

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

August 28, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.  
Department of Administration

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**I. ATTENDANCE**

**1. 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
Ms. Sue Barker	RI Bicycle Coalition
Ms. Meredith Brady	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public Member
Mr. Albert Dahlberg	Public Member
Mr. Ronald Gagnon	RI Department of Environmental Management
Ms. Joelle Kanter	Representing Mr. Dan Baudouin, Providence Foundation
Ms. Eliza Lawson	RI Department of Health
Mr. George Monaghan	RI Consulting Engineers (RICE)
Mr. Daniel Porter	RI Airport Corporation
Mr. Barry Schiller	RI Sierra Club
Ms. Pam Sherrill	RI Chapter, APA
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**2. Members Absent**

Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Woonsocket
Mr. Richard Crenca	City of Warwick
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Mr. David Everett	City of Providence
Ms. Lillian Picchione	RI Public Transit Authority
Mrs. Dinalyn Spears	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Commerce Corporation

**3. Statewide Planning Staff Present**

Mr. Benjamin Jacobs	Principal Research Technician
Mr. Chris Witt	Principal Planner

**4. Guests Present**

Mr. Corey Bobba	Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Dennis Brown	RI Department of Transportation

Ms. Eugenia Marks

Audubon Society; Coalition of Transportation Choices

Mr. Douglas McVay

RI Department of Environmental Management

Mr. Sudhir Murthy

Trafinfo Communications Inc.

Mr. William Nordstrom

Jacobs Engineering Group

Ms. Deanna Peabody

Trafinfo Communications Inc.

Mr. Jon Rhodes

RIPTA Riders Alliance

Ms. Mary Shephard

Perdestrian Advocate, Writer

Mr. Mike Wreh

RI Department of Transportation

Mr. Christos Xenophontos

RI Department of Transportation

## **II. Agenda Items**

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

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

### **2. Approval of July 24, 2014 Minutes – *for action***

Mr. Schiller expressed concern that his closing comments in the previous minutes had not been clear. Mr. Schiller clarified that, since the state will need to spend \$0.5 Billion to replace the 6/10 connector bridges anyway, and since FHWA funding will now allow that money to be spent on replacing a divided highway with a boulevard design per page 14 of the Transportation Alternatives Program presentation on July 24, 2014, which could serve to reconnect the road network and encourage biking and investment in impoverished areas.

Thus clarified, there was no further discussion and Ms. Shocket asked for a motion to approve the July 24, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion was made by Ms. Kanter , seconded by Mr. Porter, and approved unanimously.

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

Ms. Mary Shephard was unsure as to when she should speak. Ms. Shocket explained the rationale behind the ordering of the comment periods, and Ms. Mary Shephard decided to defer her comments until later.

### **4. MAP-21 Educational Series – System Performance**

- **RIDOT Staff Presentation – *for information***

Mr. Mike Wreh introduced the topic of road system performance by giving a brief summary of the history of RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT)'s Transportation Management Center (TMC), noting that they were the first RIDOT section to use performance measures. Mr. Mike Wreh then introduced his colleagues, Mr. William Nordstrom, Mr. Sudhir Murthy, and Ms. Deanna Peabody, who presented MAP-21 Educational Series – System Performance as distributed with the Committee's packets as shown in (attachment 1). Highlights of those items in which the Transportation Advisory Committee engaged in discussion are as follows:

Ms. Sherrill asked how baselines are established to establish trends over time given that data has been gathered for such a long time. Mr. Murthy replied that FHWA will be setting guidelines on the establishment of baselines. Mr. Christos Xenophontos added that we expect these guidelines from FHWA for CMAQ projects by the end of the year, and will require each project to show a positive result.

Mr. Woods asked if 1) this would be the way that the federal government was going to be distributing money to the states in the future and 2) how much these new reporting requirements will increase costs and will these cost burdens rest on the state? Mr. Xenophontos replied that such costs are eligible for federal funds, but that the federal government does not provide the state with new funds to cover the costs of reporting requirements. It was also noted that currently these programs are being built and run by transferring current staff into these roles from other duties. Mr. Bobba noted that funding levels are based on a separate formula that only the US Congress can change, but that these new requirements would require performance measures to show that funding investments were being spent in ways that would help achieve national transportation goals.

Mr. Schiller commented that creating more reliable, less congested roads could encourage dispersed land use patterns, whereas the environmental community would prefer a more concentrated settlement pattern, and he asked if the performance measures had a way to answer this issue. He further asked whether this use of CMAQ funds, one of whose goal areas is the improvement or elimination of traffic signalization, would make any contributions to this area. Mr. Schiller closed by asking whether there was a measure that focused on the clearance of sidewalks and bus stops after snow events. Mr. Murthy first replied that over a five to ten year time frame, these performance measures would provide data for making decisions about things like signalization that would be based on projects that worked in practice. Mr. Murthy also clarified that the presentation related to performance measures, derived from FHWA guidelines, which related to the function of the highway system. Other agencies that are more directly concerned with land use and non-motorized transportation likely have their own performance measures. Mr. Wreh noted that the TMC is working with the traffic and safety management to improve signalization under the RI\*STAR Program.

Ms. Shocket asked if there was interest in a future tour of the TMC among new committee members. Several members expressed interest.

Mr. Albert asked how much RIDOT has been engaged in the use of performance measures before the MAP-21 mandate. Mr. Nordstrom indicated that it had been in use since 2009. He added that the sensor network in Rhode Island, which had at one time been restricted to I-95, has now expanded to other freeways, but there are still many important roads not covered. Mr. Murthy noted that states had been using some kind of performance measures before, but that there has been a change in the way congestion is viewed. He also noted that now all sections within RIDOT will be asked to use performance measures, and that the federal government will want consistency among the different states.

Mr. Albert clarified that he was asking whether MAP-21 was a sea change in the way business is done. He also asked if this was going to lead to a disproportionate amount of money being spent in just a handful of towns. Mr. Murthy noted that performance measurement is only one part of the decision making process on funding. Mr. Nordstrom added that performance measures were important in avoiding having decisions based on influence, instead basing decisions on data. Mr. Xenophontos volunteered that RIDOT had begun the move to performance management before MAP-21 as a result of efforts by Governor Chaffee in order to make wise strategic decisions with limited funds. Mr. Albert asked if this was going to be a permanent feature of future federal highway programs, and Mr.

Xenophontos replied that he felt it likely that future bills will expand the use of performance measures rather than restrict them. Mr. Bobba agreed with Mr. Xenophontos and added that the TAC will have a key role in setting local targets in order to meet national goals.

Mr. Schiller noted that traffic in metropolitan areas often is caused by travelers from outside, and that often this congestion is missed due to the focus of the state sensor system on longer distance travel routes. Mr. Murthy agreed that the sensors are currently very restricted, noting that when the sensor system was begun it only covered I-95, and that the past year was the first year in which the system covered any of the arterial roads, including several mentioned by Mr. Schiller. Mr. Murthy emphasized that it is the goal of the program to eventually include sensors on many if not all the arterial roads, and Mr. Nordstrom noted that this process has been facilitated by several recent cooperative agreements with the municipalities.

Mr. Everett asked how much of the Rhode Island's roadways were considered freight corridors, and what kind of data will be available on truck travel in the corridors. Mr. Murthy answered that FHWA provides daily travel time data for trucks and other vehicles for all roads on the National Highway System and RIDOT collects data on the volume of freight on the roads using several different types of sensors. Mr. Xenophontos added that FHWA has published a draft plan depicting freight corridors, and Mr. Witt noted that while this plan limits freight corridors to the interstates primarily, Statewide Planning's State Freight Plan will seek to identify other freight corridors that are of importance to the state, forming a more comprehensive state freight corridor network.

Ms. Sherrill noted that the travel time index discussed in the presentation seems similar to the Level Of Service (LOS) used on local roads. Ms. Peabody responded that LOS is usually only used for signalized intersections, whereas these roads were freeways, though the two were very similar.

## **5. Staff Report**

Mr. Witt made the following report.

State Freight Plan: Consultant proposals received in July and are being reviewed, with a decision to be made in the next few weeks. Mr. Witt also noted that Statewide Planning and RIDOT had received a \$125,000 grant from FHWA's Strategic Highway Research Program, which will pay for additional work on the freight plan to examine the economic benefits of freight projects, with the possibility that this work could be continued in the TIP process.

Functional Classification: RIDOT has learned that it needs to recalibrate how it classifies bridges, which has required a reexamination of ramps, bridges, frontage roads, and jug handles. These facilities should have the classification of the highest facility served, so a review is being undertaken to ensure that this is the case, which will need to be done soon enough for RIDOT to make its September 30<sup>th</sup> reporting deadline for bridges.

Administrative Adjustment #4: RIDOT asked that \$5 Million in CMAQ funds be moved from a reserve line item to an active line item so the money could be used. This did not require a public hearing because it was a move within a category, and as such it was reviewed and approved by Mr. Kevin Flynn as Secretary of the metropolitan planning organization.

MAP-21 Educational Series: FHWA and RIDOT have requested an additional presentation, entitled "Reduced Project Delivery Delays," to be added to the schedule at a later date.

Mr. Witt noted that Statewide Planning has received approval to hire a new candidate to fill the position vacated by a recent retirement. The candidates are currently being reviewed and the position should be filled in the next four weeks.

Mr. Witt let the committee know that the next TAC meeting will be on September 18 at 6:30 p.m. in Conference Room A on the second floor of the Powers Administration Building.

Mr. Wood asked if the Functional Classification changes would change the posted Functional Classification Map. Mr. Witt noted that it is likely that there will be some changes.

Mr. Albert noted that in the advanced materials sent by Statewide Planning it was unclear as to whether the Better Bridges Program would be fully funded, and asked if there were any sources of funding available should the program not be funded. Ms. Brady noted that there is some additional funding expected for RIDOT from the state, but that this funding was not intended exclusively for the Better Bridge Program, and it is hoped that some other source of funding will be found, probably requiring further action from the legislature.

## **6. Additional Public Comment**

Ms. Eugenia Marks, who represents the Audubon Society and the Coalition for Transportation Choices commented on the lack of data on RI Route 138 and US Route 1, particularly given their tendency toward seasonal congestion. Ms. Marks expressed hope that the TAC and DOT would attempt to deal with these issues without the construction of new road capacity, instead possibly utilizing public transportation or shuttle buses.

Ms. Mary Shepard expressed support for Ms. Marks' comments, and noted that the state could do more to combat congestion if the electronic traveler information signs, used by the TMC to alert travelers to congestion and travel times, were used to give travelers information about travel via trains and other forms of public transportation. Ms. Shepard also expressed frustration at the continued confusion regarding the Kennedy Plaza renovation by RIPTA, and expressed the desire to see the current terminal building redesigned by a building with transparent external windows, which would add to the public lighting, increase security, and add aesthetic value. Ms. Shocket suggested that Ms. Shepard bring this idea to the attention of RIPTA.

Mr. Jon Rhodes, representing the RIPTA Riders Alliance, clarified that RIPTA is not responsible for the current renovation, which is being conducted by the City of Providence's Planning Commission, which is also restricting RIPTA's berth capacity. Mr. Jon Rhodes also called the committee's attention to the \$35 million bond issue, article #5. Mr. Jon Rhodes expressed strong support for the concept of multiple nodes, allowing riders in many cases to bypass downtown Providence entirely. Ms. Kanter pointed out that the bond is actually Question #6.

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

Mr. Schiller expressed his support of Ms. Shepard's terminal building idea, and noted two upcoming events, Cyclovia on September 7<sup>th</sup> from Noon to 4:00pm, and Park(ing) Day on September 19<sup>th</sup> from

8:00am to 4:00pm, which would be a great way for the committee and members of the public to experience the benefits of protected bike infrastructure in an urban environment.

Mr. Wood commented that the Apponaug circulator, which has just begun construction, had at one time been one of the lowest rated projects before the committee, and expressed amazement at its movement to the construction phase twenty years later.

## **9. Adjournment**

Ms. Shocket asked for a motion of adjournment. The motion was made by Mr. Cassidy, seconded by Ms. Brady, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm.