

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

June 23, 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
Ms. Melanie Jewett Army	City of Providence
Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Cumberland
Mr. Russ Chateauneuf	RI Department of Environmental Management
Ms. Ann Clarke representing Mr. Kevin Dillon	RI Airport Corporation
Ms. Elaine Colarusso	Town of East Greenwich
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Mr. Robert Murray	Public Member
Mr. Paul Romano	Public Member
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
Mr. Everett Stuart	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Mr. Mark Therrien	RI Public Transit Authority
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**TAC members absent**

Ms. Sue Barker	Greenways Alliance
Mr. Dan Baudouin	Providence Foundation
Mr. Mark Carruolo	City of Warwick
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public member
Ms. Marilyn Cohen	Public member
Mr. Jim Soctomah	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Dr. Robert Vanderslice	RI Department of Health

**Others in attendance**

Ms. Diane Badorek	RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Barbara Breslin	Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Meredith Pickering	Senate Fiscal Office
Mr. Bob Smith	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Kevin Viveiros	Pare Corporation

**Statewide Planning Staff Present**

Mr. Jared Rhodes	Chief
Ms. Karen Scott	Assistant Chief
Ms. Linsey Cameron	Supervising Planner
Ms. Ronnie Sirota	Principal Planner

## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

### 2. Approval of May 26, 2011 Meeting Minutes– *for action*

Upon motion of Mr. Murray to approve and seconded by Mr. Murray, the May 26, 2011 minutes were accepted unanimously.

### 3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

There were none.

### 4. FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Estimated Available Transportation Funding – for discussion*

Ms. Scott stated that the draft proposed TIP 2013 – 2016, included in the packet, is a baseline table. Ms. Scott continued by stating that staff is hoping to get some feedback from the TAC about the proposed TIP tables which reflect the limited amount of transportation funds available in the coming years. Mr. Shawver explained that the Department of Transportation (DOT) does not know Rhode Island's federal allocation of transportation funding, therefore he did not put too many projects in the TIP at this time. Mr. Shawver said that he would rather not have to cut projects and DOT can always add projects if more funding becomes available. Mr. Shawver's assumption is that the total funding available for projects will be approximately \$160 million, which would represent a 30 percent decrease from the 2011 TIP program. However, Mr. Shawver stated that he believes \$180 million is the more likely figure. Mr. Shawver proceeded to review the allocation of funding by program categories in the proposed TIP 2013 – 2016. Mr. Shawver stated that he had taken out most projects that were somewhat discretionary for this exercise and that this was the first version of a baseline TIP program.

Mr. Shawver continued by explaining the programs listed in the proposed TIP 2013 – 2016. In the Bike / Pedestrian Program only the Recreational Trail Program and the Safe Routes to School Program remain. Mr. Schiller asked if the discretionary sidewalk program was eliminated. Mr. Shawver confirmed that this version does not contain the discretionary sidewalk program. He explained that program is too expensive and was never developed as a standalone program. Mr. Shawver returned to describing the proposed TIP 2013 – 2016 with the Bridge Program. He stated that there are no new bridge projects listed, however funding was allocated for bridge right-of-way (ROW), inspection, maintenance, and design. Mr. Shawver stated that it is important to fund for the design of bridges, because it would not be good for the state of transportation if Rhode Island were to lose the design community. Mr. Shawver added that he allocated some funding to bridge ROW to serve as a placeholder for the program. Bridge inspection is needed and required. Bridge preventative maintenance is also needed and the proposed funding is relatively unchanged from previous years. Mr. Shawver added that it may be possible to delay the expensive and anticipated Providence Viaduct project for a year, which would free up some of 2012's funding under the TIP.

Mr. Shawver went on to describe the proposed baseline funding under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) TIP Program. Under CMAQ, RIPTA funds were removed except for commuter resources. Mr. Shawver stated that the listing for new capital improvements for the Transportation Management Center (TMC) is up for discussion. Under the South County Commuter Rail, the allocated funds are necessary to pay Amtrak for the use of the Northeast Corridor and the cost is pretty much fixed.

Next Mr. Shawver went on to describe the other major programs under the proposed baseline TIP. He stated that there are backlogs of projects to be completed under the Enhancement Program and there are no new projects under the Highway Program. Some funding is needed in the Interstate Program. Under the TIP's Major Projects with Multi Year Funding program, Mr. Shawver added that GARVEE debt service and earmarked projects have to be retained in the TIP. He noted that DOT has run out of funds for the Sakonnet River Bridge due to an increase in construction costs. The TIP's Planning Program funding allocation is needed for data collection, research, etc. and is necessary for applying and receiving federal transportation funds. Mr. Shawver believes that if there are any extra funds available in the TIP they should be allocated to the Pavement Management program. Mr. Shawver stated that he is optimistic that with some tweaking of the costs, there will hopefully be \$20 million to \$25 million per year under Pavement Management. Mr. Shawver also explained that \$1 million was put into Study and Development program however there may be little need to spend money under this category if the projects move onto other programs. Mr. Shawver stated that the Traffic Safety Program includes mandatory elements that are required to receive federal funding.

In conclusion, Mr. Shawver stated that the net result for the funding allocations by program for 2012 through 2016 is displayed in the draft baseline TIP Program totals table included in the packet. Mr. Shawver explained that it was not a lot of money to work with in the coming years and the cuts could even start in 2012. There may not be the \$30 million available per year for discretionary projects. Therefore, if the TAC goes out for a solicitation, Mr. Shawver advised that it be kept small and limited to the Traffic Safety and Pavement Management programs under the TIP. He further added that new projects are not needed for Study and Development, as there is already enough currently listed in that category. Mr. Bob Smith, Deputy Chief Design Engineer at DOT, noted that there are needs in the Bridge Program, Pavement Management, and Interstate Program that need funding. Mr. Smith said DOT is resurfacing another section of I-95 later this year and money is needed in that category. Mr. Shawver stated the TAC does not need to figure out the exact budget amounts for the future TIP today. The key for today's meeting is to determine what we are going to go out for TIP project solicitations.

Discussion of the TAC followed. Mr. Schiller asked about the existing earmarked projects listed in the TIP. Mr. Shawver stated that the earmarks are not included in the baseline TIP for 2013 – 2016; however, there is still money in that category. Mr. Schiller stated that in any future solicitation, people will want to know what happened to the earmarked projects. On another topic, Mr. Shawver explained that a lot of bridges were repaired in the last TIP. Mr. Smith said there is enough money allocated in the TIP for small bridge projects.

Ms. Clarke asked whether any extra funding is available. Mr. Shawver said if there is any, it will be used to replace bond money to pay the debt service. In answer to Ms. Clarke's question about a possible toll on the highway, Mr. Shawver stated that if a toll was approved, the actual toll would not take place for at least three years. Ms. Breslin from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) asked if the funds listed under the Bridge program was all the funding for that program or whether the funding was moved around. She added that funding from the bridge category should be used only for bridges. Mr. Shawver asked if Ms. Breslin knew how much was going to be in that category. Ms. Breslin suggested continuing this discussion later with staff.

Ms. Scott distributed the Draft Program Totals, TIP 2009 – 2012 / TIP 2013 – 2016 Funding Levels table that Ms. Cameron completed for a comparison of the current TIP with the future baseline TIP. Ms. Scott noted that in the TIP 2009 – 2012, 18 percent of the total funding was allocated to the Bridge Program,

whereas under the proposed baseline TIP 2013 – 2016, 26 percent is allocated to the Bridge Program. Mr. Schiller asked how the Sakonnet River Bridge was counted since it was listed under Major Projects. Mr. Shawver replied that the Sakonnet River Bridge is using bridge money. Mr. Brodd stated that he would like to allocate additional funding to the Bridge Program as a means to eliminate deficient bridges in the state.

Ms. Clarke stated the TAC needs to be careful how much funding is cut from design work. Mr. Smith stated that many of the projects get lumped into design such as construction inspection but they are not really design. Mr. Murray asked if DOT was active in going after insurance reimbursements from vehicular and truck accidents that result in damages to highway and road infrastructure. Mr. Shawver replied that DOT does have someone who is solely responsible for going after insurance payments. Ms. Scott noted that RIPTA will undertake a similar exercise as DOT to determine baseline TIP funding in the next few weeks.

- *Status of Study and Development Projects/Working Group Discussion – for discussion*

Next, Ms. Scott discussed the TIP's listing of the Study and Development projects, included in the TAC mailing package. She expressed the importance of discussing how the TAC should approach the municipalities for the solicitation without raising too many expectations for project funding. Ms. Scott suggested that staff sends an individualized letter to each municipality painting the realistic financial picture of the limited transportation funding available. The letter would also include a listing of the TIP projects that have been completed in that specific municipality, as well as a listing of projects that are in the TIP for future years. Ms. Scott added that the project listing would also include information related to the status of Study and Development projects and the funding mechanism for each project, i.e. earmarks, etc. Staff will then request the municipality to rank their projects in order of priority, as well as indicate if any projects are no longer relevant or have changed in scope. The TAC would then offer the municipality the opportunity to submit project proposals of the highest priority in the TIP's Traffic Safety and Pavement Management program which would be detailed on a one page application form. This one page application would collect the basic information for the project including location, project limits, overall condition, etc.

According to Ms. Scott, the TIP budget for 2012 is projected to be \$210 million, however cuts could possibly take place. Staff is proposing that if a project is budgeted for 2012 in the TIP and the municipality indicates it as being of the highest priority, that project would not have to compete again. Any new project would have to be reviewed by staff and a subcommittee of the TAC. Ms. Scott stated that staff is proposing to review the TIP project proposals with a set of criteria which are currently being developed as part of an EPA Cooperative Assistance Grant that relates to smart growth, livability, and context development. Utilizing the EPA criteria, the projects that rank the highest the municipality can be asked to submit a more detailed application. The detailed application proposals would then compete against applications submitted and listed on the FY 2009 – 2012 TIP that are of lower priority or are not funded. Both new and old TIP project applications would be competing according to the new EPA criteria. A draft TIP 2013 - 2016 would then be programmed and presented before the TAC for review.

Ms. Shocket asked Mr. Wood as a town manager how he felt about the proposed process just discussed. Mr. Wood replied that the TIP project submissions to the TAC should have credible engineering information. He does not have a problem with new projects competing with the old projects. Mr. Rhodes clarified that staff was not proposing a full solicitation and it would just be targeted to the cities and towns. Mr. Rhodes suggested that an estimated construction cost be required for each proposed project on the application. Mr. Rhodes added that DOT's engineers were wonderful in their review of

Safe Routes to School project applications and perhaps DOT could review each TIP project application the same way, especially considering there will be a limited number of new applications. Mr. Shawver indicated DOT staff has reviewed TIP submissions in the past but the TAC needs to make sure the application criteria make sense.

Mr. Shawver stated that if the application is for pavement management, much of it would depend on the condition of the pavement, although other criteria can be added in the review criteria. He then questioned if a more detailed submission is needed for the Pavement Management program. Mr. Smith stated that if a road's pavement is in very bad condition, regardless of it meeting other criteria such as smart growth it still needs to be fixed. According to Mr. Smith, at various times the federal government has had a criterion for the assessing the condition of roads. The level of service of a road can also be a factor in determining what roads get fixed first. Mr. Smith stated that a one page application may be enough for them to determine a list of roads in need of repair. Mr. Smith stated that the communities will also help DOT determine the priority roads needing repair. Mr. Wood explained that sometimes other related items are needed when repairing a road, such as drainage improvements. Mr. Shawver suggested that a working group of people are needed to determine the TIP application and review criteria. Mr. Brodd commented that the process just described is what is used on the local level. There are two categories, one category includes roads that can be repaired and the other category consists of roads that are already failing. According to Mr. Brodd, criteria for selecting the priority roads in need of repair can include roads of high traffic volume, as well as those near failure. Therefore, the review criteria have to be somewhat flexible.

- *TIP Solicitation Process – for discussion*

Mr. Shawver suggested the TAC form a working group similar to what had recently been done to review the existing TIP's Study and Development projects. Ms. Clarke agreed with Mr. Shawver's suggestion and that a working group makes a lot of sense. Her concern is that in reality, who will take a project off the Study and Development list unless there are limitations capped to the communities. Every road project will be a priority for the particular community. Mr. Shawver stated if the community affirms the roads already on the TIP and submits new proposals then they will have to prioritize their projects.

Ms. Scott returned the discussion to the topic of the letter to the municipalities that was discussed earlier in the meeting. She stated that the letter to the municipalities must be clearly worded in explaining that if a project listed on the TIP is no longer a priority for the municipality, they do not get to reserve that funding for a new project that is identified by the city or town as a higher priority. Mr. Shawver stated that a similar process is needed when determining the TIP's Traffic Safety projects. Mr. Shawver said it is more limited on how RIDOT can fund high hazard roads. Mr. Smith answered that some roads that have a high accident rate may be eligible to be listed on the TIP even though they are local roads. Mr. Schiller asked if the allocated \$9 million per year to the TIP's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) can only be used for high hazard intersections or is there room under this funding category to look for innovative low cost solutions to slow traffic. Mr. Shawver stated that low cost solutions are possible but DOT needs to review traffic accident data in order to determine what roads are eligible to be improved with state funding under the TIP. Mr. Schiller asked if there is room for towns to add low cost, innovative ideas to slow traffic. He gave an example of a project to slow traffic on Fruit Hill Road in North Providence which included items such as extending the sidewalk into the road. Mr. Schiller asked if these kinds of projects are eligible for federal funding. Mr. Smith suggested at some point FHWA could explain the criteria for these types of traffic calming projects. Mr. Rhodes stated there is a preexisting process to solicit these projects. Ms. Breslin explained that the highway safety program has a data collection process to determine the high accident rate roads and they are

addressed first. According to Ms. Breslin the highway safety program is all data driven. Mr. Rhodes asked if there is still a need for municipalities to submit their high accident rate data since there already is a federal process. Mr. Shawver believes there should still be a process for municipalities to submit their high accident road data to the TAC. Ms. Cameron suggested there probably should be two different application forms, one for safety projects and one for pavement management projects. Mr. Rhodes stated that staff will work on preparing these items related to the TIP solicitation and will invite TAC members to meetings related to these discussions.

Ms. Scott then summarized the proposed process in which they will be moving forward to prepare for the TIP solicitation. Over the next month staff will examine and revise the project criteria, develop an application form for traffic safety and pavement management projects, and draft a letter to the municipalities for the TIP solicitation. Staff will invite TAC members to participate in meetings related to these items moving forward. Staff will then present the TIP solicitation process to the State Planning Council. Ms. Shocket asked for a show of hands to get a sense of whether the committee agreed with the approach Ms. Scott just described. Most members of the TAC raised their hand, indicating that they did support the approach. Ms. Scott said that work on these items will happen over the next few weeks. Mr. Rhodes explained that since the previous timeline was based on a different process, the staff will revise the timeline. This process should make it more manageable to accomplish.

Mr. Brodd agreed with the process but disagreed with limiting the TIP solicitation to traffic management and pavement management. There are some roads where pavement management will not fix the problem especially roads that are closed due to failure and need to be replaced. Mr. Smith answered that reclamation and more complete restoration is included in pavement management. Mr. Brodd also was concerned about bridge projects and the municipalities will need to have input into the small bridge program. Mr. Shawver believes public input into the process is important and perhaps in the letter to the municipalities that item is addressed. Mr. Wood said it is fine to ask the cities and towns to do more of the leg work when they submit their TIP projects in order to assist in the evaluation process including even completing some preliminary engineering work. Mr. Shawver added that in the past, if a community wanted to do the design they received higher priority on TIP funding.

Mr. Schiller stated that he was concerned that the municipalities will not be able to include sidewalk and pedestrian projects. Mr. Smith replied that in the pavement management program, rebuilding of sidewalks is included to be compliant with ADA requirements. Mr. Shawver said the inclusion of sidewalk work in pavement management projects should be made clear in the application. Ms. Scott said the list can include the explanation of what the categories include.

#### 5. **Staff Report – for discussion**

- *Rail Plan Update*

Statewide Planning, along with DOT and RIPTA have reviewed all three of the consultant proposals and scored them according to a variety of items include previous experience, proposal, and price. Staff has submitted the preferred consultant recommendation to the Department of Administration's Division of Purchasing, who will then issue notice to the consultant by next week. Staff will then draft an agreement with the consultant and begin working on the plan. Work will probably start in a couple of months and must be completed a year from the start date.

- *Congestion Management Task Force*

The Task Force held a meeting at the end of May. Updates were received from RIPTA regarding the design and installation of their Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) which will include real time bus

location status feeds for web and mobile applications. RIPTA will begin testing these applications in fall 2011 with hopeful deployment in February of 2012. It was also discussed if the state should revise its approach to Access Management by utilizing corridor plans produced under the planning challenge grant program. Through discussion at the meeting, it was identified that there was a need to revise the state application and approval process for RIDOT Physical Alteration Permits (PAP)s. The goal of a revised PAP process would be to improve local planning and RIDOT coordination on access management.

In answer to a question as to whether Rhode Island has impact fees and if there is a corridor program where a developer can pay for an improvement, Mr. Rhodes answered that impact fees are primarily used at the local level.

#### **8. Additional Public Comment**

There was none.

#### **9. Other Business**

Mr. Schiller stated that the TAC previously heard the presentation from the Coalition for Transportation Choices related to transportation financing. The House Finance budget deferred a revenue stream from increased registration fees for a couple of years. The House Finance budget does not provide funding for RIPTA's deficit in this next fiscal year. Mr. Bruce Landis, of the Providence Journal had written an article about the transportation funding situation. Mr. Schiller added that he heard there may be an amendment to House Budget Article 22 by State Representative O'Grady to establish a trust fund from registration fee increases with half of the funding to going DOT, 15 percent to cities and towns for their local roads, and 35 percent to RIPTA. RIPTA has stated what will happen if they do not receive the additional funding. There would be elimination of holiday service, elimination of late evening service on most routes, cutbacks on the length of routes, as well as staff layoffs. According to Mr. Schiller if the House budget amendment does not pass it will be very difficult to save the transit system as it currently operates. Governor Carcieri's Blue Ribbon Commission report stated that the level of RIPTA service should at least be maintained. Mr. Therrien stated that Mr. Schiller is accurate. A \$4.5 million shortfall will result in a \$6 million service cut in September. Mr. Schiller's opinion is that this cannot be saved by fare increases.

#### **10. Adjournment**

Upon motion of Mr. Murray, seconded by Mr. Brodd, the TAC unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linsey Cameron, Secretary