

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Meeting Minutes of July 10, 2024

A meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was held in person at the MARC Offices in Ascutey and remotely over Zoom.

Attendance

TAC Members Present: Kristi Morris, Springfield; Wayne Wheelock, Baltimore; Peter Hudkins, Chester; Diane Foulds, Windsor (via Zoom).

Others Present: Logan Nicoll, MARC; Jason Rasmussen, MARC (via Zoom); Abe Koffman, VTrans (via Zoom).

Kristi Morris called the meeting to order at 6:13 PM

1. Welcome and introductions

All present members and guests introduced themselves. The board welcomed new TPI coordinator Abe Koffman from VTrans.

2. Changes to the agenda

No changes were necessary.

3. Acceptance of May 22 minutes

Peter Hudkins made a motion to approve minutes as presented. Seconded by Diane Foulds. The motion passed unanimously.

4. FY25 TPI Guidance Acceptance

Logan explained to the committee MARC has received the TPI Work Program FY25 guidance from VTrans, and is generally supportive of the additions from last year. The changes are relatively minor, the highlights are outlined in the memo that was in the agenda packet. Logan is hoping the committee will accept the new guidance and motion to recommend its approval at the next MARC Board of Commissioner's meeting on July 22.

Jason clarified that the schedule is slightly compressed because the MARC Board of Commissioners do not generally meet in August, so their July meeting would be the last chance to get this approved by the MARC Board before the new fiscal year. Jason explained his perspective that this new program is essentially the status quo, albeit with a 3% increase over last year's budget. Jason asked the board to reach out if there were any projects that they specifically want to be included in the new work program.

Peter asked about river flow datum and said that VTrans current flow models use datum from before TS Irene of 2011.

Jason said FEMA is updating the flood maps, but he's not sure about their assumptions with regards to flow.

Peter said the ANR flood maps are okay, but the basis for the flows are lacking.

Jason said we can look into that.

Peter Hudkins made a motion to recommend the FY25 Guidance to the MARC Board of Commissioners. Seconded by Wayne Wheelock. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Construction Updates

Logan gave updates about transportation projects around the region: the Mill Street Bridge in Ludlow is being removed to make way for a pedestrian-only bridge; paving projects, especially on the interstate in our area have been ramping up with alternating lane closures; and VTrans has been communicating with the Town of Windsor about scheduling full closure of the bridge at the southern entrance to the town for an inspection.

Peter asked about the timeline on the Toll Bridge between Charleston, NH and Springfield.

Kristi said as a result of local pushback NH DOT had decided to delay the project until 2027 while they re-evaluate the preferred alternatives.

Jason said there has been discussion about that timeline because the I91 bridges project, which is in close proximity, is also slated for 2027, and doing those projects at the same time could create further issues.

Peter asked what bridges were being replaced as part of the I91 bridges project.

Kristi said it was all three sets of bridges, over the Black River, over the Toonerville Rail Trail and over Route 5.

Logan said there has been some discussion and local concern about VTrans preferred alternative for changing the Toonerville Rail Trail. As a part of this project, they are proposing to have the Trail follow along Route 5 instead of going under the Interstate through its own underpass. Under VTrans preferred alternative the Trail would cross the entrance ramps for I91 South from Route 5 and the redesigned exit ramp for I91 North. The town has expressed some concern about new pedestrian crossings. Logan gathered some data and was surprised to find that there are 30-50 people that walk down through that part of the rail trail and that seems like a lot of pedestrian traffic to put across those interstate ramps.

Kristi said he was just informed that the bridge by the McDonald's Restaurant on Route 11 in Springfield is being scoped for replacement. VTrans has reached out to the town to confirm ROWs and easements.

Jason said he remembers talking about replacing this bridge around the time he started in this job ~20 years ago.

6. Other Business

Logan said he had been putting off finalizing the changes to the Bylaws the Committee had discussed some months ago while dust settled on the legislative session and bills were finalized, including the bill which made changes to Open Meeting Law and the State Code of Ethics. Logan said the T-Bill was a bit more controversial this year than most years, and there were some interesting EV incentives included. Logan said he was hoping the committee would agree to meet again at the end of July to get back on the regular meeting schedule and to run through some procedural items, including election of officers and adopting/re-adopting the regular meeting schedule.

Logan explained he has heard from members of the committee that the fourth Wednesday no longer works for them and they would like the committee to discuss their regular schedule to see if another day would work.

Logan gave a brief update on the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant. He is hoping the committee will adopt a resolution at the next meeting establishing a commitment to achieving zero deaths on our roadways in accordance with our Safe Streets and Roads for All grant that will serve as a framework for the MARC Board of Commissioners to adopt and send to our representative Towns to adopt.

The committee discussed Grants in Aid and the issues some towns have had understanding the requirements and the status of their respective grants.

Jason informed the committee that he and others at MARC are working on a forest blocks study that may include some work around wildlife crossings and they may come to present to the committee at some point in the future.

7. Future agenda items & next meeting date

The committee discussed maintaining active membership and engaging with towns that don't attend very often. The committee decided to meet next on July 24th.

8. Adjourn

Wayne Wheelock made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Peter Hudkins. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:49 PM.