

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

August 25, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.
Department of Administration
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

APPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

TAC members present

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair	Public Member
Mr. Robert Murray, Vice Chair	Public Member
Mr. Dan Baudouin	Providence Foundation
Ms. Ann Clarke representing Mr. Kevin Dillon	RI Airport Corporation
Ms. Elaine Colarusso	Town of East Greenwich
Mr. Paul Romano	Public Member
Mr. Barry Schiller	RI Sierra Club
Ms. Jane Sherman	Public Member
Mr. Mark Therrien	RI Public Transit Authority
Ms. Amy Thibeault representing Mr. Robert Shawver	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation
Dr. Robert Vanderslice	RI Department of Health

TAC members absent

Ms. Melanie Jewett Army	City of Providence
Ms. Sue Barker	Greenways Alliance
Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Cumberland
Mr. Russ Chateaufeuf	RI Department of Environmental Management
Mr. Mark Carruolo	City of Warwick
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public member
Ms. Marilyn Cohen	RI Chapter, American Planning Association
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Construction Industries of RI
Mr. Jim Soctomah	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. Everett Stuart	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

Others in attendance

Ms. Barbara Breslin	Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Meredith Brady	RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Laurie Brayton	Senate Fiscal Office
Ms. Molly Clark	American Lung Association RI/ CTC (Coalition for Transportation Choices
Mr. Grant Dulgarian	Ecology Action for RI
Mr. Richard Langseth	Greenwich Bay Watershed Group
Mr. Thomas Queenan	DOT Intermodal Planning
Ms. Mary Jane Sorrentro	ASRI

Mr. Kevin Viveiros
Mr. Douglas Williams

Pare Corporation
RIPTA Riders

Statewide Planning Staff Present

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

Chief
Assistant Chief
Principal Planner

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Approval of June 23, 2011 Meeting Minutes– *for action*

Because there were not enough members to constitute a quorum, the approval of the minutes could not be voted upon. That will be done at the next meeting.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was none

4. FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program

• ***TIP Solicitation Package – for discussion***

Ms. Shocket complimented Ms. Scott and Ms. Cameron on the TIP Solicitation package that was mailed to TAC members. Ms. Scott replied that she also worked with Mr. Rhodes and DOT on it. Plans are to mail the package out to municipalities this coming Monday, August 29. While no one knows for sure what the funding will be, Ms. Scott stated they are assuming a 24% cut both for highway and transit funding. Any decrease will likely take effect on October 1, 2011 for FY 2012. Because of the current funding crisis, RI will not be able to fund all the projects in the current TIP. Ms. Scott thanked DOT especially Amy Thibeault for their help with the TIP package.

Ms. Scott explained the details of the letter and other materials in the package. Municipalities are being asked to do the following:

1. Review the list of projects in the current FFY 09-12 TIP that are not projected for implementation according to RIDOT's project status report to ensure that they are still relevant to the municipality's transportation goals.
2. If there is a priority project that is not listed in the current FFY 09-12 TIP, it may be submitted for consideration by completing an Application for New Projects.
3. Submit a single, prioritized list of projects on the Project Prioritization Cover Sheet that includes projects from the current FFY 09-12 TIP that the municipality would like to move forward to the FFY 13-16 TIP, as well as any new project submissions.

The TIP application is a simplified two page application. In addition, applicants do not need to categorize their projects by TIP category, the staff will. This TIP, the TAC will separate into subcommittees not by geography as in the past but by category. It was thought that this method would make it more objective to score. If necessary, the staff will have the opportunity to ask for more information from the applicant.

A TAC subcommittee contributed to the TIP solicitation letter and Guide to the TIP Development Process for Federal Fiscal Years 2013 – 2016. Members included: Mr. Schiller, Ms. Shocket, Mr. Cassidy, Ms. Army, Mr. Shawver, Ms. Thibeault and staff from Statewide Planning. Ms. Scott explained the contents of the application package including the letter to municipalities, the TIP Guide, TIP New Project Application, and TIP Project Prioritization Cover Sheet. Ms. Scott stressed that no projects in the current TIP will be automatically carried forward to the new TIP. She stressed that the status report on all projects provided by RIDOT included in the package indicates whether a project needs to be prioritized on the Project Prioritization Cover Sheet to be considered for inclusion in the FY 13-16 TIP. Even if 90% design is completed, it may not have the funding for the construction. The municipality would then have to indicate its priority moving forward. This TIP process was also approved by the State Planning Council.

Questions and discussion followed. Mr. Baudouin stated that he felt some projects should stay in without the municipality having to prioritize it. Ms. Scott responded that the DOT status report contains a column which states whether the project needs to be prioritized. Ms. Scott explained that some projects just will not have the funding for construction. However, the municipality does not need to submit a full application since the original one is on file. In addition, the TAC always has discretion on choosing the projects.

Ms. Clarke explained that with FAA, if construction has not started within a period of time, the environmental work has to be done again and wondered if that would be true of these projects. Ms. Breslin said the major highway projects will be in the TIP. Ms. Scott explained that the major DOT interstate and bridge projects do not need to be factored in when the applicants choose the priority projects. DOT and RIPTA will prioritize projects that have more of a statewide significance.

Discussion followed from TAC members. Mr. Schiller stated that the staff did a terrific job on the document and in explaining it at the meeting today. As a member of the subcommittee, he would like to convey a suggestion that Ms. Eugenia Marks of the Audubon Society had suggested to him. He stated that since there is limited funding, the municipalities should think about small scale projects such as walking and biking especially since there are health and climate issues. Also, in the letter that will be sent to the municipalities, there is no mention about public health or bicycles. Many people do not know that those types of projects are eligible and it is not clear in the package that they are eligible to be included. Therefore, Mr. Schiller suggests adding “We also want to suggest small scale projects that serve public health by promoting safe active transportation, that is walking and bicycling, especially as the U.S. Dept. of Transportation Policy statement on bicycling and pedestrian accommodation encourages ‘a commitment to accommodating bicycle and pedestrian as an integral part of the U.S. transportation system.’ ” This was part of the USDOT guidance. Mr. Schiller also stated that both in the draft TIP and at a roundtable discussion with DOT Director Michael Lewis, it was clear that there would be no bike program in this TIP if the funding is cut as anticipated.

TAC discussion followed on Mr. Schiller’s comments. Mr. Murray stated he would rather add Mr. Schiller’s suggestions as bullet points rather than as a detailed explanation in the document. Mr. Baudouin would support the concept of adding bicycle and pedestrian projects but is not sure of how it should be worded. Mr. Walker asked what amount is considered “small scale” projects. Mr. Schiller responded that each municipality would have to define this but “small scale” does emphasize that there is not a lot of money. Ms. Scott responded that there were

many revisions of the TIP solicitation letter made but there could be an additional revision if the TAC feels it is appropriate. Staff tried to make it implicit in the letter that the TIP cannot afford large expensive projects at this time; only small projects. In addition, for this solicitation, they didn't want to give specific categories; rather, staff wanted to wait to see what types of projects are submitted. Ms. Scott clarified that if there are requests for bicycle projects, then there would be a bike program. The scoring criteria are listed by topic in the letter. Health benefits are not a specific evaluation category in the TIP scoring criteria, however, the mobility benefits criteria does address health benefits.

Mr. Rhodes added that staff is looking at the priorities of the communities. He does not feel we have to remind the communities that bicycle/ pedestrian is part of those priorities. The criteria have been approved by the State Planning Council so that cannot change for this TIP solicitation. Dr. Vanderslice added that there are other easy channels of communication besides the letter to get the message out to the communities regarding the importance of bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Mr. Romano asked how many bridge projects from the present list will make it into the TIP. Ms. Scott said DOT has already undergone a formal process to prioritize the state's bridges. This process was presented to the TAC by Dave Fish of the RIDOT bridge section late last year. That is likely to be the basis for which bridges are included in the TIP. Mr. Rhodes also stated that there is no commitment at this time as to the level of funding in any category. Ms. Thibeault responded that there will be room for municipalities to make decisions on small bridges. Ms. Scott replied that there will be a subcommittee just on bridges to review and rank all bridge projects that are submitted. Ms. Breslin's office has been working closely with RIDOT to develop a bridge management program and RI is very close to completion on this. Mr. Murray stated that he thought the materials in the solicitation package were great. However, he wondered about the salutation "Dear Interested Party". Ms. Scott noted that the full TIP package will be sent to municipal chief administrative officers, planning directors, public works directors, regional planning directors, and transportation providers. In addition, notice of the TIP solicitation process will be distributed to the entire Statewide Planning database which includes over 1,200 contacts. There will also be a legal ad in the Providence Journal and all information will be posted on the Statewide Planning website.

Mr. Baudouin commented that the State has developed a good bike network and he assumes there is a Bicycle Master Plan. He asked about the progress the State has made on this. Are there critical pieces that need to be filled? Ms. Sherman stated it was part of the Greenways Plan that Mr. George Johnson accomplished. Ms. Thibeault responded that there is a lot of bike path funding from earmark projects and these earmark projects will be included in the FY 13-16 TIP. Mr. Baudouin said it would be helpful to see a bicycle map on what is in place, what was funded and what still needs to be funded. It is a great network – one of the best things the State has ever done. It was commented that there may be a map on the DOT website.

Ms. Shocket asked for further comments. There were none.

5. Transportation Improvement Program FY2009 – 2012 Amendment # 12

- *Staff Briefing on DOT's Amendment Request – For information*

Ms. Scott explained that the staff briefing is for information only and includes a memo from Mr. Shawver summarizing the request. At the next regular TAC meeting on September 22 there will

be a public hearing on the proposed TIP Amendment. Ms. Scott then turned it over to Ms. Thibeault of RIDOT who explained the amendment further and answered questions. Following are some of details explained by Ms. Thibeault as well as TAC members' comments and questions:

Ms. Thibeault explained that there is a copy of the TIP changes in the TAC packet. This first portion of this amendment adds a total of \$28 million in ARRA FRA grants for Providence and Kingston Station. \$25 Million will be used to construct a third track at the Kingston Station. This project will enable high-speed trains to pass trains on this high volume section of the Northeast Corridor. \$3 million will be used for preliminary engineering and environmental assessment for track and platform upgrades at the Providence Station. These projects must be on the TIP in order to obligate funds. These grants are 100% federal funding.

This amendment also includes several adjustments to the Enhancement program. The first proposed adjustment is the addition of the Northern Interstate Gateway Beautification project which includes a series of projects such as landscaping, murals and other artistic monuments at the state line at I-95 & I-195. This project will be phased over the next five (5) years and cost approximately \$3.9 million. Ms. Sherman asked where the funding is coming from the first phase, which is listed at \$700,000 in FY2012. Ms. Thibeault answered the first phase will come from the \$4 million budgeted annually in the TIP for Enhancement projects. Ms. Sherman asked which project would not be complete since it seemed that the \$4 million budget was already allocated to other projects currently in the TIP. Ms. Thibeault explained that some projects are not ready at this time to be authorized. Mr. Thomas Queenan, who manages the Enhancement Program, explained that not all the Enhancement projects currently listed in the TIP will be able to be funded. Mr. Schiller asked about the role of the Enhancement Advisory committee to oversee this. Mr. Queenan answered the committee has approved the addition of this project. Mr. Baudouin questioned why RIDOT is proposing to add new projects to the Enhancement Program when there is a large backlog of projects that have not been completed and why this new project will be funded next year ahead of dozens of other that have been waiting for years to be implemented. Mr. Queenan said only one extra project was requested. No new projects have been added for several years. Projects were awarded when the federal funding climate was different than today. Also, no one could have predicted what happened to the economy.

Ms. Sherman commented that people have spent time on the projects already listed and asked which projects are losing funding because of this addition. Mr. Schiller stated that nothing in the Enhancement Program is being dropped. The Governor's Office believes the new Enhancement project, the Northern Interstate Gateway Beautification project is a statewide project. The procedure is the Enhancement Advisory Committee reviews new project requests and after review, they have approved this new project for inclusion in the TIP. In answer to a question from Mr. Rhodes as to the composition of the Enhancement committee, Mr. Queenan listed some of the members but then stated he would send a complete list.

Mr. Baudouin asked if the Enhancement program was part of the current TIP solicitation. Ms. Scott replied that \$4 million is allocated each year in the current TIP for enhancement projects. Since there are about \$40 million worth of projects in the current TIP, there is not sufficient funding to construct all projects. With this TIP solicitation, municipalities are being asked to prioritize any project in the current TIP which is not anticipated for construction, including enhancement projects. New projects of any kind can be submitted as well.

Ms. Thibeault went on to explain the other proposed changes to the Enhancement Program. The Town of Westerly has requested reprogramming of the Bradford Streetscape Project (\$450,000) and the Westerly Riverwalk Project, also known as the Pawcatuck River Enhancement (\$1,470,000). Westerly has decided not to proceed with either due to unresolved right of way issues. In their place, Westerly wishes to proceed with a project along Canal Street utilizing the combined allocated amount of \$1,920,000. This project would include the complete redesign and reconstruction of two (2) local roadways which will provide a new road surface for vehicles, guardrails, signage, storm drainage improvements, new sidewalks, landscaping and safety improvements for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The resurfacing portion of this project is currently listed in Study & Development. It would be added to the Pavement Management Program of the TIP. Landscaping and other amenities would be added to the Enhancement Program. The Enhancement Committee approved these changes. Implementation is expected between FY 2013-2015.

Ms. Clarke asked why the Westerly Enhancement project was being submitted as part of this current TIP since the implementation is proposed to take place in the future. She asked if they would need to resubmit for the FY 13-16 TIP. Mr. Queenan stated that this was part of an amendment that had been approved for Westerly. Ms. Clarke replied that there may be some expectation of funding since it has been amended. Ms. Scott noted that if this Amendment was adopted it would need to be prioritized by the Town and included with the FY 13-16 TIP request.

Mr. Murray stated there should be a reasonable expectation on the part of the municipalities that projects that do make it into the TIP can actually be implemented. Ms. Shocket said the prioritization process that will be used as part of this TIP update should help in this area. Mr. Queenan stated that the awarded projects were fiscally constrained when they were awarded. The problem is what has happened economically since. The prioritization process is a good first step toward creating an Enhancement Program that is fiscally feasible.

Mr. Therrien commented that in the early days of the Enhancement program, many times it was not the town that submitted a project but rather another organization such as the Preservation Commission. Ms. Sherman asked that RIDOT present what Enhancement Projects will be completed in the next year at the next Public Hearing. Ms. Thibeault offered to provide a more detailed status report of the Enhancement Program at the next meeting.

Ms. Thibeault continued explaining the remaining changes which are part of TIP Amendment #12. Two projects that were originally included in the Enhancement Program, Manville Landing and Central Falls Landing, will be funded with Earmark funds for the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor. The two projects that were originally slated for the Earmark funds, the Blackstone Bikeway Enhancement Project and the Blackstone Canal Enhancement Project, will be moved to the Enhancement Program. This swap is proposed because the Landing projects are closer to construction than the other Blackstone Valley projects. The dollar amounts for the Manville Landing and Central Falls Landing projects is equal to that of the Bikeway and Canal projects so there is no net change in the amount included in the Enhancement Program.

Ms. Thibeault summarized the final portions of the TIP Amendment, which includes adjustments to the Pavement Management Program. RIDOT is proposing the addition of the Matunuck Beach Stabilization Project (\$1.6 million) in order to construct a coastal protection system needed to stabilize approximately 400 feet of shoulder embankment. Construction is planned

for FY 12. At the same time, RIODT wishes to defer the Highway Project/ADA, South Main Street Project in Providence (\$2.4 million) to future years due to design issues. This change will provide fiscal constraint to the TIP. Mr. Baudouin asked why ADA sidewalk money will be spent on something else since the South Main Street project is delayed. He would like to see something that is not ADA related deferred instead. Ms. Thibeault said she would discuss this with her colleagues at RIDOT. The last project included in the TIP amendment is improvements and safety upgrades on 13 local roads on the Federal Aid System in the Town of North Providence. This is to reflect an \$899,846 earmark in the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriation Act of 2010. Construction is anticipated in FY 2012.

When the discussion was completed, Ms. Shocket reminded everyone that action on the Amendment will be scheduled after the public hearing at the September 22, 2011 TAC meeting.

6. Staff Report – *for discussion*

Ms. Scott gave the staff report:

- *Rail Plan Update*

Staff anticipates that by the end of next week the contract will be signed with the selected consultant.

- *Challenge Grant*

There is a new Challenge Grant Solicitation; the RFP is on the Division of Planning website. Ms. Barbara Breslin of FHWA stated that she continues to be impressed with the Challenge grants. Ms. Scott stated that there is \$1,000,000 in funds available for this round of grants. In addition, Statewide Planning has partnered with RI Housing, who will offer up to \$10,000 to use toward the required 20% match for projects that include a housing component. Ms. Breslin stated that this will promote the livability issues. Ms. Scott added that the grant application deadline is November 10, 2011. The grants are likely to be awarded at the end of December or the beginning of January.

- *Airport System Plan*

Mr. Rhodes explained that the State Planning Council held a public hearing in May on the draft Airport System Plan. The draft Plan was presented last week to the State Planning Council. Discussion was postponed until the next meeting.

- *Safe Routes to School (SRTS)*

Ms. Scott explained that several projects from the first round will finally be advancing to construction. Statewide Planning and DOT have finalized a workflow process for the SRTS program. DOT is hiring two on-call consultants to design and construct all Round 2 grant projects. There will be a workshop held on September 20 for those awarded SRTS grants in Round 2 to outline the administrative procedures of both the infrastructure and non-infrastructure process. Ms. Sirota, RI SRTS Coordinator, is completing the non-infrastructure Cooperative agreements and scheduling the last few SRTS National Workshops for the fall. Mr. Rhodes thanks DOT for their work on updating this process especially Ms. Diane Badorek and Mr. Steven Church.

7. Additional Public Comment

Mr. Richard Langseth, Executive Director of the Greenwich Bay Watershed Group had comments related to the State Airport System Plan. He stated that this was a big issue in the Warwick Beacon recently. Mr. Langseth praised the TAC and believes it showed courage on this issue. He stated the Airport Corporation president said the airport runway extension will cost \$165 million which is 1/3 of the entire cost when all associated costs are factored in. Mr. Langseth states that the runway expansion is a \$400 million project. State law is that if a bond reduces the rating, then it is inappropriate. Mr. Langseth does not believe that RI needs to extend the airport in RI. In fact the runway at Boston's Logan Airport is shorter and yet Jet Blue can fly it. RI has a short haul airport and thus just needs appropriate planes. He asked TAC members to pass this information on to other interested parties.

Ms. Molly Clark of the American Lung Association and the Coalition for Transportation Choices is not asking to change the letter in the FY 13-16 TIP solicitation package but to remind people that pedestrian and bicycle projects are an important part of the TIP.

Mr. Douglas Williams representing RIPTA bus riders spoke about helping RIPTA find alternate sources of funding. It is the funding mechanism that is a problem. Already 1,500 names are on a petition to deliver to the Governor to help save RIPTA service. Mr. Williams asked that since RIPTA rides the same roads, why can't there be more of a merger between RIPTA and DOT. He also commented that there is literature on the table for people to take about the proposed drastic cuts in service because of the deficit. He asked for assistance in finding alternative funding for RIPTA.

Mr. Grant Dulgarian asked if the TAC commented on the proposal to increase driver license and registration fees. Mr. Rhodes responded that the TAC composed a letter to legislative leadership outlining issues facing transportation funding in general, which he would be glad to share with Mr. Dulgarian. The TAC did not comment on specific proposals but laid out the problems and some strong recommendations. Mr. Dulgarian said that no one was talking about what would be given to the drivers in return for increasing their fees. Mr. Dulgarian felt the duration that a driver's license is valid should be increased in return for the higher fees.

8. Other Business

Ms. Shocket stated that there is information on the table regarding the RI Women in Transportation Reception celebrating five years as an organization. There is also information about a memorial bench in memory of TAC member Paul Reynolds that will be put up by the Kingston Improvement Association. The KIA is accepting donations for this effort.

Mr. Schiller thanked the four public speakers who spoke earlier in the meeting. He also felt that when thinking of TAC membership, a representative from the RIPTA Riders organization should be considered if that group remains active.

9. Adjournment

Upon motion of Mr. Murray, seconded by Mr. Schiller, the TAC unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:15 p.m.

Prepared By:
Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planning

Submitted By:
Linsey Cameron, TAC Secretary