

Appendix A: Summary of the March 2016 Public Forums

Thirty-eight people plus PACTS staff attended the four forums regarding the draft *Destination 2040* recommendations. We also received four emails related to the forums. All comments heard are shown below along with a PACTS staff response where appropriate.

The overall sentiment expressed by the forum attendees was strong support for the Plan's recommendations.

SACO March 8th

1. Question about the data source for the PACTS model....cell phone data? PACTS staff answered that it is from statewide population, employment and trips data from the company REMI. Long explanation including calibration.
2. Who is maintaining the REMI model now that Charles Colgan is gone? With the growth occurring in Biddeford/Saco as a result of Portland overflow they want to make sure population projections account for growth. PACTS staff answered that he was unsure but probably the State Economist's office.
3. Are there plans for double-tracking? PACTS staff answered that he knows only about current plans for double track passing siding in Yarmouth.
4. Comment complimenting the Plan, and wanted to be sure there is an emphasis on pavement preservation and maintenance of existing infrastructure. Good roads = economic development. PACTS staff answered that the Plan is all about transportation by roads, for all modes. The Plan also accepts that there is not enough projected funding for our region to adequately maintain all of the roads in the region, and therefore identifies and emphasizes those roads most important to commerce, economic development and the most efficient use of limited resources through the Priority Corridors and Priority Centers framework.
5. A comment from a Saco Planning Board member mentioning that Saco is exploring an update to their local Comprehensive Plan and wondered what the relationship is between *Destination 2040* and their comprehensive planning process. PACTS staff answered that *Destination 2040* is a regional guidance document for our member towns and cities to use to aid in the development of individual municipal comprehensive plans. It is also a key to understanding what is desired for projects and competing for very limited PACTS federal and state funding.
6. Comment that Saco would like to re-assess, through its comprehensive planning process, housing density and growth areas with respect to the Plan. No PACTS staff reply needed.
7. A comment that there is not enough money to fund projects in the PACTS area. He would like to see an item in the plan that leaves open the possibility of Biddeford/Saco/OOB (others) to set up a finance authority (with local control) that can fund big projects (bond bank). Would like to sit down with MDOT and FHWA to discuss. No PACTS staff reply needed.
8. A comment on the above comment that there is precedent with EPA revolving loan funds. No PACTS staff reply needed.
9. A comment suggesting that signal coordination on Main Street in Saco should be considered in addition to Elm Street signal coordination. Need to coordinate Saco Main Street with Biddeford Main Street and Amtrak schedule. PACTS staff will share this idea with the PACTS regional traffic signal coordination working group.

10. Suggestion to explore joint proposal for Main Street Saco through South St Biddeford for signal coordination. PACTS staff will also share this idea with the PACTS regional traffic signal coordination working group.
11. Question about why the rail road crossing barriers are left down even when train has passed the crossing. Affects congestion unnecessarily. PACTS staff suggested that Saco and/or those responsible for the crossing gate actuation coordinate with the signals group and vice versa.
12. Comment about weight limits forcing trucks onto Main Street in Saco instead of bypassing the downtown. No PACTS staff reply needed.

WESTBROOK March 10th

1. Question about the process to implement the Plan. PACTS staff explained that many of the recommendations are long-term in nature, however a Plan Implementation Committee has already taken up some of this question and will be reconvening after Plan adoption.
2. Lot of discussion and excitement around the Smartphone transit tracker application for Smartphones. PACTS staff shared in the enthusiasm about this.

YARMOUTH March 15th

1. Regarding the new bus service between Freeport and Portland – Will the service be sustainable –at risk because of short-term funding? Suggest a grassroots promotion and marketing effort. No PACTS staff reply needed.
2. Excitement around the transit AVL “where is the bus” Smartphone app coming out soon. PACTS staff shared in the enthusiasm about this.
3. Suggestion to coordinate new bus service trips and schedule with that of the Downeaster train. PACTS staff advised that this is being done.
4. Suggestion that more bridges include sidewalks/paths/multi-use trails. Cantilevered if necessary. No PACTS staff reply needed.
5. Suggestion to build a multi-use trail along the old St Lawrence & Atlantic rail right-of-way between Freeport and Yarmouth. No PACTS staff reply needed.
6. Suggestion for a multi-use trail along I-295 rather than on the St Lawrence & Atlantic rail right-of-way. No PACTS staff reply needed.
7. Discussion of a need to alleviate peak hour congestion on North Road in Yarmouth as it approaches Route 1. No PACTS staff reply needed.
8. Mention of the need to build a pedestrian bridge over I-295 in Freeport from the school campus(s). No PACTS staff reply needed.
9. Suggestion to make a formal trail connection from Portland Street in Yarmouth to the Park & Ride through the MaineDOT maintenance lot in Yarmouth. No PACTS staff reply needed.
10. Comment about really liking the land use emphasis in the Plan. No PACTS staff reply needed.

PORTLAND March 22nd

1. Suggestion that the Priority Corridors and Centers map should include a center in the Northgate area. Portland and PACTS staff both responded – a center will be added.
2. Suggestion that private sector or government create financial incentives for people to drive less and/or own fewer cars. Example was to increase the cost of parking. No PACTS staff reply needed.
3. Desire for more seamless regional transit services – need to consolidate 7 transit systems into 1. PACTS staff described the work underway on this subject.
4. Desire for more neighborhood byways for pedestrians and bicyclists. Identifying and making small connections. Portland staff responded regarding Portland’s plan and the PACTS-funded byway project.
5. Suggestion for more park ‘n ride lot capacity for people wishing to ride the bus to their destinations. PACTS staff noted that **Destination 2040** includes a strategy to achieve this.
6. Idea to add a trail/bikepath along the rail corridor from Portland north along the coast. PACTS staff noted that the same idea was offered at the Yarmouth forum.
7. Comment that travel speeds drop a lot on Route 302 when travelers enter Portland from the west. The comment included the statement that it’s okay given that Forest Avenue runs through a dense urban area. No PACTS staff reply needed.
8. Suggestion that more be done to manage stormwater by a variety of means related to road construction. PACTS staff noted that **Destination 2040** includes a strategy to achieve this.

Via Email

From: Cheryl Juniewicz

Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2016 9:30 PM

To: Carl Eppich <ceppich@gpcog.org>

Subject: 2040 public presentation tues eve

Hi Carl, Great to see all the progressive thinking going into the future of this region. Your presentation was very interesting, too bad the pictures weren't larger it was a little difficult to see. IE Washington Ave corridor areas of focus for redevelopment, please take a look at including the East Deering area at Washington and Veranda as well as the Northport area. Thanks, Cheri Juniewicz

From Kara Wooldrik, Executive Director from Portland Trails

Hi Carl,

I see comments are to come to you about the draft long range plan. I had planned to attend the public meeting last night but was struck down with a killer headache. Sorry to miss the fun.

So, I've tried to review the plan online but honestly haven't been able to get through it in as much detail as I'd like. Here's what we have:

We like the big picture. We like that all modes are recognized throughout the plan and that land use and economic development are considered in ways that respect the importance of healthy ecosystems. And, I'm glad to see so much focus on transit.

Strategy 2.5 The wording is clearly not exclusive but it could include trail networks that actually serve the desired purpose better than linear regional trails.

Nice focus on Complete Streets. It's good to see multi-modal level of service mentioned.

Strategy 6.6: I'm surprised to see non automobile modes called "alternative". That seems to reflect an auto-centric approach, which I think this plan mostly avoids. It would be great if one of the strategies did not use this outdated language.

Strategy 6.7: Why not call us (Portland Trails) out on this one? The footprints of the facilities mentioned here are much smaller than the PT footprint which covers 4 communities and about 70 miles of trails.

Feel free to send questions my way. Thanks so much for all of you work on this. My Best, Kara

Kara Wooldrik
Executive Director Portland Trails

From: Nat Tupper [<mailto:ntupper@Yarmouth.me.us>]
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2016 12:13 PM
To: John Duncan <jduncan@gpcog.org>
Cc: Pat Thompson <PThompson@Yarmouth.me.us>
Subject: Destination 2040

Dear John-

I will be unable to attend the March 15 meeting in Yarmouth on the draft Destination 2040 Plan due to a schedule conflict. I did want to pass along a couple specific thoughts and a general endorsement of the Draft Plan as presented so far. I think the Committees working on this update are to be congratulated and thanked for an excellent effort and I am confident that the Plan will be a very useful guide for future decisions and investments.

Despite my endorsement of the Plan in its entirety, I do want to offer two observations for consideration. The two are related in a strange way.

Goal #6 asks for a focus on the environment (in addition to related goals for promoting good land use patterns and energy conservation) and Ch 4 Strategies 6.1 and 6.2 address environmental concerns to some degree. But I think more could be said and more environmental focus could be promoted in the TIP scoring processes that are derived from the Plan. Strategy 6.2 promotes stormwater management that prevents heavy/fast concentrations of flow to prevent erosion and downstream concentrations of pollutant loads. And Strategy 6.1 references climate change adaptations for transportation infrastructure (I suppose expecting higher storm flows, changes in flood elevations etc). I can support both...but I wonder if there isn't much more that could be addressed such as habitat loss and fragmentation, stream crossings and culvert designs that prevent or permit movement of fauna, construction practices that introduce/encourage non-native invasive plants, street tree canopy impacts of road and utility work, salt or other chemical runoff or groundwater percolation and similar concerns. I realize

that there are an overwhelming number of concerns that compete for very limited transportation funds and that these are “periphery” issues that won’t drive most of the transportation investment funds. This leads to my second observation related to funding:

I’m a bit lost on the numbering and section elements but Chapter 1 (Sept 23, 2015 draft) page 15 and Chapter 4 Strategy 1.3 both refer to greater funding flexibility. Strategy 1.3, in particular lists various options for funding other than the traditional TIP competitive process. I applaud that and I think it should be expanded to include funding partnerships with the private sector, foundations, environmental, economic, social justice and other groups and interests of a broad range including other state and federal agencies. But I question where in PACTS funding process there is room for such partnership. For the most part, I fear we will say we have broader goals and funding flexibility to promote those goals, but I don’t see where (at least currently) PACTS could/would actually be at the table to fund a project that does not first and foremost promote a pure transportation goal. If PACTS were to somehow have a funding mechanism to support transportation infrastructure investments that are first environmental, (or social justice or other concerns) we could, in fact, potentially be a partner to advance the goals stated in Strategy 6.1

I don’t have a viable solution or strategy to offer as few , if any, would support an environmental “set aside” in our TIP process (including me). And I can’t envision more than a few token scoring points in the TIP rating process for projects that advance environmental objectives writ more largely than the limited scope of Strategy 6.2 . PACTS policies and implementation approaches are focused on municipally initiated roadway (and some ped/bike and transit) projects and generally lacks flexibility and responsiveness to opportunity...even as our Plan calls for flexibility, creativity and partnerships. Our funding decisions are based on municipally initiated applications and committed to in some degree 2-6 years in advance of construction. Our funding dollars are (appropriately) competitive and ranked against similar or other projects in the same funding cycle. By necessity, PACTS is unable to be at the table when an environmental issue is the primary driver.

In the end, I support the Plan as drafted and I thank everyone for the excellent work. I will be thinking, however, as we work our ways through implementation policies, on how we can break out of our silo a bit and position ourselves to be at the table and helping use transportation funds and projects to advance our goals outside out TIP process.

Chapter 1 Goal 6---(1)Regional focus,(2) Ec Dev,(3) Mobility/Safety/Accessibility,(4) Energy Conservation, (5)Land Use,(6) Environment.

Environmental Ch 1 Recommended Action #8 Identify and Implement cost effective approaches, financing opportunities, and cost savings methods to leverage, local, state and federal funding of preservation, modernizing, and efficiency of the collector system.

Recommended Actions 46-49 (funding chase)

Federal Policy #5 Environment/Land-Use/Energy Conservation all lumped together

Strategy 1-3 mentions BPI

Nat Tupper, Town Manager



April 11, 2016
Dear Mr. Eppich,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed PACTS Long-Range Transportation Plan: Destination 2040. The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is a statewide organization that works to make Maine better for bicycling and walking. We support projects and policies that create safe and welcoming places for those traveling on foot or bike.

We are writing to express general support for the proposed plan. We are pleased to see the agency embrace concepts of Complete Streets, multi-modal safety and accessibility, public engagement, coordination with smart growth land use planning, and more.

We were, however, concerned with a number of projects listed on "Other Major Projects Under Consideration in the PACTS Region" (Table 2, page 15) in the Executive Summary. The list seems to emphasize turnpike expansion and additional turnpike interchanges: a turnpike spur to Gorham; new turnpike interchanges in Saco/Scarborough, Biddeford, and Cumberland; and a new interchange at I-295 exit 4 in South Portland.

As we're sure you are well aware, transportation experts have repeatedly found that building new roads inevitably encourages more people to drive, which in turn negates any congestion savings. We would urge PACTS policy-makers and planners to re-think spending such a large amount of public dollars on infrastructure projects that will only invite and create more cars, traffic, and congestion. Were major new funding sources to become available during the next 20 years, we hope that they would be spent in the same fashion as other PACTS projects that have consistently emphasized the needs of all users, not just car drivers.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Abby King".

Abby King
Advocacy Manager
Bicycle Coalition of Maine

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "James Tasse".

Jim Tasse
Assistant Director
Bicycle Coalition of Maine

April 11, 2016 PACTS Staff Response

Hi Abby-

Big thanks to you, Nancy and Jim for reviewing and getting us these comments. They will become part of the record for the development of the Plan.

As the title implies, the "Other Major Projects Under Consideration in the PACTS Region" table includes potential projects that may or may not come to fruition. They are needs identified through the development of the Plan by our many stakeholders. Certainly less expensive solutions or options are a priority, and providing a safe means of travel for other modes near, on, or at the intersection with these conceptual investments, would be emphasized by PACTS members in the development of actual projects.

Thanks again!

Carl

Carl F. Eppich, AICP

Senior Transportation Planner

PACTS Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System

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