

**APPROVED – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
March 15, 2023**

Held in-person and via Zoom, an in-person quorum was present

Members Present:

Jason Hennessey, Amherst	Karin Elmer, Merrimack
Will Ludt, Amherst	Tim Tenhave, Merrimack (Chair)
Danielle Pray, Amherst (via Zoom)	Janet Langdell, Milford
Tamara Sorell, Brookline (via Zoom)	Bob Bollinger, Nashua
James Battis, Hudson (Treasurer)	Camille Correa, Nashua
Kara Roy, Hudson	Jaie Bergeron, Pelham
Ralph Boehm, Litchfield	Jeff Gowan, Pelham
Michael Croteau, Litchfield	Dave Hennessey, Pelham
Kim Queenan, Litchfield (Vice Chair)	Kermit Williams, Wilton
Charlie Post, Lyndeborough	

Staff Present:

Jay Minkarah, Executive Director	Matt Waitkins, MPO Coordinator
Vince Noga, Transportation/Planning Analyst	Kristin Wardner, Administrative Assistant
Camille Pattison, Assistant Director	

1. Welcome and Introductions

Tim Tenhave opened the meeting at 7:01p.m. with introductions.

2. Privilege of the Floor

No members of the public were present to speak.

3. Approval of Minutes – February 15, 2023

There were no changes to the February 15, 2023 minutes.

James Battis motioned, with a second from Karin Elmer,

THAT the minutes of February 15, 2023, be approved as presented and placed on file. A roll call vote was conducted. Janet Langdell, Jaie Bergeron, Bob Bollinger, and James Battis abstained.

The motion **carried**.

Charlie Post arrived at 7:07pm.

4. MPO Policy Committee

a. Review and approval of NH DOT FY25-34 NH Ten Year Plan Projects for the NRPC Region

Matt Waitkins briefly reviewed the Ten Year Plan (TYP) project solicitation process and the timeline and stated TTAC voted on 3/8 to recommend adoption of the project list. He reviewed the initial list of prioritized projects with cost estimates and DOT comments. He noted that the first Merrimack project (Chamberlain Bridge rehab) has been removed from the list because it is now eligible for state bridge aid funding. The priority #7 project in Amherst was not reviewed by NH DOT because NRPC was over the regional allocation. With those 2 projects removed, there was over \$200,000 remaining. TTAC discussed and agreed to adding the Preliminary Engineering only for the next Merrimack project (Naticook/Camp Sargent Rd improvements) which would require using money from the next TYP allocation. In response to Battis, Waitkins stated that money left unused gets reallocated elsewhere with no negative impact on future allocations.

Michael Croteau and Jason Hennessey arrived at 7:28pm.

The next steps following adoption of the final project list were reviewed: March 31 – deadline for submitting list to NHDOT; September – December – GACIT hearings; and January – June 2024 – NH legislature consideration and approval; Governor signs into law. Jay Minkarah explained that changes to scope and funding can be made at the GACIT hearings and by the Governor. Janet Langdell stressed the importance of advocacy.

The presentation may be viewed here:

https://cms5.revize.com/revize/nrpc/Agendas%20and%20minutes/TYP_Update_MAR2023_MPO.pdf

Karin Elmer motioned, with a second from Kara Roy,

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and Metropolitan Planning Organization adopt the Final Prioritized List of Nashua MPO FY2025-2034 Ten Year Projects as presented.

The motion **carried**.

- b. Review and approval of the FY25-28 Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) Program project list for the NRPC Region

Minkarah introduced the next agenda item and went on to explain that NRPC will be required to update its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) by the end of the calendar year. There will be more on that coming but it will involve developing projects for that long range plan. He stressed it is important to develop, cost and scope projects because there are many funding opportunities available.

Waitkins explained the Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) Program is a federally funded reimbursement program that provides funds for projects that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Eligible projects and programs include those which would result in emissions reductions and air quality benefit. Waitkins then reviewed the CMAQ program timeline and explained that NHDOT decided to set aside all of the EV infrastructure projects and only consider the traditional CMAQ projects. Because of that, the evaluation committee was not required to meet and score the projects and DOT could accommodate all the remaining projects, if they meet air quality standards. The current round of funding has \$30 million total funds available statewide and there were 6 funding proposals in the Nashua region totaling approximately \$7.3 million.

Vince Noga reviewed the air quality analysis that was completed for each of the remaining 4 projects:

- Amherst: Baboosic Greenway Expansion
- Nashua: Traffic Coordination Upgrades and Optimization
- NRPC: NTS Service Expansion (Nashua to Milford)
- Wilton: Pedestrian Bridge Connecting Riverside Way to Howard Street

He explained the process for completing the analysis using the FHWA CMAQ Emissions Calculator and the inputs that were used for the calculations. The result gives a number for Total Energy Consumption which needs to have a net positive result to qualify for CMAQ funding. All 4 of the projects met the criteria.

Regarding the Nashua project, Bob Bollinger stated that there are almost never any physical improvements associated, rather it involves making the existing electronics perform at their optimal level. He said that he imagines that prioritization will be given to the main line with as much distribution as possible to satisfy the side streets.

Regarding the NTS Expansion project, Minkarah stated that he believes it is 1 of only 2 transit projects in this round of funding and that it is industry driven to get Nashua residents out to Milford. Will Ludt asked if the route is an extension of the current Amherst Walmart route. Camille Correa explained it is not an extension – the current Route 2A does go to the Amherst Walmart, however this would start earlier than that route from Nashua and continue to Milford and then do a roundabout with stops through town and back through Amherst and Nashua. It is geared towards shift workers. Waitkins stated that the route that goes to Amherst began as a pilot study funded through CMAQ.

In response to Jason Hennessey, Minkarah stated the calculations do not look at the impact of construction on air quality. Kermit Williams said the analysis does not take into consideration the congestion – he explained that area in downtown Wilton is the most congested area in town. He would expect there to be an even larger air quality benefit than the calculator shows.

The presentation may be viewed here:

https://cms5.revize.com/revize/nrpc/Agendas%20and%20minutes/Commissioners_CMAQ_AQA_03-15-23.pdf

Jim Battis motioned, with a second by Jason Hennessey,

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission MPO Policy Committee adopt the FY2025 – 2034 Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) Project List as presented.

The motion **carried.**

c. NH Capital Corridor Update

Minkarah provided an update on the Capital Corridor project. It is an extension of commuter rail from Lowell to Manchester with proposed stops in South Nashua, Crown Street in Nashua, Bedford, downtown Manchester and a layover facility in Manchester with 16 round trips a day. In 2014, a feasibility study was released, and this was the preferred alternative. He explained that 3 years ago through the TYP process, there was money allocated for the project development phase. That phase is

required before one can apply for federal funds. DOT entered into a 2 year contract with AECOM in January 2022 which was to include a financial plan, taking the engineering to 30%, environmental assessment work, negotiating with MBTA, and developing an application should the state decide to move forward to apply for federal funds. NHDOT applied for an extension of that contract and was declined by the Governor and Executive Council, stalling the project at the end of January 2023. Some key components have yet to be completed and there are many unknowns at this point. There was discussion about the significant drop in commuter rail ridership since Covid.

d. Other transportation Updates

None

6. General Updates

a. Regional Housing Needs Assessment

Minkarah explained that NRPC is in the process of updating the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, which they are mandated to update every 5 years. The goal is to get the draft done by end of month for adoption by the Commission in June.

b. NRPC Statement of Strategy

Minkarah briefly reviewed the Statement of Strategy and stated it was last updated in 2016. A consulting firm has been brought in - Robin LeBlanc from RHL Strategies - to facilitate the process. The goal is to provide updates at the June meeting. The next key step is a survey of all NRPC stakeholders, hopefully in the next few weeks. Tenhave stated it is about meeting the needs of the region, beyond RSA requirements.

c. NRPC Annual Forum

Minkarah stated the Annual Forum is May 11 at LaBelle Winery. The theme is the State of the Economy Post Covid. The speakers will be NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs Commissioner Taylor Caswell, Wendy Hunt, President and CEO of the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce, and Mike Vlacich, Regional Administrator of SBA New England Regional Office.

7. Commissioners Roundtable

Amherst – Danielle Pray said Amherst postponed their election due to weather. They have several protest petitions for zoning warrant articles. J. Hennessey gave praise to the bike/ped committee in town.

Brookline – Tamara Sorell said Brookline also postponed their election. There is ongoing construction on a pedestrian sidewalk/crossing on Mason Road to access the Lake Potanipo area.

Milford – Langdell stated Milford postponed their election. She explained that NH Transit Association (NHTA) and the State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (SCC) are seeking to get funding from the state for operating costs for community transportation. 2 years ago the state added \$200k for the first time to the state budget. NH contributes the lowest per capita in New England.

Pelham – Jaie Bergeron stated that Pelham did hold their election. A significant warrant article passed that gives tax exemptions to new and existing businesses in their business district. He is working on a sidewalk project to connect the senior center to a walk-in clinic and senior housing.

Litchfield – Michael Croteau said Litchfield did hold their election. Queenan was elected to BOS. The Planning Board has been busy. They are currently working on their Master Plan update. Queenan said the town saved \$81,000 with the NRPC energy aggregation.

Nashua – Bob Bollinger introduced himself as a new commissioner. He is the Nashua Planning Board representative. At their last meeting there was a proposal for possible redevelopment of Mohawk tannery site.

Lyndeborough – Charlie Post stated their election was postponed due to the snow. They will have 8 warrant articles on their ballot.

Merrimack – Tenhave stated the town’s deliberative session is today. He said that in June is the annual meeting of the full Commission in which elections are held for chair, vice-chair and treasurer, as well as adding members to the Executive Committee (there will be at least one opening). Anyone expressing an interest in a larger role can reach out to him.

Wilton – Williams explained that Wilton has many dams in town (the town itself owns 4) and the majority have problems. He believes NRPC should be involved in assisting communities with dam mitigation.

Hudson – Kara Roy said Hudson did postpone their election also. The town’s Master Plan update process is ongoing.

Pelham – Dave Hennessey said Pelham is finishing up their Master Plan update. He is predicting an influx of new housing construction and properties for sale in April which should stabilize or drive prices down.

8. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made by Jim Battis, with a second from J. Hennessey, all in favor. The meeting ended at 8:58 p.m.

The next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Wardner, Administrative Assistant