

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

September 23, 2010 @ 6:30 p.m.
RI Department of Administration
Conference Room A
Providence, Rhode Island

DRAFT MINUTES
ATTENDANCE

TAC members present:

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair	Public Member – Jamestown
Ms. Sue Barker	RI Bicycle Coalition
Mr. Alan Brodd	Cumberland Public Works Director
Ms. Ann Clarke representing Mr. Kevin Dillon	RI Airport Corporation
Ms. Marilyn Cohen	RI Chapter, American Planning Association
Mr. Robert Murray	Public Member – Smithfield
Ms. Linda Painter	City of Providence
Mr. Paul Romano	Public Member – Bristol
Mr. Barry Schiller	RI Sierra Club
Mr. Robert Shawver	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Construction Industries of RI
Ms. Jane Sherman	Public Member – Providence
Mr. Mark Therrien	RIPTA

TAC members absent:

Mr. Dan Baudouin	Providence Foundation
Mr. Mark Carruolo	City of Warwick
Mr. Michael Cassidy	City of Pawtucket
Mr. Russ Chateaufneuf	RI Dept. of Environmental Management
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Mr. Jim Soctomah	Narragansett Indian Tribal Historic Preservation
Mr. Everett Stuart	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Dr. Robert Vanderslice	RI Department of Health
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville

Others in attendance:

Ms. Molly Clark	American Lung Assoc. of RI/ Coalition for Transportation Choices
Mr. Steve Elias	
Ms. Eugenia Marks	RI Audubon Society/ Coalition for Transportation Choices
Ms. Meredith Pickering	Senate Fiscal Office
Ms. Margarita Pryor	RI Bicycle Coalition
Mr. John Sheulon	Pare Corporation
Mr. Robert Smith	RI Department of Transportation

Ms. Amy Thibeault
Mr. Kevin Viveiros

RI Department of Transportation
Pare Corporation

Statewide Planning Staff Present:

Mr. Kevin Flynn
Mr. Jared Rhodes
Ms. Karen Scott
Ms. Ronnie Sirota

Associate Director
Chief
Acting Supervising Planner
Principal Planner

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m. Ms. Shocket asked for a moment of silence for the passing of two long time TAC members, Mr. Paul Reynolds and Dr. Robert Quigley.

2. Approval of May 27, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Upon motion of Mr. Murray to approve and seconded by Ms. Painter, the May 27, 2010 minutes were accepted unanimously.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was none.

4. FFY 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program – Status Report

Ms. Scott explained that there have been several amendments to the TIP over the past year mostly due to the \$137 million in ARRA funds that the state received. There have been questions about what kind of impact that \$137 million has had on the overall TIP. The funding provided an opportunity to complete some projects from the backlog in the TIP and some of the projects listed in the future years of the TIP. The projects listed in the future years category of the TIP are not included in the financially constrained portion of the TIP. Because some projects slated for future funding were completed, it didn't always make room in the TIP for new projects. Therefore, although the State received \$137 million in ARRA funds, an analysis by RIDOT shows that there is not that same dollar value worth of room opened in the TIP.

She further explained that Bob Shawver would provide a more detailed analysis of the finances of the TIP, including the effect the ARRA funds had on the projects listed in 2011, 2012 and future years. That analysis will show about how much room there is in the financially constrained portion of the TIP for unprogrammed projects. Once Bob Shawver is done, Bob Smith will review the status of some of the larger projects in the TIP, current maintenance needs and talk about the status of some of the projects currently listed in Study and Development.

She then introduced Mr. Shawver. Mr. Shawver began with an overall explanation of transportation funding in the state. He explained that every year Congress passes an appropriation bill, which gives funding to all the states. This year RI received \$225 million, which is fairly flexible. This funding must be obligated by September 27 of this year by project agreement or it goes to another state.

The second source of funds is general obligation bonds as referendums, which are voter approved. This year, \$40 million is proposed each year for the next two years, available July 1 of each year. The third source, gas tax revenue, is the only state funding received by RIDOT. The general obligation has to be paid back; the gas tax (\$94 million) is the only state funding RIDOT doesn't have to pay back. Mr. Shawver then went on to explain how the various funding is used. For approximately 12 years, RIDOT has been paying back the GARVEE debt (approximately \$48 to \$50 million annually). There are about 11 more years of payments due to this debt. There are also motor fuel tax bonds and general obligation bonds to be paid back as well. As a result, the percentage of debt service is increasing.

Mr. Shawver explained that the TIP is divided into a number of programs and is fiscally constrained. The stimulus funds implemented approximately \$77 million in projects that were originally slated for implementation in 2011 and 2012, creating \$77 million for new unprogrammed projects in the TIP. In addition, \$33 million of projects were not implemented in 2009 and 2010, leaving a total of \$110 million in new projects available for programming in 2011 and 2012. The TIP has a column for unprogrammed or future projects, which before the stimulus totaled \$292 million. After the amendment, \$249 million of projects were in the future column. However, the financial need is even greater. The stimulus allowed RIDOT to accelerate projects that would not have been implemented as soon as well as program the local roads projects. \$28 million of projects were bypassed due to scheduling. Therefore, the true need of projects already in the TIP is \$393 million. This does not include Study and Development category.

Mr. Shawver then asked for questions from the TAC. In answer to the question as to what happens if a project is delayed, Mr. Shawver responded that it gets moved to next year. Mr. Rhodes asked the amount flexibility that is now available in the TIP. Mr. Shawver stated in the unprogrammed funds, there is \$110 million for projects in 2011 and 2012 but that does not take into account future year projects or bridge adjustments. RIDOT's preference would be to get some more projects currently listed in the TIP implemented before going out for a full solicitation. Mr. Schiller felt there should be a discussion on future solicitation after discussing the Study and Development projects.

Mr. Brodd had a question on the Safe Routes to School program. It was his understanding that the first five years of the program would have \$1 million a year allocated. The chart indicates \$3.3 million for those years. Mr. Shawver stated that is supposed to represent what is in the current TIP, not the previous TIP. The Safe Routes to School program has received \$1 million per year, minus minor rescissions, since the programs beginning.

Mr. Smith gave the Study and Development presentation. RIDOT is transitioning into a maintenance, or "Fix it First" program. He explained that since the last TIP, progress has been made. Mr. Smith reviewed the projects currently listed in the Study and Development section of the TIP, gave the status of certain projects, and included a RIDOT recommendation for the project moving forward. He explained that, prior to implementing any of the RIDOT recommendations, municipalities should be consulted. He went on to outline that nine projects should be able to leave Study and Development. If a municipality has done or obtained the funding to do a study, RIDOT has moved with it. If they heard nothing since the original submission, unless there is a huge safety problem, there have not been the resources to implement the project. The bicycle/pedestrian projects with "FSR Completed" means that

RIDOT has completed a feasibility study report for each one of those. Each project is in a different stage of implementation. Mr. Smith explained that many previous bike projects were implemented with specific earmarks. Most of those projects are completed.

Mr. Flynn asked Mr. Smith about the Trestle Trail. He replied that it has some earmarks and has some remaining contracts, which DEM is managing. A detailed review is needed but the project is moving. Mr. Schiller suggested that perhaps there should be an Ad-Hoc Bicycle subcommittee again. Mr. Smith agreed that probably it would be a good idea to rank and score the projects in the Study and Development category. Mr. Schiller added that it is the bike community's priority to add to the existing bicycle network. Mr. Brodd asked that since RIDOT has been able to move along projects, if there is an opportunity to get new projects into Study and Development. Mr. Shawver replied that there are still a lot of expensive projects in that category that have not been implemented. Mr. Smith added that while the small projects are moving forward and being implemented, the larger projects are still on the list. There are many with no input from the municipality since they were included on the TIP several years ago.

Mr. Shawver stated that a process is needed to either move the projects out or implement them. At one time there was a Study and Development committee. Ms. Sherman said she was on that committee and there was good discussion. Ms. Painter said an "inactive" listing indicates RIDOT is not currently working on it; however, the city may still be interested. Mr. Shawver said he would be glad to work on a committee since RIDOT does not always want to be the ones to prioritize. Mr. Murray reminded the TAC that what was included in the Study and Development list was often the town's first or second choice projects and were very important projects at the time of listing. He cautioned that a full solicitation might not be a good idea at this point since there is no real room for new projects. Before starting again with a Study and Development committee, he suggested the TAC form an Ad-Hoc group to contact municipalities to see if they are still interested in the projects that are currently listed in the TIP, and then they can be ranked. Mr. Schiller agreed that the cities and towns should be contacted to be able to reprioritize. Mr. Rhodes clarified that what RIDOT is discussing is which projects should be allocated in the current TIP, years 2011 and 2012 as an amendment.

Mr. Murray stated that eight or ten years ago there were projects that should have lasted more than ten years such as Route 116 in Smithfield that are failing about now. These include Route 116 by the high school. Mr. Smith clarified that particular road was worked on 20 years ago in 1990. Ms. Cohen asked if there were limits that can be spent in each category. Mr. Shawver replied that he can discuss the general amounts with the TAC but often times, the amounts budgeted to a certain category are exceeded due to need. An example would be the large amount that was spent on bridge inspection recently.

Ms. Shocket suggested that RIDOT prepare a specific proposal for the unprogrammed funding for TIP years 2011 and 2012 for presentation to the TAC at the next meeting. Ms. Sherman stated that the TAC has never had a discussion of the status of bridges. Mr. Shawver added that there is a bridge summit today at RIDOT. A presentation could be made to the TAC at the next meeting. Ms. Painter understands the need for small bridges but would like to know the status on the big ones. Mr. Shawver stated that there would be \$20 million per year spent on the Providence viaduct starting on 2012 or 2013 until it is done. Mr. Shawver stated that RIDOT pays for the police detail to stop the truckers going over the Pawtucket Bridge but the State puts the fines to the General Fund. Mr. Brodd suggested that just like the TAC was able to institute a

local road program, maybe a small bridge program is needed. Ms. Shocket asked about the effect of the flood on infrastructure projects. Mr. Shawver replied that the State received \$20 million in federal funding for flood related projects.

Ms. Shocket stated that a proposed amendment should be presented by RIDOT at the next meeting for discussion by the TAC.

5. **Providence Core Connector Study - Update**

Mr. Therrien of RIPTA gave a presentation on the status of the Providence Core Connector Study and report on the feedback received at the three public open houses on September 21, 22 and 23, 2010. He explained that the Core Connector Study is a partnership between RIPTA and the City of Providence to examine the feasibility, cost and benefits of improving transit within the central core of the City connecting the College Hill, Downtown and Upper South Providence neighborhoods. The study will examine options for connection of the significant educational, medical, employment and cultural destinations in this corridor with the central bus hub in Kennedy Plaza and rail services at the Providence MBTA/ Amtrak station.

Mr. Therrien explained that the previously completed Metro Study contained several recommendations, which included: additional bus service, improving the transit experience; reinventing Kennedy Plaza; new downtown Providence transit hubs and increasing the Park and Ride capacity. Some buses will be able to come downtown and continue on so people may not need to transfer. Other recommendations include the initiation of rapid bus service; building a Providence streetcar service; strengthen intermodal connections; expanding the program for commuters; and encouraging of transit- oriented development.

Mr. Therrien explained that although RIPTA is working on all the recommendations in the Metro Study, the Core Connector Study is specifically addressing the recommendation on building the Providence streetcar service. He detailed the format of the open houses, which included over 130 participants in three locations. At the open houses, participants were asked to fill out comment cards detailing the types of services they would like to see in the downtown core, including enhanced bus, modern streetcars, and historic replicas of streetcars. Ms. Shocket asked which of these do not require new infrastructure. Mr. Therrien replied they all do. The streetcar would be approximately \$75 million versus \$10 million in enhanced buses. While streetcars are more expensive, they have proven to bring more economic development investment along the line since there is dedicated infrastructure. Streetcar projects are often said to be 50% transit and 50% economic development projects. Mr. Therrien said the issue is to decide what is the best route and best mode, either rail or rubber tires. The schedule for the Core Connector Study is to have proposed modes and routes available for presentation to the public in December and to complete the study by June 2011.

Mr. Therrien was asked how the presence of rails in the streets might affect bicyclists. He stated that rails in the streets are difficult for bicycles. This will be examined as part of the Core Connector Study. The Study will also include an environmental assessment addressing visual pollution that may accompany a streetcar project. Mr. Schiller stated that he did not vote for the study but now that it is here it seems like politically it is already decided that they want the streetcars. He urged RIPTA to carefully examine the impact that the streetcars may have on bus service. While buses may not have as much of an economic development impact, there are a lot of residents who depend on bus service. Buses can go faster than streetcars. Bus shelters can

be improved. Trolleys could divert their routes as needed. Bus alternatives would be less expensive. Mr. Schiller questioned whether the presence of streetcars would force bus riders to change modes an additional time, prolonging their trip to work. He worries that if something were cut to fund the streetcars, it would be bus service. Mr. Schiller added that his concern is that streetcars do not provide new transit service. Mr. Therrien stressed that all the issues raised by Mr. Schiller would be addressed in the in the Study. Ms. Shocket suggested continuing the discussion when the results of the study are in.

6. Staff Report

Current Project Construction Update – Bob Shawver; Bob Smith

- Ms. Scott stated there have been recent reports of cost overruns and delays in RIDOT construction projects. To address these issues, Mr. Shawver will give an actual status of several large projects. Mr. Shawver said that despite press reports that the price of the I-WAY doubled, the price actually went down. The debt service went down. The reports were comparing the actual costs in 2010 to a ballpark estimate established in 1993, without accounting for inflation.
- Mr. Smith stated the Sakonnet River Bridge is under construction. The project is below budget at this point and on schedule.
- Mr. Shawver said there is expected to be a signed agreement with the MBTA on Tuesday to provide commuter rail service from Boston to the new Intermodal Station in Warwick. Legal issues with Amtrak held up the agreement. There should be trains before the end of the year to Warwick and next year to Wickford Junction. Ms. Ann Clark of the RI Airport Corporation stated that the rental car facility should be ready to open for operation by October 27, 2010.
- The Pawtucket River Bridge bid came in at \$40 million below the estimate.
- Mr. Shawver said that several stimulus project bids came in lower than estimate, therefore RIDOT was able to add additional projects, including crack sealing, striping, signal itemization, etc.

Safe Routes to School

- Ms. Scott announced that there is an award event scheduled on October 6, 2010 at 4:00 pm in the Department of Administration Atrium. October 6, 2010 is also International Walk to School Day, which is a perfect opportunity to present the awards for over \$2 million in great projects throughout the state. Over \$4.5 million in requests were received. This round of grants will fund improvements and programs at 16 elementary and middle schools in 10 towns. Ms. Scott thanked Ronnie Sirota, the SRTS Coordinator for all her hard work on the effort. The TAC is invited to attend the ceremony.

Airport Systems Plan

- Mr. Rhodes stated that has been working on this State Guide Plan update with the Airport Corporation. This Plan was previously presented to the TAC 1 ½ years ago and it is being updated according to the new passenger forecasts included in the most recent Draft Environmental Impact Statement completed for proposed runway expansion at T.F. Green Airport. A draft of the plan will be on the TAC agenda in October for discussion and to schedule a public hearing. Ms. Clarke indicated that

none of the substance or recommendations contained in the plan has changed from the original version the TAC reviewed over a year ago.

- The next TAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 28 at the Quonset Development Corporation.

7. Additional Public Comment

Ms. Molly Clark of the RI Lung Association and the Coalition for Transportation Choices wanted to add to what was discussed earlier in the meeting. She feels that before there is a new TIP solicitation, there should be discussion with the municipalities to see if there is any re-prioritizing of the projects currently listed on the TIP.

Ms. Eugenia Marks thanked Ronnie Sirota, RI Safe Routes to School Coordinator and the others involved for all their work for this round and the previous round of Safe Routes to School grants. In looking at the schools and the surrounding areas, it is vitally important to focus on signals and adequate stripping to slow traffic down near schools. It is very important to get the local officials involved to understand the safety issues.

Ms. Margarita Pryor announced that the first RI Bike Walk Summit would take place in Providence on October 7.

8. Other Business

Mr. Schiller said that he has a link to the Bike Summit so people can call him for this information. The Environmental Council of RI will be sponsoring a debate for the candidates for Governor; transportation topics will be included in this discussion. It will be Tuesday, September 28. Mr. Schiller offered additional information for anyone who was interested.

9. Adjourn

Upon motion of Mr. Murray and second by Mr. Brodd, the TAC adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen G. Scott
Secretary