

**Southern Maine Corridor Committee
Scarborough Town Hall
September 8, 2004
5:00-6:30 P.M.**

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Caroline Allam, GPCOG; Neal Allen, GPCOG; Betsey Buckley, TrainRiders Northeast; Wayne Davis, TrainRiders Northeast; John Duncan, PACTS; George Flaherty, Cumberland County EMA; Jennie Franceschi, Biddeford; Connie Garber, YCCAC Transportation; Carolyn Gilman, Westbrook Senate District 29; Marc Guimont, MDOT; James Gulnac; Sanford; Natalya Harkins, GPCOG; Peter Hefler, Greater Portland Transit District; Robert Kahn, TrainRiders Northeast; Stephen Klein, Mermaid Transportation; Rosemary Kulow, New Gloucester; Suzanne LePage, SMRPC; Jim Long, Old Orchard; Chris Mann, MDOT; Tom Murphy, Sen. Susan Collins Office; Ronald Owens, Scarborough; Harold Parks, Gorham; Randy Perry, TrainRiders Northeast; Bob Petitt, Gorham Economic Development Corporation; Rob Petitt, GPCOG; Tom Reinauer, SMRPC; Bob Rodman, TrainRiders Northeast; Mike Shaw, Scarborough; David Sherlock, MDOT; Dan Stewart, MTA; David Willauer, GPCOG; Roger Winn, Newfield; Dick Wood, Gray; Steve Workman, Eastern Trail Management District.

Call to Order

David Willauer opened the meeting with introductions.

Overview of Regional Needs Assessment Approach – MaineDOT

Chris Mann gave an update on the Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) process and explained that the new public participation approach was approved by Commissioner David Cole. New components in the area of transportation planning include a public survey, public focus groups, and a stakeholders' survey. Broad public participation and involvement is necessary to create a meaningful public role in the decision-making process. Some of the shortfalls of the RTAC process included lack of consensus between regions, inconsistent involvement of RTAC members, and the fact that 70% of the respondents who participated in the public opinion survey were not aware of RTAC activities at all. This led to a need for some form of grassroots planning that connects the public with local and state authorities, allows for public input in the transportation planning process, and links land use, transportation and economic development together.

MaineDOT reviewed some of the public participation plans available in the country and introduced the RNA process, which will be carried out by local Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) including GPCOG and SMRPC. This process will include public opinion to develop priority corridors and to integrate land use, transportation planning and economic development. Some of the goals of this approach include expanded public involvement, broad regional transportation goals and assessment, and a more sound information source for MaineDOT future planning and investments. The six Economic Development Districts will be used for the Regional Needs Assessment.

Proposed Steering Committee Membership

David Willauer introduced the public participation plan that was developed for the RNA process. The plan highlights some of the opportunities for public involvement in the study. The plan identified various information dissemination techniques and channels and included both formal and informal settings for future public process. The stakeholder profile form was distributed to all participants. The purpose of this form is to determine individuals that are willing to serve on the Southern Maine Corridor Steering Committee.

Regional Needs Assessment

David Willauer summarized the Corridor Based Planning concept, which expands beyond town borders and includes multiple interests in the region. Suzanne LePage presented draft maps with six suggested transportation corridors in both Cumberland and York Counties and stressed advantages of broad public participation in community planning activities. A corridor-based approach encourages regional cooperation, regulatory consistency across municipal borders, more effective growth management tools, promotes economic development, and accounts for regional transportation needs.

Neal Allen explained how the Portland Area MPO (PACTS) has expanded from seven to 15 municipalities. GPCOG and SMRPC have a long history of working together and now both staff PACTS committees. He also described the role and structure of the Southern Maine Economic Development District (SMEDD) He further described how GPCOG and SMRPC have been working successfully with several sub-regional corridor coalitions.

Corridor Identification and Next Steps

Participants discussed suggested regional corridors and elements such as pipelines, trails, water transportation, integration of territories adjacent to Maine borders, etc. One of the questions that should be asked prior to corridors delineation is the purpose of this exercise: is it designed to look at the existing conditions or is it a future vision for the region? Are they passenger and freight corridors or just highway corridors? Suzanne explained that regional corridors outline geographic regions for the purposes of information gathering and analysis, municipal cooperation, and also public outreach. The study will look at different aspects of planning and will include various transportation modes and types.

MaineDOT will provide a framework for cooperation between different regions around the state and will compile a statewide Regional Needs Assessment (RNA).

A question was raised about the effectiveness of public participation and its influence on local planning decisions, based on the current conditions of growth happening faster than planning. MaineDOT would like to use the RNA to help with the transportation improvements prioritization process and funding. Also, this approach develops a methodology for introducing regional planning groups instead of putting this role on EPA or MaineDOT. Participants discussed the importance of common interest areas for municipal collaboration and public interest and a focus on proactive approach in planning. It was also mentioned that strong Home Rule in the state and unwillingness of local government to give up local control often restrain regional-based planning. Regional impact fees were identified as one of the tools that could be used in growth management.

Caroline Allam gave an overview of existing economic development programs and pointed out the “disconnect” between job creation and growth management.

Participants suggested town websites for disseminating information about the Regional Needs Assessment process. Maintaining public interest and involvement could be a difficult task. David Willauer suggested that increased awareness of current transportation projects of regional significance in the area would draw public attention to the Regional Needs Assessment process. Visualization was identified as one of the most powerful tools in conceptualizing the future impact of various development scenarios. One member suggested the use of computer based visualization applications, such as traffic simulation models, To bring attention to area traffic congestion.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of Southern Maine Corridor Committee will be in early October. Staff will poll interested committee members for best date and time.

Natalya Harkins, GPCOG 774-9891