

I. Executive Summary

In July 2004, MaineDOT introduced a new process to improve public participation and to develop a Regional Transportation Assessment (RTA) for the State's multimodal transportation system. The RTA was produced to examine ways that Maine DOT could coordinate its regional transportation planning and programming with other local, regional and state transportation, land use and economic development planning activities. Regional Transportation Assessments were conducted in all six of the state's Economic Development Districts. The Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) and Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC) prepared the Regional Transportation Assessment Report for the Southern Maine Economic Development District, which includes six regional corridors in York and Cumberland Counties.¹ The Southern Maine Corridors Steering Committee and MaineDOT assisted GPCOG and SMRPC in this process.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inventory and assess regional transportation, land use, and economic development needs along major transportation corridors within the economic development districts (EDD) comprising the two county service area of the Southern Maine Economic Development District (SMEDD). Identified needs were prioritized to maximize the benefits of transportation infrastructure based upon data analysis of existing conditions, trends, and public input.

The following elements describe MaineDOT's new approach to regional planning:

- Utilize creative techniques for increased public participation
- Increase the use of regional planning commissions
- Focus on corridor-based planning (Example: Pennsylvania Corridor Plan)
- Create a Statewide Regional Transportation Assessment by region
- Incorporate economic development strategic planning

Public Involvement

The 1991 Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) states that transportation decisions must "incorporate a public participation process in which local governmental bodies and the public have timely notice and opportunity to identify and comment on concerns related to transportation decisions, capital investment decisions and project decisions." The STPA rule then convened a series of Regional Transportation Advisory Committees (RTACs), which were composed of people "who broadly and fairly represent the concerns of planners, environmentalists, business and commerce, different transportation modes, historic preservation, the elderly, the disabled, and other diverse interests." These committees met regularly over the past decade to assist MaineDOT in various planning and policy decisions, but have not always been effective at reaching out consistently to the population groups prescribed in the rule. Also, in southern

¹ Regional Corridors were defined similar to the Pennsylvania Plan and connect major service and employment centers. These Corridors follow roads, railroads, trails, and rivers.

Maine, the RTAC 6 membership tended to draw members from the urban and coastal areas, leaving a gap in knowledge of the unique needs of the more rural places.

The purpose of direct communication with stakeholder groups is to introduce the needs assessment project and to gather initial feedback on: 1) refining the proposed corridors; 2) identifying significant land use, economic and transportation variables to be incorporated in our inventory; 3) identifying local and regional concerns related to the major corridors; and 4) identifying significant constituencies such as freight carriers, transit riders, business and tourism that have not yet been contacted but should be involved in this project.

Contacts with stakeholder groups were conducted via email, interviews, and telephone conversations. Project staff also created a web page with direct links from both GPCOG's and SMRPC's web sites to regularly update and solicit comments from the stakeholders on the Regional Transportation Assessment. In addition, the web page included information on transportation projects advertised or currently under construction, minutes and documents from Corridor Committees, transportation-related census information, and a regional community calendar with information about Regional Transportation Assessment-related workshops and public meetings. Southern Maine Corridors Steering Committee meetings, an open house, and group workshops were designed in various geographic locations so that at least one workshop was reasonably accessible to all municipalities in Cumberland, York, and Southern Oxford Counties. The Southern Maine Corridors Public Participation Plan and Calendar are attached in Appendices K and L.

Steering Committee

GPCOG and SMRPC convened a Southern Maine Corridors Steering Committee to oversee the development of the Regional Transportation Assessment. This phase of public participation complies with the Maine Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) and will ensure participation of individuals or groups representing "planners, environmentalists, business and commerce, different transportation modes, historic preservation, the elderly, the disabled, and other diverse interests." Approximately twenty members serve on the Steering Committee representing business groups, town administration, planning and transportation professionals, environmental advocates, and former RTAC 6 members. A Stakeholder Profile form was developed to identify interested stakeholders and individuals willing to serve on the Southern Maine Corridors Steering Committee. This committee is staffed by GPCOG, SMRPC and MaineDOT. The SMCC Roster can be found in Appendix M.

Other sub-regional corridor committees are also meeting regularly in Cumberland and York Counties. They include the Central, Coastal and Lakes Region Coalitions in Cumberland County and Route 109, Route 111, Route 113, and Route 236 Corridor Committees in York County. A description of these corridor planning efforts can be found in Appendices A - F.