Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL**
**MINUTES**

**Thursday, November 8, 2007**
William E. Powers Building
Conference Room A
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

## I. ATTENDANCE

**Members Present**

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| Mr. Kevin Flynn, Chair | Representing Ms. Beverly Najarian, RI Department of Administration |
| Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, II, Secretary | Statewide Planning Program |
| Mr. Robert Azar | Representing Mr. Thomas Deller, Department of Planning & Development, City of Providence |
| Ms. Susan Baxter | Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission |
| Ms. Sharon Conard Wells | West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation |
| Mr. L. Vincent Murray | Town of South Kingstown Planning Department |
| Ms. Anna Prager | Public Member |
| Mr. B. Michael Rauh | Environmental Advocate |
| Mr. Ralph Rizzo | Representing Mr. Peter Osborn, Federal Highway Administration (Advisory Member) |
| Mr. Henry Sherlock | Representing Mr. Steven Cardi, Public Member |
| Mr. Peder Schaefer | Representing Ms. Rosemary Booth Gallogly, Budget Office |
| Mr. Lee Whitaker | Representing Mr. William Sequino, Public Member |
| Mr. Robert Shawver | Representing Mr. Jerome Williams, RI Department of Transportation |
| Mr. John Trevor | Environmental Advocate |
| Ms. Janet White Raymond | Public Member |

**Members Absent**

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| Mr. Daniel Beardsley | RI League of Cities and Towns |
| Ms. Jeanne Boyle | City of East Providence Planning Department |
| Mr.Timothy Costa, Vice Chair | Governor's Policy Office |

**Guests**

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| Ms. Amy McPheters | Edwards & Kelcey |
| Mr. Michael Mini | R.I. Airport Corporation |
| Mr. Vince Scarano | R.I. Airport Corporation |

**Staff--Statewide Planning Program**

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| Mr. Robert Griffith | Chief, Strategic Planning |
| Mr. George Johnson | Assistant Chief, Statewide Planning |
| Mr. John Stachelhaus | RIGIS Coordinator |
| Ms. Katherine Trapani | Supervising Planner, Transportation |

## II. AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. Call to Order

Mr. Flynn called the meeting to order at 9:06 A.M.

### 2. Approval of October 11th Minutes

Ms. Prager moved to approve the Minutes of October 11, 2007, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baxter, and carried unanimously.

### 3. Chief's Progress Report

Mr. Rhodes covered the following items in the Chief's Progress Report:

- **2007 Awards Ceremony**: An Awards Ceremony was held on October 25th here in the Atrium Gallery to announce the recipients of this year's Safe Routes to School and Planning Challenge Grant Programs. We were very pleased at the interest that was shown in the event and the fact that we had approximately 50 people in attendance including many municipal planners and even some Chief municipal Executives and School Committee Chairs. This was the first year that Statewide Planning had such an event and our intent was to put the focus on the recipients and to try and create a platform for generating some local coverage as to how our local communities are working to address their land use and transportation concerns and how we here within the statewide planning program are trying to bring federal resources to bare on those concerns. The grants, totaling approximately 2.3 million dollars of federal transportation planning funds, will be distributed among 15 municipalities and two non-profit organizations. Staff is now in the process of working with the recipients to draft and sign the Cooperative Agreements that are necessary to initiate the work.
- **2006 Planning Challenge Grants:** Staff is also in the process of closing out the 2006 round of Planning Challenge Grants and beginning to investigate a means for sharing the lessons that were learned through these efforts.
- **Transportation:** The most recent amendment to the TIP, adopted by the Council in September, has received federal approval. Rhode Island now has a TIP formally in effect for fiscal 2008 and a copy of the approved version is provided in the members' materials. Transportation staff has otherwise been very busy working on a number of plan updates including the Airport Systems Plan which is the focus of today's agenda. With the TIP resolved for a couple of months and the Airport Systems Plan moving forward the section's immediate short term goal is to complete an update of the Long Range Surface Transportation Plan which is due in August of 2008.
- **Land Use:** The majority of staff time within this section continues to be dedicated to the review of local comprehensive plans and to the implementation of the primary recommendations of Land Use 2025 and the new Solid Waste Management Plan. With specific regard to implementation, staff and the Land Use 2025 Implementation Committee (which will be meeting at 11:00 this morning) continue to focus on the development and implementation of a State Investment Strategy tied to the concepts of Land Use 2025, and an assessment of the RI comprehensive planning process. With regard to the Solid Waste Plan implementation, staff is completing the drafting of an RFP and Memorandum of Agreement for the hiring of a consultant to assess the economics of RIRRC's pricing structure as called for in the solid waste management plan.

Work also continues on several other efforts in land use, including developing agreements for consultant support regarding benchmarking RI municipalities' progress in developing GIS parcel data coverages that meet RIGIS standards, and assessing the feasibility of using local parcel data to do statewide land use change analysis.

- **Comprehensive Plans:** The City of Central Falls' Five-Year Plan Update, as revised, was recently given State approval. Staff is also in the process of reviewing amendments submitted by North and South Kingstown, and Five Year Updates from Charlestown, North Smithfield, Tiverton and Westerly. In addition, the program has received a request from the Town of Glocester to review a draft of its five-year update.

- **Economic Development:** Efforts in Economic Development have focused on the production of this year's CEDS Annual Repor, which is being distributed today, and the update of the Economic Development and Industrial Land Use Plans. The administration of the Intergovernmental Review (IGR) Process continues also as a staff effort. The staff of the Economic Development Section was halved through a retirement this past summer, and we are trying to bring some additional staff resources to this section by rearranging some of the work assignments within the Division as a whole. In particular, we are looking to re-assign responsibility for operation of the IGR process to the Strategic Planning unit, thereby allowing the Economic Development Section's staff to focus on completion of the Guide Plan updates.

In addition, Mr. Flynn commented on the Quonset Gateway Review, noting that the Review Committee has held two meetings during the past month. The group is a tough group, and it includes architects and other design professionals. The firm of Maguire has been retained to review the plans for Lowes to see if it can obtain LEED certification – the current design is close to attaining the threshold for certification, and it is thought that with revisions, could attain "Silver" LEED status. The Lowes design team is being brought in for a meeting with the Committee, and this could allow a good exchange of ideas. He noted that he is encouraged by the review process to date, and is convinced that this group will provide much more than a cursory review.

Relative to announcement of the Safe Routes to School and Challenge Grant awards, he noted that the staff had hoped for a better press response to the Awards Ceremony. He asked recipients represented on the Council to help get the news of their communities' awards out to the media contacts and encourage them to write local stories.

Finally, Mr. Flynn commented that he is leaving today to attend a two-day conference in Montreal, Canada covering demographic trends. This is a topic on which Rhode Island and New England are experiencing some of the same trends as the Eastern Canadian provinces, including declines in workforce age residents, difficulty in retaining educated young people, and an aging population.

## 4. <u>Draft Airport System Plan</u>

Mr. Flynn noted that this item had been generally introduced at the last meeting, and that action—acceptance of the draft for purpose of holding a public hearing – could be taken today, if the Council is comfortable with the draft. He asked Ms. Trapani of the staff to review the draft plan.

Ms. Trapani first called members attention to a handout providing some minor revisions to the draft that was mailed. She noted that she would be assisted by Mr. Vince Scarano, Mr. Michael Mini of the Airport Corporation, and Ms. Amy McPheters of the Corporation's

consultant, Edwards and Kelcey, in presenting the draft plan. She noted that Chapter 1 of the Plan is background and context, that had been covered at last month's meeting. She introduced Ms. McPheters to continue the presentation with Chapter 2.

Ms. McPheters summarized Chapter 2, noting that this provides an extensive inventory of the existing system's units and facilities. She noted that Green is the state's primary commercial service airport with 10,000 scheduled flights. Quonset and North Central are general aviation relievers for Green. Newport is general aviation only. Westerly and Block Island service general aviation and limited commercial passengers. Chapter 3 provides forecasts upon which the plan is developed. These utilize industry trends, but also consider local factors. Nationally, there has been a lull in general aviation following September 11th, but recently activity is climbing again. Greater business use of general aviation may be contributing as well. The demand forecasts for general aviation present a base case and an enhanced case, which represents additional demand that could result from investments in improved facilities. This was based on a survey of pilots using the airfields, she noted. Projections for both aircraft operations and based aircraft at the five general aviation system units show increases over and above the base projections. Only at Green is general aviation and military usage forecast to be essentially static. Commercial activity at Westerly and Block Island, while dipping at present, are also forecast to resume growth.

Ms. Trapani introduced Mr. Scarano to describe the forecast for TF Green. Mr. Scarano indicated that the general aviation forecasts are based mostly on judgement, since long term data are often lacking. But, commercial aviation forecasts for an airport like Green benefit from a long trend line and the experience of the industry nationally. The Green forecast in the draft plan is derived from the data being developed for the Master Plan and EIS, he noted. These data have been accepted by the FAA as part of the EIS's Purpose and Need statement, and have been vetted via the EIS Stakeholder process, which involves a number of hearings and many agencies.

Like the general aviation forecasts, the commercial forecast for Green uses a base case and an enhanced, or incremental case. The base case assumes steady growth in current operations, but there would not be a runway extension, or expansion to long distance markets. In the enhanced case, demand would grow more, as a runway extension, and additional service on select long haul routes are assumed. Under the base case, current service would continue, with limited new destinations, such as Pittsburg, Raleigh-Durham, West Palm, and Houston. Under the enhanced case, these would be supplemented by additional direct service to Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Stansted (London). Under the base case, total passengers are projected to grow from around 5,000,000 to 10,300,000 by 2025. In the incremental forecast, passengers are forecast to increase to 11,400,000 by 2025.

Mr. Schafer asked why the draft did not include data more recent than 2004. He questioned how much traffic has fallen from the 2004 figures cited.

Mr. Mini replied that passengers using Green had declined by about 4% in 2005 and 2006. This was in direct proportion to the decline in available seats as airlines have switched to smaller aircraft to reduce fuel usage. Mr. Scarano stated that the demand growth assumed in the plan is conservative, and anticipates some fluctuations, such as have been experienced recently.

Ms. McPheters reviewed Chapters 4 and 5, which cover system performance and needs. Chapter 4 provides a performance assessment of the system units. This assessment uses 40 benchmarks within the 7 planning factors used throughout the plan. Current conditions are assessed, and future enhancements are included, she noted. However, there are some cases where improvements necessary to meet a performance measure at a given site are not recommended due to cost vs. benefit, impracticality, or anticipated high impacts. The factors considered include: Economic, Capacity, Air Accessibility, Ground Accessibility, Compatibility with environs, Compliance (primarily with environmental regulations); and Standards (compliance with FAA requirements).

Ms. Trapani explained the "Compatibility" factors used: the most basic is whether the community has a state-approved comprehensive plan that mentions the airport. The next level if whether the community has adopted airport height zoning. All communities meet these two criteria, she noted. The third level is if the community has adopted hazard area zoning applying within the safety areas at the ends of runways, and the fourth level is putting zoning in place that addresses compatible land uses within a larger area influenced by aircraft noise. No airport communities currently meet this criterion, she noted.

Mr. Murray suggested that a reason why communities had not complied with all four Compatibility criteria could be that they were not fully aware of the need for this special zoning, or perhaps did not have sufficient resources or specialized knowledge necessary to implement it. He stated that this suggested a need for technical assistance and/or resources. Ms. Trapani noted that this was also a concern of the Technical Committee, and that the draft was altered at the Committee's suggestion to include an action item for RIAC to provide technical support. Mr. Scarano stated that this effort could be proposed as a system-wide project for FAA funding.

Mr. Rauh asked, relative to the Economic criterion, if economic self-sufficiency for all units was the goal. Mr. Mini stated that was the objective, but currently only Green and Quonset are profitable and they support the other system units.

Ms. Trapani summarized Chapter 6, Goals and Policies, using language from several new policies to highlight major changes in this plan relative to the current (1984) system plan. She explained the criterion relating to Air Accessibility involves a major policy change of this plan. The current system plan placed a "medium haul" (1,500 mile) qualification on Green's role designation. The draft plan removes that qualifier, recognizing that direct flights longer than 1,500 miles are currently operating out of Green, and are desirable in the future. The draft includes a policy (3C) to provide adequate facilities to ensure that Green is regionally competitive and able to fulfill its role in the state and New England airport systems. There is also a new strategy ( 3K) to provide airfield infrastructure to optimize commercial service at Green by completing the EIS process and implementing projects recommended by that process. These both acknowledge a goal of long haul service, but leave the best means to attain that – be it a longer runway or improved aircraft technology --- to be decided by the on-going EIS process.

Mr. Rauh stated that the language used in policies 3C and 3 D seems obtuse. If the State feels that long-range commercial service is desirable at Green, then the plan should say that boldly, not meekly.

Ms. Trapani stated that the language in question was re-worked at great length by the Technical Committee.

Mr. Azar stated that the Technical Committee, in which he participated, wanted language that did not predispose the outcome of the EIS process.

Mr. Rizzo added that the Committee did not want language that precluded a longer runway, but also did not require it. The Committee was comfortable with removing the distance criteria and allowing the EIS process to go forward.

Mr. Scarano stated that the language settled on by the Technical Committee is supported by RIAC since it recognizes that Green needs to have facilities that allow it to fulfill its role, which includes a role in the regional plan. Mr. Mini agreed, stating that the terminology supporting infrastructure allowing Green to "fulfill its role" is key to RIAC.

Mr. Flynn stated that the decision ultimately will be made through the EIS process, and will involve many considerations. A goal of long haul, non-stop service will not be pursued at

any cost, he maintained, noting that FAA itself is indicating it can commit only a certain level of resources to an expansion project.

Mr. Rauh agreed, but stated that he still felt that the plan should clearly state the goal, and then allow the process to determine if the goal is attainable, and if so, how best to attain it.

Mr. Whitaker stated that he agreed with Mr. Scarano's opinion that the language in the draft is sufficient to allow Green to meet its role.

Mr. Rhodes suggested that the plan's focus should remain on defining what the role of the airport will be.

Mr. Flynn stated that the discussion was excellent, and he did not want to cut it off. He reminded the Council that there is no need to alter the draft at this meeting, as final action is not being requested.

Ms. Prager stated that she was uncomfortable with the rationale that the plan needed to be vague to allow the EIS process to go forward in whatever direction it may take. She agreed with Mr. Rauh's suggestion that clear direction be provided in the plan, and that the Council put forward a document that is straightforward. If physical expansion is not necessary, then the plan should also say that.

Mr. Rhodes agreed that the Council could be criticized if the plan does not address the issue squarely. He suggested adding language that is up-front about the State's objectives for Green, and clear that the objective of supporting long haul, non-stop service is a change in policy from the current plan. He continued that the Council's vote to accept the draft for hearing will be viewed as endorsing a long-term policy for the state, with impacts on business and residents.

Ms. Trapani stated that for those not familiar with an EIS process it may seem like a leap of faith; but she noted that her experience with EIS processes is that they produce the best outcomes by getting all affected involved in the decision-making. She cited the EIS for Rhode Island's Freight Rail Improvement Project (FRIP) in which a partial build-out was selected as the preferred alternative due to cost, community and environmental impacts.

Ms. Prager suggested that a paragraph that requires three persons to explain it needs to be stated more simply.

Mr. Schafer asked, relative to the recommendation for assisting host communities, whether financial assistance would be provided to communities for tax revenues lost via land acquisition by airports for expansion. Mr. Scarano replied that the FAA allows only payments for direct services, such as police and fire. Compensation for lost tax revenues is not provided, and is not discussed in the plan.

Mr. Scarano summarized Chapter 7, which provides recommended improvements by individual airport, and a general capital development program for the system.

Improvements are presented for a short, medium, and long time frames, and it is recommended that the plan and program be reassessed every five years. There are some improvements which, although needed, are not recommended at this time. Total costs are estimated at $43 million for general aviation improvements. Costs for Green's improved facilities are not estimated at this time, and would be dependant on the outcome of the EIS. A number of funding sources are identified. For general aviation units these include FAA's state apportionments and non-primary, discretionary, and entitlement funds. For commercial service facilities, passenger facility charges and revenue bonds may be used.

Mr. Trevor asked what the estimated timeline for completing the Green EIS was. Mr. Scarano replied that it is in excess of a year.

Ms. Prager asked if action on the draft was necessary today.

Mr. Flynn replied that a public hearing would not be held during the holiday season, so a vote to accept the draft could be held off until the December meeting, allowing staff time to address the concerns expressed by the Council today relative to re-wording policies. A revised draft could be presented for acceptance for hearing at the December meeting.

Ms. Prager moved to continue consideration of the draft Airport Systems Plan to the December meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Baxter and carried unanimously.

Mr. Whitaker noted that his office gets complaints from East Greenwich residents frequently about aircraft noise and flight patterns, so the issue affects more than the City of Warwick. He suggested that it may be appropriate for the state to rely more on Logan for long distance flights.

Mr. Scarano noted that the New England Regional System Plan states that the three regional airports need to operate in coordination if the need for an entirely new airport in the region is to be avoided.

Mr. Shawver stated that the Council needs to be concerned with setting goals and policies, and then allowing the processes in place, such as the EIS process, to determine how the goals can best be carried out.

**5. <u>Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – Annual Update</u>**

Mr. Rhodes referred members to the draft CEDS document which was distributed earlier, and to a handout providing several language chances made when the draft was approved by the Technical Committee last week. It is being introduced this month to allow members a heads up, and a copy of the full draft incorporating the revisions on the handout will be provided prior to the December meeting, at which time a staff presentation on the draft will be made and Council action on it requested.

**6. <u>Committee Nominations</u>**

Mr. Rhodes reviewed this item, reminding members that at last month's meeting the Council authorized staff to return with nominations for Committee appointments. On the Technical Committee, there are nine members whose terms expire December 31st. Seven of these have asked to continue, and are recommended for reappointment. Two current members are not returning -- Mr. William Haase has taken employment outside Rhode Island, and Ms. Christine Stuart, the Chair, is stepping down after ten years on the Committee. Staff is nominating two local planners to fill these vacancies: Mr. Chris Spencer, Town Planner in Tiverton, and Mr. Jon Reiner, Town Planner in North Kingstown.

On the RIGIS Executive Committee, terms and membership numbers are not fixed. The intent is to have broad representation by the GIS community on this group. Several appointments are recommended to bring new perspectives to the group: Ms. Melanie Beda-Joubert of the Town of Hopkinton, Mr. Michael Terner of Applied Geographics, and Mr. Edward O'Brien of the R.I. Society of Professional Land Surveyors.

Mr. Flynn indicated that per Council rules, these nominations would be taken under advisement for one month, and presented for action in December.

Mr. Schafer asked if the RIGIS body was getting too large. Mr. Stachelhaus stated it was manageable. Mr. Rhodes indicated that there also were two representatives from Providence who do not participate regularly and may be coming off the Committee.

**7. 2008 Meeting Calendar**

Mr. Rhodes called members attention to the handout listing proposed meeting dates for 2008. These have been established to continue the traditional meeting time of the second Thursday morning of each month, with the exception of the October meeting which would be moved to the third Thursday to avoid a conflict with Yom Kippur. No action is required this month, but the 2008 meeting calendar will be presented for approval at the December meeting.

**8. Other Business**

Mr. Flynn noted that a prestigious award -- *Outstanding Citizen by Choice* -- had been bestowed recently on Council member Anna Prager by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. He congratulated Anna on this award, and Council members applauded her accomplishments.

**9. Adjourn**

There being no other business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 10:54 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jared L. Rhodes, II
Secretary

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**STATE PLANNING COUNIL**
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# STATE PLANNING COUNCIL

## 2008

## MEETING DATES

| Month: | Date: |
|---|---|
| January | 10th |
| February | 14th |
| March | 13th |
| April | 10th |
| May | 8th |
| June | 12th |
| July* | -- |
| August | 14th |
| September | 11th |
| October | 16th |
| November | 13th |
| December | 11th |

* There is no meeting scheduled for July.

All meetings will begin at 9:00 AM in Conference Room A of the R.I. Department of Administration Building, One Capitol Hill, Providence, unless other notice is given.

Meeting notices and agendas are available approximately 10 days prior to each meeting date at **www.planning.ri.gov**

Signed:
Jared L. Rhodes, II
Secretary