coffees with COG** – FY22 programming to include cybersecurity, public private partnership solutions, and other topics TBD as requested by members.
- **Leadership trainings** for Chairs and Vice Chairs, Councilors, Selectmen – We will offer one of our regular trainings in FY22.
- Broadband **Digital Frontiers** and capacity building webinars.
- In FY23, GPCOG will hold a **“State of the Region”** community event focused on the Economy, Equity and Environment. Planning for this event will start in FY22.

1.5.2 Regional Champions – This is not an FY21 activity.

Strategy 2: Lead the Region toward Sustainable Prosperity

Critical priorities are to:

- Help the region organize itself to maximize federal recovery funds and additional federal resources. GPCOG’s focus is on transportation, high speed internet, and climate investment opportunities. We’ll promote the region’s shovel-ready, shovel-worthy priority transportation investments (2.1.2.3-4), support multi-municipal collaborations to ensure the region is competitive for broadband investments, and work closely with the state to expand EV charging infrastructure.
- As the pandemic wanes, we will reduce focus on supporting small businesses with grants and loans, but maintain racial equity effort on supporting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-led businesses and non-profits.
- Deploy our ‘second wave’ of Resilience Corps (2.5.8) young professionals to support vibrant places and regional priorities (2.5.9).
- Rebuild transit ridership through implementing Transit Tomorrow’s recommendations, including the Transit Together marketing campaign, the Transit Together effort to improve services, advancing rapid transit and microtransit, deploying automatic passenger counters, improving bus stops, and enhancing mobility management.
- Adopt a regional complete streets policy (2.1.4) and launch Connect 2045, the update to the region’s long-range plan.

Below is a full list of all priorities (x.x) and projects (x.x.x), also illustrated by year on the accompanying matrix.

2.1 Develop a Regional Vision and Plan

2.1.1 Regional Transit Plan – *Transit Tomorrow* was adopted in FY21.

2.1.2 Regional Transportation Priorities – Building off the FY21 ‘call for projects’ and successful selection of a short list of projects to submit for federal earmarks, GPCOG will continue working with members to line up shovel-ready projects for state and federal investment and leverage and/or apply for state and federal funding. This initiative will advance transformative regional projects that have been featured in prior plans and studies. Connect 2045 will include an updated, prioritized list of transportation projects.

2.1.3 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – The region’s next five-year plan will be published in summer of 2023. We’ll prepare to launch the research, public engagement and policy development in summer of 2022. One FY22

communications priority is to help municipal officials and community leaders better understand the economic development challenges and opportunities in our region’s quest for shared and sustainable prosperity.

2.1.4 Active Transportation Plan – This was completed in FY19. The projects identified in the plan were included in the “universe of projects” developed during through the FY19 PACTS Priorities process. FY22’s key outcome is a regional complete streets policy. Other implementation work will be integrated into the 23-24 Unified Planning Work Program.

2.1.5 Regional Transit Plan Phase 1 Implementation – Moved to section 2.2.

2.1.6 Regional Sustainability Strategy – The newly-formed Sustainability Team is tasked with developing a sustainability strategy to guide the agency’s sustainability priorities and activities.

2.1.7 State of the Region – Our first State of the Region was completed in FY20, but never published due to the pandemic’s immediate impact on the economy. With the pandemic putting large events on hold, our plan is to hold a large symposium event in the fall of 2022 focusing on economy, equity and environment. Planning for this will be done in FY22, with the event to be held in FY23.

2.1.8 Omitted as a duplicate of 2.1.5

2.1.9 Transit Tomorrow – Incorporated into 2.1.1.

2.1.10 Regional Transportation Plan - In spring of 2021, we launched the update of the region’s long range transportation plan, *Connect 2045*. The transportation and land-use plan, while visionary in nature, will reflect all modes of regional transportation, be fiscally-constrained and include focus on equity/environmental justice, performance measurement, congestion mitigation and climate resiliency and mitigation. The plan will guide PACTS’ priorities and will align with the TIP. The plan will be completed by December 2022.

2.2 Implement Transportation Investments

2.2.1 Long Range Transportation Plan Implementation – This is an ongoing activity to implement Destination 2040. For FY21, the critical priority is to complete a funding framework for transportation investments (see 2.2.8 below).

2.2.2 Transportation Improvement Program – With the funding framework adopted in spring of 2021, PACTS will select its capital projects, including the 2023

“complex projects” and the CY22 collector paving projects. TIP Policies and Procedures will likely be updated in FY22 to reflect adjustments to the region’s funding policies, particularly with respect to “complex projects.” The TIP, itself, will also be updated in coordination with MaineDOT.

- 2.2.3 Mobility Management** – GPCOG will continue to build mobility management networks both in Southern Maine and statewide. The networks will facilitate better transportation access for underserved communities by advancing cross-sector coordination, informing policy change, and spurring innovation.
- 2.2.4 Inclusive Transportation** – In FY20, GPCOG launched its Community Transportation Leaders program and updated its civil rights plan. In FY21, PACTS added Community Transportation Leaders to its decision-making committees. In FY22, we will continue the program by welcoming a new cohort of Community Transportation Leaders.
- 2.2.5 Implement Transit Tomorrow** – In FY22, PACTS will advance the following Transit Tomorrow recommendations: make transit easier (Community Transportation Leaders and Transit Together), create frequent connections (Transit Together), improve rapid transit (Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study), and create transit friendly places (Transit Stop Access Project and Transit Oriented Development). To engage municipal officials and community leaders in the implementation of these recommendations, one FY22 communications priority is underscore the need for innovation as the transit system recovers from the pandemic and builds for the future.
- 2.2.6 Transit Together** – To improve the customer experience, employee satisfaction, and make good use of limited resources, we will develop a plan to improve the transit network and agency operations. The plan will be completed in FY23 and is expected to include a suite of recommendations that can be implemented within a year.
- 2.2.7 Transit Communications Campaign** – To rebuild the region’s ridership during and after the pandemic, we will encourage residents to “hop aboard”. This is an opportunity to coordinate and synthesize regional marketing and public engagement efforts related to public transportation and pilot a shared communications approach for the transit agencies. While the formal campaign will conclude in October 2021, we expect that the regional coordination efforts will continue well beyond this strategic marketing effort.
- 2.2.8 Funding Framework** – This was adopted in FY21.

2.2.9 Regional Transit Plan Phase 1 Implementation – In FY20, PACTS advanced electronic fare payment for three providers and adopted a regional fare policy. FY21 will focus on identifying better route connections between systems through Transit Together (2.2.6) and piloting coordinated communications through a public education campaign to rebuild ridership (2.2.7).

2.2.10 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – PACTS will develop the CY22-23 UPWP, identifying \$2.7 million in regional transportation planning initiatives.

Organize the Voice of the Region

2.2.11 Regional Voice – This activity is our agency-wide communications and advocacy work. Our top communications priorities for the region are to elevate the following messages:

- Our region faces a profound transportation funding deficit.
- Where we build, and where we don't build, matter deeply.
- Resilience and innovation will define our future – it's up to us to control how that happens.

Our FY22 advocacy priorities will build on last year's policy focus on economic recovery and this year's priority of maximizing the impact of federal funds for the region. In FY21, we successfully advocated for federal transportation earmarks and state policies that met member needs, including remote access to public meetings, a Commission to explore land use innovations to encourage greater housing choice, and broadband expansion policies that ensure our region's full participation and access to federal funding. FY22 advocacy priorities may include the below, and will be adopted in the fall:

- Supporting state investments to enhance capital infrastructure
- Maximizing regional access to and use of federal relief and stimulus funding
- Supporting land use policy changes that help municipalities expand housing affordability and housing choice
- Supporting funding for regional implementation of a state development fund for climate and economic recovery investments
- Supporting state investment in regional homeless shelters
- Increasing the flexibility of remote meeting rules

2.3 Develop and Communicate Data

- 2.3.1 Data Services (see above, under Strengthen Cities and Towns)** – This task is no longer a stand-alone task. Data development, analysis and communication underpins many of the FY21 workplan activities.

2.4 Catalyze Investments

- 2.4.1 Transportation Funding Allocations** – PACTS will program its annual highway and transit funds, which approximate \$25M. PACTS will also allocate the remainder of \$53M in federal CARES funds and \$8M in ARPA funds.
- 2.4.2 Food Manufacturing** – The ‘Scaling for Growth’ USDA grant concluded in FY21.
- 2.4.3 Small Business Loans** – In FY22, GPCOG will focus its traditional lending resources on small business to support job retention and creation, with a specific emphasis on underserved employers and employees. GPCOG will work with member municipalities to do the same.
- 2.4.4 Brownfields Grants and Loans** –We will continue to be responsive to redevelopment opportunities, while working toward a more intentional and proactive approach to where we invest. We will continue to develop and maintain an inventory of parcels ripe for redevelopment in priority centers and provide assessment and/or remediation resources, seeking to leverage other public and private investment. With the addition of supplemental RLF funding in FY21, our goal is to commit at least enough remediation funds to be eligible for further assessment, loan, and supplemental funding. We start the year with two prospects and one project in the works for loan and/or subaward funding
- 2.4.5 Maine Clean Communities** – Through this statewide program, GPCOG will continue to advance vehicle alternative fuel and electrification.
- 2.4.6 Broadband** - GPCOG will support the Maine Broadband Coalition as fiscal sponsor and through our broadband initiative. Additionally, GPCOG will support community based, multi-municipal broadband planning and development efforts to increase reliable and affordable high-speed internet in GPCOG’s region.
- 2.4.7 Resilience Exchange** –Seeking to match needs with resources, GPCOG will grow the Greater Portland Resilience Exchange as a platform to support businesses, non-profits and the public sector to partner. In 2022 GPCOG will continue to develop and expand the Exchange, using its existing networks to create

economic opportunity and serve regional workforce needs, all in partnership with local, regional and state partners.

- 2.4.8 Resilience Corps** – After a very successful pilot year, GPCOG will engage its second year of 14 AmeriCorps Members in our Resilience Corps program. Resilience Fellows are hosted by GPCOG, member communities and non-profits to support community engagement, research, data analysis and visualization, project implementation, volunteer management for a wide range of activities including: economic inclusion and development, broadband expansion, climate action planning, environmental resilience development, and increasing access to affordable housing and public transportation.

Strategy 3: Operate with Excellence

Critical priorities are to:

- Sustain our resources, with a focus on retaining the level of capacity we now have past FY22 (3.3.2). To do this, GPCOG will add a new senior position focused on developing strategic partnerships and grants.
- Enrich our team’s understanding of structural and institutional racism, and apply an anti-racist lens to all our program areas and operations (3.1.2)
- Upgrade and clarify internal systems to improve employee engagement and boost team efficiency.

Below is a full list of all priorities (x.x) and projects (x.x.x), also illustrated by year on the accompanying matrix.

3.1 Create a Learning Organization

- 3.1.1 Performance Management for Staff** – This is an ongoing activity to continually implement GPCOG’s performance management system in which individual performance expectations are linked to the agency’s work plan and the strategic plan. All staff are annually appraised and regularly coached.
- 3.1.2 Professional Development** – In FY21, we began expanding our agency’s understanding of structural racism and provided training in facilitation and conflict management. The agencywide professional development goals in FY22 are to continue internal work on racial equity, improve public communications and media skills, build supervisory skills, improve organizational and time management skills, and train staff on a new contacts

management platform. Each staff member also has an individual professional development plan.

- 3.1.3 **Strategic Plan** – GPCOG will complete a 2-year update to its strategic plan to guide the agency in FY23 and FY24.

3.2 *Build Strong Team*

- 3.2.1 **Recruitment** – In FY21, due to pandemic relief funds, GPCOG grew, adding a program manager for a 14-AmeriCorps Member Resilience Corps, a digital media specialist, a senior planner, a special projects coordinator, a transportation project manager and two associates. In FY22, we will add a Director of Strategic Partnerships who will focus on sustaining and growing resources for broadband, sustainability, racial equity, and housing work.
- 3.2.2 **Teams** - We will continue regular staff huddles and launch an internal newsletter. We will continue our team-based approach to operating, with continued leadership, transportation, events, workload management and grants/contracts teams. We will launch a new equity team to integrate racial equity into GPCOG’s operations and portfolios and build external work, as resources permit. GPCOG will transition from remote work to a hybrid workforce, which included FY21 technology upgrades for meeting spaces and an FY22 focus on reimagining the use of the office.
- 3.2.3 **Organizational Culture** –GPCOG will hold an all-staff workshop to define our values and culture, which will feed into the 2-year strategic plan update.
- 3.2.4 **COG-PACTS Merger** – This activity is complete.
- 3.2.5 **Human Resources Capacity** – In FY21, we expanded the Director of Municipal Collaboration’s job to include serving as the Chief Operating Officer. This position handles HR, with support from Cumberland County’s HR team. One FY22 focus will be on improving employee onboarding.
- 3.2.6 **Employee Engagement** - In FY21, GPCOG undertook an Employee Engagement survey and focus groups, resulting in an action plan to improve our ‘operate with excellence’ work. In FY22, we’ll implement the action plan (see 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, and 3.4), clarify decisionmaking and more broadly engage staff in key decisions, and issue a second survey to track progress against the FY21 baseline survey.

3.3 *Develop Organizational Systems*

- 3.3.1 Financial Management** – In FY21, we built out the remaining pieces of the agency-wide budget tool to enable project managers to build a ‘bottom-up budget’ and to allow the agency to adopt budget adjustments every 6 months. FY22’s focus will be to improve financial reporting so it is less complicated and more understandable for both staff and various committees. Ongoing tasks and goals are to obtain a clean audit and ensure healthy cash flow.
- 3.3.2 Grants and Contracts Development** – Due to federal COVID relief funds, in FY21 and FY22, the agency’s budget increases exceeded the annual target of growing the budget by 5%. With this expansion of resources, the focus on FY22 is for the grants and contracts team to sustain revenues for FY23 and FY24, particularly for broadband, sustainability, racial equity and housing. In FY22, we will add an intentional focus on exploring new or enhancing existing partnerships and initiatives that will strengthen members’ and the region’s capacity to innovate and to prosper in these rapidly changing times.
- 3.3.3 Organizing and Staffing Workload** – Our continued goal is to deliver on time and on budget projects through excellent project management. Ongoing tasks include implementing the Managing & Tracking System (Russian Nesting Dolls) developed in FY19 and adjusting workloads as projects emerge and staffing shifts. A FY22 focus is to explore software solutions to support project management. We will also implement the Employee Engagement recommendation that we budget more unallocated hours for staff to allow for new projects and we hire one additional staff person than the budget supports to smooth workloads when team members depart.
- 3.3.4 Contacts System** – In FY21, we purchased HubSpot as a Customer Relationship Management system to enable tailored communications and engagement with stakeholders. In FY22, this CRM will be fully implemented.
- 3.3.5 PACTS Committees Consolidation** – This activity is complete. PACTS decided to shrink the number of committees and increase representation of transit, equity, private sector and elected leaders. In FY21, the governing bodies adopted and implemented a proposal to consolidate committees.
- 3.3.6 File Storage** – In FY22, we will clean-up the shared drive, develop file storage protocols, and migrate file storage to the cloud.
- 3.3.7 Transportation Request for Proposals (RFP)** – in FY22, we will develop an RFP for “general transportation services”, creating an umbrella contract through which GPCOG can easily select top-scoring consulting firms across

various transportation specialties. This will eliminate the need for project/program-specific RFPs, streamlining the consultant selection process and reducing staff hours on procurement.

3.4 Educate and Communicate Clearly

3.4.1 PACTS Website - This activity is complete.

3.4.2 Social Media - Omitted as a standalone activity

3.4.3 Member Communications – We will continue the regular publication of “News from the Executive Director” and annual letters to elected officials and managers about services delivered. In FY22, we will update the member services brochure.

3.4.4 Hot Topics of the Year – FY22’s communications work will prioritize transportation and housing. As part of *Connect2045*, we will release a series of briefs on the region’s transportation challenges and opportunities (See 1.1.10). To support expansion of housing choices, we will explore the causes and remedies to the housing shortage (See 1.1.3).

3.5 Create Accountability

3.5.1 Agency Performance Metrics – This is not an FY22 activity.