

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Andrew Zarro (D4), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Roberto Rodríguez (At-Large)

Minutes March 8, 2023

Members Present: Councilor Zarro, Councilor Pelletier, Councilor Rodríguez

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Katie Tims

Guests: Keith Gray (City Engineer), Mike Murray (Acting Director of Public Works), Jeremiah Bartlett (City Transportation Systems Engineer), Chris Chop (Transportation Director, GPCOG) and Andrew Clark (Transit Program Manager, GPCOG)

Meeting was called to order.

January 11 Minutes

Councilor Zarro makes a motion to approve the January 11th, 2023 meeting minutes. Councilor Rodríguez moves the motion. January 11 minutes passed unanimously, 3-0.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon and Katie Tims

The Sustainability Office welcomed our new GPCOG Resilience Corps member, Emma Perry. The Office has started receiving energy benchmarking reports (due by May 1) required under the Energy and Water Use Benchmarking Ordinance. The office will host three training sessions in March and early April to assist building owners in submitting their reports. The Office is joining the benchmarking implementation platform Building Energy Analysis Manager, the platform tracks compliance and streamlines the administration of benchmarking policies. We are preparing to launch the Electrify Everything 2.0 program, including Electrify Bikes! And DIY Electrify!, during our Earth Day event on April 22. Troy Moon participated in the first of a series of integrated planning workshops convened by the Maine PUC to plan for a robust and reliable electric grid in the State. On February 22, the Sustainability Office hosted a meeting with Dan Burgess of the Director of Maine Governor's Energy Office, and representatives of the DOE to discuss the progress being made here in Maine and the opportunities for continued collaboration. Garbage to Garden won the bid for collection services for all of our compost sites, public schools, and municipal operation - including the Barron Center, Clocktower Cafe, and the new Family Resource Center. We are coordinating with Garbage to Garden, staff at all of the facilities, and the current vendor to transition service and will look to promote curbside composting later this Spring. We are excited to report that the DC fast chargers at the corner of Spring and High Street will be online before the end of March, along with the neighborhood charging hub at East End Elementary School. Pesticide Applicator Reports were due February 1st and staff received reports from 40 applicators. Staff was in contact with all pesticide applicators who reported in the past and estimated near full compliance for the 2022 reporting period. The Office hosted a landcare professionals workshop on February 14th titled Healthy Soils and Happy Lawns: A Deep Dive into Organic Turfgrass and Lawn Care Practices. The

Sustainability Office publicly announced the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program on February 13th and just this week, Troy Moon presented the communication before our City Council on February 27. The Office hosted an Informational Open House on March 2 and has been working hard to spread the word to Portland residents and groups. The Office has been busy conducting public educational presentations and other outreach efforts.

Committee Comment on Sustainability Update

Councilor Pelletier asks about participation at the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program Informational Open House. *Around thirty people participated, virtually or in person, but we have also heard from forty-nine interested residents from over seventeen of Portland's neighborhoods. We have been working to connect those interested residents of like neighborhoods together. We have also translated flyers and displayed them around locations in neighborhoods. Will the outreach continue to the neighborhoods that don't fill out applications? Yes, absolutely - participation in the Program events and projects will hopefully be amplified and attract interested residents regardless of their residence.*

Major Transportation Priorities

Presented by Keith Gray and Jeremiah Bartlett

The City of Portland is working on multiple projects including the Franklin Street Redesign, Libbytown Safety & Accessibility Project, Brighton Avenue Multi-Modal Project, and a number of Smart Corridor initiatives (Phase II Morrill's Corner, Phase III Forest Avenue - Marginal Way to Park Avenue, Phase IV Forest Avenue - Revere Street to Bedford/Baxter Blvd), and others. Presenters described the purpose and need, timeline, and next steps on all major projects.

Comment on the Major Transportation Priorities Presentation

Councilor Rodríguez asks a clarifying question about why a project like the Franklin Street Redesign, which has seen a lot of community involvement, is "dormant"? *Jeremiah Bartlett explains that in a past particular Council, there was hesitancy to commit that level of capital to the active portion that was being considered. Also, at the time, the conversation had not matured to the point it stands currently with policymakers and the connection to the other outcomes associated with Franklin Street (transportation, housing needs, mixed-use, etc). We may be at a different place now, instead of looking at it (Franklin Street) as a place with a lot of assets.*

Councilor Pelletier shares appreciation and adds that she was at the Libbytown Safety & Accessibility Project meeting, noting the excitement and level of engagement at planning meetings. She asks about the potential future project regarding the restoration of two-way traffic on State Street and High Street? How feasible it is based on how many projects we have and how we might envision it? *The DOT did contribute signal funding for those corridors, not in line with implementing two-way conversion, but there will be investments made. Jeremiah Bartlett describes that how it moves forward is in the earlier stages and we would have to conduct new traffic studies to see what improvements could be made for the future of State/High St traffic. Challenges exist as we sequence these current projects and funds, as they connect to future transportation design projects.*

Councilor Rodríguez asks about Allen's Corner and if there is anything lined up for future design improvements. *There has been a Safe Streets For All Award made to PACTS and Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and one of the things we want to investigate as an outcome of that is traffic safety improvements in Allens Corner. It is an area with many challenges and we are looking for safety-based options and pilot work.*

Councilor Zarro notes the legacy potential of these projects and the long-lasting impacts they will have on our community. Providing the example of a \$30 million dollar estimate for the Franklin Redesign project, Councilor Zarro asks if we are looking at the timeline of federal grant opportunities and measuring how to anticipate those. *Jeremiah Bartlett describes how in RFPs (Request for Proposals) for urban designers, we are clear in needing someone who is familiar with those types of grants, can help us write those grants, and is knowledgeable on local match expectations. We are going to need to be thoughtful and creative in seeking funds and exploring our options.* Councilor Zarro agrees and shares excitement for the Libbytown project and how it may change the face of the community. *Jeremiah Bartlett describes that within the year, they have been very collaborative with the state and DOT and hopes to get the Libbytown project started as soon as possible.* Councilor Zarro asks how citizens can get involved with transportation and traffic-related concerns? *Similar to the previously described Libbytown Safety & Accessibility Project meeting, public meetings and walking tours can be effective in engaging citizens. Audiences that may also want to participate may use surveys and City discussions. The Libbytown neighborhood website is also a great resource to find information and gather input.*

Follow-Up on Rail Use Advisory Committee Discussion and Policy Recommendation **Presented by Jeremiah Bartlett (City Transportation Systems Engineer)**

Public comment was taken on this item on January 11, 2023.

The Sustainability & Transportation Committee requested this follow-up presentation to include the outcome from the Dec. 22, 2022 Rail Use Advisory Committee (RUAC) vote, the copy of the Auburn City Council Resolve from Dec. 22, possible other options for transit uses for the corridor. The RUAC Member vote was tallied as follows: 7 votes for Interim Trail Until Rail, 5 votes for Rail with Trail, 1 vote for Rail Only, and 2 members abstaining from voting. The presentation also included a review of the PACTS/GPCOG 2017 Study and a reminder of the staff recommendation in which it may be of value that the DOT complete a transit alternatives analysis for the corridor.

Comment on the Presentations

Councilor Zarro asks if the sole decision comes down to the Commissioner. *Jeremiah Bartlett describes that in the case of these advisory committees, this becomes an advisory opinion or information that goes back to the Commissioner. And it may be of more value to stay tied to that process. When you have a mixed voting outcome, not sure if the Commissioner will have a lot to learn from the outcome. If the state legislature is moving quickly, we could look to them and gain more information on the potential outcome. Other projects (Ocean Gateway, Roux Institute, etc) and questions still need to be asked and considered.* Councilor Zarro acknowledges the many uncertainties - how much LR1755 may impact this and the MDOT transit alternatives analysis -

even if we take a stance at the moment, it may be irrelevant in the future. *There may have been a critical mass reached with our representatives and elected officials, and we have a state climate action plan, and we know that carbon emissions and environmental disturbance are problems, but without the ability to foster compact development patterns by inducing sprawl then how do we go about accomplishing those things? We are reaching a transition from discussion to action and it may be beneficial to have another conversation when more things settle out.*

Update on the Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study

Presented by Chris Chop (Transportation Director, GPCOG) and Andrew Clark (Transit Program Manager, GPCOG)

Thai study is based on recommendations from “Transit Tomorrow”, the long-range regional transit plan adopted in Spring 2021. The Gorham-Portland-Westbrook analysis was conducted to identify options for a rapid transit line connecting these towns. The study recognized the influence of demographic and environmental factors and explained that the next steps are to evaluate alternatives, develop design parameters, and determine the “locally preferred alternatives”.

Comment on the Presentations

Councilor Pelletier asks about the feedback from the surrounding Portland municipalities regarding the “locally preferred alternatives” for routes. *The study specifically included feedback from the towns of Portland, Westbrook, and Gorham, especially meeting with staff from municipalities to learn about land use and zoning policies and projects underway in these communities. Other communities have not weighed in on a preferred route yet, but we anticipate that happening in a couple of months and we welcome that feedback at future meetings. We are still identifying opportunities to learn more about major environmental constraints, equity opportunities or challenges on particular roadways, and more.* Is there a level of engagement being done to people who are not municipal employees, but community-level engagement? *We do have a project advisory group of stakeholders who have mobilized to spread the word about our future public meetings, METRO has posted flyers at bus stops along the corridor, and flyers at community centers and libraries, and we are also soon launching a survey that asks individuals their thoughts. Last fall, we conducted extensive public outreach and we are, so far, receiving great engagement.*

Councilor Rodríguez asks about the input that may be helpful from Councilors tonight? *Any input would be helpful.* Councilor Rodríguez was intrigued about the route along Warren Avenue because it gets up to Morrill’s Corner, a high-traffic and congested area, but prefers the route that includes Brighton Avenue.

Councilor Zarro reminds the Committee that they took a resolution to Council, where full support for the resolution led to support for this study to take into account the impacts of the Gorham Connector, can you speak to any of the conversations you may have had with the Maine Turnpike Authority pertaining to this study? *The Gorham Connector project has been stagnant, conversations with the Maine Turnpike Authority slowed a few months ago. The PACTS policy*

board which recommended that the two teams continue to coordinate on the projects, acknowledging that the projects are different and connect the same communities in different ways. Councilor Zarro follows up by asking for specifics on the timeline of the Gorham-Portland-Westbrook rapid transit study. We would like to have a locally preferred alternative selected by our policy board selected at their meeting in July. That target is informed by application deadlines at the FTA. Working our way back from that, we are taking our four alternatives to the design engineering team, develop conceptals and parameters, work with municipalities in design workshops with planning staff, request final public feedback, and move into final adoption in July.

Discuss and Finalize Committee Workplan

Discussion led by Troy Moon, Councilor Zarro, Councilor Pelletier, Councilor Rodríguez

Building on the conversation we had in January, the Committee created a priority list of items:

- Create a Sustainability Fund (similar to the Housing Fund) to support projects that advance the goals in One Climate Future / deposit revenue from REC sales.
- Adopt an ordinance authorizing Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) to help businesses improve energy efficiency and adopt renewable energy.
- Explore an ordinance requiring home energy performance at the time of sale (similar to Montpelier, VT) to provide visibility into future energy costs and to incentivize energy efficiency.
- Complete work on bird-safe design requirements for new construction to reduce bird mortality during spring and fall migrations.
- Amend the traffic schedule to close/restrict traffic on certain streets to improve walkability and facilitate non-motorized forms of transportation activity.
- Explore policy options to increase revenue from on-street parking and from private parking facilities.
- Make amendments to the Energy Benchmarking Ordinance to clarify reporting requirements and fully implement the program in all buildings with 20,000 square feet or more.
- Update the City's carbon reduction goal to 100% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2050 in alignment with current science-based targets.

We are pleased that tonight we already heard a presentation on transportation priorities including a discussion on implementing the Franklin Street Master Plan and converting State St. and High St. to two-way traffic. We would also like to invite Metro Director Greg Jordan to present a "State of Metro" report, receive the LMAC Annual Report, receive the Benchmarking Annual Report, review shore power feasibility study results, and receive updates about IRA opportunities for the City, residents, and businesses.

After connecting with our colleagues at the Parks Department, we learned that the City is conducting a tree forestry masterplan, which would be valuable information in future conversations about amending the Heritage Tree Ordinance.

Councilor Zarro asks how we plan to give CMP a granular explanation of what we need as we transition to beneficial electrification? Troy Moon intends to work with them and continue conversations with them to identify opportunities and challenges. Both agree we should revisit that as an item at the end of the year for this Committee.

Other Business

No other business. Councilor Zarro asks for any other questions or comments and thanks the guests for joining us.

Motion to Adjournment

Moved by Councilor Rodríguez, all adjourned.

Meeting Adjourned