

PACTS Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)

September 5, 2023

9:00 a.m.

Approved Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Emily Cole-Prescott	
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	Melissa Hutchins	Y
PACTS Western – Municipal	Bob Burns	
PACTS Western – Planning/ Economic Development	Amanda Lessard	
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Katherine Kelley	Y
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Nathan Poore	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Erin Zwirko, chair	Y
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	
Transit	Hank Berg	
Transit	Natalie Bogart	
Transit	Tom Reinauer	
Transit	Chad Heid, vice chair	Y
MaineDOT	Ryan Neale	
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	
Active Transportation Specialist	Jason Day	
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Guy Mpoyi	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Cheryl Oldfield	Y
Private Sector Trade Association	Eamonn Dundon	Y

1. Welcome

Erin Zwirko opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of the July 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Tom Milligan moved to approve the July 11, 2023 meeting minutes as written; Eamonn Dundon seconded. Melissa Hutchins and Christian MilNeil abstained. All other members present were in favor. (Vote: 9-0-2)

4. Staff Report

2023 Community Transportation Leaders Presentations

Chris Chop (GPCOG) reported that the third cohort of Community Transportation Leaders (CTL) presented their top regional transportation concerns and opportunities to the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) in June. GPCOG staff cataloged the recommendations and gave transit agencies the opportunity to provide status updates. Transit agencies are encouraged to contact GPCOG staff with additional updates and CTLs and GPCOG staff will continue to work with transit agencies on these initiatives.

Enhanced Project Scoping Update

Harold Spetla (GPCOG) provided an update on the PACTS Enhanced Project Scoping studies. GPCOG entered a contract with Toole Design Group in July to complete studies for Gorham's Section 3 Cross Town Trail, Freeport's Route 1 Multi-use Pathway, and Portland's Forest Ave Phase 4. Toole Design Group has scheduled bi-weekly meetings with the municipalities. GPCOG will work with Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) and the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) to gather traffic data along Forest Avenue in Portland using Miovision cameras, and the GPCOG Engagement Team will assist with the public engagement process on Forest Avenue, Phase 4 in Portland.

Housing-Related Technical Assistance Services Available

Chris Chop informed the group about the "Create Transit Friendly Places" element of the PACTS Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – a dedicated funding source that allows the GPCOG Planning Team to provide housing-related technical assistance services to our member municipalities. The specific goals of the element are to expand housing options and encourage infill development in our priority centers (identified in Transit Tomorrow and Connect 2045). The Planning Team has already used the Create Transit Friendly Places element to provide some limited support to several communities on an ad hoc basis but would like to make sure all communities are aware of the opportunity. Please contact Matt Panfil (mpanfil@gpcog.org) to learn more about how your community can best make use of our Planning Team to support your housing goals.

Public Comment

None.

Committee Discussion

Tom Milligan asked if these projects were submitted for Complex Project funding. The projects were submitted in fall of 2021 when GPCOG put out a Call for Planning Studies. The Portland Forest Ave Phase 4 project and Gorham Cross Town Trail (the full length; all 4 sections) were originally submitted as a Complex Projects but were determined to require additional study.

Motion

This item was for information only.

5. Carbon Reduction Program Funding Allocation

The Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) was established by the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) to provide funds for projects designed to reduce transportation emissions. Through the CRP, PACTS will receive \$1,158,668 from MaineDOT for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

GPCOG staff, in coordination with MaineDOT and the Town of Yarmouth, identified the Beth Condon Path in Yarmouth as a project that aligns with CRP's goals and eligibility requirements.

The Beth Condon Path was already in the PACTS Complex Projects pipeline, having been selected for preliminary design report (PDR) funding in 2021 using the Transportation Funding Framework scoring process. In May 2023, the Policy Board allocated \$1,125,000 in federal funding for construction on the Beth Condon Path. At the time of the construction allocation, PACTS had not yet received the CRP suballocation. By using the CRP suballocation, it would make \$1,125,000 available for future allocation through the Complex Projects program.

The anticipated funding split would be \$1,159,668 from PACTS' Carbon Reduction suballocation (77%), \$40,332 from MaineDOT's Carbon Reduction Program allocation (3%), \$150,000 from MaineDOT match funds (10%), and \$150,000 from Yarmouth match funds (10%) - for a total of \$1,500,000.

Public Comment

None.

Committee Discussion

It was clarified that the Complex Projects funding made available by using the CRP suballocation could be used on existing projects in the funding pipeline and would not be restricted to new Complex Projects.

Committee members Christian MilNeil (RTAC - Environmental Specialist), Tom Milligan (Biddeford), and Eamonn Dundon (RTAC – Private Sector Trade Association) discussed the possibility of developing other methods for allocating Carbon Reduction Program funds in future years, when PACTS

expects to receive the suballocation sooner in the year. Kristina Egan (GPCOG) added that the proposed 2024-2025 PACTS Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) has a road map toward meeting vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, which could help inform the selection of projects. Chris Chop (GPCOG) added that while the CRP suballocation is a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding source, it could be flexed to use on transit projects.

Motion

Nell Donaldson moved to recommend that the Policy Board approve an allocation of \$1,159,668 in Carbon Reduction Program funding to the Beth Condon Path project in Yarmouth; Christian MilNeil seconded. All were in favor. (12-0)

6. 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

PACTS is federally required to create a Unified Planning Working Program (UPWP) that documents the region's transportation planning activities. The UPWP is only eligible for planning, not design or construction, and it can be modified or amended throughout its life. The anticipated budget is \$3.5 to \$4.0 million and will be 80% Federal funding, 10% State funding, and 10% Local match funding.

In July 2023, staff presented draft concepts to RTAC ([link here](#)) and the Policy Board ([link here](#)) for input. The concepts were developed based on regional plans, which included robust community input (Connect 2045, surveys of PACTS committees/boards), as well as federal and state guidance.

Following the July meetings, staff further categorized the draft concepts into "tasks" and "elements" (or projects) and developed preliminary cost estimates for each element. Tasks are intended to reflect broader groupings while elements reflect specific investment priorities. The four UPWP tasks are 1) Coordinate, Engage, and Evaluate; 2) Feed the Project Pipeline; 3) Implement Plans and Projects; 4) Plan for the Future.

The draft UPWP is expected to be published in mid-September, reviewed by PACTS Policy Board in late-September, reviewed by RTAC in early-October, and approved by PACTS Policy Board in late-October. A November meeting will serve as a placeholder, if necessary.

Public Comment

Sue Ellen Bordwell (Yarmouth, Casco Bay Trail Alliance) expressed support for the Regional Trail Plan and noted that any plan should be cooperative with the East Coast Greenway. Sue Ellen also expressed concern that \$165,000 (the proposed budget for the Regional Trail Plan in the UPWP) would not be enough. She also noted that the Regional Trail Plan might be a good opportunity to build off the state Active Transportation Plan, which she identified as primarily aspirational rather than operational.

Paul Drinan, [Westbrook Active Transportation Task Force and Vision Zero Maine], expressed support for the Regional Trail Plan and the different elements focused on active transportation. Paul noted the many benefits of active transportation including carbon reduction, safety, equity, and general health improvements.

Committee Discussion

Christian MilNeil expressed support for having a Maine Won't Wait vehicle miles travelled (VMT) reduction strategy, also expressing he feels the State of Maine needs to contribute more money to reduce VMT by 2030. Christian explained that Portland is where most VMT happens and the region needs to be more ambitious than the state, and PACTS should ask Augusta for help meeting those goals. Additional resources from Augusta could also assist with Vision Zero and Complete Streets design guidelines. Christian also noted there might be some overlap between Reimagining Route 1, the Route 1 study proposed in the draft 2024-2025 UPWP, and Complete Streets and Vision Zero. He wondered if these projects should be combined to maximize effective spending. Kristina Egan (GPCOG) responded that GPCOG staff feel the larger need for funding is in transformative capital projects, noting that coordinating with MaineDOT's greater funding source could lead to a more powerful outcome. Christian replied, expressing that the region needs planning money specifically for Maine Won't Wait. He specified that the question should be posed to Hannah Pingree and the Governor's Office. He suggested that creating a plan would make it clear that investments are needed.

Chad Heid asked about UPWP item 3G "Coordination on External Projects" and wanted to verify that coordination is programmed in the draft UPWP. Chris Chop (GPCOG) felt the funding allocation for that item was sufficient, but it could be reassessed following conversations within future PACTS meetings.

Nathan Poore (Falmouth) expressed concerns about meeting Falmouth's climate action plan goals, which align with the State's goals. He added that the region needs to look at a plan if it wants to have a chance at implementing the climate action plans.

Nell Donaldson (Portland) asked what items within the UPWP are the top priorities. Kristina Egan identified the implementation of the major plans that PACTS has adopted over the past two years (Connect 2045, Transit Tomorrow, Transit Together, Vision Zero), as well as preparing projects for the PACTS Complex Projects pipeline. Chris Chop added that this includes preparing existing projects for the pipeline, in addition to preparing new projects. Chris also noted that there's work ahead to implement the new plans and policies into the PACTS funding processes.

Tom Milligan (Biddeford) expressed unease with recommending approval to the PACTS Policy Board before the public comment period ends. Chris Chop expressed the option to postpone the RTAC vote until early-November, which could create time constraint issues. Chris also suggested that RTAC could vote in early-October, with the stipulation that any substantial public comment would lead to a postponement until November. Kristina Egan added that the UPWP can be amended, and funds can be moved around between tasks, if necessary.

Nathan Poore (Falmouth) asked if the vulnerability assessment (UPWP Task 4F) was redundant, noting the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) was conducting similar work. Chris Chop responded that the intent was to do additional scoping for a regional resilience plan, which would prepare the region for funding opportunities under the PROTECT program. Chris noted that the programmed amount \$15,0000 was not enough to complete a plan, but PACTS applied for more funding.

Nathan also suggested the idea of expanding Reimaging Route 1 (UPWP Task 4D) to include transportation, housing, and vehicle electrification. Additionally, he suggested removing “issues” from the Notes section of Task 4D and provided general comments to improve the description of each element. Nathan added that including housing and electrification might make the plan more appealing for future grant opportunities. Kristina expressed support for the idea but noted that those changes to the scope could require funding changes.

Chris Chop requested guidance from RTAC to determine if members would prefer to vote on the UPWP in October or November. Erin Zwirko (Yarmouth) suggested a tentative recommendation in October, pending any significant public comment that could require revisiting in November. GPCOG staff will report back on any public comment received at the November meeting.

Motion

This item was for information and feedback only.

8. Adjourn

With no objections, the meeting was adjourned.