

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

November 20, 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
Mr. Albert Dahlberg	Public Member
Mr. David Everett	City of Providence
Mr. Ronald Gagnon	RI Department of Environmental Management
Ms. Joelle Kanter	Representing Mr. Dan Baudouin, Providence Foundation
Mr. George Monaghan	RI Consulting Engineers (RICE)
Ms. Lillian Picchione	RI Public Transit Authority
Mr. Daniel Porter	RI Airport Corporation
Mr. Tom Queenan	Representing Ms. Meredith Brady RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Pam Sherrill	RI Chapter, APA
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Commerce Corporation
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**2. Members Absent**

Ms. Sue Barker	RI Bicycle Coalition
Mrs. Dinalyn Spears	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Woonsocket
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public Member
Mr. Richard Crenca	City of Warwick
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Ms. Eliza Lawson	RI Department of Health

**3. Statewide Planning Staff Present**

Mr. Benjamin Jacobs	Principal Research Technician
Mrs. Karen Scott	Assistant Chief
Mr. Chris Witt	Principal Planner

**4. Guests Present**

Mrs. Dennis Brown	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Lance Newman	Cambridge Systematics

## **II. Agenda Items**

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

Ms. Fran Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

### **2. Approval of October 23, 2014 Minutes – *for action***

Mr. Tom Queenan made a motion for the minutes to be approved, it was seconded by Mr. Albert Dahlberg, and unanimously approved

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

No comments made at this time.

### **4. MAP-21 Educational Series – Performance Based Planning and Programing**

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

Mrs. Karen Scott gave a short introduction of the topic of Performance Based Planning and Programing, reminding the Committee of the previous session on Asset Management. She introduced Lance Newman of Cambridge Systematics to give the main presentation, MAP-21 Educational Series – Performance Based Planning and Programing, 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:

Mr. George Monaghan asked how the federal government will ensure that MAP-21 will be judged uniformly across the country. Mr. Lance Newman responded that there will be a formula for monitoring how all the states are doing, but that funding will not be contingent on meeting the targets, and that the targets themselves will be set by the individual state. Mr. Newman emphasized that while MAP-21 sets uniform measurements, the targets each state must attain will not be uniform.

Mr. Michael Wood asked for clarification as to what new rules and regulations would be coming out as a result of MAP-21. Mr. Newman clarified that MAP-21 had been in force for 2 years already, so no new statutes would be coming out, but that FHWA was still in the process of publishing regulations to enforce those statutes.

Mr. David Everett noted that some issue areas, such as congestion, almost inevitably get worse over time in spite of almost any realistic effort that could be implemented, and he asked how realistic targets could be set in those areas, particularly given regional variation. Mr. Newman acknowledged the difficulty, and replied that the ideal would be to set a target that, taking into account local conditions, would reflect an attempt to make conditions better than they would otherwise have been, even if the overall numbers were still going in an unwanted direction. Mr. Newman elaborated that issues beyond the control of the state agencies, such as wider economic conditions, would have to be considered as a factor when setting the targets.

Mr. Everett Stuart noted that the state will soon be soliciting projects for the TIP, and that under MAP-21 the projects will need to be related to progress measures. Mr. Stuart then asked if the staff of RIDOT or Statewide Planning would be providing help or guidance in connecting individual projects with prospective impacts on progress areas. Mrs. Karen Scott responded that after the wrap up of the MAP-21 educational series in February, Statewide Planning would engage the committee in a discussion of how the TIP process would need to be structured moving forward, starting in March. Mrs. Scott noted that Statewide Planning had been discussing internally that the new TIP process will need to incorporate new evaluation criteria while still preserving the open, participatory nature of previous efforts. Mr. Newman noted that this was largely in line with the experience of other states. Mrs. Scott noted that Rhode Island was at something of a disadvantage compared to other states because of the poor condition of its bridges, which is one of the few areas where MAP-21 sets hard, universal targets.

#### **5. FY 13-16 Transportation Improvement Program – Amendment 5**

- **Staff Presentation (SPP & RIPTA)**
- **Request for Public Hearing – *for action***

Mrs. Karen Scott noted that due to some changes under MAP-21, Rhode Island had seen some rise in apportionments, particularly due to the inclusion of Westerly in the Norwich-New London Urbanized Area, which makes money available, that had not been anticipated when the FY13-16 TIP was approved. There had also been some areas where funding was unexpectedly carried forward from previous TIPS, as well as some areas where money was assigned to funding categories that were no longer in line with RIPTA's priorities. Mrs. Scott then introduced Ms. Lillian Picchione from RIPTA to give an overview of RIPTA's desired amendment, preparatory to a vote to request a public hearing from the State Planning Council. Ms. Fran Shocket noted that Ms. Picchione was now the official RIPTA representative on the TAC, and welcomed her to the Committee. Ms. Picchione then presented Amendment 5 (attachments 2 and 3) to the committee. Highlights of those items in which the Transportation Advisory Committee engaged in discussion are as follows:

Mr. Lloyd Albert asked what RIPTA had done to maintain solvency when so much of its expected budget had been eliminated due to the end of earmarks. Ms. Picchione responded that there had been enough money to make up the shortfall, but it was in other program areas, resulting in the need for RIPTA to defer scheduled maintenance and computerization projects, and shift money around internally. Unfortunately, a point would come at some point in the near future where all the allotted funding was going to the operation of buses, leaving nothing for RIPTA's other needs. Mr. Albert asked whether the congressional delegation was working with RIPTA on these issues. Ms. Picchione responded in the affirmative, noting that RIPTA had regular discussions with the congressional delegation as to the specific policies and wordings that could best help Rhode Island. Ms. Picchione expressed great gratitude to the delegation and their efforts on behalf of the state. Mr. Albert noted that Rhode Island's four congressional representatives were not the source of the state's problems, to the general assent of the assembled committee.

Hearing no further comments, Ms. Fran Shocket noted that the action required was a request for a public hearing from the State Planning Council. The motion was made by Mr. Michael Walker, and seconded by Mr. Tom Queenan, and unanimously approved.

#### **6. Proposed 2015 Meeting Schedule– *for discussion***

Ms. Fran Shocket asked for any comments.

Ms. Lillian Picchione asked for clarification as to why the meetings were at 6:30 PM. Ms. Shocket noted that this time was felt to be most convenient in previous discussions, as it allowed members of the committee to get to the meetings without taking time off of work, but was early enough to ensure that the meetings did not run overly late. Several committee members noted that, in the past, the committee members had been provided food, and Ms. Shocket noted that now they are not even provided with soda or water. There was general agreement that this was an undesirable situation. There were no further concerns as to meeting dates or times.

## **7. Staff Report – *for information***

Mr. Chris Witt made the following report:

The Statewide Planning Program submitted the update to the Functional Classification system to the Federal Highway Administration in October. The update will have to be reviewed by the FHWA Division Office before being submitted to FHWA Headquarters for the review of the changes to the National Highway System.

HDR Engineering has been hired by Statewide Planning to help with the development of the state's Freight Plan, a process begun with a kickoff meeting on November 12, 2014.

Mr. Witt noted that the Technical Committee had moved to receiving their meeting materials via electronic copy, and asked if the TAC would be willing to move to a similar model of emailing material to members before meetings, rather than distributing physical copies via mail.

Ms. Fran Shocket opened the floor for discussion of the issue.

Mr. Michael Wood asked if the materials would be available on a website so that if a committee member missed the initial email, they would still be able to access the materials. Mr. Witt replied that for the Technical Committee, the members receive an email with both attached files and links to the materials on the Statewide Planning website. Mr. Wood followed up by noting that any color documents might be hard for some members to print using their own resources. Mrs. Karen Scott noted that the option would remain for members to receive hard copies if they wished.

Ms. Pam Sherrill expressed a preference for hard copies, and noted that as she owns no laptop or tablet computer she would need a hard copy or a projector at the meeting in order to reference the materials.

Mr. Ronald Gagnon asked if wifi was available in the meeting room. Mrs. Scott replied that there was, that it required a password to access, and that she was confident that Statewide Planning could secure a password for the committee members if that were something that they desired. Ms. Shocket noted that she would likely receive the documents electronically and print them out at home.

Ms. Lillian Picchione noted that it was nice to have hard copies available for the public. Mr. Witt replied that Statewide Planning would continue to provide hard copies for the public on the day of the meeting.

Ms. Fran Shocket summarized that there seemed to be a consensus that electronic delivery would be acceptable, that wifi should be made available, and that those who wanted to continue to receive hard copies via mail should let the Statewide Planning staff know of their preference.

Returning to the administrative items, Mr. Witt asked the committee to be sure to RSVP to the meeting invitations with due promptness, as a kindness to the Statewide Planning Program's Executive Assistant.

In closing, the next meeting will be January 22<sup>nd</sup>, as there will be no December meeting.

## **8. Additional Public Comment**

No Comments at this time.

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

Mr. Michael Walker noted that there are two items on the agenda for public comment, that the Committee itself is diverse, and that recently such opportunities for comment have been used for purposes beyond their original intent. He went on to note that the Committee is only required by the public meetings law to allow the public to observe the meetings, that public input was taken per statute at Public Hearings, and that there was no need to take public comment in an average meeting. Ms. Fran Shocket asked for clarification as to whether Mr. Walker was asking for the elimination of both items 3 and 8 on the current agenda, and Mr. Walker agreed that this was his ideal. Mr. Walker noted that the staff is available for public comment at any time, and that meetings were not the appropriate venue for such input.

Mr. Michael Wood noted that it did seem redundant to have two agenda items devoted to public comment, particularly item 3, and asked if it could be left to the discretion of the chair whether to open the floor for public comment when an item arises of interest to the public, rather than at the beginning of the meeting.

Mr. Everett Stuart stated his opinion that the current process had not been particularly abused in his experience, noted that Rhode Island had a reputation for backroom deals, and concluded that he felt the amount of transparency fostered by the Committee was to its credit. Mr. Lloyd Albert concurred with Mr. Stuart, and opined that it added value, for both the public and the members of the Committee, to have this as an open channel of communications. Mr. Stuart concluded by noting that he was unsure whether two periods of comment were strictly necessary, but that some period of comment was indeed a good thing.

Ms. Fran Shocket reminded the newer members of the committee that the current system was inaugurated because members of the public felt unhappy that their comments were only being heard after the committee had already voted on the items under discussion. Ms. Shocket went on to note that as an individual she felt strongly in favor of continuing to hear the input of the public, but that she was only speaking as one member and not as the chair.

Ms. Joelle Kanter suggested that a time limit per speaker be used to prevent grandstanding or to encourage the public to contact the staff beforehand. Ms. Shocket noted that this was an option available to the chair in situations where there were a large number of members of the public, as this ensured that all interested parties had an opportunity to speak while holding the meeting to a reasonable length.

Mr. Ronald Gagnon asked whether there was a difference between the for discussion items and the for action items in terms of the ability of the public to comment. Ms. Fran Shocket replied that in the

comment periods the public can comment on either, or on anything transportation related. Ms. Shocket noted that the purpose of the Committee under federal statute was to receive public input on transportation issues.

Mr. Michael Wood expressed confusion at the separation of the public comment periods from the agenda items under discussion. Mr. Wood noted that in Burrillville's meetings the public has the opportunity to comment up front, and then another opportunity to comment after hearing the discussion of the officials but before they vote. In this way the public can hear the explanation of the issue, hear the discussion of their officials, and then respond to those officials before a decision is made. Under the rules of the TAC, the members of the Committee can hear the public, and the public can hear the members, which is useful, but does not allow for interaction between the public and the Committee.

Mr. Everett Stuart asked how far this discussion could go. Mrs. Karen Scott responded that she thought that any changes of this kind would need to be approved by the State Planning Council.

Ms. Pam Sherrill expressed the opinion that there should only be public comment on action items.

Ms. Lillian Picchione suggested that controversial items could be moved to the front of the agenda to get them out of the way and avoid disruptions to the more mundane business of the committee. Ms. Fran Shocket noted that this could be done under the current rules by a motion of the members of the committee.

Ms. Fran Shocket asked if there was any other business.

Mr. George Monaghan informed the committee that the Bureau of Transportation Statistics publishes transportation data, and that ASCE issues Infrastructure Report Cards by state, and their websites include a large amount of relevant data.

The entire committee expressed their sadness at the absence of Mr. Barry Schiller.

## **10. Adjournment**

Mr. Michael Walker made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Ronald Gagnon seconded and it was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:47.