

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

February 28, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

Department of Administration

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**TAC members present**

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair	Public Member
Mr. Everett Stuart, Vice Chair	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Mr. Lloyd Albert	AAA Southern New England
Mr. Michael Bliss representing Ms. Dinalyn Spears	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Cumberland
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public Member
Mr. Russ Chateauneuf	RI Department of Environmental Management
Mr. Richard Crenca	City of Warwick
Mr. Albert Dahlberg	Public Member
Mr. George Monaghan	RI Consulting Engineers (RICE)
Ms. Lillian Picchione	RI Public Transit Authority
Mr. Paul Romano	Public Member
Mr. Barry Schiller	RI Sierra Club
Mr. Robert Shawver	RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Pam Sherrill	RI Chapter, American.
Dr. Robert Vanderslice	RI Department of Health
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**TAC members absent**

Mr. David Everett representing Mr. Robert Azar	City of Providence
Ms. Sue Barker	Greenways Alliance
Mr. Dan Baudouin	Providence Foundation
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Mr. Daniel Porter	RI Airport Corporation
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Construction Industries of RI
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation

**Others in attendance**

Mr. Corey Bobba	FHWA
Ms. Ellie Derrig	Town of Westerly
Ms. Amy Grzybowski	Town of Westerly
Ms. Joelle Kanter	Providence Foundation
Mr. Paul LeBlanc, P.E.	Town of Westerly
Mr. Bill LeGare	Valley Transportation
Mr. Steve Pristawa	RIDOT
Mr. Kevin Viveiros	Pare Corp.
Mr. Richard Youngken	Watch Hill Conservancy

### **Statewide Planning Staff Present**

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

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

#### **1. Call to Order**

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

#### **2. Approval of January 24, 2013 Meeting Minutes – *for action***

Upon motion to approve by Mr. Vanderslice, seconded by Ms. Sherrill, the meeting minutes were accepted unanimously.

#### **3. Public Comment on Agenda Items**

There was no public comment on the Agenda items.

#### **4. FY 2013 -2016 Transportation Improvement Program – Minor Amendment #1**

##### ***Public Hearing:***

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

Ms. Shocket formally adjourned the Public Hearing at 6:47 p.m.

#### ***See attached Public Hearing Report on Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Amendment #1.***

Following the Public Hearing, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) resumed its meeting.

Mr. Schiller moved to accept Minor Amendment #1 to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which would:

- Add the Bay Street Infrastructure Project to the Pavement Management Program
- Eliminate a portion of the Canal Street / White Rock Road Project from the Pavement Management Program

Mr. Bliss seconded the motion.

TAC consideration and discussion followed. Mr. Cassidy thought Westerly's projects are a great use of the funds but wondered if the Pavement Management program is appropriate for the enhancement elements of the project such as new street lighting. Mr. Shawver responded that Pavement Management as a funding category is technically no longer there under MAP-21 and is now considered part of surface transportation funding. The project, as proposed, is eligible for surface transportation funding. Mr. Wood commented that if the Canal St. project was put in the TIP for 2016 but Bay Street is listed for 2014, what project is being taken away to advance this project to 2014? Mr. Shawver responded that there is a two year window for the projects in the TIP and that it is not an exact science. It is not known how much funding federal Rhode Island will receive at in 2014. He feels there is no problem in making these adjustments as no project will be harmed.

Mr. Vanderslice asked what the impact was from Hurricanes Sandy and Irene on the Westerly project areas. Mr. LeBlanc answered that there were two different areas that were impacted strongly. One is the lower section of Canal Street, and has resulted in a FEMA grant to acquire certain properties to

mitigate future flooding. In addition, FEMA funding helped with an improved pumping station. For the most part, Watch Hill and Bay Street was spared during Hurricane Sandy. However, there was a lot of damage in the Misquamicut Beach area. Mr. Youngken of Westerly added that the utilities that were buried in Watch Hill and Napatree Point survived intact and that the whole area regained power quickly as soon as the other utilities were online.

Ms. Sherrill congratulated Westerly for putting together these funds and congratulated Ms. Grzybowski for doing all the reporting. She asked about the extent of the underground utilities and where they are located. Mr. Youngken pointed out the areas on the map, from Lighthouse Road and Larkin Road to the historic merry-go-round on the corner of Bay Street. Mr. Youngken added that the area is frequented by fog and moisture, leading to transformers crashing, and power is lost frequently. The hope is that with the infrastructure improvements in Watch Hill, the area can become a ten month tourist destination, as opposed to just the summer months. The confidence of property investors in the area comes from reliable utilities and an attractive streetscape for pedestrians. Over \$5.5 million in investments have been made for this project thus far. The Ocean House Hotel has served as an inspiration as to what can be done.

Mr. Schiller wishes Westerly success and noted that the area is important to the whole state. He asked whether there are any bicycle improvements planned, i.e., signage or parking. Mr. LeBlanc stated that there is a lot of biking from residents. He agreed there could be additional improvements made such as added bike racks. However at this time, the details have not been established on the amenities planned. Mr. Schiller responded that he hopes that bicycle parking and signs are added to the project. Mr. Youngken spoke of "share the road" signs present in the area and that biking is important. Mr. Schiller asked about the financing of the jitney service and that other areas could benefit from a similar service. In response to Mr. Schiller's question regarding financing, Mr. Youngken answered that the jitney service is financed by the merchants in an experimental role by advertising on the jitney. He also pointed out that there is ferry service between Westerly and Stonington, Connecticut. Mr. Schiller would like the Westerly group to communicate with the TAC and Statewide Planning any ideas that can be shared since they could be potential models for other places.

Mr. Bobba asked if the roads for the infrastructure improvements were federally eligible roads. Mr. Shawver answered that they were.

Upon a vote, the TAC accepted unanimously Amendment #1 to the TIP. The action requires notification to the State Planning Council.

## **5. Rhode Island Strategic Highway Safety Plan**

- *Update from RIDOT*

Ms. Callaghan explained that RIDOT led the effort to develop the Rhode Island Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). Statewide Planning is a member of the SHSP Steering Committee, along with many other stakeholders. Ms. Callaghan added that she thinks most members of the TAC would like to have a better understanding of the traffic safety activities and projects which often go unnoticed in the grand scheme but have a major impact on motorist and pedestrian safety. She also noted that Rhode Island's activities to advance safety accounts for 10 percent of the current TIP's funding by program, with \$30.5 million allocated for each fiscal year.

Mr. Steven Pristawa, RIDOT's Chief Engineer in Traffic Research, then gave a PowerPoint presentation (see attached) on the Rhode Island Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Mr. Pristawa stated that many

stakeholders have been involved in the formation of the Plan, which the Governor signed on October 1, 2012. Mr. Pristawa noted that Rhode Island's traffic fatalities have decreased 17 percent and serious injuries have decreased 40 percent in the last year from 2011 to 2012. However, the definition of serious injury was changed to "serious injuries non-incapacitated" and "incapacitated injuries." Mr. Pristawa continued to describe other measures that have improved safety on Rhode Island's roadways. The primary seatbelt law was passed in 2011, although there is currently a sunset on the law which RIDOT is trying to eliminate. Policies have also been developed to consider roundabouts at high crash locations. A Road Safety Audit (RSA) program has been implemented, as well as the installation of medium guard rails and shoulder rumble strips. Limited access roadways will gain impediments to prohibit cross crashes. Road diets are being incorporated in travel lanes, as well as improved speed enforcement. The RI Traffic Safety Coalition has been reconstituted. The emphasis for 2012 to 2016 will be on the following: impaired driving; intersection and run-off-the-road crashes; occupant protection; speeding; and young drivers. Distracted driving was not included as an emphasis area because there is little in actual data to support crashes that resulted from distracted driving. Police reports list the causes of accidents but it is difficult to prove what the driver was doing immediately before a crash. Therefore it was decided to have a committee to study strategies to mitigate distracted driving including talking and texting on cell phones. There are also many other subsets to improve traffic safety such as elderly driving, safety corridor program, etc.

Implementation items for the SHSP include a Steering Committee which meets quarterly, as well as an Executive Committee. Mr. Pristawa also showed the Rhode Island Towards Zero Deaths video for to get across the significance of the Plan.

Ms. Shocket asked where Rhode Island ranks with regard to safety in the nation. Mr. Pristawa stated that as part of MAP-21 requirements, the USDOT establishes performance measures. Mr. Bobba added that MAP-21 includes multiple measures including percentage of miles traveled; also as a percentage of the population. However, it is difficult to say where a state ranks. Mr. Bliss asked why school buses do not have seatbelts even though it is a Rhode Island law to buckle up. Mr. Pristawa answered the reason relates to the size and weight of the bus. Mr. Bliss stated that the driver wears a seat belt so why don't the children?

Mr. Schiller stated that he frequently uses statistics and the statistics show that Rhode Island is relatively safe. He thinks it is because there are not as many high speed roads in Rhode Island. Mr. Schiller then quoted from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that fatalities on different kinds of transit is much less, therefore transit is a much safer mode of travel. He also highlighted that there were 66 deaths on Rhode Island's roadways in 2011, 14 of them were pedestrian deaths. Mr. Schiller also mentioned pedestrian safety on crosswalks and the problem of snow removal on sidewalks. There are presently, legislative bills aimed to make it safer for pedestrians. Mr. Schiller asked if the safety officials are following these bills and would like to know if the bills can be made known to the TAC. Mr. Pristawa stated they are trying to address pedestrian issues. Pedestrian fatalities ended up near the bottom of all fatalities and to keep one drunk driver off the road can help many factors including pedestrians. Techniques such as road diets benefit pedestrian safety as well. Mr. Schiller agrees that RIDOT is really trying to improve pedestrian safety. Mr. Pristawa added that rotaries have been redesigned in Rhode Island to roundabout, which force cars to go slower and they are shown to reduce crashes.

Mr. Russ Chateauneuf stated that he believes this is a great effort and the SHSP is one of the best reports he has seen as it is very readable. He wonders if the plan would be disseminated. Mr. Pristawa responded that the report can be downloaded from the RIDOT website. Mr. Chateauneuf stated there

are 32,000 fatalities in the U.S. annually but he can remember when the figure was around 55,000 in the 1980s. Is it possible to cut this in half again? Mr. Pristawa stated that the total number of annual crashes in Rhode Island annually is approximately 40,000 to 50,000, including small fender bender crashes. Mr. Cassidy asked what the definition is for impaired driving. Mr. Pristawa stated the definition may change to include drugs, as well as alcohol.

Mr. Stuart stated that railroad grade crossing safety is another measure that improves highway safety. Grade crossing measures includes highway safety education programs and Operation Lifesaver – a program which targets students, professional drivers, etc. about railway crossings. Mr. Stuart noted that in Rhode Island, this effort has been waning and the TAC may want to become more involved with reviving this effort. Mr. Pristawa stated that Mr. Steve Devine of RIDOT is the person who would be involved in this effort. Mr. Dalhberg stated that in the SHSP, Cranston is listed as #1 and Burrillville #5 municipality for fatalities and serious injuries for crashes in which the occupants were not wearing seatbelts. He suggested more education was needed in these communities. Mr. Pristawa agreed that there can be speakers sent to high schools. RIDOT does not presently send these statistics to towns. Mr. Bobba thanked Mr. Pristawa for this presentation of the SHSP.

## **6. TIP Appendix E – Traffic Safety Program Update**

- *Update from RIDOT*

Ms. Callaghan explained that the Traffic Safety Program includes \$30.5 million in each fiscal year and includes several programmatic line items within the TIP. As part of the FY 2013-2016 TIP, Appendix E was added to provide a tentative list of projects proposed for funding within the traffic safety program to provide an additional level transparency to the TAC and to the general public. Because the programmatic criteria for these funding sources are very specific, RIDOT engineers are responsible for selecting and scheduling projects within these line items to reflect not only current needs but also federal requirements. As part of this process, RIDOT has committed to providing updates to the TAC on projects that are being implemented in this program. This is the first update since the adoption of the TIP. All the highlighted projects listed on the chart are the ones that were changed since the adoption of the TIP. Fiscal constraint is maintained as the total budget for the Traffic Safety Program in the TIP remains unchanged. This action is for information only and does not require TAC action. Mr. Pristawa and Mr. Shawver are available to answer any questions on any of the specific projects.

Mr. Schiller asked Mr. Shawver if the equipment for clearing sidewalks is eligible for capital funding. Mr. Shawver answered that there is not any program that can be used to purchase that equipment. Ms. Picchione spoke of the blocked bus stops. Mr. Schiller states that no one has a solution for the blocked bus stops existing for days at a time even at key bus stops. Ms. Shocket asked if there is any responsibility from the property owner or action resulting in a fine. Mr. Schiller replied no one claims responsibility. Mr. Brodd who represents a municipality states that many communities have ordinances that sidewalks have to be cleared in front of their property. Most people cannot do it such as elderly, etc. When Mr. Brodd worked in North Attleboro, he had two sidewalk plows which after each storm cleared seven miles of sidewalks taking two days. It can be done; however, it is costly and takes time. Merchants can clear their sidewalks. Mr. Chateaufeuf said Warwick tried a few years ago with volunteers for residential property and there was property damage. Mr. Brodd stated that in Cumberland they plow a couple of miles of sidewalks mostly near schools.

Mr. Cassidy asked if the highlighted projects listed on the chart was new or changed. Ms. Callaghan stated that many of the projects were new locations. Mr. Cassidy suggested adding a category “status” to indicate “completed” when the project is completed.

Mr. Pristawa stated that RIDOT puts a value to the type of crashes that happen. Mr. Shawver added that RIDOT wants to be data driven and show the public the status. The TIP may look like that in the future. Mr. Dahlberg stated that it is a great report. He suggested there be a map which shows where the fatalities are. Mr. Pristawa responded it will be on the website.

## **7. Staff Report**

Ms. Callaghan gave an update on RIDOT's Physical Alteration Permit Process (PAP). A meeting of the PAP Advisory Committee was held earlier this week at which, Mr. Michael Moan of Statewide Planning's staff, presented an outline of an action plan for recommendations to improve RIDOT's PAP application. The action plan will include recommendations for the application itself and improvement to the review process at both the municipal and state levels, and how the two can be better coordinated. The advisory committee voted to approve the outline for the action plan so now staff will move forward with the specific implementation items. Ms. Callaghan also wants to note that RIDOT has been very involved in this activity and will continue to be as the implementation items are ironed out. Ms. Callaghan noted that TAC members Ms. Sherrill and Mr. Monaghan are also members of the PAP Advisory Committee.

Ms. Callaghan next spoke about the Rail Plan. Staff is refining the consultant's draft text. Staff spoke with the consultant at length this week regarding the rail project evaluation criteria, which is based upon the TIP criteria most of the TAC is familiar with. Staff is expecting a draft of the criteria in the next couple of weeks.

Ms. Callaghan stated that staff will now be holding bi-weekly meetings with FHWA to learn about the new requirements of MAP-21 and will keep the TAC updated as we learn more on what will be required.

Ms. Callaghan continued by stating that freight is emphasized under MAP-21. An ad hoc working group consisting of staff from Statewide Planning, FHWA, US Dept. of Maritime, RIDOT, Quonset, EDC, and URI Transportation Center has been meeting for the last couple of months to consider the need for a coordinated freight planning effort in Rhode Island. There is also now interest from Rhode Island's congressional delegation, with a member of Sen. Whitehouse's staff attending our last working group meeting two weeks ago. As it stands now, Statewide Planning will be taking the lead to coordinate freight planning in Rhode Island including the development of a State Freight Plan. This task will be added to our work program however it is still in the infancy stages and due to staffing resources efforts will be focused to complete the State Rail Plan first. However, in the meantime this ad hoc committee will continue to meet to identify how the State should best advance freight.

## **8. Additional Public Comment**

Mr. Bill LeGare from Valley Transportation cited his transportation experience and spoke about the lack of seatbelts in school buses. The national requirements for the construction of school buses make them the safest vehicle on the road. There are literally steel cages in many areas of the buses. Seat belts on school buses would not be helpful for the safety of the kids as they can become a weapon.

## **9. Other Business – *for discussion***

There was none.

**10. Adjournment**

Upon motion of Mr. Brodd, seconded by Mr. Bliss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted By: Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner to Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary.

Respectfully submitted,

Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary