



Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes January 10, 2022

Members in Attendance: Nick Pappas (Chair), Michele Cardinal, Dan Schragger, Laura Davis; Norman Abbott; Phil Posner (Clerk), Terri Ackerman (SB Liaison) (for portion of meeting) **Absent:** Kathleen Fasser

- MEETING CALLED TO ORDER at 7:01 PM
- The meeting was called to order with a roll-call vote.
- A motion was made by Norman Abbott (and seconded by Dan Schragger) to accept the minutes of the December 13, 2021 TAC meeting. Members voted unanimously in favor of accepting the minutes.

ARPA funds

- Chair Nick Pappas advised the group that the SelectBoard was seeking input from the TAC regarding the use of ARPA funds received by the town from the federal government.
- Chair Pappas presented a slide show which illustrated 'Values and Objectives' to be used by the TAC in making recommendations. He then asked members to weigh in about objectives in the Long Range Plan (Envision Concord) that should be included in the "V & Os".
- Ms. Davis suggested that the "V & Os" include the goals of the Sustainable Concord Planning Initiative (e.g. everyone in the town would have access to zero carbon emission transportation "to commute and get around Concord")
- Chair Pappas used the slide show to illustrate the "current situation" (what we have, what we lack) regarding, for example, individual car ownership, cut through traffic issues, demand for more parking, "transportation capacity" (e.g. COA vans, school buses) that isn't used as all times, lack of service for visitors. A discussion ensued among the TAC members regarding goals, projects and priorities.
- Norman Abbot mentioned that the town has 2 rail stations.
- Ms. Cardinal – likes approach of 'what we have and what we don't' – suggested that we may identify easily accomplished projects ("low hanging fruit") that may be undertaken by the town.
- Mr. Posner mentioned that there is a perception that there is congestion problem in town as well as concerned about street traffic using tertiary roads because of Google Maps and wayze. Mr. Pappas suggested that this falls into the 'cut through traffic' issue.
- Ms. Davis mentioned that there the Yankee Line commuter bus stops in Concord that is underutilized and that there is a lack of "safe connectivity between places in town" for pedestrians and cyclists. We have the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail but no bike lanes.
- Mr. Posner then mentioned that the two halves of Concord are "severed" by Route 2. He also mentioned that there is 'sign pollution' (too many, hard to see').
- Ms. Cardinal identified a lack of wayfinding and consistent signage in the town.

- Mr. Pappas then mentioned that there it's difficult to measure problems and improvements, we don't have metrics to measure most of our issues – the issues are identified through people's perceptions more than measurable data. Also we don't have information about the status of these issues in other towns (e.g. parking availability in downtown). Hard to make investment decisions without data.
- Mr. Posner – its difficult to put numbers on some of the issues but there is survey data. CPW has information regarding "pavement quality" that it uses as the basis for setting priorities and has rethought how it's going to approach this issue – we should reach out to CPW for information on this issue.
- Chair Pappas mentioned that CPW would be holding Zoom meetings regarding paving/road improvement projects on Tuesday (January 11) and Wednesday (January 12).
- Erin Stevens then provided a brief summary of "current CPW projects" in the transportation area that she was apprised of. She has reached out to various agencies to get input but that task isn't completed yet. CrossTown Connect Bus Service (Acton's service is on hold right now. Sudbury's program is operating); Sudbury Road, Seven Star Traffic Signal, Commonwealth Avenue improvement; Shared Streets Grant (BFRT crossing); bike share pilot program; cut through traffic study; Cambridge Turnpike Improvement Project; BFRT Bridge. There are regional groups that Planning and CPW work with on
- Ms. Davis asked if there was move information about the Complete Streets program. Ms. Stevens related that projects could apply for funding on an annual basis. Towns don't get all the funding requested - so the town must be prepared match funding.
- Mr. Posner – might be good to understand how Planning and CPW use their resources to identify grant opportunities. For example, Planning Director Rasmussen is terrific at obtaining grants we don't know if she is focused at all on matters relating to transportation.
- Ms. Stevens – there isn't a single person assigned to seek grants. Mr. Posner suggested that the communities that are most successful at obtaining grants have staff that are trained and focused on obtaining grants and perhaps we could recommend to the SelectBoard that they direct the staff on this issue.
- Ms. Cardinal raised the issue of having a 'transportation department'. Mr. Posner suggested that we could recommend to the SelectBoard that they propose funding an additional 'transportation' staff position.
- Ms. Hartman from the Finance Committee advised us that the town manager had included funding for a transportation planner position in his proposed budget and the finance committee is currently working on this issue. If it doesn't get in this year (NB – FY 2023), then a positive recommendation from the TAC might get it in next year's budget (NB – 2024).
- Terry Akerman, SelectBoard Chair and TAC liaison, then stated that the ARPA funds – a once in a lifetime opportunity - \$5.6 Million – the largest grant ever received by the town, that the town has no plan to use the funds and that the TAC should weigh in on how the money could be used (for matters within the TAC's purview). She also stated that it's possible that a transportation planner could take in more in grants than the salary.
- Ms. Akerman mentioned that Planning Director Marcia Rasmussen had created a memo regarding 18 different grants and programs – e.g. Assabet River Pedestrian Bridge.
- Ms. Stevens – will be meeting with Director Rasmussen and will inquire about the memo / grants / projects.
- Mr. Pappas then began a discussion of possible projects – how do we decide, what criteria are we to use to make recommendations, what are the start up and operational costs?
- Ms. Cardinal stated that we may want to go back to information in the existing studies.
- Ms. Davis stated – I think Ms. Fasser is working on teasing out this information.
- Ms. Davis interjected we need to be clear about what is within [the town's] power to accomplish [as opposed to MBTA or the state], also 'speed is important' in the Climate Change context – we need to act now and not wait to accomplish action.

- Mr. Posner – before we start brainstorming – let’s review what’s already been done. A Priority List of road projects already exists. Mr. Posner showed the spreadsheet and the TAC agreed that it would be shared with all. Ms. Davis suggested that the TAC make sure that Complete Streets priority list was the “current (final) document” as multiple versions of the document are in the town records (PBP comment – the *unrevised* Priority List is posted on the CPW website – CPW should change that)
- Mr. Pappas then began a discussion of ‘shared mobility’ (microtransit) – He suggested that the town needed to get to a different paradigm regarding transportation issues. He also mentioned a microtransit (bus service) might be something to push for –
- As an example, Ms. Stevens made note of a pilot project in Berkshire County in which Council on Aging Vans were used to fill unmet transportation needs of a more general population.
- Ms. Davis - the TAC should define “what population we are serving”. She mentioned that there were populations that were in need of transportation resources (e.g. the disabled, high schoolers, seniors that don’t drive) that are in need of better transportation infrastructure (NB “facilities”).
- Mr. Pappas – the school bus model is optimized for elementary school. The system is not optimized for the middle and high school. This relates to the demand for more parking at the high school.
- Ms. Davis – how do the needs of the Complete Streets projects serve the needs of the population we wish to serve. She related the transportation survey made in the schools identified specific infrastructure issues that were barriers to kids getting to the high school. Our audiences
- Dan Schrage – the student transportation issue is something that we may want to tackle first. We know there are existing problems.
- Mr. Posner – the town participates in the Safe Routes to School program. The SRTS staff has a mandate to provide technical assistance to towns that participate in the program.
- Ms. Akerman – be careful about ‘serial conversation’ issue – we must be compliant with Open Meeting law.
- Ms. Cardinal we should be focused on the Envision Concord study as a guide to TAC’s efforts.
- Ms. Akerman ‘we’re on the right track’. Env. Concord is a good roadmap but some things have changed due to the pandemic. There was a forum on Env. Concord last November. The town agencies created a spreadsheet of all items each was responsible for. It’s on the town website – every item in the Env Concord study has been addressed.
- Ms. Davis – what are our goals re: January 31 meeting.
- Ms. Akerman – I want to make sure that “Transportation” is represented. If there are proposals that we may make that would be good. Some concrete
- Chairman Pappas suggested that the TAC meet again before its regularly bi-monthly meeting – to continue to work on the issues. The TAC members decided that a meeting on Tuesday 1-18 was available for most to attend. Mr. Pappas said he hoped to speak with Director Rasmussen and Director Cathcart before the meeting so their input could help frame the meeting. If Director Rasmussen or Cathcart knows of items that she’s working on that should be move forward – then that could be a priority of the meeting. He wants to find points of connection between existing projects, works already underway, other actionable items, that we may be able to recommend to the SelectBoard.
- Ms. Davis – the Sustainable Concord plan has multiple 2-page documents with tasks that can be undertaken that relate to transportation.

The meeting was then opened for public comments.

Mark Gailus of 62 Prescott Street said that he supported the idea of utilizing ‘microtransit’ (delivery service). Regarding the ARPA funds – idea of capitalizing a microtransit program is a good idea. Also there is an article on the town warrant to create an economic vitality revolving fund (this relates to tourism but it could also relate to

getting people from the train or have groceries delivered). Mr. Gailus also addressed wayfinding signs as an important issue (and noted the historic commission's role in this) for the town.

Ned Perry of 362 Bedford Street noted that public (road) safety had not been discussed by the TAC, and, as an example raised the issue of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail crossing through 'Junction Park' in West Concord.

Ellen Quackenbush of 206 Prairie Street stated that the idea of a 'delivery service' was a good one and worthy of further exploration.

- **Motion to Adjourn** Laura Davis moved to adjourn; Dan Schrager seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 PM