



**DRAFT – MINUTES
NASHUA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
April 17, 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	Tim Berry, Town of Mont Vernon
Danielle Pray, Town of Amherst	Levent, Akinci, City of Nashua (Zoom)
Steve Russo, Town of Brookline (Zoom)	Bob Bollinger, City of Nashua
Joe Garruba, Town of Hollis	Camille Corea, Nashua Transit System
Kimberly Queenan, Town of Litchfield	Lucy St. John, NH Department of Transportation
Karin Elmer, Town of Merrimack	Jaie Bergeron, Town of Pelham
Tom Koenig, Town of Merrimack	Heather Corbett, Town of Pelham
Chris Costantino, Town of Milford (Zoom)	Jeff Gowan, Town of Pelham
Janet Langdell, Town of Milford	Kermit Williams, Town of Wilton
John Yule, Town of Milford	

NRPC Staff Present:

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

Others:

Christian Alex, Temple Street, Nashua

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kim Queenan opened the meeting at 7:11 p.m. with introductions.

2. Privilege of the Floor

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

3. Approval of Minutes – February 21, 2024 (*action required*)

Queenan asked for any there are any edits to the minutes. Edit identified: “Tyrell” to Tyrel.

Berry moved the motion, with a second from Gowan:

THAT the minutes of February 21, 2024, be approved as amended and placed on file. A roll call vote was conducted. All in favor except Koenig, Garruba, Bergeron, St. John, and Russo abstained.

The motion **carried**.

4. MPO Policy Committee

- a. **FY2023-26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment 5 and 2023-2050 NRPC Long Range (Metropolitan) Transportation Plan ([MTP](#)) amendment (*action required*).**

Queenan opened the public hearing for the FY2023-26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment 5 at 7:16 p.m.

Waitkins presented FY2023-2026 TIP Amendment 5. He reviewed an outline of the presentation topics. The first item was about the Transportation Planning Process. Waitkins asked that everyone keep in mind that projects go from the Project Concept stage at the start of the process, through Project Construction ending the process. The largest plan is the federally required 2023-50 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and it has a 20+ year horizon. The currently adopted state plan is the 2023-2032 Ten-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TYP). The first 4 years of the state TYP is the federally required 2023-26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and that is what is to be amended tonight. Waitkins then gave examples of the types of projects that can end up in the 20+ year horizon Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Five potential thresholds trigger an amendment. Waitkins read them to attendees. A significant change (>25%) in costs will require an amendment which required TIP Amendment 5. If and when the amendment is approved by an MPO, the regional planning commissions update the TIP and the state updates their STIP.

Langdell asked if anything below these thresholds is accepted as “minor revisions,” and in that case would they not come before the commission for a vote? St. John explained that does happen but municipalities are informed.

Amendment 5 Local Projects: Merrimack 29714: DW Highway Wire Rd to Baboosic Brook. Increase the project funding from \$4.6 mil to \$6.6 million. Total cost is greater than 30%, from \$8.5 to \$11 million. Drainage system adjustment; there is more impervious surface than originally planned for, more tree removal and restoration, signalize adjustment needed – more impervious services needed including tree restoration and a retaining wall, signalize the Wire Road intersection, and add a retaining wall on Church Street. Williams remarked, so the vote is needed not simply because construction costs went up, but because two projects were combined so the cost of the project went up. Waitkins stated that not only because two projects were combined but also because over time the project costs go up.

The other TIP Amendment 5 project is programmatic – the maintenance and preservation of Tier 1 & 2 bridges. The FE Turnpike is a Tier 1 Road, and segments of NH routes 101, 101A, NH111, NH13, NH128, NH38 are Tier 2. The proposed change that has taken place – increased cost of construction increases the cost within the TIP years by 25.3%, (\$33.2 million to \$41.6 million). Additional funding is needed. Hennessey asked do you know why costs increased? St. John stated that yes, the cost of materials, labor, etc. has increased. Berry asked if the project itself changed. St. John stated the project is mainly the preservation of the bridges. Bollinger stated that what we are really talking about here are major highways. Berry stated that there are scores of them (in this project). Bollinger agreed, there is federal funding involved here as they are part of the major highway system. But the state has prioritized them and this is one of those projects that is a priority.

Waitkins reviewed the Amendment 5 timeline with a recommendation for adoption by the NRPC MPO tonight. Langdell asked if public comment was received. Waitkins answered no.

Seeing/hearing no further public comments, Queenan closed the public comment period at 7:34 p.m.

Bollinger moved the motion, with a second from Hennessey.

THAT the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, in its capacity as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), approves Amendment #5 to the FY2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and FY2023-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). All in favor (unanimous).

The motion carried.

b. NH Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (2025-2034) Biennial update (HB2024)

The House passed with amendments about one month ago; Senate – the first hearing was on Tuesday, 4/16. Hearings have been recorded and are available on YouTube. To deal with the amendments the House put through, it is anticipated that a joint committee or additional meeting will put the two (House and Senate) together. The target is June at the latest. Signed by the governor thereafter, it becomes law on July 1.

Koenig stated Merrimack objected to one of the amendments that the House decided to put in requiring Merrimack to maintain Continental Boulevard which is currently designated as a state road. The cost to Merrimack to maintain Continental Boulevard would equal the Town of Merrimack's total annual road maintenance budget. A comment that was made is that The Town had the road, the State enhanced it and took it over, and now the State wants to give it back to Merrimack. It was never a town road to begin with. It is a road that connects Exit 10 to Route 101A. That is one of the amendments the Senate has talked about taking out. Merrimack's town manager and a state representative spoke to the Senate Committee last Tuesday. Senator Ricciardi, Chair of the committee agrees it should come out of the ten-year plan. Langdell stated that this was not part of the original ten-year plan that was circulated. Koenig stated that it was added in the House. It was voted in by the House 180-170. Langdell stated this is where NRPC can be very helpful in alerting us of sudden changes such as this one.

Connell presented an update on the 2027-2036 Ten-Year Transportation Plan, reminding everyone that we are starting with projects of some note and reason. This is the Ten-Year Plan – Biennial Process, which starts with NRPC soliciting projects from our municipalities in May – July 2024. Letters will go out to selectboards and commissioners will be copied. We have an engineering firm helping with the solicitation process, costing, and review. By March 2025, we plan to have a finalized project list approved by NRPC/TTAC/MPO and submit the list to NHDOT for inclusion in the State's draft Ten-Year Plan. Minkarah stated we are always in a ten-year cycle. We are finalizing one ten-year plan right now as we just heard, but we are starting another ten-year plan with project solicitation. Minkarah discussed the role of the engineering firm consultants, one important role they play is establishing engineering costs, providing costs that are as close to real estimates as possible.

The types of projects that can be included in the Ten-Year Plan are roadway improvements, bicycle and pedestrian travel, public transportation, aviation, and natural hazard resiliency. NRPC leads the prioritization and inclusion of projects in the plan. Projects eligible for

consideration include asset management projects, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, infrastructure-related travel demand management projects, planning studies, and roadway improvements.

A prioritization matrix was shared with the Commission. Scoring projects is based on need and impact. Minkarah stated projects for the Ten-Year Plan can be submitted and at the same time municipalities may seek funding from an alternative funding source for the project, such as a grant or member-directed funding. Submit the project for alternative funding after it has been submitted for inclusion in the 2027-2036 Ten-Year Transportation Plan. Having the project articulated, scope, and budget, gets you a very long way in getting funding from other/additional sources.

Referring back to the NH Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (2025-2034) Biennial update (HB2024), Connell offered watching sessions for the Senate hearings at NRPC. They are also broadcast on YouTube.

c. ***Safe Streets For All Grant project (SS4A)***

As part of the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act, there is new funding available under SS4A – it’s called Safe Streets For All. A key factor here is that you have to have a safety action plan to go after these implementation funds, which are for the actual improvement. Therefore, the four New Hampshire MPOs got together with an engineering firm and we are developing safety action plans for each of the regions. Minkarah stated there has already been a round of Safe Streets For All funding. None of our communities were able to apply for robust funds as we were not prepared (did not have safety action plans in place).

The next grant application round will be in 2025. The intent is to have the plan finalized by January 2025 so that our communities can apply in the next round which will open in Spring 2025. There are two types of grants, Planning and Demonstration (which the regions have now), and Implementation which is construction.

The primary goal is to create Safety Action Plans for the four NH MPOs which will provide a framework for selecting and prioritizing safety improvement projects throughout the region. Planning-level cost estimates for two projects within our region will be developed. After, two meetings will be held in our region to go over the Safety Action Plan and present it, most likely in the late summer or early fall. Connell does not know how the projects will be selected but asked everyone to “stay tuned.” Minkarah stated the whole region will be assessed. Two priority projects will be picked by the engineering firm, but that doesn’t mean that the implementation threads are limited to those two projects. The two projects will be “priority projects” that are more fully developed. Connell stated that the two priority projects will serve as templates so it be easier for the towns and communities to apply later on.

Garruba asked, will the safety plans be coming out for review before that is adopted? Connell stated, yes, that the safety plans will be coming out for review before the two projects are adopted. Langdell asked if the MPO is required to approve it. Minkarah stated it is not since it is not federally required. However, a final draft should be ready by the MPO December 2024 meeting to be brought before us for approval.

Connell stated the plan will be a top-level plan. It will identify areas that have high accident rates and corridors with high fatalities. Minkarah stated that it does not include a redesign of a particular intersection. Hennessey asked if we do a multi-modal analysis, a fatality analysis that will be conducted not just on cars, but bike and ped too. Minkarah stated, yes – on all three. Connell offered his assistance to anyone who had any questions.

d. Public Involvement Process Plan update

Waitkins shared information about how the transportation planning public involvement and outreach process is being updated. Concerning MTPs and TIPs, we have to allow for adequate public notice and give opportunities for the public to participate. We have to allow for comment at certain points. We also have to allow for multiple participation formats. We have a current document adopted in 2019 that is somewhat clunky and needs some updates. Our current plan calls for updates to the outreach and involvement process every 8 years, with interim updates every 4 years (so we are due). The results of our federal certification review are specific to public outreach and update our outreach plan, as necessary. We have been recommended to engage the local and state organizations that are involved with underserved populations for equity and add to our list of engaged organizations. We need to review the federal requirements for any changes, update links to the document, and simply the document.

Next steps: internally complete our review and update the draft. It requires a 45-day comment period beginning May 3rd. We plan to review the updated document at the May 8 TTAC meeting. At the June MPO meeting, we hope to adopt the new plan. When we release the updated plan for public comment, you can review and comment on it. St. John stated the NHDOT is seeking public comment from April 1 – May 15 on updating the State of NH Public Participation Plan. The draft document is on the NHDOT website on the homepage. Minkarah stated we will put ours on the NRPC homepage. Langdell asked if NRPC has one huge master list of all the organizations. Minkarah responded yes, that NRPC has a database with individuals identified by organization affiliation, municipal department, etc. It requires constant updating.

e. Other transportation updates

Minkarah stated in our UPWP transportation budget we do have a line item for special projects. We are interested in special community transportation projects. We conduct studies for a specific issue, such as the town-wide traffic study for the Town of Hudson, that gave the community a good deal of information and allowed for projections. For the Town of Merrimack, we conducted a study of Exit 12, looking at the potential for a full interchange and improvements. A few years ago, one was done for Amherst Village. We don't need answers now, but if you can think about any potential challenges in your communities, we can define the scope and perhaps turn it into a special study.

5. Presentation – Jay Minkarah: NRPC Brownfields Assessment Program

NRPC has a Brownfields Assessment Program and I intend to provide an overview of our program quickly with an ask at the end of it. A Brownfield site is hindered by known or perceived contamination. What falls under that definition is very broad. This program intends to evaluate those sites. Before 2019, we had very little money. In 2019, we received \$300,000 in grant money

that we received in 2020. We burned through that quickly. In 2022, we applied for a \$500,000 grant, we were awarded the funds in 2023, and we are working through it.

The grant money will cover site assessments for private, non-profit, and publicly owned properties.

The grant money covers the following:

Phase 1 - Environmental Site Assessment (desk assessment) – we can cover 100% of the costs through our grant; there is no match requirement for the community or site owner at all.

Phase 2 – Sampling and Testing; any additional testing

Phase 3 - Remediation Action Planning: reuse planning, visioning, master planning. Therefore, the use of the funds for a project is broad.

Downsides – have to get access agreements from the property owner. We have to get EPA approval (2-3 weeks); then Phase 2 has to have a scope prepared for DEA/EPA and it is public information.

Site Evaluation Approval Process – EPA looks at all these. You are not eligible to participate in the Brownfield program if the owner is still liable. If it is a “mom-and-pop” business, it is not viable. If it is part of a major corporation, i.e. Exxon, it’s viable. The site cannot be a Superfund site – it’s already on the priority list. The Mohawk Tannery site is NOT a superfund site. It is eligible, but the costs are so great that it won’t be included.

Sites assessed since the 2019 slide shared. \$300,000 was shared on three sites. Milford has the most sites; a few in Nashua and one in Merrimack.

Examples: Milford Cabinet building – if you have an older building., you have to do a hazardous materials assessment if you want to raise it or rehab it. We came in and found lead and asbestos. This turned into 18 units of affordable senior housing.

An example of a classic Brownfield site is the City of Nashua in the Millyard – Ultima Nimco site which has barrels of unknown substances, and oil spilled all over the floors. We have now done all the testing we can. The city is moving forward with a developer to turn it into a mixed-use building.

Note: funding dollars do not include clean-up.

Another example – a former Texaco site in Milford on South Street. Redevelopment plan for municipal parking – an exception to the process. It was a Mom & Pop gas station. Able to remove the underground storage tanks to test the underlying soil. Once you pull them out you have to dispose of them properly. This was expensive. Sometimes below the slab you have to destroy and do remediation. The Town of Milford has acquired it and the plan is to put a municipal parking lot there. Gas stations and dry cleaners are always eligible for Phases 1-3.

Streeter Shores in Nashua which was turned into a senior center; it had a huge amount of asbestos. Turned into affordable senior housing and senior activity center.

Merrimack – Marjang-Corbin site on Turkey Hill Rd – became a junkyard after it was a farm. The site sat there and allowed dumping on the site. A site like this needs extensive groundwater testing. Even a farm can contaminate.

We are in Year 2 of our 5-year grant. \$160,118 expended to date. \$269,382 remaining. If any of you have properties that you are concerned about that you would like to potentially see redeveloped, demolished, etc., we can help here. We can do an assessment. In the case of

NIMCO, the City of Nashua owns it and wants to see it redeveloped, but it needs to be determined what is needed to redevelop to attract a developer.

6. Other Business

- a. NRPC – the 2024 Annual Forum is May 8. Please let us know if you need an invitation and share the invitation with your boards and committees. Please let Kathy know if you need a name badge if you haven't already. The invitations have been mailed and an email invitation is going out next week. Please RSVP.

7. Commissioners Roundtable

Russo/Brookline – we are working on redoing the Bond Street bridge. It is a major connection within the town. It's in the planning stage to get it done soon.

Koenig/Merrimack – the town voted approval of the community choice aggregation power program. The town budget went down but everything else was approved. We have a constant fight with PFAS, and DOT over the highways, etc.

Garruba/Hollis - the town approved a study for the rehabilitation of an old school into a community center. We will also be doing a fire and police facilities use study.

Amherst/Pray – community power has been approved. An elementary school warrant article was not approved for the third time. PFAS at the fire station – we will hopefully know what we need to do about the contamination from fire-fighting foam, i.e. can we cover it or do we need to remove it?

Corbett, Bergeron, Gowan/Pelham – the town voted and passed community power aggregation. The budget went down. Mammoth Road construction should start next summer. Chunky's is closing in Pelham and Nashua and we see it as a loss as they were a contributor the community. The Master Plan is in front of the Planning Board and they are choking on the costs.

Queenan/Litchfield – the warrant article for the elementary school did not pass. Community power passed.

Bollinger/Nashua – the Planning Board is involved with the Mohawk Tannery project coming back online. We had 3 cases that ended up in court and we have not seen any resolution yet. Staff will be tied up in that for the time being.

Post/Lyndeborough – regarding our Master Plan, we have had good communication now and are moving forward with great progress. The town did not approve community power. 7 out of 8 warrant articles were approved. The most significant was a detached A/D use of up to 2,000', 2-bedroom units.

Langdell/Milford – the school budget did not pass. The warrant articles for the renovation of a high school build school and improvements for the applied technology CTE program – neither passed. Some money will be coming from the state so we expect the improvements for the applied technology CTE program will come back next year. The Planning Board is dealing with Marmom Utility company that is looking to expand and wants to discuss expansion plans with the Planning Board.

Kermit/Wilton – Wilton has been offered for free by the owner who has the building in trust, the Wilton Falls building which is a manufacturing building that has deeded rights to the police station parking lot, which is a lot of parking downtown. If someone else bought the building, the new

owner could therefore keep the parking rights so now that is no longer a potential issue. We want to do a Brownfields study. Still discussing the memorandum of understanding which the trustee has to sign off. The building is a 19th-century building and most likely requires cleanup.

Mont Vernon/Williams – everything got approved including a \$1.9 million bond for the library and a new \$800,000 road to the library. Taxes will be going up \$4 per \$1,000 and newcomers who own the more expensive homes are voicing disapproval.

St. John/NHDOT – urges everyone to stay involved in the public process.

8. Adjournment

Tim Berry moved the motion to adjourn at 8:45, seconded by Kim Queenan. Unanimous approval.

Chat Links: none

Next NRPC Commission Meeting: Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kirby, Administrative/Communications Assistant