

Meeting of the Strafford RPC/MPO/EDD Commissioners

Friday, July 18, 2024 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Hybrid Meeting (Conference Rm 1A, SRPC Office & via Zoom)

1. Introductions

Vice Chair Peter Nelson called the meeting to order and asked for introductions: Peter Nelson, Newmarket; Joe Boudreau, Rochester; Barbara Holstein, Rochester; Mark Richardson, Somersworth; Matt Towne, Barrington; Sarah Wrightsman, Newmarket; Don Manter, Northwood; Marshall Goldberg, Brookfield; John Mullen, Middleton; Kate Buzard, Middleton; Steve Stancel, Wakefield; Paul Rasmussen, Durham; Rick Healy, Rochester; Lee Howlett, Milton; Michael Bobinsky, Somersworth; Glen Davison, NHDOT, and Mike Lehrman, Durham

Staff in Person: Michael Polizzotti, Rachel Dewey, Jen Czysz, Colin Lentz, Mark Davie

Commissioners and Policy Members attending on Zoom: Katrin Kasper, Lee; Steve Diamond, Barrington; Jack Wade, NHDOT;

Guests: Jeff Rogers and Amanda Gourgue, Bike Walk Alliance

Staff attending on Zoom: Natalie Gemma, Lisa Murphy, Kyle Pimental, and Megan Taylor-Fetter

2. Commissioner Roundtable

P. Nelson reported that the Executive Committee nominated Paul Rasmussen as Chair and the EC is looking for additional volunteers to join the EC as alternates.

M. Towne reported that the New Barrington Library is fully open, a great success and attendance is over the top. Anyone is welcome to stop by for a visit.

M. Bobinsky stated that the solar array project on the superfund site on Blackwater Road in Somersworth is progressing along. The project has been 10 years in the making and there has been a strong partnership with the EPA and DES. It is expected to be completed in the fall. M. Richardson added that this site is unique since it is on a superfund site and is monitored regularly.

J. Mullen stated that the Cochecho River Advisory Committee hosted a booth at the Lilac City Funfest. It was an educational and successful event. people about their work to preserve and clean the river and encourage participation

P. Nelson asked if there was an inventory of solar array projects in the region and the state. It would be useful to have information on the size, scope, and financing of these projects. J. Czysz stated that K. Kasper is the circuit rider for Clean Energy NH and has



been supporting projects throughout the state. Katrin welcomed anyone to reach out to her if they are seeking information.

J. Czysz stated that SRPC staffer Natalie Gemma has been compiling a resource guide for municipalities to guide them through the many new planning and zoning laws that will impact communities. Some of the new laws will require municipalities to make changes. There is some funding for housing related zoning amendments. Reach out to SRPC staff for more information.

S. Diamond stated there is a Barrington ZBA meeting tonight related to bike trails in Barrington. This is a potential opportunity to mitigate some drawbacks in terms of bike trails and access key destinations such as the library and town hall.

3. Commissioner Engagement

M. Lehrman stated that the Executive Committee recently talked about ways for commissioners to connect with their town's staff and officials. M. Lehrman stated that the conversation included suggestions for ways commissioners can be better engaged with their communities, to bring them information on what SRPC is doing and to bring back concerns and needs of their communities to SRPC.

P. Nelson stated the he recently talked with Newmarket's town planner about meeting monthly before commission meetings to discuss upcoming meeting topics.

Suggestions included talk with administration, reach out on social media for feedback, meet with fire and police staff to get their thoughts. Get info in advance on transportation matters.

4. Approval of the June 20, 2025 Policy Meeting Minutes

M. Richardson motioned to approve the June 20, 2025 minutes. Sarah Wrightsman seconded the motion. Following an amendment to reflect that M. Lehrman was not present at the meeting, all members voted in favor. The motion passed. M. Lehrman abstained.

5. Presentation and Discussion: Safer Streets and Roads

Jeff Rogers and Amanda Gourgue of the Bike Walk Alliance (BWA) delivered a compelling presentation advocating for safer streets through local control of speed limits. Their message emphasized the urgent need to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians on public roads, calling for legislative changes that would allow municipalities to reduce speed limits—specifically from the state default of 25 mph to 20 mph on certain roads.

Jeff shared a personal connection to the issue, having sustained serious injuries in a crash several years ago. His story underscored the human cost of unsafe streets and the growing crisis: pedestrian deaths in the U.S. rose by a staggering 80% between 2009 and 2023. This alarming trend is driven by multiple factors, including driver inattention, impairment, aggression, and excessive speed.



The BWA stressed that lower speeds save lives, especially for vulnerable road users. While reducing vehicle speeds benefits everyone, pedestrians and cyclists are disproportionately at risk of death or severe injury in crashes.

To effectively reduce traffic speeds, BWA recommends a three-pronged approach:

Road Design – Narrower lanes and traffic-calming features naturally slow drivers.
Context – Speed limits should reflect the surrounding environment and road use.
Speed Limit Adjustments – Legal authority for municipalities to set lower limits where appropriate.

They also emphasized that speed limit reductions should be paired with physical changes to roadways.

The conversation focused on identifying effective design strategies to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, including the implementation of dedicated bike lanes and other infrastructure changes. Participants emphasized the importance of conducting a needs analysis to guide the development of targeted solutions that address specific safety challenges.

Key considerations included:

- Liability concerns related to road design and traffic incidents.
- The role of advocates and policymakers in shaping and supporting legislation and infrastructure improvements.
- The need for collaboration across sectors to ensure that safety measures are both effective and equitable.

Successful solutions require a combination of planning and strong advocacy.

6. Discussion: NH 10-year Transportation Plan and Conversation with NHDOT staff

C. Lentz provided an update on the Ten-Year Transportation Plan (TYP) and stated that the plan is overprogrammed by \$400 million. There are not enough funds available to complete the projects that are in the current draft by 2036. NHDOT has the unenviable job of balancing the plan so it is constrained to the funds available. Commissioners are encouraged to engage with local representatives and state senators.

More details are expected at the upcoming Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) meeting, scheduled for August 13th. Additionally, a series of GACIT public meetings will be held this fall, with two or three typically taking place in our region. Stay tuned for confirmed dates and locations.

J. Mullen asked whether the TYP has historically been fully funded, G. Davison responded that they always strive to do the best they can with the resources available.

Additional discussion points included:



- Safety inspections and whether recent changes could impact the state's ability to meet safety targets.
- A gap in funding that could affect long-term infrastructure goals.
- The broader budgetary picture, including the effects of inflation and rising indirect costs.

7. Other Business

There was no other business

8. Citizens Forum

There were no citizens comments

9. Adjourn

J. Mullen motion to adjourn seconded by D. Manter. All members voted in favor; the meeting adjourned at 10:35AM

