



**APPROVED MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
February 21, 2024**

Held in-person and via Zoom. Live on Facebook and recorded. An in-person quorum was present.

Members Present:

Jason Hennessey, Town of Amherst (v)
Will Ludt, Town of Amherst
Danielle Pray, Town of Amherst (v)
Alan Rosenberg, Town of Brookline
Tamara Sorell, Town of Brookline
Dillon Dumont, Town of Hudson
Tim Malley, Town of Hudson
Ralph Boehm, Town of Litchfield
Micheal Croteau, Town of Litchfield
Kim Queenan, Town of Litchfield
Karin Elmer, Town of Merrimack
Tim Tenhave, Town of Merrimack

Chris Constantino, Town of Milford (v)
Janet Langdell, Town of Milford
John Yule, Town of Milford
Tim Berry, Town of Mont Vernon
Bob Bollinger, City of Nashua
Camille Correa, City of Nashua
Heather Corbett, Town of Pelham
Jeff Gowan, Town of Pelham
Kermit Williams, Town of Wilton
William Rose, NHDOT (v)
Jessica Wilcox, NHDES (v)

NRPC Staff Present:

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director
Kate Lafond, Assistant Director
Matt Waitkins, MPO Coordinator
Ned Connell, Senior Regional Planner
Tyrel Borowitz, GIS Analyst
Kathy Kirby, Administrative Assistant

Others:

Stef (V)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Tim Tenhave opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with introductions. Heather Corbett, Town of Pelham was welcomed by Tenhave as a new member to the Commission.

2. Privilege of the Floor

Tenhave asked if anyone wished to speak at this time. No one wished to speak.

3. Approval of Minutes – December 20, 2023 (*action required*)

Tenhave asked if there are any questions, comments, or thoughts on the December meeting minutes. Edits identified – page 1: “Landell” to Langdell; “Allen” to Alan; “260-unit” to 216-unit.

Berry moved the motion, with a second from Gowan:

THAT the minutes of December 20, 2023, be approved as amended and placed on file. A roll call vote was conducted. Bollinger, Corbett, Dumont, and Elmer abstained.

The motion **carried**.

4. MPO Policy Committee

a. FY2023-26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment 4 (*action required*).

Waitkins summarized the TIP Amendment IV timeline, why Amendment IV was necessary, and the various project revisions that made the Amendment necessary.

Timeline: January 2024 – a draft amendment was released by NH DOT and NRPC communities were notified. A final draft was released on February 2nd by NHDOT. The public comment period started February 9th and ended February 19th. February NRPC TTAC meeting was held. TTAC voted to approve and recommend for adoption by the NRPC MPO Commission at this meeting. The only public comment was made by William Ludt, Town of Amherst.

Amendment Thresholds were reviewed. The amendment is required for any change that triggers an Air Quality Conformity Determination, addition or removal of a project phase, state, or federal-funded projects with substantive changes; regionally significant projects with a significant change regardless of funding; a 25% change in cost within STIP years; and officially adding a project that was previously included for illustrative purposes. Minkarah explained the purpose of the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) is a federally required document. It includes all the federally funded projects for 4 years. MPO adopts this document. Amendments occur multiple times during the 4 years (this is Amendment IV). NRPC cannot spend federal dollars unless the updated project is included in the TIP. So that is the reason for the amendments and why votes are taken on the amendments by the (MPO) committee.

Regional Projects that require Amendment IV to FY2023-2026 NRPC TIP include:

- Amherst (44351) Route 122 - construct a multimodal side path. Funding was successfully obtained from the FY2025-2028 Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) program funding cycle.

Langdell asked if there is a chance that if the GACIT is not approved these projects will be altered in some way by the state Legislature. Rose stated with this ten-year plan, we are managing the STIP concurrently with whatever the current draft of the ten-year plan is at present. Yes, there is a chance that we can see changes to the STIP, or the TIP based on whatever happens at the legislative level at this point. The TIP we have for Nashua is a constantly changing document, but it represents the best plan/information we have for Nashua at any particular given moment in time. Williams asked if federally funded projects like this one (Amherst) are eligible for modification by the state legislature. Rose stated that the Ten-year Plan is the driver that rules above all else. The STIPs and the associated TIPs in NH are the vehicles we use to access federal dollars to make the Ten-Year Plan projects happen. Rose added that they have a character limitation that they have to manage in the state systems and the scope looks good now but, in the end, it might be different.

- Hudson (44653) Melendy Road - Bridge Replacement. It's a new project being added to the FY2024 of the TIP because the Town of Hudson now has the staff resources to work on this project.

- Nashua (44354): NH101A, NH111, NH111A, NH130 – Traffic signal phasing & timing. Replace underground traffic detection loops to reduce congestion. The City of Nashua applied and received CMAQ funds, and the project was added to the TIP.

Tenhave asked if we had seen this before. Minkarah said yes because it was in the CMAQ application. Hennessey asked if it included Somerset Avenue. Minkarah stated that it included just an intersection with Somerset Avenue. Jason Hennessey said it would be great if we could include Somerset Ave. because you end up taking a left, and then you have to stop at the next light and wait. But with timing, you could fix that.

- Wilton (44295): Howard Street pedestrian bridge over the Souhegan River. CMAQ funding received by the Town of Wilton. Berry asked if the Milford Center project is still in the ten-year plan. Waitkins answered that it was.
- Wilton-Milford-Amherst-Bedford (13692E): NH 101 safety improvements. Construction will not happen before 2026 due to right-of-way impacts and environmental permitting. Therefore, it is outside the FY2023-2026 NRPC TIP and is removed. Berry asked if this was a road-widening project. Waitkins stated it is still being determined. This is the E-project, so the D-project is the bypass project. FYI - the project manager and the consultant will be at the March TTAC meeting to further discuss the D and E projects.

Programmatic Projects that require Amendment IV to FY2023-2026 NRPC TIP include:

- (CBI) Various – Complex Bridge Inspection (Parent). A funding increase greater than 25% within the S/TIP years is needed for complex bridge inspections (e.g., for suspension, cable-stayed, and other bridges).
- (MOBRR) Various – Municipal-owned Bridge Rehabilitation & Replacement Projects. The program is being removed from the S/TIP. It is an administrative change. These projects will still be funded but will be listed separately either under bridge rehabilitation OR reconstruction, not both. Adding/removing projects requires an Amendment.

Williams asked how this program relates to MOBIL. Rose responded that they are both focused on the same type of assets. MOBIL uses assets made available under the Bipartisan Infrastructure law and there are limits on the dollars available in the years that we are spending on the program.

In conclusion, Waitkins explained that the proposed changes made by Amendment IV to the NRPC TIP and MTP update meet all applicable conformity requirements under the Conformity Rule. The DRAFT TIP Amendment details these requirements and the NRPC actions to meet the requirements. On behalf of NRPC, he recommended the MPO Committee move to vote to approve TIP Amendment IV. Tenhave asked if there were any further comments or questions. There were none. Tenhave closed the public hearing at 7:31 p.m.

Williams moved the motion. Berry seconded:

THAT: The Nashua Regional Planning Commission, in its capacity as the Metropolitan Transportation Organization (MPO) approves Amendment #4 to the FY2023-2026 NRPC Transportation Improvement Plan and the FY2023-2050 NRPC Transportation Plan. A roll call vote was conducted. Croteau abstained.

The motion **carried.**

b. 2023-2050 NRPC Long Range (Metropolitan) Transportation Plan ([MTP](#)) (action required)

Covered in the above, 4a. (see above).

c. Bike and Ped Count Viewer: Presentation made by Tyrel Borowitz, NRPC GIS Analyst

Borowitz gave the audience an overview of the NRPC Bike & Pedestrian Count Viewer found under the “Transportation” section’s “Bicycle & Pedestrian” home page of the NRPC website. The initial Count Viewer map shows all the places where counters are placed using green icons. There is an infrared counter which will count both pedestrians and bicyclists. The infrared counters need to be attached to a post of some sort. Tubes are placed on the ground to obtain separate bicyclist counts. You can click on the counter symbol, and you get more information with a picture of the counter and where it is. A white drop-down box will appear with more count history details. A user can click on a single count history and get more detailed information. If you scroll down, you can see the count history, seeing how the counts change over time. Installation date, site type, status, and a link to an even more detailed PDF report which you can download if you choose. Daily totals, hourly averages, and hourly totals are all graphed. Langdell asked about the differentiation between a bicycle and a stroller. Strollers will not be counted. Waitkins stated the counter looks to a pattern that is set for bicycles that are based upon the bicycle’s wheelbase. Back on the main Counter Viewer map, Borowitz shared counts taken near downtown Nashua and the four entrances of Mines Falls Park. Pedestrian and cyclist counts were collected at Mine Falls Park. In Brookline, there were pedestrian and bicyclist counts taken twice last year on the Palmer-Bartell trails. You can generate the same types of reports. But there are tabs at the bottom of the main Count Viewer screen to access Counts By Year, Most Recent Counts, Site List and Records, and Site List and Trends.

Langdell asked how counter placement is determined, can a community request counts, and if a community pays for them. We have been working on that here at NRPC. We have a schedule set up for the first half of the year. We have looked at past places and we have been in touch with people from our communities and have come up with new locations. We have acquired two new counters so we have a total of four counters so we can take requests to set them up. We have a request for Hollis and Brookline already. Langdell asked Borowitz who in the town are you contacting? Borowitz stated Conservation Commissions and sometimes Public Works. Costantino stated in Milford, that Nicole Crawford (Town Engineer) reached out to NRPC via email for sidewalk counts. Berry asked what the specific funding source for this program is. Borowitz stated it is part of the DOT/Part of DPWP funding; it is not something that towns have to pay for. More data is being collected on ped/bicyclists that are being funded by states and the federal government because they are collecting more data on pedestrians and cyclists. Corbett

asked if the data was available for download. Borowitz answered yes. It can be downloaded or output in Excel data. To get the data, contact Tyrel. Boehm stated he noticed that Litchfield had had counts taken. Boehm stated that bicyclists are using the roads because people complain that cyclists are using the bike trail. Question was asked do the road counters differentiate between types of vehicles? Borowitz stated that there are two different counter types. Hennessey asked a question if it is possible to install bicycle counting tubes in the breakdown lane. Borowitz answered that the bike lane has to be very defined; it is not typically done as cars will “mess up” the counts. Borowitz stated that one day there will be a video-based option that can be used. Seasonal counts can be made. Permanent bike and ped counters are being installed in Amherst that will collect seasonal data. Minkarah stated we are looking at installing one to two permanent counter locations with high volume to free up portable counters. Ludt asked the cost of a counter. They are \$5,000 each. Langdell asked if there is a quick marketing sheet about the bike/ped counting program, including capabilities to get our Planning Board and Conservation members thinking. By March 14 we need to call Tyrel and schedule bike/ped counts. Minkarah stated that the focus is on optimal locations where there is a high level of traffic and getting historic counts to see trends and seasonality data. Other areas that are optimal where the town may be thinking about applying for a grant (CMAQ) and some of you may not be aware NRPC has gone into the community (for example, Wilton) and taken pre-improvement count; and then after improvements, what difference have they made, so we can review it against the post-project. Another factor to consider is whether we can obtain good counts. Route 102 in Hudson is a difficult place to get counts. Tyrel then asked the audience to take a look at the counter installed on Mines Falls Park where the counters are installed on the railings. This is not optimal. In Hudson, there wasn't a good spot to attach the counter between the roadway and where the pedestrians walk. There needs to be a place to attach the counter so that the beam coming off the die will hit an object, such as a statue, to stop the beam from counting. You have to be able to point towards the object you want to count (cars, peds) and have an object that will stop the counter, such as a statue. Borowitz explained an issue that they had in the past in Merrimack where machine counts were too high and therefore unusable.

Taylor Falls Bridge in Hudson – the post has a speed limit sign that helps with pedestrian counting. But we can only get one side (South) counted as there is no sign on the other side (North).

Dumont asked how you get sidewalk regular counts. Borowitz stated that counters have been set up on metal posts with reflectors. Dumont would like Hudson counts and will have DPW reach out to NRPC. Borowitz explained to get counts, NRPC needs a secured post that cannot be removed easily. The post installed in front of Hampshire Hills is a good example. The Milford DPW removed the post, so NRPC did not get counts. Now we have stickers on our counters. Berry stated the radar the police use can be used with a post.

Borowitz clicked on each of the tabs across the bottom, i.e. Most Recent Counts, Site List, and Records to show what type of data can be found under each tab and how it is presented. Updating the counts is a manual operation (not live), but it is synced up and connected.

Sorrell asked if two people were walking next to each other are they counted separately. Borowitz said no – they will be counted once. Dogs will be counted if ahead of the owner.

Minkarah stated that we have to account for some anomalies in the data, i.e., a walk-a-thon. We won't use that in our data. We are excited because we have had the data for a long time and now it can be pulled up and accessed on-demand on the NRPC website. Borowitz has done a huge amount of work on this dashboard. Members thanked Borowitz for his work on the dashboard and presentation.

d. NH Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan Update

Ned Connell (NRPC) attended the NH House Public Works & Highway Committee Ten-Year Plan hearing and provided an update. The only projects that will not be included are the Revision Energy CMAQ projects in Nashua, Manchester, Concord, Durham, and Berlin. The Governor deemed them too expensive and out of the ordinary. The public hearings are ongoing. Connell will be following this legislation. If you would like a link to the hearings, email Ned Connell at NedC@nashuarpc.org. Boehm stated HB 2024 is scheduled to have the bill out from the House committee by March 21 and go on to the Senate. Langdell stated to date, the Governor has supported the funding for public transit that is in the bill.

e. Other transportation updates.

Minkarah stated we are working with Nashua Transit and the Regional Community Council 7 on updating the locally coordinated long-range plan. We are looking at special projects will be undertaking in the future. We just wrapped up a 2023 project with Hudson. Please contact Minkarah, Ned Connell, or Matt Waitkins with ideas for special projects.

5. NRPC Project & Staff updates

Minkarah gave the updates. NRPC has a new Assistant Director, Kate Lafond. She was previously our Finance Director, and we are pleased to see Kate come back to NRPC in her new role.

NRPC is working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission - that is the Boston Area Regional Planning Commission, on a Climate Action Plan for the Boston Metropolitan Area, which includes 200-plus communities. It includes all of the Nashua region, parts of Manchester, and the seacoast – so we are pleased to be working alongside/with them on that plan. NRPC is a sub-grantee. There is a two-pronged process. In the initial phase, we identify some short-term projects wrapping up in March and then we go into the second phase. The State of NH is also working on its Climate Action Plan. All of the state and all MSAs have been funded by federal dollars. We are also working with DES and the State's initiative. We have brought the two together to establish a Climate Action Plan. We had the Climate Action Plan Listening Session here last month and we can share the results of that session.

We received \$100,000 to update our regional plan. We are supposed to update it every 5 years, but the last update was done in 2014. All nine regional commissions applied collectively; the money to update was split among the nine commissions, and we will be updating after July 1. Jessica Wilcox stated there is a link in the chat that contains priority measures the State took from the public comment period that just closed for the Climate Action Plan. The transportation sector has three different priority measures that are being proposed: one is deploying a public electric vehicle charging infrastructure. The second program is to expand public transportation options, and the

third is to incentivize consumers to purchase electric vehicles. So, by including these priority measures in the priorities of the Climate Action Plan, as Minkarah mentioned, when it is submitted on March 1, it will then enable state towns/cities and state agencies to potentially apply for nationwide funding specific to projects that fall into the three priority measures.

Gowan asked about NRPC specifically hiring a person responsible for grant administration aligned to the Statement of Strategies goals. Minkarah stated that NRPC will be looking at staffing this year and have some new funds that may enable NRPC to hire more staff or shift responsibilities to align with the statement of strategy goals.

6. Other Business

- a. 2024 NRPC Annual Forum – Kirby gave an update on the event. It will take place on Wednesday, May 8th, 5:30 – 9:00 p.m. at LaBelle Winery in Amherst. A “Save the Date” email was sent out earlier this week. All Planning Board members and Select Board members are invited to attend. If one of your town's members did not receive an email or invitation, they are invited so please extend the invitation to them. This year’s theme is Water – quality and conservation.
- b. There will not be a full commission meeting before the May event. It is our annual meeting when we look at the budget. If you are interested in serving on the Executive Committee and/or an officer’s position, please let Tim Tenhave know. Tenhave is not planning on being the Chair after the June meeting so the position will be open.

7. Commissioners Roundtable

Hennessey, Amherst – we have a \$50 million new school on the ballot. Pray stated that they have a large subdivision being heard tonight by the Planning Board and we have a community power warrant article on the ballot in March.

Rosenberg, Brookline – nothing to add at this time.

Queenan, Litchfield – they have approved 28 new homes in a new subdivision. Community Power is on the ballot. \$52 million grammar school will also be on the ballot. Thank you to NRPC for helping us with the MS4 Stormwater Management EPA-required zoning ordinances that will be on the ballot. Boehm will be monitoring the progression of the ten-year plan.

Bollinger, Nashua – Scott Leclair, Chair of the Planning Board, has stepped down but has agreed to stay on as an Alternate. He will provide an update in June.

Elmer, Merrimack - Merrimack has Community Power coming up for a town vote. Lots of growth continues on DW Highway with more apartments.

Langdell, Milford - our selectmen and Community Power Committee have been busy preparing public information so that everyone understands the change with Eversource’s source rates – they are going to be lower than Community Power’s source rates, at least temporarily. Residents who have/are signed up with Community Power need to opt-out from Community Power and resign with Eversource or they will be billed at Community Power’s increased rates. The municipal

budget is lean this year. \$8 million to renovate the Bales School. Planning Board news – Hitchiner is planning to tear down and rebuild a building which creates some questions about zoning changes. Lots of nuances there.

Williams, Wilton – my fellow commissioner resigned so I am the solo Wilton commissioner. The DPW garage is getting started. Williams attended a UNH event about building a new DPW garage. He asked who among the Commissioners present has built one recently because he would like to connect with those people. Merrimack and Brookline stated they had.

Berry, Mt. Vernon – there will be several warrants at the March town meeting, and for the first time in five years, our traditional town meeting will not conflict with the NRPC full commission meeting.

Gowan, Pelham – we are very happy to have Heather (Corbett) here. We're trying to get our voters to reapprove money that has expired for certain transportation projects, including a roundabout. If they don't, it means fees have to be paid and the roundabout does not get built. People don't realize that. Corbett stated that a YES vote means the roundabout will happen, but there not be an increase in taxes. But if they did not read that, and they would vote no, there would be impact fees and they would have to pay money. We also have electric aggregation on the ballot. They accidentally put restricted housing back on the ballot. In an attempt to put affordable housing on the ballot, the Planning Board wrote something that did not pass legal muster, so it ended up getting worded to essentially bring back age-restricted housing. So, we are trying to get the vote out against that one in the old-fashioned, traditional way.

Langdell praised NTS on the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative with our partners from Nashua, we were able to provide the 45,000th ride since October 1, 2008, to a disabled woman from Amherst who can now get to her doctors, the town library, etc., and live a more normal life.

8. **Adjourn**

MOTION TO ADJOURN by Karin Elmer /Seconded by Tim Tenhave. Unanimous. (8:44 p.m.)

Chat Links:

Link to Draft Priority Measures for New Hampshire's Priority Climate Action Plan - <https://www.des.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt341/files/inline-documents/sonh/draft-pcap-priority-measures.pdf>

Link to NHDES' Climate Pollution Reduction Grants webpage for more about the program at large - <https://www.des.nh.gov/climate-and-sustainability/climate-change/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>

Next NRPC Commission Meeting: Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kirby, Administrative/Communications Assistant