

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee

July 6, 2021

9:00 a.m.

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	Y
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Denise Clavette	
PACTS Southern – Public Works/ Engineering	Tom Milligan	Y
PACTS Central – Municipal	Matt Sturgis	Y
PACTS Central – Planning/ Economic Development	Nell Donaldson	Y
PACTS Central – Public Works/ Engineering	Doug Howard	Y
PACTS Western – Municipal	Bill Giroux	
PACTS Western – Planning/ Economic Development	Amanda Lessard	
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Bob Burns	Y
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Bill Shane	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Theo Holtwijk	Y
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	
Transit	Hank Berg	Y
Transit	Patricia Quinn	Y
Transit	Donna Tippet	
Transit	Robert Currie	
MaineDOT	Tom Reinauer	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	Y
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	Y
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Mireille Kabongo	Y
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	Y

1. Welcome

Nell Donaldson opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Approval of the June 1, 2021 RTAC Meeting Minutes

Bill Shane moved to approve the minutes from June 1, 2021. Tom Milligan seconded the motion. All were in favor.

4. Staff Report

In response to a request made at the June RTAC meeting and after consultation with the PACTS officers, staff will vet items before including them on the agenda and will provide specific recommendations on agenda items. The PACTS officers agreed that if GPCOG staff are unable to sufficiently vet an item, that should be reflected in the agenda. This update was also provided to the PACTS Executive Board.

Staff will provide updates on CARES project expenditures starting in August. Bill Shane asked about the bypass track, a 3-mile dual track that NNEPRA built in the Falmouth/Yarmouth/Cumberland area, and how communities should ask for assistance in completing this project and what role can GPCOG/PACTS play in this process. Chris Chop stated that he would raise the topic at a PACTS Policy Board meeting.

Jean Sideris asked how the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds relate to PACTS. Chris Chop, GPCOG staff, answered that about \$8 million in ARPA funds have been allocated to PACTS specifically for public transportation. The funds have not been programmed yet but GPCOG staff is currently looking at how ARPA funds can be used in conjunction with the CARES funding.

Eamonn Dundon asked if PACTS is subject to the recent legislative restriction on remote public meetings. Kristina Egan, GPCOG staff, answered that GPCOG is proposing to the Executive Committee a request to continue remote meetings, which would give all standing committees, including PACTS, the option of holding a remote meeting. Additionally, GPCOG will be gathering input from GPCOG/PACTS members on their preferences for meetings (in-person, hybrid, remote) moving forward. Tom Milligan asked for clarification on whether meetings must be in person if an item requires a vote. Kristina stated that Chris Hall, who acts as GPCOG's general counsel, is putting together information regarding this topic, which will be shared with PACTS.

5. Allocation of FHWA Funds for Collector Paving Programs Projects

The PACTS Collector Paving Program (CPP) seeks to extend the life of the pavement on the region's collector roads. PACTS receives an annual allocation of approximately \$2.2 million in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding that is used for the CPP. Last year, PACTS convened a Collector Paving Working Group, which revised the PACTS CPP policy. Under the revised policy, projects are selected from one of three CPP subregion on a three-year rotating basis. Projects are ranked according to Pavement Condition Index (PCI), transit presence, and Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT).

The proposed list of 2023 paving projects is in the agenda packet (Attachment 5B). The cost for each proposed paving project is a preliminary estimate and will be refined after a field review. If refined cost estimates come in over the allocation, projects at the bottom of the ranked list will be moved to a waiting list.

No public comment was received.

Bill Shane commented on the importance of preventative maintenance and noted that reconstruction is not funded by the PACTS CPP.

Jean Sideris asked if non-motorized users are included in average daily traffic numbers. She also mentioned that she receives comments about shoulders that are not repaved when the roads are, which creates a lip between the repaved road and the deteriorated shoulder and leads to more non-motorized users, such as bicyclists, riding in the road. Chris Chop responded that the traffic numbers do not include non-motorized users, which was followed by a discussion about if and how reliable data on pedestrian and bicycle traffic could be collected. Elizabeth Roberts, GPCOG staff, mentioned that unpaved shoulders can be a cost-saving measure but are

generally included in the repave. Tom Reinauer, MaineDOT staff, agreed, noting that bicycle traffic is sometimes a factor when making the decision on whether to pave the shoulder or not.

Christian MilNeil stated that collector roads have more problems than just pavement, such as lack of sidewalks, lack of transit service, and traffic congestion, and suggested that PACTS focus on these issues as well. Christian asked if there are other funds available and if there is a long-term plan. Chris answered that PACTS, at this time, does not have a long-term strategic plan for the collector paving program. PACTS considered combining all resources into one lump sum and allocating funds based on the funding framework, but there was not enough support for the idea. Chris also mentioned that MaineDOT can assist some municipalities with collector paving preservation; however, MaineDOT does not assist urban areas, so those municipalities are forced to fund their own collector paving preservation or look to PACTS, as the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO). There are federal discretionary grants available, but the shorter road segments would not likely be competitive on a national level. Christian stated the existing system is not working well and is not financially sustainable. Chris pointed out that PACTS will be starting its long-range transportation plan, *Connect2045*, which will provide a roadmap for how resources are used long-term.

Tom Milligan explained the approach that the collector paving program takes is meant to be cost effective. For example, the region was split into three subregions to limit mobilization costs. He added that MaineDOT comes in a year after paving to review ADA accessibility. Finally, Tom stated this program is also important because deteriorating roads can impede economic development.

Tom Milligan moved to approve the Collector Paving Program as presented. Eamonn Dundon seconded the motion. There were 14 votes in favor and 2 votes opposed (Christian MilNeil, Leeann Brionez).

6. Allocation of FHWA Funds for Complex Projects

PACTS receives an annual allocation of \$2,472,965 in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding that is used for complex projects. A complex project is a project that PACTS programs in two phases—preliminary design report (PDR), and then construction when PDR is complete. If PACTS decides to fund a project for PDR, PACTS is committing to fund that project for construction in the future.

This year PACTS received nine applications for complex projects funding, three of which were removed to undergo enhanced project scoping (EPS). The remaining six applications include five projects for PDR funding and one project for construction funding. (The municipality requesting construction funding, Windham, funded its own PDR.) In addition, two project sponsors (South Portland and Westbrook) with projects that were funded before PACTS funded projects in two phases are requesting additional funds for construction due to cost increases.

GPCOG staff put together three sample allocations to demonstrate the options available:

- Option 1: PDR-Heavy Allocation—Fund all five applications for PDR (Portland Libbytown, Saco Island Multimodal Bridge, Yarmouth Beth Condon Path, Yarmouth Main St., Gorham Signals), plus the South Portland and Westbrook projects for construction. This option would advance more projects closer to “shovel-ready” status. It would also commit PACTS to approximately \$17 million in future construction costs.

- Option 2: Construction-Heavy Allocation—Fund Windham, South Portland, and Westbrook for construction, plus the highest-scoring project (Portland Libbytown) for PDR. This option would limit FACTS’s commitment to future construction costs to approximately \$6 million.
- Option 3: Limited Allocation with Savings—Fund the three highest-scoring applications for PDR (Portland Libbytown, Saco Island Multimodal Bridge, Yarmouth Beth Condon Path), plus South Portland and Westbrook for construction. This option would commit FACTS to approximately \$16 million in future construction costs.

GPCOG staff recommended Option 1 plus allocating the remaining FHWA funds (approximately \$900,000) for Windham’s Route 302 North Windham Sidewalk project, pending availability of additional local match funding. Staff recommended Option 1 because it funds three of the four highest-scored projects, gets projects closer to “shovel-ready” status, and provides funding for the South Portland and Westbrook projects. It is important to note that both Yarmouth projects and the Gorham project are less resource intensive.

Chris Chop stated it is important to have projects close to “shovel-ready” status so they are more competitive for discretionary grant programs. He highlighted that it is important, under the current administration, for FACTS to anticipate additional transportation resources and be prepared for that as a region.

No public comment was received.

Bill Shane asked if it is possible to produce a timeline for when projects will actually be constructed. He questioned if it would make more sense to dedicate money to constructing projects that are already on the list rather than adding PDRs. Aubrey Miller, GPCOG staff, explained that the three projects on the PDR list are not yet ready for construction funding. Under the PDR-first policy, MaineDOT recommends FACTS fund 1-2 PDRs each year so that we have projects ready for construction.

Eamonn Dundon asked when and how the decision will be made on the cost for the Saco Island Multimodal Bridge. He also asked if the South Portland and Westbrook projects are not funded through FACTS, will there be a reduction in scope or additional local match from the municipalities. Aubrey answered that the Saco and Biddeford Town Councils will decide on which alternative they want soon. She also said that the South Portland and Westbrook projects have already reduced scope to bring down cost. Chris Chop added that South Portland has separated the project and is now doing the roadway paving separately.

Jennie Franceschi, Town of Westbrook, mentioned that the Westbrook project goes back 11 years. She stated the funding for the project will address a high crash location at the intersection of William Clarke Drive and Saco Street. Additionally, this issue is not just a municipality issue, but a regional one due to the regional traffic through Westbrook.

Christian commented that these projects need better financing plans to avoid issues of overbudgeting. He believes that FACTS should be funding projects where municipalities are providing more than the required local match, like the proposed Windham Route 302 sidewalk. Christian expressed support for fully funding the Windham project and dispersing the remaining funds to South Portland and Westbrook.

Patricia Quinn asked if the local match for the PDR has been committed. Aubrey answered that the match was committed during the application process; however, some municipalities do still need formal approval from their city/town councils. Patricia also asked if it is FACTS’ policy to fund both PDR and construction. Aubrey answered yes. This is primarily because once federal funds are committed for PDR, the project must be

constructed or the federal funds may have to be paid back. Patricia mentioned that PACTS does not have to be the primary funder for construction and asked if the application process includes municipalities coming up with plans to obtain funding for construction with the understanding the PACTS is a back-up funder. Aubrey answered that some municipalities did list additional funding sources on their applications, but it is not a requirement. Finally, Patricia asked who manages the PDR and if that individual/body must report back to RTAC. Aubrey answered that the PDR is managed by MaineDOT and the municipalities; there is currently no requirement for either of those bodies to report back to RTAC.

Tom Reinauer expressed concern about getting too far ahead on PDRs and advocated for a more balanced approach. He stated that discretionary funds are not guaranteed, while the PACTS funding is. There are three projects in design now, in addition to the two projects in South Portland and Westbrook that are requesting additional funding. Tom questioned if committing to five PDRs is the right move. He suggested Option 3 (in Attachment 6G) as a more viable option.

Christian wondered what the incentive is for municipalities to seek additional funding when PACTS has already agreed to fund construction upon PDR approval.

Theo Holtwijk noted he was hearing two separate issues. The first is the allocation recommendation. He conceded there is not a perfect option; however, he would support the staff recommendation of Option 1. The second, bigger concern is the sustainability of the program. He believes that it would be worthwhile to spend time on policy decision-making to analyze where improvements can be made.

Nell Donaldson stated that trying to find the balance on whether to save or spend is difficult. She mentioned that PACTS is being encouraged to spend, even though there is not enough construction to spend it on at this time.

Chris Chop stated that this is the first time using the funding framework and improvements can be made in the near future.

Kristina Egan said PACTS needs to balance planning ahead with funding construction to ensure there are enough projects in the pipeline. She mentioned that PACTS should consider the current administration when putting forth projects. The region just went through a prioritization process for earmarks and did not have many shovel-ready projects. Kristina agreed that having a timeline is a great suggestion but cautions there are often delays. Even though there are multiple PDR projects, they will not be due for construction at the same time. There needs to be a balance between “shovel-ready” projects and construction.

Tom Reinauer agreed the PDR process can take a while depending on the complexity of the project. He also agreed that these projects will be staggered because there are always delays in this process.

Patricia Quinn asked if there is a timeline for construction for the Windham sidewalk project. Aubrey answered that she believes they are ready for construction as soon as funds are available.

Tom Milligan agreed with Theo’s approach to focus on the recommendation today and to have a larger policy discussion later. He reminded everyone that the application process takes much effort and that it is harder for smaller municipalities to compete. Tom supported the staff recommendation of Option 1, including the Windham sidewalk project.

Eamonn Dundon asked if there is any incentive for municipalities to fund their own PDRs in the funding framework. Aubrey answered that there are currently no points given to municipalities that fund their own PDRs, but the funding framework can be revised.

Christian made a motion to approve staff recommendation Option 1 with the amendment that the Windham sidewalk project is fully funded, and the remaining funds are allocated to the Westbrook and South Portland projects.

Jean commented that going further, there should be a conversation regarding the ability of smaller towns to fund their own PDRs.

Regarding the Saco-Biddeford bridge project, Tom Milligan pointed out that the PDR is intended to help determine the final design and therefore the construction cost.

Jessa Berna, City of Saco, explained that the city's grant-funded feasibility report provides a range of bridge options and typologies, with costs ranging from about \$4.5 million to \$8.5 million. She reiterated Tom Milligan's point that the PDR will determine the best option, but added that the municipalities (Saco and Biddeford) would be open to removing the highest-cost option from consideration. She simply requested that the mid-cost alternatives remain on the table to give the municipalities some flexibility; to allow for that, the project would need about \$300,000 for PDR.

Jennie Franceschi, Town of Westbrook, clarified that they have worked to try to find funding for their project and that they are coming to FACTS because the western region needs it done. She asked that RTAC reject the current motion to approve Option 1 with the amendment to fully fund the Windham project and allocate the remaining funds to the Westbrook and South Portland projects. Jennie suggested that RTAC support the original staff recommendation. Bob Burns agreed that the South Portland and Westbrook projects are important to the region and need to be funded.

Christian shared census data regarding mean travel time to work to explain his disapproval of the road widening in the Westbrook project. He said there are ways for Westbrook to obtain funds to make up the difference from the original staff recommended Option 1.

Nell Donaldson brought forth Christian's motion to approve staff recommendation Option 1 with the amendment that the Windham sidewalk project be fully funded and the remaining funds be allocated to the Westbrook and South Portland projects. Eamon Dundon seconded the motion. There were two votes in favor and 14 opposed; the motion failed.

Bill Shane made a motion to approve the staff recommendation. Tom Milligan seconded the motion. Kristina requested to add in the motion that staff will get the exact number from Saco when they have selected an alternative. There were 14 votes in favor, 1 opposed (Christian MilNeil), and 1 abstention (Tom Reinauer); the motion carried.

7. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

8. Adjourn

With no objection, the meeting was adjourned.