

PACTS Executive Board

April 26, 2022

9:00–10:30 am

Meeting Minutes

Affiliation	Member	
Policy Board Chair	Matt Sturgis	✓
Policy Board Vice Chair	Hope Cahan	✓
Central Subregion Rep.	Keith Gray	✓
Central Subregion Rep.	Kate Lewis	
North Subregion Rep.	Bill Shane	✓
South Subregion Rep.	Jim Bennett	
West Subregion Rep.	Eric Dudley	

Affiliation	Member	
MaineDOT	Dale Doughty	✓
Maine Turnpike Auth.	Erin Courtney	✓
Active Transp. Specialist	Kara Wooldrik	✓
RTAC Liaison	Tom Milligan	✓
Transit Rep.	Hank Berg	✓
Transit Rep.	Greg Jordan	✓
Transit Rep.	Jack DeBeradinis	

1. Welcome

Matt Sturgis opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Approval of the February 22 Meeting Minutes Meeting Minutes

Erin Courtney moved to approve the February 22 meeting minutes as written; Hope Cahan seconded. All were in favor.

4. Staff Report

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently published guidance related to the Carbon Reduction Program, created through the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Staff anticipate an annual allocation of approximately \$575,000 to support regional investments in a variety of project types.

5. Nominating Procedure for Policy Board Chair and Vice Chair

The current PACTS chair and vice chair terms will expire on June 30. Per PACTS bylaws, a three-member nominating committee selected by the Executive Board and comprised of Policy Board members will recommend a slate of officers for the Policy Board's review and approval at their first meeting of the GPCOG fiscal year. Matt Sturgis and Bill Shane volunteered, and Hank Berg nominated Chad Heid to serve on the nominating committee.

6. Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Project Update

Rapid transit provides high-speed, high-capacity, high-reliability, and high-quality service. Bus rapid transit, streetcars, and light rail are common types. *Transit Tomorrow*, the region's long-range transit plan, directs the region to invest in rapid transit for a number of reasons:

- The region is growing and will continue to grow.
- Additional highway capacity has not been shown to reduce congestion in the long-term.
- The environmental impacts of the region's transportation system are unsustainable.
- The region's economy and resident depend on an improved transit system.

Rapid transit has been shown to generate a number of benefits, including increased transit ridership, avoidance and sequestration of carbon emissions, and significant economic development; a bus rapid transit system in Cleveland, Ohio has generated \$190 in increased economic activity per dollar invested.

Of the four corridors identified in *Transit Tomorrow*, staff selected the Gorham-Westbrook-Portland corridor as the first corridor of study based on existing population and employment densities, and anticipated development opportunity. Based on initial outreach, the municipalities are generally supportive of the study. Staff have selected a consultant—Nelson\Nygaard—for the study and will formally kickoff the project soon. The project is anticipated to be complete by October 2023.

Bill Shane suggested identifying case studies of comparably sized regions.

Tom Milligan suggested reviewing the connection between this study and the recently enacted housing opportunities bill.¹ Staff noted the study will review existing and future land use—including impacts of any municipal and statewide zoning and legislative changes—as one input to inform the viability of rapid transit along the corridor.

Dale Doughty noted the importance of coordinating with Portland's Brighton Avenue project.

Matt Sturgis appreciated the replicability of the study process for additional corridors in the future.

Mike Foley, mayor of Westbrook, noted Westbrook's support for both rapid transit and Maine Turnpike Authority's proposed Gorham Connector as compatible ways to reduce congestion in the city.

¹ See LD 2003, [An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions](#).

7. Proposed Gorham Connector Project Update

One responsibility of PACTS is to allocate federal funding for roadway projects. As the Maine Turnpike Authority's (MTA) proposed Gorham Connector would not utilize federal funding—it would be fully funded by toll revenue—formal Policy Board approval will not be required. However, staff anticipate PACTS being a close partner through MTA's planning phase.

Peter Mills, executive director of MTA, provided remarks on the current status of the project. In 2007, the Maine legislature directed MTA to study the construction of a highway spur west of Portland to address growing congestion in the area. A 2012 report recommended a "three-legged stool": a highway to reduce congestion, transit service to further reduce single-occupant vehicles, and land use planning reforms to support walkable downtowns and neighborhood centers. MTA has selected a preferred alignment and has begun property acquisition. Public engagement will continue through the summer, and permitting may begin by winter.

MTA supports the rapid transit study and views the two projects as complimentary. Peter noted the favorable political environment for transit investment. MTA is also willing to support capital investments for transit, including on the Biddeford-Scarborough-Portland corridor.

Matt Sturgis asked for public comment. Mike Foley, mayor of Westbrook, reiterated Westbrook's support for the project as a source of congestion relief and an economic development opportunity for a number of municipalities in the area. He noted that traffic has returned to pre-pandemic levels. Matt closed the public comment period.

The group looked forward to PACTS, MaineDOT, and MTA working together on a holistic solution.

Staff said that it will be important to understand how the Gorham Connector and rapid transit study will reinforce each other. Peter said MTA intends to update the traffic analysis and projections. If the data does not show the new roadway as a solution, MTA will not build it. Staff noted the challenges of incorporating transit and land use into traditional traffic modelling.

Matt thanked MTA for the update and encouraged MTA and GPCOG to continue coordinating.

8. Connect 2045 Call for Projects Process Review

Staff are developing objectives, strategies, and performance targets for *Connect 2045*, the region's upcoming long-range transportation plan. An upcoming public workshop will inform that effort.

Staff are also developing evaluation criteria to prioritize projects received under the Connect 2045 Call for Projects. Projects will be scored based on their alignment with the vision and goals of the plan, and assigned to either the "fiscally constrained" project list or an "aspirational" project list. Further scoring

will occur before a project is selected for funding and inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Matt Sturgis asked for public comment. Ken Capron of Portland suggested staff consider the Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) as prescribed by USDOT. Patricia Quinn of NNEPRA noted the BCA is required for discretionary grant proposals, but can be resource-intensive to complete. She urged the group to be thoughtful with the scoring criteria so projects are in strong positions for funding opportunities. Matt closed the public comment period.

Hank Berg agreed with Patricia, noting the impacts to Casco Bay Lines through certain scoring criteria in the Funding Framework. Staff noted transit operations and maintenance needs are expected to be exempt from the Connect 2045 call for projects.

Erin Courtney asked whether projects not seeking federal funding would be included in the plan on a separate list or map. Staff said those projects would be documented so PACTS can have a holistic understanding of all projects in the region.

Hope Cahan asked whether there would be an opportunity for RTAC to review the scoring criteria. Staff noted there may be opportunities and will review meeting schedules and agendas.

Matt Sturgis asked whether a local match will be required. Staff said the initial project screening is not anticipated to require those details.

9. Regional Complete Streets Policy Update

This item was postponed.

10. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

11. Adjourn

Hope Cahan moved to adjourn; Keith Gray seconded. With no objection, the motion carried.