

Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study

Project Advisory Group (PAG)

June 9, 2022
10:00–11:00 am
Meeting Notes

Attendees: Eric Dudley (City of Westbrook), Eva Birk (Federal Highway Administration), Leah Sirmin (Federal Transit Administration), Mike Arsnow (MaineHealth), Rebecca Grover (Maine Turnpike), Greg Jordan (METRO), Patricia Quinn (NNEPRA), Nell Donaldson (PACTS RTAC/City of Portland), Eamonn Dundon (Portland Chamber of Commerce), Justin Barker (Portland Housing Authority), Kara Wooldrik (Portland Trails), Kevin Jensen (Town of Gorham), Aaron Witham (USM)
Project Team in Attendance: Ericka Amador (GPCOG), Chris Chop (GPCOG), Theresa Carr (NN), Joe Poirier (NN), Anne Galbraith (ASG), Rosanne Lubeck (CTD), Lily Goodspeed (CTD)

Welcome & Introductions

Ericka Amador, Project Manager for GPCOG, welcomed everyone to the Project Advisory Group (PAG), thanked them for participating and sharing their time. Members of the Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates team and all PAG members in attendance also introduced themselves.

Project Overview

Theresa Carr, Project Manager for Nelson/Nygaard provided an overview of the study scope and schedule. The study will examine various transit modes and alignments to connect Gorham, Westbrook and Portland with faster, more reliable transit. The end result is envisioned to be a “locally preferred alternative (or LPA)” and an implementation plan for moving forward with desired improvements.

The study team will assess local mobility needs and opportunities; develop and evaluate alternatives; assess the costs, impacts and benefits of those alternatives; and conduct a robust public engagement effort. The study was initiated in May 2022 and should be complete in mid-2023.

Project Advisory Group (PAG) Role

Anne Galbraith of ASG Planning discussed the role of the PAG. It is anticipated that the PAG will meet about six times over the course of the study, approximately every 2 to 3 months and aligned primarily with public engagement milestones. The PAG is intended to play an advisory role in terms of reviewing and guiding work products and the engagement process. In response to a question about the ultimate decision-making process, Anne and Theresa indicated that the PACTS Policy Board would be the ultimate decision maker in terms of adopting an LPA, but that public and stakeholder/PAG input will play a large role.

Project Vision and Goals - Menti Poll

The study team will be working this summer to collect data on existing conditions and to develop more specific study goals. To help inform this process, the PAG was led through a series of 5 poll questions:

- What access and mobility benefits of rapid transit are most important?

- What other high-level goals for the study are most important?
- What does a successful study outcome look like?
- What are the biggest challenges facing this study?
- How effective are the following engagement methods for your community/constituency?

The poll results can be found at the end of these minutes. Discussion included:

- Tourism was not ranked as high as other goals. When asked about tourism destinations, PAG members mentioned Rock Row and mountain biking trails in Gorham.
- It was suggested that the public be provided both virtual and in-person opportunities; in-person meetings are seen as providing more detailed input, but virtual opportunities can sometimes reach more people.
- It was suggested that public meetings be held at locations along the corridor (e.g. the university, Rock Row or the hospital).

Public Engagement

Rosanne Lubeck of Connect the Dots provided more detail on the proposed public engagement process. The study team will build upon the successful public engagement tools used by GPCOG. The approach is to “layer” public engagement activities so that there are opportunities to comment via the website, meet study representatives in person, and/or attend a virtual session at various points throughout the study.

A September public meeting is anticipated. Prior to that time the team will meet with various stakeholders and organizations, and will hold some “pop-up” events in the field. Other public meetings will be held in the winter (to discuss the alternatives analysis and screening) and in spring of 2023 to present the recommended alternative.

Public Comment

Kenneth Capron suggested that micro rail, be included in the alternatives analysis. In response, the study team indicated that alternatives development will look at a variety of potential modes and corridors and assess these based on the underlying market demand. Mr. Capron also provided links to background information on micro rail.

Next Steps

The study team will be working on collecting data on existing conditions over the summer, collecting data and developing project goals and a framework for evaluation. The next PAG meeting is anticipated for September 2022.