

November 22, 2017 GACIT Meeting in Concord, NH
NHDOT JO Morton Building 2:00 pm in Room 114

Executive Councilor Wheeler opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.

Roll call: Councilor Kenney, Councilor Pappas, Councilor Volinsky, Councilor Prescott and Victoria Sheehan, NH Commissioner of Transportation.

NHDOT in attendance: Chris Waszczuk, Deputy Commissioner; Bill Cass, Assistant Commissioner; Pete Stamnas, Director of Project Development; Bill Boynton, Public Information Officer; William Watson, Glenn Davison, Sharon Allaire and Lucy St. John, Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance; Kathy Mulcahey-Hampson, Senior Hearings Examiner; Marie Mullen, Director of Finance; and Shelley Winters, Bureau of Rail and Transit.

Regional Planning Commissions in Attendance: North Country Council- Barbara Robinson and Greg DiSanto; Lakes Region Planning Commission- Jeff Hayes; Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission- Steven Schneider; Central NH Regional Planning Commission- Mike Tardiff; Southern NH Planning Commission Sylvia Von Aulock and Nate Miller; Nashua Regional Planning Commission- Jen Czysz; Rockingham Planning Commission- Tim Roache; Strafford Regional Planning Commission- Colin Lentz; and Bill Watson NHDOT noted that Southwest Region Planning Commission staff was unable to attend.

Others in Attendance: Harold Parker, Governor Sununu's Office; and Paul Worsowicz.

GACIT Chair Wheeler referred to the agenda.

NHDOT staff referred to the various handouts and information which had been provided to the GACIT Committee regarding the 23 public hearings which were conducted in September and October.

Pete Stamnas, NHDOT provided an overview explaining the themes heard at the public hearings including funding, funding for transit and need for transit, commuter rail, request to advance various projects, increasing tolls, electronic tolling, addressing noise through sound walls, connectivity of multimodal transportation options, climate change resiliency, request for corridor studies and safety improvement projects. He then provided a brief overview of the handouts explaining the changes proposed to the Ten Year plan by NHDOT including projects in Conway, Londonderry, Rockingham RPC three projects and to add Seabrook project, Nashua to Manchester Capitol Corridor Study, Hampton Beach, Plymouth and the Henniker-Hopkinton project. He also explained that NHDOT is proposing to flex 25% of the CMAQ funding for sound walls and corridor study programs starting in 2021.

Councilor Kenney asked specific questions about the Route 16 corridor and the Conway projects. He noted that about 20 years ago a Route 16 Corridor Study was completed. Since that time the corridor has changed dramatically. He noted the increase congestion in Conway Village and Berlin, additional retail areas have been added in Ossipee, Tamworth and Ossipee. They are also recreational draws. He stated, his point is the Route 16 corridor has changed much over the years and needs to be looked at it again. Commissioner Victoria Sheehan commented that the handouts presented for discussion today is

a summary of the many comments heard at the GACIT public hearings. The NHDOT supports the need for corridor studies, and the discussion today is not to specifically identify corridors which will be studied, but to recognize and acknowledge that NHDOT supports corridor studies.

Chris Waszczuk, Deputy Commissioner iterated that the Ten Year Plan is fiscally constrained and the proposal submitted for discussion today is also fiscally constrained (for each year presented, it is within \$1 million of the constrained dollars). Chris noted that the recommended project changes to GACIT are possible due to several initiatives. The NHDOT consulted with their bond advisor about the GARVEE bond debt services. Based on this input, the NHDOT was able to restructure the debt service and free up funds in the early years of the Ten Year Plan to accommodate the recommended project changes. Additionally, other adjustments are recommended including advancing a red list bridge from 2019 to 2018, delay of the Mechanic Street project from 2019-2020 (due to lack of progress), and flexing of CMAQ funds. All of these adjustments allow the proposal submitted to be fiscally constrained.

Victoria Sheehan, NH Commissioner of Transportation commented that the proposal submitted is in response to the multitude of comments heard at the GACIT public hearings. She noted that following the public hearings, NHDOT met with each of the Executive Councilors. The goal for today is for the NHDOT to leave this meeting with a clear understanding and direction from GACIT if they support the proposal so that NHDOT staff can prepare the revised draft Ten Year Plan, which would be fiscally constrained. Chair Wheeler asked for clarification. Commissioner Sheehan reiterated the goal is get direction from GACIT today, if what is presented is acceptable to the GACIT Committee so NHDOT can prepared the revised draft Ten Year Plan, which will then be discussed at the Dec 6th GACIT meeting. Councilor Prescott commented that the proposal and summary provided for GACIT's consideration today is right-on based on the comments he heard from the communities and those that attended the GACIT public hearings. He thanked the staff for preparing the information.

Victoria Sheehan and Chris Waszczuk noted that the CMAQ applications will be discussed at the December 6th meeting and the NHDOT is suggesting 1-2 corridor studies each year. Councilor Kenney asked what the process would be to decide which corridors would be studied. Commissioner Sheehan commented that the specific corridors to be studied will be determined later, as several potential candidates were identified during the public hearings. She noted that the goal is to ask for concurrence from the GACIT Committee if NHDOT can set funding aside for the corridor studies. Bill Cass commented that currently there are several existing projects which are in the Route 16 corridor referring to the Albany and Ossipee projects. Councilor Kenney noted that Route 16 needs to be reviewed in the context of the whole corridor. Councilor Prescott noted that Route 16 could be added to the potential list of corridor studies to be completed as part of the GACIT process. Chris Waszczuk noted he does not envision including portions of Route 16 in Dover, Newington and Rochester in any future Route 16 corridor study because of the recent turnpike improvements made in these areas. Councilor Kenney noted he is referring from the areas of north of Milton to Errol and north to the Canadian border. He commented that the infrastructure improvements in the I-93 corridor are putting pressure on areas in the north, such as Route 16.

Chair Wheeler suggested that a motion be made for each of the projects that will be considered for addition or modification in the Ten Year Plan. Councilor Volinsky commented that he didn't think it necessary to vote for one at a time, and suggested we asked NHDOT their thoughts. Commissioner Sheehan commented that if the Commission wanted to vote each project as a separate motion that would be okay, reiterating that the information presented is for GACIT to provide direction to the NHDOT in preparing the Plan for the December 6th meeting. The Councilors agreed to vote on each project with a separate motion. The Councilors presented a motion for the projects in their district and each motion was then seconded and unanimously approved with the following exception:

- Nashua to Manchester – Capitol Corridor Study. Motion by Pappas, voted 3-2 voting in favor to support the study- Pappas, Volinsky and Prescott and voting in opposition- Kenney and Wheeler.

The GACIT Committee then discussed the proposal to flex 25% of the CMAQ funding for sound walls and corridor study programs.

- Motion by Pappas and seconded by Volinsky to establish and fund the corridor studies program. Councilor Prescott commented that the corridor studies will give us a better way to forecast and plan. All in favor- unanimous yes.

GACIT members then discussed the sound wall program proposed. NHDOT noted that highway traffic noise and the need for sound walls were concerns heard at several of the public hearings. Commissioner Sheehan explained that the goal of this proposal is to bring some relief to residents in these areas. Councilor Prescott commented that in some of these neighborhoods children put their hands over their ears when they are outside and this is not acceptable. He further commented that the neighborhoods in Portsmouth were built back in the 1940's following World War II as housing for veterans, and the highway was improved later. He noted we need to correct the noise issues and support this program. Commissioner Sheehan commented that NHDOT is trying to treat community needs equally and fairly.

- Motion by Volinsky and seconded by Pappas to establish and fund the sound wall program. Councilor Pappas noted that the sound wall program would not be able to help all the communities, noting Bedford may not be eligible. All in favor- unanimous yes.

Chris Waszczuk, Deputy Commissioner then proceeded to provide an overview of the handout for acceleration and expansion of the Turnpike Capital Program. Commissioner Sheehan explained that there is a short-time frame to work in if tolls are to be considered as part of the Ten Year Plan process. Councilor Kenney asked if the Governor knows about this proposal to increase the tolls. Councilor Prescott commented that he appreciated Councilor Kenney's concerns. He also commented that after public input from his GACIT public hearings he knew we need to increase the tolls, and that he asked NHDOT staff to prepare a toll increase proposal to address the many Turnpike projects which need to be completed sooner. It was clear to him that if additional toll revenue were not allocated, there would be additional red list bridges and needs. He noted that increasing tolls is more economical than just increasing the gas tax. He commented we also can't just continue to widen highways. We need to have

other transportation opportunities. And he noted that the Turnpike system is self-sustaining. Councilor Volinsky commented that he supports all of Councilor Prescott's comments. Commissioner Sheehan noted that NHDOT is drafting language to be presented to Governor and Executive Council at the December 6th meeting on behalf of Councilor Prescott. Councilor Volinsky asked what is going to happen if the tolls are not increased. Chris Waszczuk explained that some projects such as Bow-Concord wouldn't be advanced. He noted that the NHDOT hopes the Legislature would see the benefit of the completing existing turnpike projects sooner. Commissioner Sheehan noted that several of the RPCs commented during the public hearings that the Bow-Concord project should be a complete Turnpike project, which would free up federal aid funds for other projects. Councilor Volinsky commented he had some questions about the toll discount proposed and he recognized the concerns raised by Councilor Kenney regarding his constituents. Chris Waszczuk provided a brief overview of the proposed discount which would be applicable to valid EZ-Pass holders making over 40 transactions per month. Councilor Prescott commented that people should pay for the roads they use, and remarked it was presumptive for NHDOT to prepare a draft legislation regarding toll increases. He noted that the toll increase is necessary so why wait. Commissioner Sheehan noted the earliest a toll increase could take effect would be March of 2018 as signage and the toll billing system would also need to be updated. Chair Wheeler asked if the public know that a toll increase is proposed and that GACIT was going to vote on it, and if the Legislature knew about this. Commissioner Sheehan commented that the purpose of this meeting was to present a summary of the comments heard at the GACIT meeting and for NHDOT to present ideas to incorporate in the draft Ten-Year plan. Any vote today by GACIT on the toll increase would be non-binding, as NHDOT staff needs direction from GACIT on what to include in the next draft version of the Plan. Councilor Prescott noted that he was in the Governor's office on Friday and the Governor's office was briefed. Commissioner Sheehan also commented that as part of the GACIT process the NHDOT does provide updated information to the Senate Highway and Public Works Subcommittees as requested. Councilor Prescott referred to an email that he received Thursday evening. The Councilor asked Harold Parker of the Governor's office if he received the email. Harold Parker commented he has been out of the State and hasn't caught up on emails.

Chair Wheeler commented that this appears to be a midnight amendment to the process, this is not the only avenue and it leaves the perception that this is not an open or transparent process, and he is troubled by this approach. Councilor Volinsky commented that in his inter-council report he flagged and commented that there may be a potential toll increase. He noted that today's decision is tentative and he is ready to vote in support of the toll increase proposal submitted. Councilor Kenney wanted to make it known to the Governor that this is a non-binding vote and the tolls will be discussed at a future meeting. Councilor Pappas commented that we are having this toll discussion today based on the comments heard at the GACIT public hearings, the timeline on several Turnpike projects could be advanced including the Exit 6 and Exit 7 in Manchester and there is strong public input from the GACIT Hearings for increasing the tolls. Councilor Prescott commented that at this time what is being presented is just a recommendation to the Governor and a mechanism to demonstrate the benefits for increasing the tolls. Commissioner Sheehan reiterated the purpose is to provide NHDOT direction on how to proceed with the preparing the revised plan for discussion at the Dec 6th meeting. As presented,

this would be a fiscally constrained plan. Councilor Prescott commented the process is for the Governor to then take the GACIT recommended Ten-Year Plan, and then the Governor can then make his own recommendations, which are then presented to the Legislature.

- Motion by Councilor Prescott, seconded by Councilor Volinsky to direct the Department (NHDOT) to develop a resolution to increase the tolls as outlined and to modify the draft Ten Year plan to reflect the changed agreed upon today. All in favor- Prescott, Volinsky, Pappas and Kenney, all opposed Wheeler. Motion carried 4 in favor and 1 opposed. Motion carried.

The CMAQ process update was given by William Watson, Administrator of the Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance. Mr. Watson explained that thirty-one (31) Letters of Intent were submitted, twenty-three (23) applications were received, and one application was disqualified by the FHWA, so now there are twenty-two (22) applications. A committee has been established to review the applications, and their recommendations will be presented at the Dec 6th GACIT meeting. He explained that the Committee included representatives from Finance, Planning (Lucy St. John), Design and Rail & Transit. All of the applications are available for review on the NHDOT website. He noted that it is anticipated that 1/2 to 2/3 of the applications may be funded based on the available funding and the maximum amount of funding allowed for any one project. Councilor Kenney inquired about the funding available and if projects would be funded in all the Executive Councilor Districts, as that is his concern. Commissioner Sheehan commented that the staff will review the application based on the criteria and all must meet the requirements to address air quality. Councilor Kenney commented that his district is at a disadvantage and all the funding has typically gone to Nashua and Manchester projects. There could be value added to including projects in his District. Bill Watson commented that the applications will be compared to similar applications, for example there is a category for transit projects, and so all transit projects will be compared. He noted that the recommendations of the application reviewing committee will be presented and discussed at the December 6th meeting.

Councilor Wheeler asked if there were any other outstanding issues for discussion. Commissioner Sheehan noted that NHDOT will prepare a letter regarding the draft plan and will present the CMAQ recommendations at the Dec 6th meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.