

**RHODE ISLAND STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, August 22, 2019
RIDOA, Conference Room A
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

DRAFT MINUTES

I. Attendance

1. Members Present

Mr. Michael Cassidy, Chairman	Public Member
Mr. John Flaherty, V. Chairman	Grow Smart RI
Ms. Bari Freeman	Bike Newport
Mr. Ronald Gagnon	RI Department of Environmental Management
Mr. Carlos Machado	Federal Highway Administration - Ex-Officio
Mr. Eric Moffett	Seaview Railroad
Mr. James Moran	City of East Providence
Mr. Gregory Nordin	RI Public Transit Authority
Ms. Mary Parella	Child Opportunity Zone of Pawtucket
Mr. Thomas Queenan	RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT)
Mr. Timothy Scanlon	Construction Industries of Rhode Island
Mr. Kevin Viveiros	American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC)
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Commerce Corporation
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville/RI League of Cities and Towns
Mr. Mark Schieldrop	AAA Northeast (for Lloyd Albert)
Ms. Mia Patriarca	RI Department of Health
Mr. Jason Pezzullo	Cranston Planning Department
Mr. Raymond Watson	Providence Cultural Equity Initiative
Mr. Michael Bliss	Narragansett Indian Tribe (for Dinalyn Spears)

2. Members Absent

Mr. David Duhamel	N & D Transportation
Ms. Jan Brodie	The Pawtucket Foundation
Ms. Martina Haggerty	City of Providence
Mr. Daniel Porter	RI Airport Corporation

3. Guest Present: RIDOT –Pamela Cotter, Policy Director, Michael Gannon, Project Manager, Kenneth White, Senior Policy Analyst, John Megrđichian, Assistant Director Financial and Contract Management, David Fish, Administrator of Project Management, Stephen Devine, Administrator Office of Transit, Steve Pristawa, Traffic Safety Engineer

4. Staff Present: Meredith Brady, Associate Director, Linsey Callaghan, Assistant Chief, Joshua O’Neill, Supervising Planner, Michael D’Alessandro, Supervising Planner, Benny Bergantino, Principal Planner, Mason Perrone, Principal Planner

Agenda Items:

1. Call to Order: Chair Cassidy called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.
2. July 2019 Meeting Minutes – *for action*

Chair Cassidy called for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 25 2019 Special TAC meeting, as submitted. A motion was made by Mr. Walker to approve the minutes and seconded by Mr. Queenan. **There being no further discussion, all members present voted aye to approve the July 18, 2019 meeting minutes.**

3. FFY 2018-2027 State Transportation Improvement Program – Major Amendment #19 – *for action*

Chairman Cassidy stated that Assistant Chief Linsey Callaghan and Supervising Planner Michael D’Alessandro would summarize two reports relating to the Amendment process before the TAC members begin discussing Major Amendment #19. Ms. Callaghan gave an overview of the STIP Ozone Conformity Determination for the relevant National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and stated that Amendment #19 will still allow the state to meet federal air quality conformity requirements as required by the Clean Air Act. The 24-page Ozone Conformity determination has been attached with the mailed materials to the TAC. Next, Mr. D’Alessandro summarized the results of the Public Comment report that has been submitted to the TAC. This report provides the TAC with all received comments during the public comment period. Comments were received from 200 individuals, including 11 elected officials, 16 advocacy groups, and 100 comments from the public. Most of the comments were in opposition to the proposed TAP program cuts which are part of Major Amendment #19. There were also several letter from town elected officials in support of adopting Major Amendment #19.

Chairman Cassidy then opened the floor for discussion of Major Amendment #19 for TAC members. Ms. Freeman began by stating that she has a statement that she has drafted in letter form and will submit to staff as part of the record for this meeting (see submitted letter). Her statement has six main points; 1) All TAC members are obligated to share their expertise, 2) We should leave the TAP money where it is and not support any cuts, 3) We should commend Division of Statewide Planning for their great work on the public comment period, 4) The timeline for reviewing public comments should be longer for TAC members, 5) TAP is currently underfunded at 2.7% of the STIP 10 year budget, 6) We need to support Statewide Planning and RIDOT in their new efforts to review and better quantify TAP projects going forward.

Mr. Flaherty stated he was impressed by the number of public comments received. He stated that the TAC has an obligation to support public feedback. Mrs. Patriarca then stated that she had also prepared a written statement that she will summarize (see submitted letter). Mrs. Patriarca mentioned that we must balance our deferred maintenance needs with the needs for increased bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to help reduce obesity in Rhode Island. An alarming 16% of children between 2-4 are obese in Rhode Island. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can aid in providing for increased physical activity for children. Mrs. Patriarca supports a balanced multi-modal transportation system.

Mr. Walker then spoke and stated that while this Amendment has certainly been a lightning rod amongst the bicycle community, this is really about the holistic needs of the transportation system and our commitment to attaining 90% bridge sufficiency by 2025. Over a 10-year plan we all expected budgets to change and be adjusted from year to year. When we started the 10-year plan, we did it with a focus on prioritizing bridge repairs and maintenance. The newly adopted Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) should guide our decision making with respect to these STIP Amendments. Mr. Walker stated that he understands the TAC will likely have competing motions on the Amendment presented tonight, but he favors supporting the Major Amendment #19 as currently proposed.

Mr. Walker then made a **motion to approve STIP Major Amendment #19 as proposed and recommend that the State Planning Council adopt Amendment #19**. Mr. Flaherty then made a competing **motion to approve Major Amendment #19 with additional revisions that he has outlined and handed out to members (see attached)**.

Mr. Flaherty then stated that the Amendment gives us a false choice of sacrificing the safety of people driving over bridges for expanded transportation alternatives. He stated that his motion addresses a full restoration of TAP funding as well as revisions to 5 pavement capital projects. **John's motion was seconded by Mary Parella.**

Chairman Cassidy called for a Point of Order. He stated that the TAC must first hear the original motion made by Mr. Walker and open it for discussion, and then they can entertain any additional motions or proposed revisions. **Mr. Queenan seconded Mike Walker's original motion, and then Chairman Cassidy opened the floor for discussion and consideration of Mr. Flaherty's motion and proposed changes.**

A discussion ensued as to whether or not Mr. Flaherty's proposal could be considered by the TAC as it would leave the STIP fiscally unbalanced, violating certain federal rules for fiscal constrain and balance with the STIP. Chairman Cassidy chimed in that his understanding was that all proposed changes to the STIP must balance or not exceed budgeted revenue sources. Mr. Queenan noted that Mr. Flaherty did not provide any budgetary totals for his proposed changes or how they would balance out. Mr. Queenan suggested that Mr. Flaherty wait to propose his changes as part of the full STIP re-write that is expected in the Spring of 2020.

Further discussion ensued about taking money from the Henderson bridge project or I-95 Viaduct project to restore TAP funds that are proposed to be cut. Additionally, the status of Green Economy bond funding being removed from the STIP was discussed in detail.

Mrs. Brady explained that some projects that were initially in the FFY 2017-2025 STIP were taken to be quickly funded with Green Economy bonds. This left some additional TAP money available. That is how the "bike contingency fund" was created. However, now that RIDEM is moving these projects forward, it has been suggested to remove them from the STIP since they are being funded entirely with state dollars and managed by RIDEM. Mr. Flaherty stated that moving around the Green Economy Bond funded bike projects weakens the belief in the efficacy of the management of these projects.

There were some questions as to whether or not the I-95 Viaduct project is a system expansion project. Mr. Queenan and Mr. Machado stated that it is not.

Mrs. Parella stated that it is really important for RIDOT to really consider the submitted comments, especially those from elected officials. She also said that it would be nice if RIDOT could tell us how it has addressed these comments when they do the STIP re-write in the Spring of 2020.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Cassidy then stated it was time to vote on Mr. Flaherty's motion. **The vote was taken and only 3 members were in favor of the motion, while 15 voted no. The motion fails.**

Chairman Cassidy then stated that the TAC must now vote on the original motion by Mr. Walker in favor of recommending STIP Major Amendment #19 for approval to the State Planning Council. **The vote was taken, with 14 members voting yes, 3 members voting no, and 1 abstention. The motion passes. The TAC recommends approval of STIP Major Amendment #19 and adoption by the State Planning Council.**

4. Assistant Chief's Staff Report – *For information:*

No report this month as STIP Major Amendment #19 took up most of staff time for the month.

5. Public Comments:

Sara Mitchell, RI Bicycle Coalition was disappointed that the proposed bike program cuts are being approved. She asked that the TAC please push to re-invest in bike infrastructure in the 2020 STIP re-write.

6. Announcements – *for discussion*

Greg Nordin mentioned that a series of public workshops will be happening in September regarding the Long-Range Transit Master Plan and shorter-term service changes. He will send out the information regarding these workshops in an email to Linsey to forward to everyone on the TAC.

7. Adjourn: Chair Cassidy asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Flaherty moved to adjourn and seconded by Mr. Bliss. **All members present voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Joshua O'Neill, Supervising Planner



more, better & safer bicycling

Statement by TAC member, Bari Freeman, Executive Director, Bike Newport
Submitted to the TAC for the record on August 22, 2019

Regarding STIP Major Amendment #19 and the gathering and processing of community feedback, I have six points to make:

1) I have concerns that the following points be construed as counter to administration's wishes, rather than collaborative in achieving progress. I would like to believe that all of my fellow committee members are free to express opinions, suggestions, and votes without concern for retribution. I submit that we are obligated by our service to share our expertise to best inform this body.

2) The primary point is that we need to leave the TAP money where it is - in both dollars and dates. TAP funds address low cost high return drivers of economic, health and environmental improvements. We should assist the South County Bike Path, for example, and allow it to continue until it reaches the beach and becomes a star in RI's crown. We should recognize the enormous value of all of these comparatively small investments. Let's agree to protect them and recognize the far-reaching contribution to our state's future.

3) I offer commendations to Statewide Planning for collecting these many community responses both oral and written, to RIDOT for responding to all of the comments with consistent talking points, and to Statewide Planning again for creating a report to share with this Committee.

4) The timeline to process community input, however, does not respect the people who took the time to comment or those of us charged with considering those comments. We received the 135-page report last night at 7:30pm -timely considering that the comment period closed yesterday. That said, it is not enough time to process this very important information.

5) Comparing our TAP spending to federal requirements is disingenuous. At \$2.7M, the federal requirement for spending on bike/ped infrastructure is so low that that at 10x more than that requirement, we are still among the lowest investors in the country. At 2.7% of our transportation improvement budget, TAP is underfunded. Even if we add the \$80M we are still underfunded.

6) Statewide Planning is working on a system to process DOT projects holistically rather than as pavement/highway and transportation alternatives. In so doing, we will inherently move away from the car-focused terminology of "alternative" and toward the more appropriate transportation "options." As a committee, we have discussed that our transportation projects should consider all road users from the start, as one project - not separately. This lens will align with our state Complete Streets policies and ordinances. We're moving in this direction, but it's premature to reference \$80M of bike/ped spending outside of TAP. Some of that spending is infrastructure improvements and some of it is paint. Some of it is in alignment with the recommendations in the upcoming Bike Mobility Plan and some of it needs to be updated. We need to support Statewide Planning in completing the system that will allow us to quantify bike/ped projects throughout DOT and DEM plans.

**FFY 2018-2027 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
Transportation Advisory Committee**

Motion to Recommend Approval of RIDOT Proposed Amendment #19 with Changes

I move to recommend RIDOT's proposed Amendment #19 for approval by the State Planning Council subject to the following changes:

1. **TAP:** Full restoration of \$37M in Transportation Alternatives (TAP) funding over the 10-year STIP (for projects already completed, surplus funds would accrue to TAP Program General Contingency Account)
2. **Pavement Capital:** Restore start date for Rt. 114 Hope St (Washington St to Dyer Ave, Bristol (STIP ID 1300) to 2022
3. **Pavement Capital:** Restore start date for South Pier Road, Narragansett (STIP ID 1361) to 2020
4. **Pavement Capital:** Restore start date for Route 146, (I-295 to Rt 146A), Lincoln, North Smithfield (STIP ID 1292) to 2022
5. **Pavement Capital:** Restore funding for Pawtucket Avenue, including sidewalks (Veterans Memorial Ave. to Waterman), East Providence (STIP ID 9525)
6. **Pavement Capital:** Restore start date for Rt. 114 Pawtucket Avenue, including sidewalks (Taunton Ave to Warren Ave), East Providence (STIP ID 1325)

John Flaherty, Member
Transportation Advisory Committee

Transportation Advisory Committee

Major Amendment #19

Testimony: Mía Patriarca, RIDOH

- We recognize that Rhode Island has deferred critical infrastructure repairs and maintenance, especially bridges, for far too long, and we are now in a position where we need to prioritize these improvements.
- However, as the state agency charged with protecting and improving public health, RIDOH is concerned about the public health impacts of reducing and slowing our investments in walk/bike infrastructure.
- As most of you know, **obesity rates continue to rise** nationally and in RI. After plateauing for a few years, Rhode Island's rates of adult obesity increased from 26.6% of the population in 2016 to 30% in 2017. Data from 2017 also tells us that almost 17% of youth ages 10-17 were obese and 16.3% of children ages 2-4 years old who were participating in WIC were obese.
- Obesity is associated with a number of **chronic diseases**, including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancers.
- Participating in **physical activity** can significantly decrease the risk of obesity and chronic disease. And we know that the built environment, including the availability of walking and biking infrastructure, has an influence on levels of physical activity.
- In all but one of the last ten years (2007-2017), Rhode Island has exceeded the national percentage for **pedestrian fatalities** (according to RI's 2018 Highway Safety Plan). Over the last five years, **cyclist deaths** have thankfully remained relatively low.
- We all know that **road design**, including robust walk/bike infrastructure, can play a key role in reducing traffic-related deaths for pedestrians and cyclists and increasing physical activity, and *we shouldn't lose sight of these facts*.
- As we have heard from many members of the public over the last couple of weeks, walk/bike infrastructure also has a role in addressing **climate change** by reducing carbon emissions.
- For all these reasons, we have been working with our **Health Equity Zone** communities to expand walking and biking facilities and policies. Overall, HEZ communities experience a higher incidence of chronic disease and often have the fewest resources to improve local infrastructure.
- As we move past this necessary, but challenging period of investing in basic road infrastructure, we look forward to working with the TAC to advance a **balanced multimodal transportation system** that includes **robust, key investments** in walking and biking **infrastructure** that are responsive to the health needs of all communities throughout the state.