

Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study

Project Advisory Group (PAG)

September 15, 2022

10:00–11:15 am

Meeting Notes

Attendees: Jeremiah Bartlett and Nell Donaldson (City of Portland); Mayor Foley and Eric Dudley (City of Westbrook); Jennifer Williams (Federal Highway Administration), Leah Sirmin, Eric Papetti, Ari Ofsevit, and Batunde Tugbobo (Federal Transit Administration); Rebecca Grover (Maine Turnpike Authority); Greg Jordan (GP Metro); Patricia Quinn (NNEPRA); Eamonn Dundon (Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce); Kara Wooldrik (Portland Trails); Kevin Jensen (Town of Gorham); Ryan O'Neale (MaineDOT); Mike Arsnow (MaineHealth)

Project Team in Attendance: Ericka Amador (GPCOG); Theresa Carr and Joe Poirier (Nelson/Nygaard); Anne Galbraith (ASG Planning); Lily Goodspeed (Connect the Dots)

Welcome & Introductions

Ericka Amador, Project Manager for GPCOG, welcomed new PAG representative Jennifer Williams and gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

Project Overview

Theresa Carr, Project Manager for Nelson\Nygaard, shared a brief project update. The project is about 25% complete. Anne Galbraith of ASG Planning reminded the PAG of their advisory role in this project and thanked them for their participation.

Purpose, Need and Goals

A draft statement describing the Project Purpose and Need was shared. Issues highlighted under Project Need outline the deficiencies the project aims to address. Project Goals set measurable objectives that the team will assess to understand how well different options address project needs. PAG comments included:

Project Purpose Comments

- Make this statement more specific (e.g., connect specific activity centers in these communities, not just the communities).
- The project should also aim to capture people coming through from the west (to park and ride), not just to connect the three communities.

Project Needs Comments

- Perhaps re-word to better state needs, rather than 'deficiencies'.
- General agreement that the sentence about the diverse study area population is not a "need" to be addressed, but a 'fact'. It doesn't fit with the other statements.

- Perhaps rephrase to speak more towards a need for equity in mobility and access.
- It is important to talk about the populations we're trying to serve, but this should cover people who have no other options, as well as people who have transportation choices.
- There is a need to overcome the 'stigma' of using public transit and a need to grow the amount of people who want to use transit.
- The statement about rapid growth is also a fact, not a need. Rather than "service hasn't kept up with growth" try "provide non-auto options and more attractive connectivity options for people." Address mode shift and getting away from auto dependency.
- There is a need for people to make transit trips for all trip purposes (e.g., entertainment and special events).
- Suggest starting each need statement with an active verb and frame things more positively.

Project Goals Comments

- Provide New Opportunities: Perhaps add commerce and retail.

Existing Conditions & Environmental Inventory

Joe Poirier, Deputy Project Manager for Nelson\Nygaard, provided an overview of the work the consulting team has performed all summer to document existing conditions and inventory environmental resources in the study area. PAG comments included:

- Roadway infrastructure. What is the level of congestion and traffic volumes on these segments?
- In the table that shows the appropriate service for various land uses, add BRT to the Mixed-Density row.
- Travel flows:
 - Check the volume between south and north Gorham; it may be too large.
 - The map doesn't include flows from the far west. This would be helpful to understand the potential park-and-ride market.

Based on this data, the team drafted a range of potential rapid transit corridors using roadways and railroad rights of way. At upcoming outreach sessions, members of the public will be encouraged to comment on these potential alignments or draw their own. Theresa asked the PAG to provide feedback on this map if there were any critical concerns, since it soon be printed for the upcoming outreach effort. PAG comments included:

- Consider an overlay that helps the public think about where alignments might go (e.g., composite demand or major destinations).
- Why are Scarborough and South Portland included? Needs in these areas are addressed through other regional studies.

- The team responded that the study area includes the Maine Mall and northern Scarborough area as stakeholder interviewees talked about people needing to travel to and from Gorham-Westbrook-Portland to these areas. The universe of alignments is intended to be inclusive of all potential corridors at this stage, but many will likely be screened out when evaluated for their ability to fulfill the project purpose.

It was noted that the PAG will be sent a copy of today's slide presentation immediately after the meeting so they may look more closely at the materials presented. Rail Conditions. (Note: Following the meeting, NNEPRA asked that rail services be referred to as passenger rail and requested adjustments to a graphic showing a potential relocation of the Portland Downeaster station).

Outreach

The first of three rounds of public outreach for this study will begin the week of 9/19/22. All events can be found on the study [webpage](#) and include:

- A survey about travel patterns and needs
- Six informal pop-up events around the study area
- An open house at USM Gorham on September 22, 2022
- A virtual Zoom meeting on September 28, 2022

The website also provides a 'Sharekit' of materials that PAG representatives can use to share materials about the outreach effort via social media, newsletters, etc.

The Gorham representative expressed concern that outreach on the USM Gorham campus won't engage town residents. He suggested future outreach include other Gorham locations (e.g., the Town hosted a 'Summer Thursday' food truck event that was attended by 350-400 people weekly).

Next Steps

Following upcoming public outreach, GPCOG and the study team will also meet with federal and state environmental resource agencies as part of the early scoping process under NEPA. The study team will also finalize and share the Existing Conditions report and other study documents, and work to finalize and screen the long list of potential transit corridors. The results of this screening will be presented at the next PAG meeting, which is anticipated for November 2022.

Public Comment

No comments.