

**Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
Meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

October 11, 2011 Meeting Minutes
UVLSRPC Offices- Lebanon, NH
Minutes Accepted December 13, 2011

Attendees:

Van Chesnut, Chair
Dick Jones, Lyme
Mike Lavalla, Lebanon
Bruce Temple, Claremont
William Rose, NHDOT
Aaron Brown, UVTMA
Nate Miller, UVLSRPC

Acceptance of September 13th Meeting Minutes

Following introductions, Dick Jones moved that the minutes of September 13th be accepted as submitted. Mike Lavalla seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

2013-2022 Draft Ten-Year Plan- Development of Formal Comments

Related to Ten-Year Plan Fiscal Constraint Assumptions

- *The GACIT and NHDOT should define a transparent process for determining how deferred or delayed projects are re-introduced into the Ten-Year Plan in the event that reauthorization legislation provides New Hampshire with more federal-aid transportation revenues than assumed in the draft Ten-Year Plan.*

TAC members noted that it is unclear how the project deferments and delays proposed under the Ten-Year Plan's current (reduced) funding scenario would be addressed if federal reauthorization legislation provides New Hampshire with more federal-aid transportation revenues than assumed in the draft Ten-Year Plan. Which projects would be reinstated from the deferment list? Which projects would see advanced construction timelines? What is the GACIT and NHDOT process for making these decisions?

TAC members advised that the ongoing Congressional conversation about federal transportation reauthorization legislation is fluid, and GACIT and NHDOT should define a transparent process for eliminating deferments and/or reducing project delays in the event that federal-aid revenues are ultimately higher than the \$120 Million per year figure used as a constraint in the draft Ten-Year Plan.

Related to Proposed Project Deferments

- *The region's #1 priority project, the Reconstruction of NH Route 12 in Walpole and Charlestown, which has been on the Ten-Year Plan since the 1990s, should be*

removed from the proposed deferment list and placed on the 2013-2022 Ten-Year Plan in full and without delay.

TAC members expressed frustration that the proposed deferment of the NH Route 12 reconstruction project seemingly disregards the region's priorities, and requested that NHDOT provide a written explanation of the decision to defer this project in light of the road's fatal accident history and the project's regional priority status.

TAC members advised that the project be removed from the proposed deferment list and placed back on the 2013-2022 Ten-Year Plan in full and without delay.

Related to Proposed Project Delays

- *The Reconstruction of Mechanic Street (U.S. Route 4) in Lebanon should be advanced from 2016 as necessary to coordinate with the City of Lebanon's EPA-mandated Combined Sewer Overflow project.*

TAC members reaffirmed previous guidance to NHDOT (dated March 30, 2009) that the Reconstruction of Mechanic Street (U.S. Route 4) from High Street to Interstate 89-Exit 19 should be coordinated with the City of Lebanon's federally-mandated Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project on the same segment. The Mechanic Street CSO project is scheduled to begin in FY 2013. The failure to coordinate these two projects will result in duplicative construction efforts, wasted time, and wasted funding for both the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the City of Lebanon. Mike Lavalla advised that the City of Lebanon remains committed to working collaboratively with NHDOT to coordinate these two projects.

Related to Proposed Discretionary Transfers

- *The GACIT and NHDOT should not consider a discretionary transfer from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).*

TAC members advised that, with limited funding, the NHDOT should focus its efforts on projects and programs affecting two key areas: 1) Safety; and 2) System Preservation. The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a core federal program that addresses locations with safety problems based on accident data. This funding is used around New Hampshire to implement essential safety improvements at locations with specific, unique safety concerns. TAC members noted that a discretionary transfer from the Highway Safety Improvement Program runs contrary to the goals of the UVLSRPC Regional Transportation Plan and the NHDOT Long Range Transportation Plan.

- *The GACIT and NHDOT should not consider a discretionary transfer from the Transportation Enhancement Program (TE).*

TAC members advised that the Transportation Enhancement program is a safety program. It is perhaps the only program that provides funding to rural municipalities to improve bicycle/pedestrian safety through the development of infrastructure that separates vehicular

and non-vehicular traffic. The safety of bicyclists and pedestrians should not be overlooked, regardless of state or federal funding constraints. TAC members noted that a discretionary transfer from the Transportation Enhancement Program runs contrary to the goals of the UVLSRPC Regional Transportation Plan.

Related to Project Funding and Revenues

- *The primary users of Interstate 93 should have a direct role in helping to pay for the \$800 Million expansion project. A user fee (potentially a toll) proximate to the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line should be instituted, with revenues providing construction funding for the project or servicing the project's bond debt.*

TAC members reaffirmed previous guidance to NHDOT (from January 2010) in support of a user fee on Interstate 93 that would help to pay for the costs of the Interstate 93 expansion project. While this user fee would address only one aspect of a much larger statewide funding crisis, TAC members advised that Interstate 93 users should play a direct role in helping to fund the \$800 Million expansion project.

- *The NHDOT should investigate funding alternatives for the Replacement of the NH Route 123A Bridge over Bowers Brook in Acworth, including but not limited to, FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation funding, administered by the New Hampshire Department of Safety's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Bureau.*

TAC members noted that the NH Route 123A Bridge over Bowers Brook in Acworth is now the #12 Red List bridge priority in the state, and was previously damaged in an October 2005 flood event. NH Route 123A is the only numbered state road in the Town of Acworth, and is a key east-west corridor for southern Sullivan and northern Cheshire County. Essentially, there are no feasible alternate routes to NH 123A. TAC members recognized that, if the bridge were to sustain further damage in upcoming flood seasons and be rendered unusable, it would not only impact the mobility of residents, but also the ability of emergency services to effectively serve the towns of Acworth, Marlow, Langdon, and Alstead.

Nate Miller advised that, given the unique conditions affecting this bridge (as detailed in a recent NHDES Fluvial Geomorphology study) the bridge replacement may be eligible under the guidelines of certain Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs, including the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program. TAC members suggested that NHDOT research alternative funding sources to complete these projects on (potentially) expedited timelines.

Related to Public Transportation Funding

- *The NHDOT should continue its program of "flexing" funding from the Surface Transportation Program (STP) to the Section 5310 elderly and disabled transportation services program.*

TAC members felt strongly that safety and system preservation should be the top transportation funding priorities, but recognized the importance of developing and maintaining a balanced transportation system within our region and our state. The proposed elimination of \$800,000 per year in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding that NHDOT currently 'flexes' to support transportation services for the elderly and individuals with disabilities will have substantial repercussions on local services, including (in the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee region) the fledgling Community Alliance Volunteer Driver Program in Sullivan County and the Grafton County Senior Citizens Council. TAC members recommended that GACIT and NHDOT consider restoring this funding in the 2013-2022 Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.

Bruce Temple moved that that Nate Miller draft a letter to GACIT and NHDOT expressing these comments on behalf of the TAC. Dick Jones seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Updates from TAC Members

Bruce Temple noted that beyond the reconstruction of North/Main Street, which is funded by a direct congressional appropriation, there is not a single road or bridge project in Claremont on the 2013-2022 Draft Ten-Year Plan.

Bruce Temple reported that the reconstruction of Drapers' Corner in Claremont was in final right-of-way negotiations, and NHDOT has completed its design review process.

Bruce Temple reported that the City of Claremont is in the process of selecting a design consultant for the reconstruction of North/Main Street.

Other Business

Bruce Temple moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 PM. Dick Jones seconded and the motion passed unanimously.