

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES

Thursday, April 16, 2009
William E. Powers Building
Conference Room A
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

I. ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Mr. Kevin Flynn	Representing Mr. Gary Sasse, Chair, RI Department of Administration
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, II, Secretary	Statewide Planning Program
Ms. Jeanne Boyle	City of East Providence, Planning Development
Ms. Sharon Conard Wells	West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation
Mr. Thomas Mullaney	Representing Ms. Rosemary Booth Gallogly, Budget Office
Mr. Thomas Deller	City of Providence Department of Planning & Development
Mr. L. Vincent Murray	Town of South Kingstown Planning Department
Mr. Peter Osborn	Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Anna Prager	Public Member
Mr. William Sequino	Public Member
Mr. Bob Shawver	Representing Michael Lewis, RI Department of Transportation
Mr. John Trevor	Environmental Advocate
Ms. Susan Baxter	RI Housing Commission
Mr. Daniel Beardsley	RI League of Cities and Towns
Ms. Janet White-Raymond	Public Member

Members Absent

Mr. Christopher Long	Representing Mr. Timothy Costa, Vice Chair Governor's Policy Office
Mr. Michael Rauh	Environmental Advocate
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Representing Mr. Steve Cardi, Public Member

Guests

Ms. Dawn Camera	
Ms. Harriet Holbrook	RIPTA
Mr. Scott Millar	RIDEM
Ms. Meredith Pickering	RI Senate Fiscal Office
Ms. Amy Pettine	RIPTA
Ms. Pam Sherrill	PARE Corp.
Mr. Mark Therrien	RIPTA
Ms. Amy Thiebault	RIDOT

Staff - Division of Planning

Mr. Vincent Flood	Acting Supervising Planner, Transportation
Mr. Paul Gonsalves	Senior Planner
Ms. Nancy Hess	Supervising Planner
Ms. Karen Scott	Principal Planner
Ms. Ronnie Sirota	Senior Planner
Mr. Shane White	RIGIS Coordinator

II. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Mr. Flynn called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

2. Approval of March 12, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Sequino moved to approve the Minutes of March 12, 2009, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. White-Raymond and carried unanimously.

3. RIDOT Local Roads Program

Mr. Flynn explained that this agenda item is for information. This issue first arose at the February Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting when representatives from East Providence and Providence expressed their dismay over the lack of funding in the proposed stimulus plan for local roads. At that point, RIDOT committed to a funding level of \$12 million. Since the last Council meeting, that commitment was increased to \$20 million. Mr. Flynn called upon Mr. Bob Shawver from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to further explain this program. RIDOT was aware even before the TAC meeting that there was tremendous interest in local communities sharing in the economic stimulus funds. Because of the need to move the economic stimulus projects quickly, the local roads program was devised using funding other than stimulus funding. Mr. Shawver referred to a distributed fact sheet and funding list. (Attachment 1). He explained that at the last Council meeting, the discussion was to use \$12 million in federal funds for locally maintained roads. An issue that arose is that several communities did not have any roads on the Federal Aid System and were therefore not eligible for any of the \$12 million. The current proposal provides funding for all RI cities and towns

through the incorporation of an additional \$8 million in RI DOT bond funds. This will amount to a total of \$20 million available to RI cities and towns for local roadway improvements. In short, the state program will make a minimum allocation of \$150,000 available to all cities and towns. The federal program will provide a proportional funding allocation for those municipalities with 15 miles or greater of locally maintained roadways on the Federal Aid System. Communities that do not receive any money under the federal program will receive an additional \$100,000 in state funds. The minimum amount that any municipality will receive is \$250,000. A public workshop, originally scheduled for April 30, 2009, has been rescheduled to May 7, 2009. Letters have been sent to each community inviting them to the workshop. The funds are currently available. The overall program is geared toward the resurfacing of existing roads. More details will be provided at the workshop.

With Mr. Shawver having concluded his formal presentation, Council member Beardsley inquired if there would be a template for the required municipal work plan provided to municipalities. Mr. Shawver responded that RI DOT would provide information on the requirements of the work plan at the May 7 workshop. Mr. Beardsley asked that any information pertaining to the May 7 workshop be provided to him electronically for distribution to his membership. Mr. Trevor asked if the process would be onerous for municipalities. Mr. Shawver responded that the federal program is more complicated than the much simpler state program. There will be separate agreements for each source of funds. Ms. Boyle asked if it would be similar to the Enhancement process. Mr. Shawver clarified that it would be similar but their auditors had suggested that there be additional oversight particularly on materials inspections. Mr. Deller asked for clarification on the timing of the projects pointing out that the TIP shows a two-year allocation. He asked if the total allocation could be spent in one year. Mr. Shawver clarified that given the flexibility of the programs, the allocation could be spent in one year.

Mr. Rhodes reported that the TAC did formally endorse the inclusion of the \$8 million in state funds in the TIP tables. According to the MOU between RIPTA, RIDOT and DOP regarding the procedures for amending the TIP, this addition is considered a no action amendment in that the total cost of the added funds, \$8 million, is less than 10% of the total project category cost which is \$126 million. The Council is not required to take formal action however a vote of endorsement would be appreciated.

Mr. Deller also pointed out that the local road program was not reflected as an annual program at this time. It was clarified that the continued use of bond funds was not feasible.

Ms. Prager made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sequino, to endorse the current proposed \$8 million local roads program and express an interest in the continuation of a local roads program in the future. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chairman Flynn introduced Thomas Mullaney, Council member representing Ms. Rosemary Gallogly of the State Budget Office.

4. RIPTA Metro Area Transit Study

Chairman Flynn next called on Mr. Therrien of RIPTA to introduce this Item. Mr. Therrien introduced Amy Pettine, Project Manager for the RIPTA Metro Area Transit Study, who led a PowerPoint presentation outlining the status of the study. (Attachment 2) The study is looking at short, medium and long term solutions to growing the transit system in the metro area and the state. The \$500,000 project is funded in part by the City of Providence and is led by HDR Engineering. Back in 2006, Providence Mayor Cicilline convened the Transit 2020 Steering Committee which included many stakeholders in looking at ways to improve mass transit in the metro area. Part of the Committee's recommendations was for RIPTA to initiate a more detailed analysis of the metro area transit system. That study began last fall. There is working group helping to guide the study which includes representative from all the area municipalities, Grow

Smart RI, Statewide Planning, Sierra Club, Brown University, Lifespan, etc. RIPTA staff is also meeting weekly with the City of Providence. There are plans to hold a charrette this summer in an effort to involve the broader public. The consultants have analyzed a variety of data sources. Ms. Pettine then summarized the overall goals of the study. First, to maintain the current system followed by the improvement of the intermodal system. Second, increased coordination and cooperation and finally, the identification and development of stable funding. Based on the data available (population and employment density, seniors, youth, residents without cars), the study area was established as the boundaries of the cities and towns surrounding Providence.

She explained that it was important for RIPTA to have ongoing implementation of study recommendations. As solutions were developed to address more immediate issues like overcrowding at Kennedy Plaza, RIPTA began to implement solutions, for example, the through routing of buses. Another solution that RIPTA is looking to implement is establishing regional hubs which will include the West Side of Providence, Capital Center (Amtrak Station), College Hill, and the Hospital District. These hubs are based on ridership and opportunity for new ridership.

The study is also looking at other transit modes including rapid bus and bus rapid transit (BRT) which involves moving buses more rapidly through a corridor. Light rail and streetcars will also be addressed. Ms. Pettine then reviewed several sources of data under study including route ridership, trip flows using the travel demand model, boarding and alighting information, and demographics.

There are several short, mid and long term goals outlined to date. The short term goals, improvements to the current system, as discussed, are already underway. Mid term goals include rapid bus and BRT and long term goals include streetcars and light rail. The proposed funding sources include a variety of federal, state, local, RIPTA capital and private monies. The timeframe of the implementation schedule will depend on the funding sources.

She concluded with a slide urging the Council to consider transit as an investment, not an expense as it creates jobs, stimulates development and helps property owners. There were no questions from the Council. Chairman Flynn thanked Ms. Pettine for her presentation.

5. Transportation Improvement Program FY 2009-2012 – Amendment Number 2

Chairman Flynn called on Mr. Therrien of RIPTA to introduce TIP Amendment 2.

RIPTA Presentation

Mr. Therrien began by explaining that this amendment is reflective of RIPTA's program for spending the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds. He is proposing a TIP amendment of approximately \$33 million. (Attachment 3) with \$4.1 million having already been directed to commuter rail. The \$33 million, will be used for RIPTA projects. The majority, \$23 million, will be for the cost difference to purchase 55 hybrid busses for the RIPTA fleet. There will be 10 trolleys that will arrive in April 2009 and the remainder of the buses will be delivered over the next two years. This will result in 25% of the RIPTA fleet being hybrid based. The busses are approximately \$200,000 more per vehicle and get 20%-40% more in fuel mileage. These buses have been in use for 4-5 years in major markets including, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington. Recent studies show that the hybrid buses are getting many more miles between failures as compared to regular buses. The point at which the investment will break even is about 8-10 years but if gas rises to \$5 per gallon this will come much sooner. The buses are expected to last 12-15 years.

The second major spending category is ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems). RIPTA already has a large sum of money that has been put aside over the past 5-6 years for ITS. The intent is to

place GPS locators on every bus. This will allow real time bus location information.

The third major spending category is preventative maintenance. RIPTA proposes to upgrade its facilities through the installation of new high speed garage doors, efficient lighting and roof repairs. RIPTA also proposes an overhaul of older bus engines to go to clean fuel. RIPTA plans to replace all support vehicles (service trucks, plows, etc.) older than the model year 2000, which will result in approximately 25 vehicles. Other equipment proposed for replacement includes lifts, tractors, etc.

The fourth item is a small change in the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) categories. Because of an error, the TIP that was released in August 2008 prevented RIPTA from carrying forward projects from the old TIP to the new TIP. In Amendment 1, the wording was changed to allow RIPTA and RIDOT to carry forward projects from the old year to the new year. This change cleans up the TIP by acknowledging the move of the old CMAQ projects forward.

Mr. Therrien concluded his presentation.

Council Discussion

Mr. Trevor clarified that the hybrid buses are diesel/electric busses and asked if there were still compressed natural gas (CNG) busses in the RIPTA fleet. Mr. Therrien explained that once these new hybrid buses were purchased and delivered, all CNG buses would be replaced. Mr. Trevor asked if the service vehicles were also proposed as hybrid vehicles. Mr. Therrien explained that the buses are the first phase of RIPTA's transition into hybrid vehicles. The service vehicles are gas vehicles with better emission controls. Since the largest cost for RIPTA is diesel, the focus has been the replacement and upgrade of the diesel vehicles.

Mr. Deller asked about the \$4.1 million for transit, the Wickford Junction Station. It was his understanding that the TIP was going to be over programmed in this category so that if the transit station were delayed, RIPTA would have access to the \$4.1 million. Mr. Therrien explained that ARRA does allow for flexibility. It was decided that over programming was not appropriate for the TIP but under the ARRA guidelines, if the Wickford Station is not built, RIPTA will have access to those funds. That should be clear by November/December 2009 if the transit funds will be spent. If they are not spent, RIPTA will be back for a TIP amendment to program those funds. Mr. Deller also sought clarification as to whether a train will actually stop at the proposed Wickford train station. Mr. Shawver explained that he expects to have an agreement in place with Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) within the next two weeks.

Chairman Flynn explained that FTA, when budgeting for the Wickford Junction Station, requires a 20% contingency. Based on the fact that the contingency is so high, there is a very strong likelihood that the \$4.1 million will be returned to RIPTA for further programming. Chairman Flynn also pointed out that this discussion does raise some interesting points as to what organization will be responsible for transit. It is his expectation that, in the long run, RIPTA will expand into the authority over both bus and rail, not unlike the MBTA. Mr. Deller agreed and added that it is important for the state to take a stand on how Rhode Island can make transit work. Chairman Flynn commented that the state is moving in that direction but is currently in a transitional mode and will eventually get to a different sort of transit system than exists today. Mr. Deller also added that the state must think logically about targeting state money to where transit and intermodal demand is likely to be, which generally is within the Urban Services Boundary as illustrated in Land Use 2025. He also felt it was important to be proactive in creating the transit agency to oversee the multiple modes of transportation in the planning stages rather than at the point that a rail transit system is already established. Chairman Flynn commended the City of Providence for its commitment to transit and for providing the entire required monetary match for the Metro Area Transit Study even though the study area includes several other municipalities.

Ms. Wells asked for clarification on the terminology used – contingency, gap and match funding. She asked if the \$4.1 million is filling a gap in the funding of the transit station project or is it part of the contingency required for the program. Mr. Shawver explained that the New Start program, which is being used for the construction of the Wickford Junction Station, requires a 20% contingency. Mr. Shawver also pointed out that the bids for the project were coming in lower than the original cost estimates. It is unlikely that the \$4.1 million will be needed for the transit station project and therefore are likely to be returned to RIPTA for reprogramming in a subsequent TIP Amendment.

Additional Staff Comments

In concluding the formal presentation Mr. Rhodes noted that RIDEM has determined that this proposed amendment conforms to the State's Air Quality Implementation Plan. RIPTA and RIDOT have documented the required fiscal constraint required for the amendment. The TAC conducted the required public hearing on Monday April 13, 2009. The public hearing report was distributed to the Council. (Attachment 4) In short, five (5) individuals offered comment but there were no requests to program the funding in an alternative manner. To sum, staff is requesting that the Council approve Amendment 2 of the TIP based on the revised numbers that were provided, with an endorsement of the carry over of the CMAQ funds so that the amendment can be forwarded to the Governor's office, FHWA, and FTA for approval.

Chairman Flynn and Mr. Rhodes thanked that staff of RIPTA, RIDOT and Statewide Planning, particularly Vincent Flood and Ronnie Sirota, for gathering the necessary information for the Council so quickly after the TIP Amendment 2 public hearing on April 13.

Council Action

Ms. Deller moved to approve the proposed amendment as presented including an endorsement of the carryover of the applicable CMAQ funds. The motion was seconded by Ms. White-Raymond and carried unanimously.

6. Ocean State Outdoors: Rhode Island's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, State Guide Plan Element 152

Chairman Flynn introduced Scott Millar from RIDEM, Nancy Hess with Statewide Planning and new Principal Planner with Statewide Planning, Karen Scott.

Ms. Hess introduced Mr. Millar who gave some background on the SCORP process. He pointed out that we are currently in the eighth iteration of the plan, with the last version having been adopted in 2003. He explained that the SCORP has several purposes. First, it serves as the State Guide Plan for outdoor recreation. Second, it is submitted by Rhode Island to meet the National Park Service's planning eligibility requirements for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program. This program provides approximately \$1.5 million to fund RIDEM's local recreation grant program. Third, the plan addresses the requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's National Recreational Trails Program that provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities. Finally, this plan provides an update to the wetlands priority plan and may result in US Fish and Wildlife funding for the conservation of wetland areas.

As part of the 2003 SCORP update, RIDEM completed three (3) extensive surveys. These surveys included an inventory of Rhode Island's outdoor recreation facilities, a public outdoor recreation demand survey, and a survey of municipal and state recreation professionals. It is the opinion of RIDEM that the results of these surveys are still a valid basis for recreation planning in the state; therefore all of the goals and policies from the 2003 SCORP have remained the same.

Changes were made to the State's recreation inventory map which was updated and converted to a web based interactive resource where residents can find a specific recreational resource in their town and find directions to the facility. The action agenda was also updated, as was the background data.

Ms. Hess then explained that a full list of amendments was detailed in the Council package. She then summarized the amendments for the Council. The amendments include references to Land Use 2025, language addressing sea level rise and climate change, language addressing recreational uses in floodplains, inclusion of new programs that have been created or implemented since the 2003 plan, and updated bikeway information. Statistics found in the document were also updated. The Technical Committee requested the addition of several action agenda items notably the restoration of the historic tax credit program. Many of the action agenda items from the 2003 plan were found to be valid and remain in the document.

Ms. Hess requested authorization from the Council to move forward with a public hearing on the SCORP. The public hearing is proposed for May 27, 2009 at 6:00pm. This date will allow staff to meet all advertising requirements outlined in the Administrative Procedures Act and the Council's own Rules of Procedure. Staff will return to the Council with a public hearing report and a recommendation on the final document at the June 2009 meeting.

Ms. Wells pointed out a grammatical error on Page 4.20. She also asked for clarification on RIDEM's role in establishing swimming areas at smaller waterbodies in the state, particularly Mashapaug Pond. Mr. Millar clarified that although a water quality restoration study was recently completed for Mashapaug Pond, RIDEM generally does not have the resources to address smaller ponds. Ms. Wells also pointed to an opportunity in the action agenda on page 4.43 to incorporate some discussion of preventative programs to prevent vandalism in addition to the more traditional enforcement methods. She also stressed the importance of partnering with community groups to promote the stewardship of public parks. She asked that language be added to the plan addressing those issues.

Mr. Deller asked that the references to the protection and expansion of working waterfronts on Page 4.28 be removed, as it is not relevant to outdoor recreation. He suggested that it be replaced with a statement encouraging the protection and expansion of public access to waterfronts.

Ms. White-Raymond made a motion, seconded by Ms. Wells to authorize the scheduling of a public hearing on the proposed SCORP amendment. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Chief's Progress Report

Mr. Rhodes reminded the Council of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) solicitation deadline of May 4, 2009. Completed applications and question about the process should be directed to Robert Griffith in the Division of Planning. He also reminded the Council that the deadline for submitting letters of intent for the Economic Assessment Tool is April 21, 2009.

8. Other Business

Chairman Flynn introduced the Division of Planning's newest employee, Mr. Shane White. He is replacing John Stachelhaus as the RIGIS Coordinator. Mr. White has a unique background that involves work in local government, private consulting and with ESRI, a major GIS software provider.

9. **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared L. Rhodes, II
Secretary

Attachment 1

RI – LEAP Fact Sheet
Prepared by RIDOT
Presented by Bob Shawver

Attachment 2

RIPTA Metro Area Transit Study
Powerpoint presentation
Prepared by RIPTA
Presented by Amy Pettine

Attachment 3

Transportation Improvement Program 2009-2012
Amendment 2
Prepared by RIPTA
Presented by Mark Therrien

Attachment 4

Draft Report on Public Hearing:
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
FFY 2009-2012
Amendment #2
Prepared by Rhode Island State Planning Program
Presented by Jared Rhodes