

Maximizing opportunities to enhance the movement of goods and people through the Gateway to Maine

Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 15 at 9:00 a.m.

**York Public Library
15 Long Sands Road
York, ME 03909**

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Voting members present: Adam Causey (Kittery), Chris Mann (MaineDOT), Tom Reinauer (Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission), Dylan Smith (York), David Rich (Kittery), Jon St. Pierre (South Berwick), Dean Lessard (York), Steve Eldridge (Berwick)

Staff & Guests: Eric Sanderson (Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission), James Bellissimo (Berwick)

1. Welcome/Introductions

Meeting called to order by Chair, Dylan Smith at 9:07

2. Approval of Minutes from the April 10, 2019 Policy Committee Meeting

David Rich made a motion to approve the minutes. Chris Mann seconded. No further comments/discussion. Motion passed 8-0-0.

3. Project Selection Procedure

- **Review of suggested updates and possible approval**

Dean began the discussion noting that consideration of extra funds should give a project a higher score, even if that score ultimately is not the deciding factor in selecting a project. He noted external political, regional and other support factors that could make a lower scoring project a better candidate than a higher scoring one.

Tom noted to the Committee that these criteria are a tool. It may be the case that one town would be able to get to the point of spending 2022 funds over another, making external considerations an ultimate factor in the process.

The Committee discussed explicitly stating reasons why a lower scored project is selected if that is ever the case. MaineDOT will review the projects as well, so there will be ample checks on the scoring criteria.

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Tom stated that himself, Darryl Belz of MaineDOT, and Eric would score the proposals. All three scores will be averaged for final tabulation, with any wide differences being discussed in detail to ensure all judgements are based on full information.

Dean and Dave noted the useful nature of this process, stating that towns can go back and look at previous applications and why a project might have fallen short. In addition having a list of unfunded projects will demonstrate a higher need for funding for KACTS.

Chris added that for this process for MPOs, MaineDOT usually talks with the MPO Director and relevant MaineDOT staff to ensure the project wouldn't hit other issues (environmental, Right of Way, preliminary estimates etc.) that would prevent it from being completed.

Tom suggested the Community Support criteria be rephrased to: "if the municipality is providing more than the required 10% match it will be considered for additional points in this category".

Jon noted the Committee should still be subjective, as it is hard to quantify such needed projects.

Dean made a motion to approve the criteria with the amendment suggested by Tom. Seconded by Dave Rich. The motion passed unanimously 8-0-0.

4. Project Candidates for KACTS Calendar Year 2022 Allocation

- **Brief presentations from communities on submitted projects followed by questions/answer session**

Berwick – Downtown Intersection and Pedestrian Improvements

James gave an overview of the project to the Committee. This project would aim to unify the Somersworth, NH and Berwick downtowns, connecting bike/ped infrastructure that currently exist in Somersworth. The project would align the School Street and Saw Mill Hill intersection. This project would make Downtown Berwick more walkable, even if bicycle improvements may not be feasible. A pedestrian was hit in 2016 in a crosswalk at this intersection. The person stopped on Saw Mill Hill and turned right onto School Street and hit a pedestrian crossing School Street. Jim Tasse of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine did an analysis of the bikeability of Berwick, and that intersection is identified as the worst for bicyclists and pedestrians in town. The project would narrow lanes, slowing down speeds

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and remove an existing vehicle lane to replace it with bike lanes. It would also better align this intersection. This project would help connect Saw Mill Hill to an existing park. The cost estimate for 2022 is \$475,000 from Milone and Macbroom (MMI). The project is part of a current effort to utilize the Prime Tanning lot to revitalize downtown Berwick, which is the subject of a current MMI study for making future roadway changes, improvements and adjustments to increase the safety and walkability of downtown Berwick.

Berwick

Steve gave an overview of the town's options that the Planning Board and Select Board have identified. At this point, the traffic design surrounding the Prime Tanning lot is still undecided. The project is one that the town and its Boards have agreed on, and will likely supplement other future projects. Steve Landry of MaineDOT recommended focusing on Saw Mill Hill, as there is a bank on the corner which has no safe access without improvements being made. Steve also noted this would be phase 1 of the greater Berwick Revitalization.

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Dean inquired about where the bicycle level of service information came from, Tom responded that it was part of the RFP sent out for the Downtown study.

York

Dylan asked about the future plans for the Prime Tanning lot. James responded that there will likely be 80-150 apartment units, a grocery store, gym and several mom & pop shops. Dylan clarified that these would all be commercial and Steve noted that they would be, with residential uses located above the businesses. There is currently a restaurant looking to locate in the Prime Tanning area with ample greenspace adjacent to it. Steve clarified that the site plan review process hasn't begun yet as the town just handed ownership of the parcel back to the owner after Brownfields work.

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The Committee discussed the relocation of the town's fire station, noting the School Street area will be improved as part of that effort. It also noted that a project can't be awarded funds solely based on the assumptions of what developers may do.

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James concluded the discussion of the project by adding the town will push for sidewalks all around the Prime Tanning lot, and costs of upgrading those assets should be incurred by the developer.

Kittery – Route 1 Intersection Improvements at Kittery Mall, South of Dexter Lane

Dave gave an overview of the project, stating that a study of the corridor was done in 2011, with this particular intersection being identified as the oldest and in greatest need of improvements. There are crosswalks that cross Route 1 with no access to sidewalks. Residents have complained about this intersection, although it is State owned. After requesting that MaineDOT upgrade the intersection, Kittery was redirected to KACTS.

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Steve asked what the cost estimate was for the project. Dave stated it is \$660,000, with construction being \$500,000 to upgrade the intersection to current standards. This estimate is from Electric light, and the intersection has no Right of Way issues, making it an easier project to plan and engineer, as no property acquisition would be required.

Chris asked if there is any plan for cost overruns if bids costs are inflated beyond what is budgeted.

Tom noted that this will be talked about later in the meeting, as part of the financial discussion/options. Although it is likely overages will be covered by municipalities. Even if that is the policy that KACTS chooses to pursue, other MPOs frequently make the decision to cover the excess costs, overriding the policy. Town, KACTS and MaineDOT staff will always work on projects to talk about options (reducing scope etc.) to reduce the costs of the project. If nothing comes to fruition, then the KACTS policy is to shift the funds to a different project that is able to be funded in full.

Jon asked about the exact scope of the project and if the mall stores were doing ample business. Dave responded that the scope is for a new signal, adding curb ramps to ADA standards and crosswalk adjustments. The existing crosswalks are not up to standard and need curb ramps on the southeast side of Route 1. This side also doesn't have a curb ramp so anyone using the crosswalk would need to step up or down. Dave and Adam discussed Kittery's future zoning changes and how those could affect businesses. Currently, property owners in the mall are making cosmetic upgrades and investing in the building. The town is considering selling off some parking space to develop the area a bit more.

Dave added that a hotel is currently expected about a 1/2 mile north of the intersection.

Dean asked why the smaller curb cuts and painting couldn't be done by the town. Dave responded that the major upgrade is the signal, which is the oldest on the corridor.

The Committee discussed seasonal traffic issues and ownership of mall entrances. The entrances are private and Adam added that the town encourages people to park once and walk while they shop. The malls were developed in the late 1980's.

York – York Village Improvements

Dean gave the Committee an overview of the project, noting that it is broken into four separate projects (all of which have been applied for KACTS funding this year). This was done such that if more funding is available, multiple phases will be able to be funded, but if smaller amounts are available, at least some work will be able to be done.

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Dean continued noting the work already done on York Village. A town group did design charrettes, community meetings and spent over \$120,000 to develop several alternatives for the Village intersection. Intersection is currently angled and confusing. The new “T” design would increase safety and pedestrian opportunities. The town has funded design and voters have approved the 10% match for the construction phase (\$3.6M-\$4M). In past years, KACTS has allocated funds to this project.

KACTS funded the Route 1A leg of the Village (west of the monument). The last piece of the project is the central business district heading down to York Harbor. All 4 project requests are for this leg of the larger Vilalge project. York has hired MaineDOT to do environmental permitting, Section 106 and Right Of Way work. The monument will move about 25 feet by the end of the current project.

York is still exploring underground utilities with Fairpoint and CMP and has received estimates to make that switch. The York Board Of Selectmen is comfortable with \$2M, which would eliminate 2 poles at the intersection, but necessitate 5 more just outside the area of the intersection. Construction on Long Sands Road is expected to begin in Spring 2020.

The intersection has been designed with a mountable ramp so firetrucks can quickly access Route 1. Any of the projects would include drainage, bike/ped improvements and using sharrows. The town has done re-zoning work done in conjunction with the larger York Village project. By 2022-2023, the town and MaineDOT will have re-built Route 1 through York Beach all the way back to Route 1. Now there are 5-foot bike lanes and handicap access and a new seawall.

The town has undergone a substantial effort to connect its various districts and areas. Now, a person can walk from Cape Neddick beach to Hannaford on sidewalks, although some of the sidewalks are not of the best quality. Town’s goal is to have those improved in the next decade. PDR is only for project 1 area (immediately east-southeast of the monument). Parking is being eliminated at the intersection, with more spots being created all along the Route 1A and Long Sands corridors. The larger project is essentially trading parking spots for bike/ped improvements and moving the parking a bit further out from the village.

Dave asked why the town wouldn’t put \$2M towards the project but would consider doing so for utilities. Dean responded that the town has already spent in excess of \$500,000 and the utilities have never been voted on, just formally discussed.

Dean also noted that the intersection has been a High Crash Location in years past, and the town is looking to finish up the York Village effort.

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Tom asked if this should be viewed as one project or four. Dean said it doesn't matter, but these have been scaled so any funding can be used. The first piece is \$195,000 and the second is estimated to cost \$600,000, so if all KACTS 2022 funding is given to this project 2 phases will be able to be funded, but if only some is given, phase 1 will be able to be funded.

Dean added that for constructability, if the intersection is built, York Street construction would not impact Long Sands Road traffic flows. The town is trying to minimize disruption to businesses and people in the area. These improvements have been included in the town's Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan.

Tom concluded that the Committee needs to select projects and notify MaineDOT of their selections by July.

5. Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- **Review and possible approval**

Tom updated the Committee on updated sections of the Plan since it reviewed the previous draft. Maps and information from the MetroQuest public involvement survey were added, and language was changed in the document's financial constraint section. SMPDC staff will provide the Committee with a more thorough analysis of the feedback received from the document in the coming months. The Committee has until the end of 2019 to approve the plan.

The Committee discussed areas outside of the KACTS region that were identified by survey respondents, but these were deemed to be errors of the survey takers or out of the KACTS jurisdiction. Tom also noted that KACTS used Facebook promotions to solicit maximum input.

Dean added he would like to see a state and MaineDOT budget in the document, along with inflation rates over time.

Steve made a motion to approve as amended with showing stat and MaineDOT budgets and inflation, seconded by Dean. The motion passed unanimously 8-0-0.

6. Financial discussion/options

Tom gave the Committee an overview of 12 actions it could take to increase funding flexibility and productivity. It was discussed that a financial subcommittee or working group could be established.

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Chris noted that MaineDOT is open to funding shovel ready, regionally significant projects.

Tom agreed that KACTS should continue to develop a comprehensive list of needed projects for the next 10-15 years.

The Committee discussed using KACTS funds for the Municipal Partnership Initiative Program, noting that town and KACTS matches could be lower if the state is willing to compensate, as long as the overall program match is met by the locality.

The Committee discussed federal transportation bills and funding, noting a previous proposal of \$1 Trillion in investments for infrastructure will likely not go anywhere, and that the current transportation funding bill (FAST Act) expires in 2020. Until after 2020 elections funding will likely be through Continuing Resolutions and level.

Chris mentioned that KACTS can be creative by utilizing other funding sources to replace federal dollars, making projects more flexible and easier to complete without having to comply with federal rules and regulations.

The Committee discussed negotiating prices with contractors for small items such as fencing and traffic control, which was done in the early 2000's and 1990's. DOT has previously stated MPOs cannot negotiate based on individual items in the bid prices. A major concern for high bid prices is labor shortages.

Dean and Dave offered to be in a working group to choose several of the twelve options presented by Tom. They will work with Tom and Eric to delve into the preferred routes/options and bring back further recommendations to the Committee.

7. Other Business

8. Next Meeting Date and Agenda Items

The next meeting will be held at 9AM on Thursday, July 18, 2019 in South Berwick. The tentative meeting location is the South Berwick Public Library, located at 27 Young Street, South Berwick, Maine 03908.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM