

**PACTS Policy Board**

September 21, 2023

11:00 AM-1:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Municipal Members		
Arundel	VACANT	
Biddeford	Jim Bennett	✓
Cape Elizabeth	Matt Sturgis	✓
Cumberland	Bill Shane	
Falmouth	Hope Cahan, chair	✓
Freeport	Jake Daniele	✓
Gorham	Ephrem Paraschak	✓
North Yarmouth	Diane Barnes	
Old Orchard Beach	Diana Asanza	✓
Portland	Keith Gray	✓
Portland	Christine Grimando	
Raymond	Nathan White	
Saco	Patrick Fox, vice chair	✓
Scarborough	Angela Blanchette	✓
South Portland	Kate Lewis	✓
Standish	VACANT	
Westbrook	Eric Dudley	
Windham	Barry Tibbetts	✓
Yarmouth	Scott LaFlamme	✓

Non-municipal Members		
MaineDOT	Dale Doughty	✓
Maine Turnpike Auth.	Erin Courtney	
Active Transp. Specialist	Jean Sideris	✓
Environmental Specialist	Allison Burson	✓
Transp. Equity Specialist	Kimberly Irish-Tarbox	
Transp. Equity Specialist	Susan Wiggin	✓
RTAC Liaison	Tom Milligan	✓
BSOOB Transit	Chad Heid	
Casco Bay Lines	Hank Berg	
GP Metro	Greg Jordan	✓
NNEPRA	Patricia Quinn	
Reg. Transp. Program	Jack DeBeradinis	✓
So. Portland Bus Serv.	Donna Tippet	✓
York Co. Comm. Action	Tom Reinauer	

Non-voting Members		
SMPDC	Stephanie Carver	
Federal Highway Admin.	Paige Melius	
Federal Transit Admin.	Leah Sirmin	

**1. Welcome**

Hope Cahan opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

**2. Public Comment**

None.

**3. Approval of the July 27 Policy Board Meeting Minutes**

Susan Wiggin moved to approve the July 27 meeting minutes as written; Allison Burson seconded. All were in favor. (Weighted vote: 38–0; standard vote: 13–0)<sup>1</sup>

**4. Chair's Report**

Hope Cahan shared that the Bicycle Coalition of Maine brought e-bikes to the GPCOG offices for Board members to test ride at the conclusion of the meeting.

**5. Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) Report**

Tom Milligan reported on the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee's September 5 meeting. Tom noted that the Carbon Reduction Program funding allocation was recommended for approval by the committee and that details regarding the draft 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) were reviewed as well.

**6. Staff Report**

Chris Chop shared an update on the Enhanced Project Scoping (EPS) RFP process. GPCOG distributed an RFP for three PACTS projects and Toole Design Group was selected as the consultant. The consults are currently in the data analysis phase, and updates will be shared with the group in the future.

Chris Chop noted that housing-related technical assistance is available for PACTS member communities by PACTS planning staff as a part of the current 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Interested Board members should reach out to GPCOG Planning Director Matt Panfil ([mpanfil@gpcog.org](mailto:mpanfil@gpcog.org)).

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<sup>1</sup> Per PACTS Bylaws, Policy Board votes are weighted by municipal population.

Chris Chop also shared that FHWA-Maine Division's former Community Planner Carlos Peña recently passed away at his home in Colombia. Chris remarked Carlos' service in the transportation industry and asked that the Policy Board hold a moment of silence in his memory.

## **7. Carbon Reduction Program Funding Allocation**

Aubrey Miller presented on the Carbon Reduction Program and the funding being suballocated to PACTS through MaineDOT. PACTS received \$1,158,668 in funding for fiscal years 2022 and 2023. GPCOG staff recommends that this funding be used to fund the construction of the Beth Condon Path project in Yarmouth. This project was previously funded for construction in May through the PACTS Complex Projects process, making \$1,125,000 available through the program in a future iteration. The RTAC recommended approval of the allocation of \$1,159,668 to the Beth Condon Path project on September 5, 2023.

Chris Chop added that PACTS received communications from MaineDOT prior to the September 21 PACTS Policy Board meeting indicating that it may not be accurate to ask the Board to allocate funding for the Beth Condon Project at the meeting. MaineDOT insists that funding should not be allocated to a project until the state's Carbon Reduction strategy is approved so that all projects selected for funding under the program are in alignment with the state's strategy. Chris included that the state's strategy does not need to be in effect prior to the funding allocation, but added that he appreciates the state's desire to approve the strategy prior to the funding allocation so that the strategy can be used as a tool for making future investments. Chris also added that GPCOG staff have been coordinating with MaineDOT for roughly 18 months on the program's funding allocation and advocating for its use. Chris included that in light of comments received by MaineDOT, GPCOG staff would still suggest approval of the funding, but also acknowledging that MaineDOT is actively developing the state's Carbon Reduction strategy, and that this item would return to the Policy Board in the instance of anything needed to be altered.

### *Public Comment*

None.

### *Board Discussion*

Following Chris Chop's comments, Dale Doughty added it might be helpful for the Policy Board to affirm that the Yarmouth, Beth Condon Path project is the highest priority project for receiving Carbon Reduction Program funding. Dale also added that there may be additional funding opportunities through MaineDOT via the Carbon Reduction Program in the future, depending on how the state's strategy is developed.

Hope Cahan asked if there was a specific funding allocation that is expected for the PACTS region through this program annually. Dale Doughty answered yes, and that there may be additional money

available. Hope asked if there is a chance the region would receive any less money. Dale answered no, barring any changes to the Carbon Reduction Program funds. Hope asked if there was any anticipation that these funds may be drawn back at the federal level. Dale answered no, adding that there are additional funding opportunities within MaineDOT if that were to happen. Hope indicated that the Board should move ahead with the approval of the funding, pending the state's Carbon Reduction strategy. Dale agreed with Hope's suggestion.

Scot Laflamme asked Dale Doughty how long this funding source would be available, and what the time table is for the implementation of the state's strategy. Dale answered that the state's Carbon Reduction strategy will be submitted to FHWA prior to the November 5 deadline. Dale also added that the funding level presented by staff is a two-year total, and that the life of the program is for five years.

Allison Burson asked about the timeline of the Yarmouth, Beth Condon Path project in terms of construction. Chris Chop answered that Yarmouth expects the projects to go out to bid in early 2025. Hope Cahan asked if a perceived delay in Carbon Reduction Program funding were to occur, if it might interfere with any other projects with PACTS-committed funds from receiving funding that was "freed up" from the program. Chris Chop answered no, adding that he expects staff to come back to the Policy Board, likely in the Spring of 2024, to ask the Board to make funding decisions on future allocations which would include the Complex Projects program.

Pat Fox asked if data was used in the decision by GPCOG staff to recommend funding the Yarmouth, Beth Condon Path project using Carbon Reduction funds. Aubrey Miller answered yes, and that the candidate recommended by staff was chosen based on the goals of the program as well as project readiness for projects previously funded using PACTS funds. Chris Chop added that the Yarmouth project is expected to finish Preliminary Design Review (PDR) very shortly. Pat Fox asked if the scores of each project in the PACTS "pipeline" were considered. Chris Chop answered no, adding that each of the projects in the pipeline were scored using the PACTS Funding Framework.

Jim Bennett supported the decision to fund the Yarmouth, Beth Condon Path project using the Carbon Reduction Program suballocation. Jim added that assessing potential PACTS-funded projects in the future should consider a municipalities overall vision. Jim cited an example of the Biddeford-Saco Multimodal Bridge project, currently in the PACTS project "pipeline".

Scott Laflamme asked GPCOG staff if there have been any consideration as to how to weigh PACTS-funded projects in the future where Carbon Reduction Program funds might be available. Aubrey Miller answered that this will be considered in the future and relayed back to the Policy Board in the Spring of 2024. Chris Chop added that it may be possible to include the Carbon Reduction Program funding into the PACTS Complex Projects, fortifying the program with an additional funding source. All of the requirements of the Complex Projects program would apply to projects being considered for Carbon Reduction Program funds in this scenario. Dale Doughty added that the decision of where to weigh the Carbon Reduction Program funds should be consistent with the state's Carbon Reduction strategy.

Pat Fox showed support for the approach of suggesting projects in the PACTS “pipeline” for new funding opportunities as they arise, rather than developing a strategy to create new projects once new funding becomes available.

Jean Sideris showed support for funding the Yarmouth project using funding from the Carbon Reduction Program. Jean added that MaineDOT’s draft Carbon Reduction strategy centers around the use of an electrified vehicular fleet, while the Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) supports a strategy centered around an increased focus on active transportation.

*Motion*

Jean Sideris moved to approve the recommended funding for the Yarmouth, Beth Condon Path project, pending the outcomes of the state’s Carbon Reduction strategy; Allison Burson seconded. All were in favor. Dale Doughty abstained. (Weighted vote: 48–0; standard vote: 17–0)

**8. 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Chris Chop presented on the 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Specifically, the four core tasks and the many projects that are categorized into each. 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. Each of the four tasks amount to roughly 20-30% of the overall UPWP budget, which is estimated to be between \$3.5 and \$4 million for calendar years 2024 and 2025.

*Public Comment*

None.

*Board Discussion*

Dale Doughty addressed some of the recent policy changes at MaineDOT that affect the four MPOs in the state, like PACTS. MPOs in the state now receive 90% of the apportionment that MaineDOT receives from FHWA, which is an increase from previous years. Dale also added that MPOs are now able to carry over a set amount of UPWP funding from the previous UPWP, allowing for continuous planning efforts.

Matt Sturgis asked if GPCOG staff have received any comments in response to the draft UPWP being out for public comment. Chris Chop answered yes, adding that the only public comments that PACTS has received thus far came from in-person attendees at the September 5 RTAC meeting. Chris added that PACTS generally does not receive much public input for the UPWP, but that staff have developed a communications strategy to hopefully increase the number of public comments received. Matt Sturgis supported the draft UPWP, specifically the draft tasks and itemizations.

Allison Burson questioned the carryover amount from the current UPWP to the next UPWP, and why there will be carryover in funding. Chris Chop answered by stating that a large sum of planning-eligible funding became available in June of 2023 for the current UPWP and GPCOG staff did not see it as necessary to ramp up things like staffing or consultant hiring due to the potential of funding volatility in the future.

Jim Bennett asked staff to provide him with an estimate for overhead costs incurred in the draft 2024-2025 UPWP. Chris Chop agreed and noted that he would reach out to Jim when appropriate.

**9. Other Business**

None.

**10. Adjourn**

Allison Burson moved to adjourn; Scott Laflamme seconded. With no objection, the motion carried.