

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Regina Phillips (D3), Chair
Councilor Pious Ali (At-Large)
Councilor Anna Bullett (D4)

Approved Minutes February 12, 2025

Members Present: Councilor Phillips, Councilor Bullett, Councilor Ali, Councilor Sykes, Councilor Pelletier

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Greg Jordan, Katie Tims, Mike Murray, Michael Goldman, Paul Bradbury

Guests: Rick Harbison, Lucy Sinclair

Meeting was called to order.

January 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The January 8, 2025, meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Transportation Updates

- Director of Public Works, Mike Murraray provided an overview of updates on the current status of major transportation projects, including:
 - The city and state received a \$2 million federal grant for the Reimagining Franklin St project for the first design phase from the D.O.T. 's Reconnecting Communities grant program.
 - Funding for the Libbytown Safety and Accessibility project has been secured and the preliminary design review (PDR) will be completed in 2025, final design in 2026, and construction by 2027.
 - The Brighton Avenue Rosemont Corner Intersection Improvements study began in 2024 and will be completed in 2025 to proceed to PDR.
 - The Forrest Avenue: Morrill's Corner (Smart Corridor Study: Phase II) project, to improve safety and enhance predictability of operations, is planning to complete PDR in late 2025.
 - The Forest Avenue: Marginal Way to Park Avenue (Smart Corridor Study: Phase III) project is awaiting outcomes from the State and High Two-Way Study as well as property discussions to determine the final configuration for design.
 - The Forest Avenue: Bedford St to Woodford St (Smart Corridor Study: Phase IV) is currently funded for feasibility only. The existing conditions were completed in August 2024 and the alternatives analysis and final draft report are currently under review by MaineDOT and awaiting feedback.
 - The State & High St Two-Way Conversion is funded and Council has approved supporting the work for a two-way conversion as well as bicycle facilities.
 - The Union Branch and Union Branch Connector Pathways design is funded with 80% federal/20% local funding and there is no construction funding currently. The

final design bid documents for the Union Branch Path will be completed this month and is expected to go out to bid this winter for construction to begin in Spring 2025.

- The West Commercial Street Pathway Phase II was completed during the summer of 2024 and the City has received preliminary approval on the funding application to MaineDOT for the design and construction of the final Phase III, but will not be officially awarded until Spring.
- Staff are exploring funding options, the project timeline, and structure process for a Transportation Master Plan.

Sustainability Updates

- Sustainability Director Troy Moon provided the update that the office hired a new sustainability associate, Karly Meyer, and have also welcomed a resilience corps fellow, Brenda Kirlin, to the Sustainability team who will be with the office until December 2025.

Vision Zero Presentation by GPCOG

- The Greater Portland Council of Governments' (GPCOG) staff, Lucy Sinclair, and Rick Harbison, presented the region's Vision Zero action plan, which is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. Vision Zero Greater Portland aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries resulting from crashes on our roadways by 2045. The plan includes recommendations for taking action, including six objectives with aligned action steps and metrics. Harbison shared current projects GPCOG is working on to implement the plan funded by Safe Streets for All Grant Projects, including 9 demonstration projects in the region, road safety audits, roundabout feasibility studies, and intersection studies throughout Greater Portland. Harbison also discussed the many benefits for the City of Portland if it adopted the Vision Zero Greater Portland plan and the several directions in which the City can proceed.

Councilor Comments on the Vision Zero Presentation by GPCOG

- Councilor Pelletier asked if they recommend examining the actual crashes that occurred in Portland this year or if it is better to take a more holistic approach. Councilor Pelletier also inquired if GPCOG has seen any impact on their research due to cars getting bigger and heavier?
- Assistant City Manager, Jordan, answered Councilor Pelletier's first question: *Both approaches would be valuable. An analysis of recent incidents is something we can do on top of the methodology that GPCOG has provided, which utilizes the MaineDOT crash database to analyze the types of crashes occurring.*
- Harbison answered Pelletier's second question that *this is a hot topic in the Vision Zero space and mentioned that the US has less regulations for cars than other countries to protect pedestrians. It underscores the importance of safe road design because vehicle size is not something we can control.*

- Sinclair added that *people are researching how we can make infrastructure safer to address the increase in heavier vehicles (i.e. electric trucks), such as barriers in highways.*
- Councilor Bullett fully supports the approach of adopting GPCOG's plan and questions *if we were to pass the Vision Zero Greater Portland plan, could we add Portland-specific amendments if it makes sense?*
- Greg Jordan answered that he *doesn't see why we couldn't add to the Vision Zero plan if needed.*
- Councilor Sykes mentions that her constituents number one concern in her district is traffic safety, speeding, and pedestrian safety and thinks this should be prioritized. She requested there be a crash data analysis reported back to the committee.
- Councilor Phillips wants to know the difference between the Master Transportation plan and the Vision Zero Greater Portland plan?
- Greg Jordan answered that as of today, a Transportation Comprehensive Master Plan does not exist. A Vision Zero is one piece of the plan and is a framework that would inform the Master Plan.
- Councilor Ali shared he is looking forward to supporting the resolution and adopting the Vision Zero Greater Portland plan.

Appropriation of Funds to Support the Battery Storage Project at the Portland Jetport

- Jetport Director, Paul Bradbury, presented an overview of the Battery Storage Project, which proposes the installation of a 1.9MW large-scale battery energy storage system (BESS) located to tie into the existing CMP underground vault near the intersection of Jetport Blvd. and International Parkway.
- The BESS serves two functions to allow the Jetport to offset the load during peak hours of demand by ISO New England and to provide needed electrical system resiliency during utility power outages.
- The battery would provide peak demand shedding and backup power to the facility. Energy storage projects like this are critical as the Jetport continues to electrify its loads.
- The \$4.25 million project would be constructed with an immediate investment from the Jetport's unrestricted fund balance and a simple payback of 8.7 years with a 30% Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 Investment Tax Credit (ITC).

Councilor Comments on the Battery Storage Project at the Portland Jetport

- Councilor Ali asked if there is any risk involved in storing this battery?
- Paul Bradbury answered that these batteries are contained in fire proof vessels, integrated technology, and have a great track record. He added that the batteries are controlled and optimized with immense oversight to ensure safety.
- Councilor Bullett inquired about the current solar projects at the Jetport.
- Bradbury replied that there is 35,000 sq ft of PV on top of the same parking garage, which handles over 60% of parking garage loads and will be adding to this load when possible.
- Councilor Sykes asked about the location of the battery storage project and if there are other locations it can be installed if the parking garage is not approved.

- Bradbury answered that the location can only be shifted modestly, approximately 10-15 feet, due to the intersection of primary transmission lines and transformers.

Public Comment on the Battery Storage Project at the Portland Jetport

- Councilor Phillips opened it up for public comment.
- One constituent spoke. The constituent asked if the project was open to bids from other providers to see if there are other cost-effective options available.
- Bradbury answered that they issued an RFP for developers for the design of this project and received proposals from three different companies. The current project being discussed is the winning company's design.
- Public comment closed

Motion to Approve the Battery Storage Project

The motion was moved by Councilor Bullett, and seconded by Councilor Ali.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Amendments to Chapter 34, Landcare

- Sustainability Director, Troy Moon, provided background information for the amendments to Chapter 34 of the Landcare Ordinance to allow the use of chlorantraniliprole to control grub infestations. This is in response to a waiver request received by the Sustainability Office in December of 2024 from Cheverus High School to treat a severe grub infestation on their athletic fields located on Ocean Avenue. They've done organic treatments and other methods to treat their fields, but were unsuccessful. The sustainability office consulted with the City of Portland's City attorney and determined that a waiver could not be considered due to the application method of the product according to the language in the ordinance. After discussion, the path forward was to seek an amendment to the ordinance to allow the use of this product as there is no effective organic treatment available of grubs, which impacts the playability and safety for student athletes.

Councilor Comments on the Amendments to Chapter 34, Landcare

- Councilor Bullett asked if Cheverus High School has a strategic plan for the long-term future of this field and if there are plans to replace this field with an artificial turf field.
- The Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations at Cheverus High School responded that the school does have an approved campus master plan from the planning office that will expire in November of 2025 for two artificial surface fields, which is dependent on fundraising.
- Councilor Ali inquired if this amendment will allow others to also ask for a waiver?
- Moon answered that the particular language for this amendment would eliminate the need for a waiver for the use of this particular product by anyone, but need to notify the office.
- Councilor Ali asked if there will be any negative impact to our waters.
- Moon answered that this product is toxic to certain marine organisms and that there would need to be actions taken to ensure it is applied at a safe distance. He noted that the current organic product allowed is also toxic to marine life.

- Councilor Bullett asked what happens if this is voted down by the committee.
- Michael Goldman answered that it would still move forward to the whole council for a vote.

Public Comment on the Amendments to Chapter 34, Landcare

- Councilor Phillips opened it to public comment.
- Three constituents spoke. One constituent spoke in opposition to any amendments to the ordinance due to their concern for human exposure to toxic chemicals. They also mentioned that they are against creating a long-term permanent solution to a temporary issue as Cheverus plans to replace the field with an artificial turf field.
- Two more constituents spoke in opposition to any amendments to the ordinance and encouraged the council to instead explore how the ordinance could be strengthened to make it more protective of vulnerable populations and public health.

Motion to Approve the Amendment to Chapter 34, Landcare

- The motion was moved by Councilor Ali, and seconded by Councilor Phillips.
- The amendment failed 2-1.

Proposed 2025 Workplan

- Assistant City Manager, Greg Jordan, discussed the 2025 Committee Work Plan, which is based on the January 8, 2025 meeting in which the committee heard public comment and discussed members' recommendations for the upcoming year. He emphasized it is a flexible outline that will likely change over the year.
- Councilor Ali suggested the committee consider adding the topic of fees for taxi drivers to the work plan.
- Councilor Phillips and Bullett agree that it can be added to the work plan.

Motion to Adjournment

The motion was moved by Councilor Bullett, and seconded by Councilor Ali.
The motion was accepted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned