

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes
December 2, 2015

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Brad Birge, City of Saratoga Springs
Frank Bonafide, NYS Department of Transportation- Region 1
Darrell Duncan, Albany County
Ross Farrell, Capital District Transportation Authority
Steve Feeney, Schenectady County, Vice Chair
Rocky Ferraro, Capital District Regional Planning Commission
Michael Franchini, Capital District Transportation Committee,
Secretary
Stephen Iachetta, Albany County Airport Authority, Chair
Andrew Kreshik, City of Troy
Robert Leslie, Town of Bethlehem
Randy Milano, City of Albany
Charles Moore, City of Rensselaer
Paul Reuss, Village of Menands
Tom Richardson, City of Mechanicville
Laura Robertson, Town of Niskayuna
John Scavo, Town of Clifton Park
Jeremy Smith, City of Watervliet
Joseph Teliska, representing Wayne Bonesteel, Rensselaer County
Michael Valentine, Saratoga County
Christopher Wallin, City of Schenectady
Brett Williams, representing Joseph Moloughney, NYS Thruway Authority

STAFF AND OTHERS

Bill Anslow, Albany County
Anne Benware, Capital District Transportation Committee
Maria Chau, Federal Highway Administration
Robert Cherry, NYS Department of Transportation- Region 1
Bryan Cross, NYS Department of Transportation- Region 1
David Jukins, Capital District Transportation Committee
Fred Mastroianni, GPI
Chris O'Neill, Capital District Transportation Committee
Glenn Posca, Capital District Transportation Committee
Sandy Misiewicz, Capital District Transportation Committee
Owen Shevlin, NYS Department of Transportation- Region 1
Aaron Spies, Capital District Transportation Committee
Greg Wichser, NYS Department of Transportation- Region 1

INTRODUCTION AND VISITORS' ISSUES

Steve Iachetta opened the meeting at approximately 9:35 AM.

There were no visitors' issues.

ADMINISTRATION

Previous Meeting Minutes - November 18, 2015

Members approved the November 18, 2015 minutes. Members pointed out that on page 4, because of a typographical error, Mike's name was spelled as "Make", and commented that the spelled out version of the acronym GTC should have been provided (Genesee Transportation Council).

ACTION ITEMS

NEW MERIT EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR TIP PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Mike Franchini reviewed the materials sent in the mail out. He commented that the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) uses a merit evaluation process for project selection. He noted that GTC includes a cost-effectiveness measure, whereas CDTC calculates direct benefits using accepted engineering and planning techniques. Because GTC is a much larger MPO it uses a more simple and streamlined process. CDTC uses the STEP model, providing a more robust process to establish benefits. He explained that staff looked at the impacts of different weighting scales on fifteen sample projects as described in the mail out.

Responding to questions about the use of the STEP Model in benefit cost analysis, Chris O'Neill explained that the STEP Model represents all federal aid roads in the four county Capital District. For non-federal aid road bridges that are not represented in the STEP Model, a manual analysis is used which calculates vehicle costs and time costs for diversions that would result if the bridge was closed. The manual analysis is consistent with the STEP Model analysis. He explained that for infrastructure projects, the STEP Model is used to estimate the negative travel time and user cost impacts that would happen if the facility was abandoned, including the negative impacts of detours. In the case of bridges, the bridge is closed in the STEP Model; in the case of pavement projects, the road is modeled at 5 mph in the STEP Model. This analysis provides the "total facility value". The "facility life benefits" are then calculated for the project based on the extended facility life provided by the project. For mobility projects, such as a roundabout or ITS improvements, the analysis is different. For mobility projects, the actual mobility benefits in travel time and user costs are calculated by the STEP Model.

Joe Teliska expressed concern that there is little help for the locally owned system. He said that moving forward he hopes that we can discuss how we can get funding for local bridges.

Frank Bonafide referred to his narrative included in the mail out. He noted that CDTC's current process was developed more than 25 years ago with a focus on new projects. Now that preservation is the new paradigm, the benefit-cost process may benefit from some tweaking.

Frank acknowledged the yeoman's effort the staff has made over the last few months trying to develop a process that was fair. For now, Frank maintains that CDTC's benefit-cost may not measure the "right things". He suggested we set some time aside in the near future to re-examine the benefit-cost approach. He also added that maybe we can create a separate category of projects that evaluates "low volume" roads and bridges.

Mike noted that the staff invested a fair amount of time testing the process by looking at 15 past projects, and more recently some pavement and bridge candidates that DOT is considering for submission. There is a concern that the group may not be representative of all projects. Mike mentioned that he and Frank spoke and offered a proposal: to solicit and evaluate projects using the proposed CDTC approach; and then step-back and determine reasonableness and fairness. Three options were discussed: (1) the results look good, proceed with programming; (2) provide minor adjustments to the process; (3) results are so skewed that a major adjustment is needed - therefore create set-asides for later programming. Given the severe time constraint, solicitation would proceed with a streamlined and abbreviated PJP.

Members expressed support and also discussed concerns with this approach. Mike responded that no evaluation system is perfect; he reminded members that it is the staff's job to provide members the information to help them make decisions; that our process, even if imperfect, is pretty simple and straightforward and will give the Planning Committee a very good sense of the scale of benefits. He reminded members that programming goes beyond numbers, that there are valid other considerations that should be considered in the process.

A motion was made to proceed with a formal project solicitation and staff evaluation of projects. Planning Committee will review the results and determine fairness. Three possible outcomes: (1) all is good, proceed with programming; (2) some minor adjustments necessary; or (3) results are so skewed, proceed with placing funds in set-asides for later programming. Members approved the motion, with Joe Teliska abstaining.

Frank Bonafide followed with a second motion that would address DOT's concerns with CDTC's benefit-cost approach: after the work is done developing the TIP update, return with a subcommittee of the Planning Committee that will work with the CDTC staff to review the existing benefit-cost process with the objective of improving the process; establish a target of October 2016 to complete the effort. Members approved the motion.

After discussion, Mike Franchini said that the solicitation letter will go out next week. Frank Bonafide asked members to look at their projects and update status of each with Karen Hulihan.

Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned. The next Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for January 6, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael V. Franchini
Secretary