

Central NH Regional Planning Commission
Transportation Advisory Committee
Thursday, October 9, 2008
CNHRPC Office
28 Commercial St. Ste. 3
Concord, NH 03301
8:00 AM

Attendees: Steve Henninger, Concord Planning Department
Nick Alexander, NHDOT
Ed Roberge, City of Concord Engineer
Dick Lemieux, Concord City Council
Jim McElroy, Henniker
Mickey M, Easter Seals
Jim Sudak, CAT
Ted Houston, Boscawen
Oldenburg, Bow
Jean McCarthy
Bill Klubben, Bow
Kathy Brockett, NHDES
Rob Mack, Concord Engineering Dept.
Bill Glennie, Bradford
Rodrigo Marion, CNHRPC
Craig Tufts, CNHRPC
Mike Tardiff, CNHRPC
Emily Norton, CNHRPC

Meeting began at 8:10 AM.

Review of June 6, 2008 Meeting Minutes: Dick Lemieux said “particle” should be changed to “particulate” pollution. Jim Sudak corrected the misspelling of his last name. Steve Henninger made a motion to approve. Jim Sudak seconded it.

Emergency Bridge Repairs Update: Gene McCarthy of McFarland Johnson presented the update. A major transportation planning study that looked at the I-93 corridor through Bow-Concord was completed in April. During the preparation of the final report, the financial crisis hit the NHDOT 10 year plan and this project was a casualty of that process. Therefore, existing issues with the corridor had to become the focus. Four bridges are red-listed (bridges that require some attention based on inspections and ratings). Two carry I-93 over the extension of I-89, the others are at Exit 12, and Exit 14. They are all rated as structurally deficient because of deck issues (concrete, asphalt). Exit 14 is rated as having the most serious deck issues. The plan is to look at the locations and make one repair per year. Exit 14 will be done in 2009, the I-89 bridges in 2010, and Exit 12 in 2011. All funding is coming from the turnpike system.

Exit 14 is the focus because it is a primary access point to Concord and traffic is a problem. Loudon Road has seven lanes underneath and four lanes of I-93 go over the bridge. The Exit 14 bridge was built in 1966 and is primarily affected by deck problems. The deck surface has to be taken off. The repaired deck will last 25-30 years minimum. Diverse options for where to move traffic are being considered. One option is to build a temporary detour, which would be expensive and time consuming but would be least interruptive to traffic patterns. Another option is to use precast panels. It could also be possible to do the construction over a weekend or doing a piece at a time overnight, which would take a couple weeks.

Jim Sudak asked about the impact to Loudon Rd. Gene said it depends on the method of construction. If they do half over a long weekend, Loudon Rd would be closed. A detour would maintain traffic on Loudon Rd. There would be some lane closures off-peak and at night. Ted asked if the work was done on a weekend, would it include demolition and construction. Gene said yes, it should take about 60 hours to demolish half the deck and bring in panels. Jim McElroy asked if the assumption is that when the deck is ripped up there will not be a surprise. This will be examined prior to construction. Jim McElroy asked what other mitigations could be considered if funding was not secured, i.e.-lane closures, weight limits. Deck repairs could be done but it is a funded project, it has money allocated in the 10 year plan, all turnpike toll money specific to this project.

Dick Lemieux asked if they would consider doing this during the week instead of a weekend due to high traffic volumes on weekends. There is a counter on I-93 that provides good yearly data about traffic spikes. If it was done on a weekend, there would be enough awareness that people would stay away from the area. Even off-peak off-season traffic could probably not be accommodated on what would be open.

Rob Mack asked if there will be an analysis of traffic control options in the draft report and Gene said there will. The draft is due to get to the DOT the week of October 13. Rodrigo said he has noticed pedestrian activities around the bridge and asked if any pedestrian improvements are being considered. This project is simply a rehab dealing with structural deficiencies and at this point nothing new will be added. Steve Henninger asked what would happen to pedestrian activity during construction. For a weekend closure, pedestrians would not be able to get through. More conventional construction would maintain one of the sidewalks at all times. Steve said it's possible an emergency shuttle should be considered and Rob Mack suggested using the trolley. Kathy asked what the difference in cost would be to do a detour. Gene said cost will be a major consideration, and deck panels are also expensive. Rob asked if the temporary bridge would be a conventional deck replacement. Gene said one consideration is the length of time it would take to build and that they want to get an idea of what are people willing to bear in impacts to get this done. Steve Henninger asked if they would consider continuing on a Monday. Gene said it would depend, but doing it over a weekend is pretty aggressive, they would need good weather, and the contractor would not be able to find any surprises. Dick asked if they would be making provisions for a potential future widening. There is some discussion of widening but it adds cost and this bridge would not accommodate what came out of the Bow-Concord project because it is too narrow and too short. Roughly \$11 million is budgeted to fix all four bridges. Exits 12 & 14 would be obsolete configurations if there was a widening but the I-89 bridges could still be used.

Gene offered to come back when the final report is complete. Once the report is published, it will be sent out. Dick asked why it is necessary to do each of these bridges in a different season. It was thought that people would not want to endure it all in one construction season but most especially, funding may not all be available in one construction season.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan: Nick Alexander from DOT presented the update. The timeline for the current STIP is for the first 4 years of the 10 year plan that was approved in June. The federally mandated portion is going through an MPO process. The STIP should be out for comment in the beginning of November and therefore up for approval in January/February. The STIP is a 4 year document so there is no concern over lapsing. STIP is planned for funding from the federal highway. The guidance is conservative, allowing a projected increase each year. The 4 year STIP is financially constrained to revenue. The bridge projects mentioned are not in the STIP because they are funded with state money. Steve Henninger asked if there were any projects in Concord region and Nick did not think so.

The 10 year planning process starts at the planning commission level within the next few months. RPCs will be asked to take a look at projects that are in the current plan to evaluate the existing projects and any new projects. During the spring/summer the DOT looks at the list of priorities from the RPCs. The DOT will try to give the RPCs feedback and then produce a draft, likely by next summer 2009. GACIT adopts a plan and forwards it to the Governor, who will then forward it to the legislature. In June 2010 there will be a new 10 year plan. The previous plan was subject to a lot of financial constraints so future plans will not be as far-reaching from a financial perspective. Steve Henninger asked what would be expected for enhancement funding & CMAC funding for the next application round in 2010. They are looking to have statewide CMAC committee meetings probably in December. TE has a long list of projects for 2009. The next round *may* start in spring 2009 for TE. CMAC is more limited for funding and does not have a lot of projects currently scheduled but has some projects that historically have not been ready to move forward (ie-rail). If these continue to be delayed, other projects would hopefully take their place.

Mike Tardiff will help CNHRPC work on the TIP. Mike asked Nick to give some background on developing criteria for the TIP. Nick said that a lot of the criteria goes back far, it was reevaluated by TAC with comments from DOT as to some layout of how the RPCs might rate potential projects. There are local, regional, and state priorities. Economic development has always been an important piece. Newer criteria talks about multi-modal, alternate modes, quality of life, and environment. The weighting scale has always been there but over time the view has shifted and can focus on important issues of the time. There have been recommendations from the CAC and there has been a Long Range Transportation Plan with recommendations. These should be taken into account when rating projects.

Mike asked for comments about how the process could work. The TIP in the past has also served as a means to look at other funding sources. Mike recommended that he and Rodrigo spend some time looking at the documents that Nick referred to and make some recommendations and evaluation criteria.

Dick said it is missing criteria to evaluate projects against each other by cost benefit analysis and how many people they will affect. Jim McElroy said safety and road service has been heavily weighted. Economic development may also have been heavily weighted but the financial crisis should be considered when weighting these issues. Dick said the level of impact could be too high (30 points). If it's not affecting a roadway or intersection why is it on the list? Take a second look at that piece. Steve said A & B seem to overlap. "A" takes into account LOS and "B" refers to other elements of road and intersections. C & D seem to say the same thing, there may be subtle differences. Nick said in the actual TIP the projects were broken down by interstate, other state roads, transit, and bike/ped. Ed said residents are screaming for quality of life improvements versus LOS improvements. Kathy said to really consider natural environment. A & B should not be yes/no, it should be "to what level has this project improved...."

Re-establishing TAC Standing Rules and Procedures: Have been inconsistent with attendance. Need to consider how to restructure the TAC. Mike said that it is difficult to get some communities to appoint members who will follow-up and asked for some discussion about participation. Nick attends all the MPO meetings. Most rural committees don't do things very differently. Daytime meetings tend to work better, food is always beneficial. In areas where there is a lot of activity, people tend to come out more. Mickey asked if CNHRPC has sent letters to town boards soliciting appointments of town representatives. That process was done periodically. Jim McElroy said that problem is affecting the commission at large as there is not full representation from all the communities. Need to outreach to members of the general court.

Bill Glennie asked where the two citizens would come from? It was suggested to put a newspaper posting and/or NPR ad. Dick said when Concord created a Transportation Advisory Committee he had to find 15 members and contacted people who had spoken out at meetings. Personal outreach might work better to get people who are engaged. Mickey could offer some names of members of the general court at a later time. Mike asked everyone to think about their interest in being Chair or Vice Chair and also making some edits to the standard rules. Nick said all the MPOs just re-did their prospecti. Mickey asked about Article 3 and membership. Steve Henniger confirmed that the Executive Committee mentioned is the Executive Committee of the RPC. Ed said that it is easy for Concord people to get to CNHRPC to meet, but maybe TAC meetings could be held at other locations. Steve said they have tried meeting in other towns but typically the same people show up. Mickey said that if meetings move to different locations is it will be difficult to find it. It is good to have a base of operations and occasionally go out and meet in another community. Dick said TACs were generally employed staff such as town planner, and engineers. TAC meetings are held during the day and Commission meetings are held at night because Commissioners have other jobs. Dick asked if the rules will be approved by the Executive Committee so it will be on the towns' radar. Mike said the rules would come back to TAC first, then Executive Committee.

Safe Routes to Schools Program: Three towns in the CNHRPC region: Hillsborough, Boscawen & Hopkinton applied for the second round. They are looking for infrastructure money for Round 3, which will occur in November. The SRTS program looks for a Task Force to advocate for safer walking and biking to schools. Craig gave an update on how he identified schools and has been contacting them to see if they are interested in applying for the federal grant. Rodrigo explained that a city-wide project is being discussed for the city of Concord.

Mickey asked who the Commissioner was in reference to, it is the DOT Commissioner. Kathy spoke about how the goal is to have less parents driving, and said it would be a perfect opportunity to spread the DES anti-idling message for buses and cars. Ed Roberge would like to close South Street in the school area to all drop-offs. Dick said that allotting some money for a part-time coordinator would be very important for the next stage. It could be someone at the RPC, City, School District or someone new that can take Deb Samaha's place.

Ozone Standards for NH: Kathy updated everyone on preliminary data relative to this year's ozone season and the number of days we went over the limit. The standard used to be 0.08 parts per million. The EPA lowered the standard to 0.075 because of health studies that showed adverse effects of high ozone levels. Because of the rainy, cloudy weather, the state did not get the number of exceedences expected. A lot of regulations have been passed for sources of pollution upwind of NH to put control technology on emissions. The state will forecast for ozone and fine particle pollution days and call in an air quality alert. Ted asked if major storms can clear the air, Kathy was not sure if there was a trend. Jim McElroy asked about the strong correlation between winds from certain areas and pollution and asked if the ozone was formed here. Kathy said ozone can be transported in a short time frame. At night it typically dissipates but compounds like VOCs can be present in NH as the pollution blows in from elsewhere that contributes to creating more ozone. It is hard to tie one reaction to one pollutant so they take a regional approach. Ted asked if there is a record of bad days and days that precede them so they can analyze the cause. Kathy said there is very good data. Bill Oldenburg asked how many monitoring locations exist and Kathy said about 15-20, mostly concentrated in the southern half of the state because they are population based. Dick asked where the monitoring stations are in Central NH. There is one on Hazen Drive in Concord and one in Manchester. Kathy said she could send out more detailed ozone data for Concord. Jim McElroy would like to hear about particulate pollution and wood smoke at a later time. Kathy said legislation was passed that they have to meet set back requirements and municipal officials have jurisdiction. Dick asked if the state engages in any anti-idling enforcement. They can if there is a specific complaint but it is a difficult habit to break.

PATH Update: Craig provided brief background about the rideshare/alternative transportation program. Emily provided an overview on donations from sponsors, the incentive programs, and the free PATH breakfast on October 17 in front of the State House. Craig discussed the working group of all organizations and interested people in the state that have meetings to discuss and give advice on transportation demand management programs. Rodrigo spoke about the funding from Concord 20/20 and how PATH will be seeking more funding when it runs out in December. Mickey spoke about how Concord 20/20 anticipated the opening of a bike/ped facility on Stickney Ave. In the past month, the support from Concord 20/20 has been withdrawn from that project but Easter Seals would like to work with PATH and help support the program. Easter Seals will be opening a bike/ped facility within the next 60 days. Dick commended the progress of PATH.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Inventory: Rodrigo spoke about how the SRTS program has come up with bike/ped levels of service for the South End of Concord. Doing bike/ped analysis for a larger area would be beneficial in applying for future SRTS grants. Dick asked if CNHRPC could look at digitized inventory data, Rodrigo said this would be ok for BLOS but for PLOS

you have to be on the street to see the conditions. Ed asked what the source of the regional review would be. Craig said there is an official bike routes map of preferred routes for the state. Ed said Concord would participate in any level for Concord. The groundwork of having interns go out in the field and do counts is very valuable. CNHRPC and Concord interns could work together. Steve mentioned the sidewalk map in the SRTS report is a couple years out of date and a new inventory will be done by the end of the year.

Park & Ride Lot Inventory Updates: Rodrigo explained the graphs showing usage over a five month period and comparing the month of August in 2007 & 2008. Kathy spoke about how the Hillsborough lot was built during the bypass construction and was supposed to capture traffic traveling west. Dick said the biggest value of this information could be for the TIP and the STIP to encourage towns to look for locations where they can create small ad hoc car lots where they can use carpools. In the 1970s the DOT would create ad hoc dirt parking lots during the energy crisis and then would pave the ones that had the most usage. There is no need for expensive Park & Rides, small lots everywhere would work better than mega lots in isolated places. Bill Oldenburg said there is a project to expand the New London Park & Ride. Mickey said the graph should indicate spaces at the site. The turn count data on single versus multiple occupancy vehicle usage was presented. Ed asked if there are national standards. Sharon said the 2006 Journey to Work average was 6% for carpooling. Rob said 1.2 is the average occupancy for commuting traffic.

NH Capitol Corridor Study: Sharon said CNHRPC has a “seat” on the NH Rail Transit Authority, which is comprised of all the RPCs, communities that will have stations, the NHDOT, State Senator, and State Representative. They passed the liability cap which was a requirement for the MBTA to provide commuter service. It would be an extension on the Lowell line. South of NH, the MBTA & MA would run the line, north of the state line would be run by Pan-Am railways. Sharon said the \$300 million should be looked at as a first guestimate of cost.

The I-93 Transit Investment study involves restoration of the Manchester-Lawrence line, only going through the airport. The train would not go into Manchester. The other alternative is Bus Rapid Transit. These buses would come from Manchester, Londonderry, and Salem. If you lived in Manchester and worked in Salem you could not get there on the bus. This solution provides no mobility for the state of NH. Mickey said the cutback on Concord Coach service from Concord to Manchester is almost libelous. Dick said the plans are going nowhere. The train would take 2 hours from NH to North Station in Boston. Dick said the state would be better off building carpool lanes. Steve said the problem with the train is that the scheduling does not allow people to easily make the train, the bus would be more convenient. Mickey said in 2004 he and Jim moved a proposal to send CAT service to connect Concord to MTA at the Hooksett line to create linkage but there was no funding support and the cost of adding a parallel ADA transit would have made the cost too high. It was rated as a top project that year and there is still a distinct need to connect transit. The general consensus is that NH does not have the critical mass or capital to support train service. Sharon said there should be inner city service in NH that could be addressed differently than service to Boston.

NH Route 28 Safety Audit: CNHRPC applied with LRPC for a safety audit that was approved. It will begin this winter and in spring site visits will occur. SPR stand for Statewide Planning and

Research, a federal highway program. Rob asked if it would analyze conceptual issues as well as safety issues and Rodrigo said it would. Bill Oldenburg said a fight might result from the Barnstead and Alton section which hasn't been reviewed since the 1930s. Ed said he has noticed a lot of commercial growth along the corridor, especially in Epsom. Jim mentioned that the hospital is building a facility near the traffic circle.

Concord Area Transit Update: Jim said the trolley got off to a slow start, partially due to mechanical problems. Rider-ship is up to 40-50 per day. They are trying to get numbers on rider-ship on the trolley along the bus's fixed route to move the fixed route out of Fort Eddy Rd and put in a trolley for any transfers. The swing on rider-ship has gone from Penacook over to the Heights route. The new Salvation Army on 106 has had an impact on ridership. Dick asked if it has an impact on immigrant ridership. Jim said they are the primary riders and many who had lived along Fisherville are now on the Heights. Dick asked if there was a correlation between ridership and fuel prices. It went up 23% and is down 16% now as fuel prices have fluctuated. Rodrigo asked if the trolley could be used for free by PATH members for a period of time. Jim said that they are working with Concord 2020 to get some free coupon passes. FTA funding says the ride cannot be given away for free, it has to come from a subsidized source like PATH or Concord 2020. Ted had the idea that businesses could have a token that they paid for that they could hand to shoppers. This is what Concord 2020 is working on. Ted said a lot of people had expressed interest in that type of system to him. Jim said students at the Tech can ride for free and the bill goes to the Tech. It is hard to serve the city effectively with only 1 bus an hour.

Other Business: CNHRPC website is being updated and will have a Transportation section on the website with TAC information. The next meeting should be in late November or early December. There will be a Safe Routes to School project to evaluate and approve. Please send Rodrigo any additional items for next meeting.

Ted Houston made a motion to adjourn, Jim Sudak seconded it. Meeting adjourned at 11:32 AM.