

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee

October 5, 2021

9:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Seat	Representative	Attendance
PACTS Southern – Municipal	Diana Asanza	
PACTS Southern – Planning/ Economic Development	Jessa Berna	Y
PACTS Southern – Public Works/ Engineering	Tom Milligan	Y
PACTS Central – Municipal	Matt Sturgis	
PACTS Central – Planning/ Economic Development	Nell Donaldson	Y
PACTS Central – Public Works/ Engineering	Doug Howard	
PACTS Western – Municipal	Bill Giroux	
PACTS Western – Planning/ Economic Development	Amanda Lessard	
PACTS Western – Public Works/ Engineering	Bob Burns	
PACTS Northern – Municipal	Bill Shane	Y
PACTS Northern – Planning/ Economic Development	Theo Holtwijk	
PACTS Northern – Public Works/ Engineering	Adam Bliss	Y
Transit	Hank Berg	Y
Transit	Patricia Quinn	Y
Transit	Donna Tippet	Y
Transit	Tom Reinauer	Y
MaineDOT	Dale Doughty	Y
Maine Turnpike Authority	Rebecca Grover	Y
Active Transportation Specialist	Jean Sideris	Y
Environmental Specialist	Christian MilNeil	Y
Community Transportation Leader	Leeann Brionez	
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 made.

3. Approval of the September 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Jessa Berna moved to approve the minutes but noted that Denise Clavette should be changed to Jessa Berna. Rebecca Grover seconded. 12 votes in favor and none opposed.

4. Staff Report

Aubrey Miller, GPCOG staff, introduced Ericka Amador, a new Regional Transportation Planner at GPCOG. Additionally, she mentioned that the next RTAC meeting is currently scheduled for Tuesday, November 2, which is Election Day. Staff will move the meeting to Tuesday, November 9.

Chris Chop, GPCOG staff, informed RTAC that MaineDOT will be closing I-295 (around Exit 9) over Veranda St. in Portland for a full weekend later this month (October 22 – 25). Route 1 / Veranda St., under the bridge, will also be closed, from October 18 to October 25. Members of RTAC and the public can check VerandaPlan.org for more information and updates. Jean Sideris asked if there was any information on how bicyclists or pedestrians would manage these closures. Chris answered that PACTS has not been involved in the planning or execution of the project so cannot offer any insight. Dale Doughty from MaineDOT did not have any information but stated he would circle back with the group once he did.

5. Connect 2045

Rick Harbison, GPCOG staff, provided an overview of Connect 2045. Connect 2045, PACTS' Long-Range Transportation Plan, creates the vision and sets the tone for how the region invests in the transportation system by focusing on the long-term regional vision, considering all users, identifying needs, identifying policies and projects that address needs, and meeting federal requirements. The federal requirements of Connect 2045 include:

- Updated every 5 years
- Analysis of Existing Conditions
- Analysis of Current/Projected Demand
- Performance Measures and Targets
- Financial Plan
- Congestion Management Process
- FAST Act Planning Factors (Economic Vitality, Safety, Security, Access and Mobility, etc.)

GPCOG staff is responsible for managing the project and developing the plan. An Advisory Committee provides guidance and input to GPCOG staff and helps with promotion and outreach. The content of the plan will come from public and stakeholder engagement, mapping and data analysis, recent plans and studies, and federal requirements. In addition to the input received throughout the year, there is a required 30-day public comment period for the draft plan. The PACTS Policy Committee will ultimately vote to adopt the plan. When the plan is approved, it will be subject to federal review. The timeline of the project will approximately adhere to the following schedule:

1. Summer 2021 – Public and stakeholder engagement begins. The project is launched, and website is created where anyone can provide input.
2. Summer/Fall 2021 – The Question Campaign and Visioning Labs are launched to create a shared vision and goals for the future of transportation in the region.
3. Winter 2022 – Staff will work with stakeholders and members of the public to identify the policy actions and projects needed to achieve the vision.
4. Spring/Summer 2022 – Stakeholders and members of the public are invited to give feedback and share in the development of the final plan.

Zoe Miller, GPCOG staff, opened with a warmup polling question (“What key issues or trends will have the most impact on our region in the next 5-10 years?”), showing RTAC how an application like Mentimeter has worked to engage stakeholders. She then described the Question Campaign, referenced above in the project timeline. She explained that staff went to different events and locations over the summer to engage with the public on their responses to: “What’s your question about getting around Greater Portland in the future?”. Members of the public were also able to text their questions to GPCOG, an option that was promoted through email, media, social media, and partners. Over 500 questions were collected from public engagement and staff was able to organize these questions into central themes such as safety, equitable access, etc. Staff is now holding Visioning Labs, which are

public workshops (virtual due to the COVID Delta variant) to collect ideas on each of the themes, which will help shape the vision and goals. Finally, the Advisory Committee will hold a workshop on the draft vision and goals.

Christian MilNeil suggested asking more focused questions to guide discussions. For example, how we are going to eliminate fossil fuel use in transportation on a limited budget? Zoe answered that staff wanted to provide a wide opening for people to participate in the process. She explained that transportation planning can be alienating due to language and acronyms. Starting broad and becoming more focused as the process moves along with help create a bold vision for Connect 2045.

Eammon Dundon asked if the long-range transportation plan is used in the federal funding framework in terms of scoring projects. Aubrey answered that it is not directly included now, but that could change moving forward.

Zoe showed RTAC the Visioning Lab virtual idea wall. RTAC members participated in the Visioning Lab by sharing ideas and contributing to discussions on others' ideas under each of the themes developed from the Question Campaign. Zoe asked RTAC members to encourage other members of the public to participate in the Visioning Lab.

Nell Donaldson asked if the information gathered will be used to draft a vision and goals for Connect 2045, and will then be presented to the committees that were already mentioned. Zoe responded affirmatively.

Patricia Quinn stated that there are many projects that have been started and she wants to ensure that these projects work together to create actionable items. Rick agreed and stated that staff wants to be consistent with other plans PACTS has done to date.

Tom Reinauer asked how affordability will be woven into Connect 2045. Rick responded that one of the federal requirements is a fiscally constrained financial plan, which will look at previous funding and project what future funding will be. He added that staff will also be creating an aspirational financial plan so the region will be prepared if opportunities for obtaining additional funding arise. Chris emphasized that the goal of the aspirational plan is that, as a region, we will be more competitive for discretionary grant programs. Zoe encouraged members to join the conversation on Stewardship in the virtual Visioning Lab. She added that once we get to the prioritization part of the plan, the goal is for everyone to understand that choices must be made.

Christian agreed that bringing up fiscal constraints is important. He stated that we are currently spending millions of dollars on an inefficient transportation system that is based on the premise that individuals get around in private automobiles. He added that the system is not sustainable financially, or as it relates to climate and inequality. He stated that Maine needs to look at states that have a more sustainable transportation infrastructure, like Massachusetts.

Nell called for public comment, and asked members of RTAC to think about how they would share the Visioning Lab link. No public comment was made.

6. Ride with Me

Ride with Me is a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Access and Mobility Grant funded project with the goal of advancing inclusion of underrepresented communities in shaping the transportation system. Ride with Me is a "Mobility Day" event that will allow decisions makers to ride transit with community members who have mobility challenges, are older adults, are English language learners, etc. The

purpose of the event is for decision makers to experience the challenges and barriers people face when using public transit. Additionally, this project will create personal connections and link transportation decisions to experience. The plan for the event will be for decision makers and riders to meet at a point, travel to a transit stop, ride (including boarding, paying, finding a seat, etc.), and arrive at destination, and to have a conversation along the way. The plan is to hold the event in the late winter or early spring. Staff is looking for feedback from RTAC today. Some of the feedback staff has received so far is that it is important to experience transit together, and that having these conversations and experiences is better in-person than virtually. Also, most people take their experiences, bodies, and/or abilities for granted and it is vital for decision makers to “walk a mile in someone else’s shoes.”

Nell asked about the plan for generating participants. Ericka answered that, on the rider side, there are already six or seven participants signed up from the Community Transportation Leaders. Staff also plans to the word out through their usual networks and social media. The goal is to get a diverse cohort to better understand different rider experiences. On the decision maker side, staff will seek participants at PACTS committee and board meetings. Staff will let RTAC members know when they can sign up for this event.

Christian suggested that anyone running for office would be great to recruit for this event.

Tom Reinauer suggested that mid-winter would be a great time for decision makers to experience public transit. Ericka agreed and stated that the plan is indeed to have this event during the wintertime when public transit is most difficult for riders.

Mireille stated that she has already volunteered to participate in this event and encouraged other RTAC members to do the same so they can experience the transportation barriers that riders face.

No public comment was made.

7. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

8. Adjourn

With no objection, the meeting was adjourned.