

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee

May 3, 2022

9:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	Y
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Jessa Berna	
PACTS Southern – Public Works/ Engineering	Tom Milligan	Y
PACTS Central – Municipal	Matt Sturgis	
PACTS Central – Planning/ Economic Development	Nell Donaldson	Y
PACTS Central – Public Works/ Engineering	Doug Howard	
PACTS Western – Municipal	VACANT	
PACTS Western – Planning/ Economic Development	Amanda Lessard	
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Katherine Kelley	
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Bill Shane	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Theo Holtwijk	
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	Y
Transit	Hank Berg	Y
Transit	Patricia Quinn	Y
Transit	Jack DeBeradinis	Y
Transit	Mike Tremblay	Y
MaineDOT	Ryan Neale	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	Y
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	Y
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	
Community Transportation Leader	Mireille Kabongo	Y
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	Y

1. Welcome

Nell Donaldson opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. Nell acknowledged the existence of strong opinions surrounding recent developments in the American Rescue Plan Act funding decisions and asked the committee to set aside that conversation for this Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) meeting.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was made.

3. Approval of the April 5, 2022 Meeting Minutes

No public comment was made. Eamonn Dundon moved to approve the April 5, 2022 minutes. Rebecca Grover seconded the motion. There were 14 votes in favor, 0 opposed.

4. Staff Report

Federal Highway Administration: Carbon Reduction Program

The Carbon Reduction Program is a new funding program created under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The funds can be flexed between Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The funds have broad eligibility, including trails, electric vehicle infrastructure, bus lanes, and multimodal infrastructure.

5. Remote Participation Policy

The GPCOG Executive Committee adopted the Remote Participation Policy on April 26. The policy applies to GPCOG and PACTS committees and allows for “hybrid” meetings to allow committee members and the public to choose whether they would prefer to attend in person or online via Zoom. The policy is defined to exist indefinitely.

Tom Milligan, Biddeford, expressed support for the hybrid strategy as it allows for scheduling efficiency for members and saves on gas and time.

Bill Shane, Cumberland, expressed a desire to get back to in-person communication to resolve differences. Bill noted, however, that the benefits of in-person meetings are lost if there are only a few in-person attendees.

Mike Tremblay, Greater Portland METRO, acknowledged agreement with both Tom and Bill’s perspectives and suggested the possibility of holding several fully in-person meetings each year.

6. Recommendations from the PACTS Complex Projects Task Force

The PACTS Complex Projects Task Force was created to recommend revisions to the policies related to the selection and funding of complex projects, focusing on policies related to project selection in PACTS’ financially constrained environment. The Task Force met five times from December 2021 to April 2022, completed a thorough survey of member input, and reviewed a September 2021 technical memo submitted to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization by a committee formed in response to cost increases similar to those experienced by PACTS. The PACTS Task Force’s recommendations can be found in the May 3, 2022 RTAC meeting packet, [here](#), as Attachment 6-A.

Bill Shane, Cumberland, suggested establishing a permanent Complex Projects Task Force to ensure there are always three to five projects in the queue ready for funding. Kristina Egan, GPCOG staff, noted it is within her performance expectations as Executive Director to ensure three to five projects project are ready for funding if it becomes available. She added that GPCOG is in constant conversation with MaineDOT to align state and regional priorities and identify projects.

Adam Bliss, Freeport, expressed concern regarding the recommendation that PACTS consider increasing the percentage of federal funding for complex projects. Adam noted this would mean reducing funding for the PACTS Collector Paving Program, which is already operating below maintenance level funding. Tom Milligan, Biddeford, said he would hope to see increased federal funding from MaineDOT so that collector paving funding would not be impacted. GPCOG staff explained that the Task Force’s recommendation that PACTS consider increasing the percentage of federal funding that goes to complex projects was outside the Task Force’s scope and should not be considered an official recommendation. The funding split between complex projects and collector paving could be discussed in the context of the PACTS long-range transportation plan, Connect 2045, or as part of other future funding policy discussions. Staff will provide clarification to the Policy Board that the recommendation is not included in RTAC’s vote.

There were also questions about *Preliminary* Horizontal/Vertical Alignment Complete (HVAC), as MaineDOT’s HVAC Design Submittal Form Checklist (which can be found in the May 3, 2022 RTAC

meeting packet, [here](#), as Attachment 6-C) does not include the word “preliminary.” Staff will provide further clarification before a Policy Board vote.

Bill Shane moved to approve the PACTS Complex Project Task Force recommendations. Eamonn Dundon seconded the motion. There were 14 votes in favor, 0 opposed. Adam Bliss voted in favor under the condition that PACTS would revisit the funding distribution recommendation in the future.

7. Connect 2045 Call for Projects Process Review

Federal regulations require that a long-range transportation plan include a list of regionally significant projects within the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (MPO’s) anticipated financial means. *Connect 2045* will also include a list of illustrative or visionary projects to prepare the region for discretionary grant opportunities, such as those in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. On April 12, GPCOG announced a Call for Projects to satisfy the federal regulations; applications are due June 17.

GPCOG staff intend to coordinate with the Connect 2045 Project Advisory Committee and RTAC to develop a process for prioritization. Staff presented the Call for Projects application form to RTAC previously.

Ken Capron, a member of the public, asked how PACTS would define “large projects” during the prioritization process—by project cost or physical length/size. Rick Harbison, GPCOG staff, responded that it would be relative to other projects and the total available funding.

Patricia Quinn, NNEPRA, suggested focusing efforts on making the scoring and prioritization process as uncomplicated as possible. Including projects in *Connect 2045* is intended to position projects for funding and Patricia expressed concern that scoring in *Connect 2045* may conflict with other scoring processes. Rick Harbison noted GPCOG staff were leaning towards omitting scores in the prioritized list of projects.

RTAC members were given about 15 minutes to use an interactive tool to submit recommendations and comments on the evaluation criteria, scoring structure, and scoring team. Members were encouraged to provide additional input after the meeting via the interactive tool or by emailing GPCOG staff.

8. Regional Complete Streets Policy

Since summer of 2021, staff has been working to draft a Regional Complete Streets Policy to provide a uniform guide for PACTS investments and to serve as a model policy for member municipalities who have not yet adopted a Complete Streets Policy or wish to update an existing policy.

The policy, when adopted, will apply to all PACTS projects during all phases of development including planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, operations, and maintenance. Though there are exceptions, they should not be common, so that complete and direct connections throughout the transportation network can exist for all users, even where specific streets cannot accommodate all users.

A region-specific design and quick-build guide, a second phase to the Complete Streets project, is slated for completion later this calendar year. The guide is intended to provide context-specific design guidance and maintenance solutions for local government planning, engineering, and public works departments. The quick-build aspect will provide guidance for those municipalities who wish to pilot street redesigns and/or reconfigure identified problem areas quickly and relatively inexpensively.

Ken Capron, a member of the public, stated that he thought the Regional Complete Streets Policy would add costs to projects that are already experiencing a funding shortfall. Ericka Amador, GPCOG staff, clarified that Complete Streets does not necessarily mean every roadway will be equipped with a sidewalk and bike lane, but rather that all users will be considered when designing future projects. Complete Streets is intended to make the roadway friendly for all users as appropriate to the roadway setting.

Jean Sideris, Bicycle Coalition of Maine, asked if there would be any technical assistance to help applicants ensure they are meeting the Regional Complete Streets Policy requirements. Chris Chop, GPCOG staff, responded that a webinar in advance of the next Call for Complex Projects could be an effective way to inform applicants on the new requirements and elements of Complete Streets.

Eamonn Dundon, Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, asked whether there would be quantifiable parameters on exemptions. Ericka Amador suggested GPCOG might lean towards putting together an advisory group to rule on design exceptions. The quick-build guide for Complete Streets will likely be contracted out and currently does not have a timeline.

Christian MilNeil, RTAC Environmental Specialist, noted that Massachusetts funded technical support for municipal public works employees to design and see projects through, which might be an idea for PACTS to consider.

Next steps include continued feedback on the draft policy, adoption by the PACTS Policy Board, development of the Complete Streets Design and Quick-Build Guide, and the formation of a Complete Streets Advisory Committee.

9. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:00 AM.