

GPCOG Executive Committee

AGENDA

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Click below to join the meeting by Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83280526656?pwd=UVJ4T2xQbmJROFNibWFpNytNaHdXUT09>

Passcode: 376167

Or join by phone by calling: +13017158592

Webinar ID: 1 301 715 8592

Note: As of March 31st, 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 1/13/21 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. Executive Director’s Report (Attachments B & C) – 10 min.**
- 5. Spotlight: Transit Tomorrow – 10 min.**

This month’s project spotlight will be presented by Rick Harbison, Senior Planner.

6. FY22 Member Dues – 20 min.

Staff Report:

In normal years, dues provide \$520,000 in revenues to GPCOG. Dues provide local match for federal and state grants, typically leveraging about \$1.3M for the region. Dues also partially or wholly fund many of GPCOG’s member services, including small projects for individual communities, shared services (like cable franchise legal work, cooperative purchasing), and regional education and actions, like Chairs in a Circle, Coffees with COG, and Metro Regional Coalition. Over the past year, dues also made it possible for GPCOG to provide COVID-related support to municipalities, launch the Resilience Corps program, and address the racial justice issues that emerged after the death of George Floyd.

In FY21, due to the anticipated fiscal impact of the pandemic on the region’s cities and towns, GPCOG’s Executive Committee authorized a temporary 20% credit for members that pay the \$2/per capita dues rate. The credit was estimated based on an anticipated 20% revenue shortfall that municipalities would face in Maine. In FY21, the member dues revenue totaled \$416,000.

It's not yet clear what the average fiscal impact has been on municipalities over the last 10 months. At the bi-weekly managers’ meetings convened by GPCOG and the County, managers have expressed that the fiscal impact is less than anticipated. That said, the fiscal impact has been uneven amongst GPCOG members.

Portland, and other cities and towns that rely more heavily on tourism-related fees (parking, dockage, landing fees) have been impacted more than others. Communities also have been impacted in areas related to recreation, and recreation programs, including summer day camps, were sharply curtailed. Many municipalities have deferred spending in FY21, anticipating that FY22 might be worse. With vaccines being administered (and hopefully at an accelerating rate) and the prospect of additional stimulus (though still uncertain), the outlook for FY22 is not as dark as we thought it would be.

As GPCOG enters its FY22 budgeting process, the Executive Committee will decide whether to offer another member dues credit. Options include continuing the 20% credit, offering a smaller or larger credit, or keeping the member dues rate at its normal level. The below table shows the revenue impact on GPCOG of different options:

Dues Credit	FY22 Revenue	Revenue Impact
-25%	\$ 390,000	\$ (130,000)
-20%	\$ 416,000	\$ (104,000)
-10%	\$ 468,000	\$ (52,000)
0%	\$ 520,000	\$ -

Recommended Action: Decide whether to authorize a member dues credit for FY22, and if authorizing a credit, set the amount.

7. Multifamily Housing, Zoning and Transit - 20 min.

Staff Report:

Jeff Levine, former Planning Director for the City of Portland, produced the attached report for the Metro Regional Coalition studying how easy, or difficult, it is to build new multifamily housing in the seven communities composing the Coalition.

Levine began by looking at zoning, but also interviewed planning staff in all seven communities to get a more comprehensive understanding of the infrastructure limits, site location regulations, and other practical impediments to building multifamily housing in each community.

His work was mapped by GPCOG's Abe Dailey and shows where multifamily development is most likely to be built. Levine noted that the region has worked to expand housing choices, and he expressly made no judgment about the appropriateness of any level or restriction on multifamily housing.

Levine also examined how the region's existing and future transit corridors match up with the ability to build new multifamily housing.

After receiving his report, the MRC has considered how transit-oriented development (TOD) planning can be brought together with land use planning efforts to expand transit and housing choices in each MRC community, potentially with the assistance of PACTS.

GPCOG is commissioning a second report from Levine, enlarging the geography of the analysis to align with the Transit Tomorrow recommendations.

Recommended Action:

Discussion on expanding TOD planning and multifamily housing analysis to more GPCOG municipalities.

8. 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, as well as the timeline. Staff believe there would be a benefit to accelerating the strategic planning process to conclude late summer/ early fall due to the need to better evaluate opportunities and requests. An accelerated timeline would also inform our next Comprehensive Economic Development Plan, which will be adopted in spring 2022.

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 and timeline for completing the update.

9. Upcoming Meetings and Agenda Items - 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 Update
FY22 Meeting Calendar
Investment Policy |
| May 26: | General Assembly and Summit |

Attachment A

**GPCOG Executive Committee
MINUTES**

January 13, 2021

In Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Sue Witonis	Cumberland County
Matt Sturgis	Cape Elizabeth
Nat Tupper	Yarmouth
Jarrold Maxfield	Windham
Sandy Carder	Gray
Belinda Ray	Portland
Justin Poirier	Chebeague Island
Jerre Bryant	Westbrook
Kate Lewis	South Portland
Stephen Cole	Maine Dept. of Transportation
Tom Reinauer	Maine Dept. of Transportation
Chris Chop, Chris Hall, Clara McCool, Julia Breul, Harold Spetla, Kristina Egan, Tony Plante, Andrew Butcher	GPCOG Staff

Welcome

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

Acceptance of 11/9/20 Minutes

Matthew Sturgis moved approval of the 11/09/20 meeting minutes. Susan Witonis seconded. The roll was called. Jarrod and Sandy abstained. The remaining members were in favor.

Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

Nominations for Executive Committee

Matthew Sturgis moved approval to appoint Justin Poirier and Kate Lewis as Executive Committee members for a five-month term extending through the General Assembly in May 2021. Belinda Ray seconded. The roll was called and all were in favor. Nat welcomed the new Executive Committee members to the group.

Executive Director's Report

Kristina Egan highlighted the recent *Portland Press Herald* profile article on GPCOG and the ensuing editorial. The agency is a vehicle to address regional challenges. Also highlighted was Tony Plante's work on a Mutual Aid Compact with the public works directors in the region aimed to reduce disruption to snow plowing from the pandemic and other threats. Harrison, Durham, Arundel, and Sebago have already signed on.

A call for shovel ready and shovel worthy projects has been distributed to municipal and transit agency leaders, which will result in a list of transportation, broadband, climate and other infrastructure priority projects.

PACTS committees have been restructured and applications are open to residents who want to participate in the allocating of federal funding. Committee slots are for people with expertise in the environment, active transportation and equity.

Spotlight: Resilience Corps

Julia Breul is the Program Manager for the Resilience Corps – a program aimed to boost capacity and enable resilience across the region. AmeriCorps, by way of Volunteer Maine, has awarded GPCOG with a \$217,000 grant. Fourteen AmeriCorps fellows are serving terms of 17,000 hours from November 6th 2020 to October 14th 2021 within GPCOG and with regional members and partners. They are delivering service in economic development, sustainability and climate, broadband and equity, data and digital service, land use and planning, transportation and outreach. Four Corps Members are being highlighted in the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development storytelling initiative. Clara McCool gave an update on her work as the broadband resilience corps fellow working with the towns of Harrison and Naples as well as the Maine Broadband Coalition.

Nat Tupper remarked on the energy and dedication of the fellows. This is a pilot year and there is potential for AmeriCorps fellows to work with GPCOG for another two years.

Partnership with MaineDOT

Tom Reinauer is the director of public outreach and planning and Stephen Cole is a regional planner for

Midcoast and Cumberland/York counties at the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT).

GPCOG has two contracts with MDOT. One is for PACTS and includes eighteen communities and another funds work in non-PACTS communities. The rural funding is a much smaller amount.

Key aspects of this partnership include stakeholder outreach and municipality communication. MDOT wants to provide relevant and correct information to Maine's nine regional organizations, like GPCOG. Jen Brickett is the director of the MDOT planning bureau which is directly under the Commissioner Bruce Van Note.

Within the month, MDOT will release its statewide workplan which shows the three-year funding plan for specific projects. MDOT hopes to include regional planning agencies in the future with things like a survey for municipal feedback.

Sandy and Kate spoke to their good experience with MDOT and expressed hope for better communications between MDOT and cities and towns. Nat suggested MDOT provide more information on the financial status of projects and contract obligations.

Federal Funding

Chris Hall delivered an analysis of recent state and federal funding opportunities developed by the National Conference of State Legislatures. He reviewed elements of the December 27th, 2020 federal action which included a \$900 billion COVID-relief package and a \$1.4 trillion government funding package. With the new administration, there will be more movement on surface transportation reauthorization, economic stimulus, and climate related policies in addition to a new Transportation Secretary, an outspoken advocate for these goals.

Committee members were asked to identify the regional opportunities in the recent federal legislation, and advise on how to best prioritize and pursue these opportunities. A detailed description of the funding analysis is found in attachment C of this meeting's agenda.

Key transportation elements of the COVID relief portion of the bill includes almost \$10 billion in surface transportation block grant money, and it indicates that some of it can be used for a variety of purposes. \$15 billion was awarded to transit agencies and GPCOG staff is looking at regional eligibility.

In the appropriations portion of the federal action, \$2 billion dollars is set aside for discretionary highways and infrastructure programs, \$2 billion is for capital investment grants, \$500 million for transit infrastructure grants and \$1 billion for national infrastructure investments. It's important to talk as a region to discuss the most important projects to pursue.

The call for projects as mentioned above in the Executive Director's Report, welcomes input on the

process to influence where incoming federal funds may flow. When towns unite and speak together, the region will be more likely to receive funding.

Sandy mentioned that Gray is working on their shovel ready list. Jarrod is pushing forward on a partnership with Portland Water District in North Windham, to support this regional hub. Nat said there's a need for a comprehensive shared vision for the region. He asked about match requirements, and Chris said that those requirements are not yet detailed.

Revenues from Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program

GPCOG, under Josh Kochis' leadership, administered \$67M in economic recovery grants. GPCOG was paid by fee per application. \$400,000 can be allocated. The committee requested a copy of GPCOG's reserve fund policy. The investment committee will meet in April.

Belinda Ray made a motion to approve allocate \$400,000 to the GPCOG Reserve Fund. Matt Sturgis seconded. The roll was called, and all were in favor.

Adjourn

The final item on the agenda, the next strategic plan, will be tabled until the next meeting on February 10. Matt Sturgis moved to adjourn, and Sandy Carder seconded. All agreed.

Attachment B

Executive Director's Report

Strategic Priority – Serve our Members

- **Regional Voice.** GPCOG will have met with the staff of Senators King and Collins by the time of our Executive Committee meeting, and will report on that discussion. GPCOG submitted testimony in favor of LD 32, *An Act Regarding Remote Participation in Public Proceedings*. This is included in Attachment C.
- **Upcoming events:**
 - **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.
 - **3/24 10:30 a.m.: Transit Tomorrow Release.** The final long-range public transportation plan will be released at a close-out event with Commissioner Van Note.

Strategic Priority – Lead the Region Toward Sustainable Prosperity

- **Priority Projects for Stimulus.** GPCOG issued a call for projects in December 2022, requesting municipalities, transit agencies and institutional partners submit “shovel-ready” or “shovel-worthy” projects. Over 75 projects were submitted. GPCOG will work with state agencies and our federal delegation to advance some of these projects for potential stimulus funds.
- **Transit Tomorrow.** The region’s long range plan for improving public transportation is fully drafted posted for public comment. To listen to a short podcast about it, click [here](#). To read it in full, click [here](#). To provide your input through a short survey, click [here](#).
- **PACTS Committee Restructuring.** PACTS adopted bylaws changes in late January. Over the next couple of months, PACTS will transition to the reformed committee structure. The new Policy Board, Executive Board and Regional Transportation Advisory Committee will convene in March and April.
- **Brownfields Progress.** Redevelopment at Thompson’s Point continues. Forefront Partners, the developer and borrower, has now drawn down the full loan amount of \$660,000 in Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund money. Interest only payments continue until January 2022, at which time they will start repaying principal as well. The interest and, later, repaid principal can then be

plowed into other eligible projects. We also have teamed up with the City of South Portland to assist in completing a Phase 2 assessment of the Liberty Shipyard (Packard) property on the city's waterfront.

Strategic Priority – Operate with Excellence

- **Staffing updates.** We've posted ads for two positions: [Loan and Grant Programs Manager](#) and [Development Director](#). The Development Director position would lead GPCOG's government grants research and writing and develop our relationships with private foundations. This position would be for two years, and longer if it proves successful. The staff person will be charged with enhancing and diversifying resources that enhance GPCOG's ability to serve members and build regional prosperity, with an emphasis on building resources for under-resourced program areas, including expanding housing choices, improving the environment, and enhancing social and racial equity.
- **Public education through media coverage.** Since our January meeting, GPCOG secured media coverage of CARES-funded transit investments and the Martin Luther King panel with local leaders Pious Ali (Portland), Deqa Dhalaq (South Portland), and Nathan Poore (Falmouth), and moderated by GPCOG's Tori Pelletier. Links below:

[Southern Maine transit gets \\$11 million in federal stimulus funding](#) — MaineBiz, 01/6/21

[\\$11 million awarded to transit agencies](#) — Portland Press Herald, 01/11/21

[Pandemic has led to fewer BSOOB transit riders, but agency hopes for normal year ahead](#) — Post/Courier, 01/14/21

[Mainers mark MLK Day with calls to action](#) — Portland Press Herald, 01/18/21

[Racial justice leaders share inspiration, innovation on MLK Day panel](#) — Forecaster, 01/19/21

[Local leaders discuss racial justice efforts](#) — Portland Press Herald, 01/20/21

- **Corporate sponsorships.** GPCOG has been fortunate to have many loyal corporate supporters of the Annual Summit and the "Welcome & Congrats!" events. Due to the ongoing economic hardship of the pandemic, and the Annual Summit going virtual this year (offering less sponsor benefit), staff has decided to suspend the corporate sponsorship program.
- **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.

FY21 Grants and Contracts Development

July 2020 through June 2021

Approved	Fiscal Agent	Amount
U.S. Economic Development Administration: 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
Cumberland County Community Development Block Grant Program: To fund a regional COVID-19 relief loan program	Center for Regional Prosperity	\$ 300,000
City of South Portland MicroLoan Program: To facilitate the city's microloan program	GPCOG	\$ 60,000
Town of Yarmouth MicroLoan Program: To facilitate the town's microloan program	GPCOG	\$ 100,000
CARES Act Transit Planning: 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
Corporation for National Service (AmeriCorps): To launch the Resilience Corps	GPCOG	\$ 217,000
Brownfields RLF Supplemental FY21-FY23: To provide loans and limited subgrants for cleanup of areas designated as brownfields	GPCOG	\$ 200,000
Maine Technology Institute: To launch the Digital Infrastructure Frontiers Series with Maine Broadband Coalition	GPCOG	\$ 20,000
Department of Transportation - Rural TA: To provide transportation technical assistance to municipalities outside the PACTS region	GPCOG	\$ 84,500
Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry - General: To provide land use planning technical assistance to inland municipalities	GPCOG	\$ 15,130
Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry - Coastal: To provide land use planning technical assistance to coastal communities and to fulfill the tasks outlined in the Coastal Work Plan	GPCOG	\$ 33,157
US Department of Energy Clean Cities: To support Maine Clean Communities program	GPCOG	\$ 90,000
Maine Community Foundation: To fund GPCOG efforts to provide racial equity training and resources to local municipalities	GPCOG	\$ 6,000
Combined proposal to 4 funding sources (Connect Maine, Maine Community Foundation, Island Institute, Northern Forest Center): To launch a statewide data collection initiative to assess broadband speeds	GPCOG	\$ 52,000
Submitted	Fiscal Agent	Amount
Brownfields RLF Supplemental Funding Request: To provide loans for brownfields clean-up. Open to current RLF grantees having committed at least 75% of all RLF funds; GPCOG has committed over 85%.	GPCOG	\$ 500,000
National Endowment of the Arts Our Town Program: To support a second round of "Creative Shelters" installations celebrating diversity through original art on bus shelters in Greater Portland	Creative Portland	\$ 100,000
Mosaic Movement Infrastructure: To fund "Mainers Advocating for Racial and Environmental Equity"	Center for Regional Prosperity	\$ 152,500
EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant FY21: To fund identification, environmental site assessment, and remediation planning for contaminated sites to assist in redevelopment	GPCOG	\$ 300,000
National League of Cities Leadership in Community Resilience Grant Program: To fund support for local communities to conduct vulnerability assessments with a focus on equity and community engagement	Westbrook /GPCOG	\$ 10,000
Maine Office of Tourism: To support WinterDine public education campaign	GPCOG	\$ 50,000

Attachment C

Testimony on LD32

February 2, 2021

Senator Anne Carney, Senate Chair
Representative Thom Hartnett, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0100

Re: LD 32, *An Act Regarding Remote Participation in Public Proceedings*

Senator Carney, Representative Hartnett, and Members of the Judiciary Committee;

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) in full support of LD 32, *An Act Regarding Remote Participation in Public Proceedings*.

GPCOG serves 30 municipal members, from Sebago Lake to Casco Bay, and the County of Cumberland. We also staff the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) which extends our service territory into York County, including Saco and Biddeford.

GPCOG is the Portland region's Economic Development District, as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, and we support numerous programs like Maine Clean Communities and the Maine Broadband Coalition.

We support the passage of LD 32 for the following reasons:

First, remote meetings expand public access and participation. GPCOG has direct experience with increased public participation during remote meetings, especially at PACTS meetings where regional transportation policy decisions are made.

Increased public participation improves the decision-making process and increases equity by expanding the number of people in our region who gain input into our work. We highly value this increase engagement, which we know will diminish if remote meetings are no longer allowed.

Becky Johnson, one of our Community Transportation Leaders, put it best:

"Before Covid, in person meetings were sometimes hard to attend—due to having a 5 year old son and I was also pregnant with my daughter. I had no transportation. In the Covid era, remote meetings have given me the flexibility to attend while also caring for my children at home."

And Cape Elizabeth Councilor Nicole Boucher, speaking for herself and not for her Council, shared the following:

“Since our town meetings have turned virtual, more voices have been appearing at the table than ever before. This summer, one School Board meeting in my town had so many attendees (est. 500+) that it needed to be simultaneously streamed on another platform to accommodate everyone due to attendee limits on the software.

Having engaged and informed citizens is paramount to a well-functioning municipality. We need to include remote participation into the traditional town hall meeting once the Executive Orders end and we return to in-person meetings. It allows for much more equity and inclusivity in our town. Without a hybrid approach, we will go back to the days where parents cannot attend evening meetings without childcare coverage, or seniors who cannot drive safely at night forgo their voice being heard.”

Second, remote meetings increase the ability and willingness of people to serve in numerous ways. By reducing travel time, we have been able to attract a larger, more diverse set of municipal and volunteer participants in our work. This is very important to a regional organization that spans a wide geography across Cumberland and York counties. In more rural parts of the state it is even more important. We know that we will lose engaged volunteers if remote meetings end.

Finally, we believe that LD 32 supports open meetings and full public transparency. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have run meetings at GPCOG successfully with remote technology. We have also served our member municipalities by providing technical assistance on the proper use of remote meeting technology, and public access, especially during the early days of the pandemic. We are confident that our members are using remote meetings in full compliance with Maine and federal law, and we have no doubt they will continue to do so if LD 32 allows the permanent use of remote meetings.

We have been running remote meetings since March of 2020 and we believe they have increased public access and participation in government, allowed a larger and more diverse group of volunteers to engage in local and regional work, and fully complied with state and federal open access and transparency requirements.

For all these reasons we ask you to support LD 32 and urge its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of LD 32 and please let me know if I can do anything else to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,



Kristina Egan
Executive Director
Greater Portland Council of Governments