



## **Adirondack / Glens Falls Transportation Council**

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### **Policy Committee Meeting Minutes of Wednesday, March 14, 2012**

Attendance:

#### **Members:**

Ralph Bentley, Supervisor, Town of Horicon

Frank Bonafide, NYSDOT Reg. 1 (rep. Mary Ivey)

Dennis Dickinson, Supervisor, Town of Lake George

Mitch Suprenant, Supervisor, Town of Fort Edward

Steven Sweeney, NYS Canal Corp. (rep. Michael Loftus)

Mike Valentine, Saratoga County (rep. Thomas Wood)

#### **Others:**

Wayne LaMothe, Warren County Planning

Scott Sopczyk, GGFT

#### **A/GFTC Staff:**

Aaron Frankenfeld, Transportation Planning Director

Kate Mance, Senior Transportation Planner

#### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Chairman Mitch Suprenant called the meeting to order at 1:37.

#### **2. Visitors Issues – None**

#### **3. Administrative Items**

- A. Committee representation update (Aaron): Chairmanship of the transportation council rotates between our two full counties every two years. Washington County is now in the position to chair the Council, and Washington County Board of Supervisors Chairman John Rymph has appointed Mitch Suprenant, Supervisor of the Town of Fort Edward, to chair the Council for the next two years. Chairman Dan Stec of Warren County has appointed Ralph Bentley of Horicon to serve as Vice-Chair. Dennis Dickinson was welcomed as the new Supervisor of Lake George. In addition, John LaPointe, Supervisor of the Town of Putnam, is now Chairman of the LC-LGRP. Washington County also appointed Supervisor Bob Shay of White Creek to be the designated rural representative.
- B. Host Agency agreement (Aaron): The Lake Champlain – Lake George Regional Planning Board is the host agency for A/GFTC; host agencies are required for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations in New York State. They provide administrative and payroll support as well as first instance funding for A/GFTC expenses. After consideration of the existing arrangement and other options, the TAC decided to renew the contract between A/GFTC and the LC-LGRP for a term of ten years.
- C. Federal reauthorization (Aaron): There are competing Senate and House reauthorization bills, although the House bill appears to have stalled. At this point, the Senate bill is the one more likely to move forward. The bill is a two-year bill programmed at \$109 billion, which is roughly level funding. There is still a possibility that there will be another extension of current transportation legislation. There is a lot of emphasis within the bill on

consolidating federal programs, such as the National Highway System, Interstate Maintenance and the Highway Bridge Programs, into a single program that is dedicated to improvements on National Highway System facilities. The Surface Transportation Program has been renamed the Transportation Mobility Program and is applicable to non-NHS facilities. Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School have been eliminated as programs, although those types of projects remain eligible for funding. There is a lot of language dedicated to performance measures, which are likely to be handed down from USDOT, in a somewhat less iterative process than under the House bill. As an organization, A/GFTC is most concerned about the tiering system proposed under the Senate Bill. As noted previously, existing MPOs like A/GFTC, which are under the new 200,000 population threshold for MPOs, would require re-designation by the Governor and USDOT, the latter of which would depend upon our ability to meet technical capacity requirements which have yet to be identified. The House bill did include a provision to grandfather smaller MPOs. There was a similar amendment to the Senate bill, although it is unclear whether it was considered. There is concern at the staff level that the performance measures are being designed with the elimination of small MPOs in mind. Staff is confident that it has the technical competency and flexibility to meet any reasonable requirements. A/GFTC's data collection capabilities are better than some other small MPOs, for example. In addition, the NYSMPO Association fosters a lot of capacity-building and information exchange among the agencies that benefit NYS MPOs. In terms of local impacts, eliminating MPO representation will likely make it more difficult for local project sponsors to have their needs articulated. If the proposed legislation passes, there will be ample time to make a case for A/GFTC to be re-designated. Mike Valentine asked for additional information concerning A/GFTC's capabilities as compared to other MPOs. Aaron cited travel demand modeling and the in-house pavement scoring system as two examples. A/GFTC can respond quickly to new performance measures once they are issued. In addition, there is the financial capacity to add staff if needed to address technical requirements. Ultimately, the certification will come from the Secretary of USDOT.

#### 4. Annual Work Program

D. Completed and ongoing staff and consultant activities (Aaron):

**Completed and on-going projects:**

- The Queensbury connector road study is being finalized. The study examined existing traffic conditions in and around the airport and evaluated the feasibility of the potential construction of a new connector road between Quaker Road and Queensbury Avenue. Future developments and growth assumptions were considered. The study concludes that the transportation system benefits associated with the new road are limited, and as such a new roadway would be largely a development-driven project. Significant benefits could be achieved from upgrading the existing system, notably with a signal timing improvement at the Quaker / Dix intersection. The consultant is preparing a memo that details the recommended change, which can be forwarded to the responsible municipalities. Wayne LaMothe noted that this has been an ongoing issue and that the existing system of coordinated signals is not being maintained properly. He asked what steps can be taken to ensure that the

signals are maintained in the future. Aaron stated that he had looked into establishing some sort of signal maintenance setaside to help address the needs for locally-operated equipment. There are two clusters of time-based coordinated signals along Quaker Road. Additionally, the only non-state-owned signals in the A/GFTC area are within the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls, so there should be a manageable way to maintain these facilities. Currently they are being maintained by City staff, either directly or through an agreement with the Town. Wayne noted that there was an older study regarding signal timing. Aaron noted that the issue with this study is that it was conducted many years ago, and there is concern at the County DPW that the data may no longer be relevant. It is not clear whether this setaside would be eligible for PL funds, or how much such a program would cost. Scott Sopczyk noted that several years ago there was an idea to swap maintenance between NYS Route 8 and Quaker Road, which might present an opportunity to ensure better maintenance.

- Staff completed an initial traffic assessment for the Warren-Washington IDA in November, as part of the permitting requirements for NYS Shovel Ready designation. The IDA indicated that it would not be interested in consultant-based assistance, so the study was completed in-house at no cost to the IDA by drawing heavily upon available data. The study concluded that the growth potential of Phase II of the Airport Industrial Park was not significant enough to substantially impact the surrounding transportation system.
- A/GFTC used the on-call engineering assistance agreement on behalf of GGFT to facilitate a pavement marking re-design for GGFT's main terminal in downtown Glens Falls. The design provided better delineation between space needed for operations of transit vehicles and on-street parking spaces. Use of the contract enabled the quick implementation of the project.
- The Glens Falls Residential Traffic Calming project was completed in October. This was in response to residents' concerns regarding speeding vehicles. The study included a speed survey conducted with residents and volunteers to determine a passing vehicle speed that residents were comfortable with. This was found to be a couple miles an hour lower than the posted speed limit. The study also evaluated the effectiveness of low-cost pavement marking alternatives designed to influence speeds downward. The striping deployment was shown to be ineffective in reducing speeds, although mobile speed feedback signs were found to be effective.
- A/GFTC recently completed the solicitation for our Make the Connection Program for small-scale bicycle and pedestrian projects. Full or partial funding was awarded to 7 out of 9 projects sponsored by the following municipalities: Warren County (3 of 4 County applications were awarded), Village of Fort Edward, Town of Johnsbury, Village of Salem, and Town of Warrensburg.

**Nearly completed projects:**

- The Warren County Bicycle Plan has been drafted and presented to the Warren County DPW committee for their consideration. The committee asked for time to review the plan, which can be finalized once any comments are received.

- The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) is also under production. An update has been presented to the public via two open houses held on March 13 in Warren and Washington Counties, and is currently undergoing review and revision based on comments received.

**Underway:**

- A draft of the safety evaluation for the Bay and Cronin intersection was delivered to A/GFTC staff yesterday. It will be jointly reviewed by A/GFTC and Warren County DPW staff prior to a presentation by the consultant team to the DPW committee at an upcoming meeting. The study is looking at a variety of alternatives in addition to a traffic signal.
- A draft of the school circulation study for the City of Glens Falls is expected this week. That study is intended to address some of the circulation issues that are occurring during pick-up and drop-off. The study is also part of an evaluation by the school district into aligning start times for the middle and high school, which are currently staggered. Having one start time for both could create a larger number of vehicles at once. The study involves physical and policy alternatives.
- Our ridesharing match program, ipoolnorth, was recently updated. We will re-commit to our promotional efforts to recruit new users.
- A/GFTC will continue to work on keeping the TIP up-to-date, and staff remains available to provide transportation-related technical assistance to our member municipalities. A/GFTC had been indirectly tasked with assisting with County Planning Board Section 239 referrals. However, this was a temporary arrangement and the responsibility will now be handled by Warren County staff. Wayne LaMothe expressed thanks on behalf of the County in undertaking the reviews, because it allowed for projects to move forward through the review process while the requisite local law was being adopted.

E. 2012-13 UPWP

- 1) Aaron reviewed the financial summary, which was reviewed by the TAC as well. For 2012-13, A/GFTC has been allocated \$327,712 in FHWA Planning funds as well as \$43,670 in FTA MPP funds. That represents the "new" money coming in. The remaining \$373,381 is made up of state and local in-kind match and program carryovers from previous years. The increase \$86,000 in available dollars for this year is attributable to a bigger carryover. There is also extra \$15,000 in FHWA PL that represents a smaller takedown in PL for statewide shared cost initiatives than had been subtracted in the prior year. A/GFTC will not spend all of the total \$745,000, and will probably spend less than half that amount. However, our practice has been to program as much of the carryover as possible. The funds listed on the summary do not account for carryover from the immediate year prior, as those funds have not yet been confirmed by FHWA as being available.
- 2) Task summary (Aaron): Tasks are broken up into four categories: administration, general development and comprehensive planning, long-range planning, and Transportation Improvement Program.

- Administration typically includes payroll, billing, certification and compliance documentation and work program development and does not change significantly from year-to-year.
- Task 2 is most of our ongoing activities, including data collection, public participation and outreach, promotion of alternative transportation options, and technical assistance to municipalities. New tasks for 2012-13 include an update to our county-wide accident tallies for off-system roadways. We last completed this in 2003-2004, and County staff has stated that the summaries were very useful. There may be a need for staff training on the accident-reporting software used by NYSDOT. New project proposals for the on-call engineering assistance program will be entertained by staff and the Technical Advisory Committee as warranted.
- For Task 3, we plan to initiate the Long Range Plan update, which is a core document required for all MPOs. This is due in 2014, but since there is a significant amount of work involved, staff will begin this effort this year. Also, the LRP will contain some longer-term traffic forecasts using our recently updated travel demand model.
- Task 3 also includes a regional mobility management plan, which is a recommendation from the CHSTP. One of the main comments that is presented most often to staff is that people in the outlying rural areas lack transportation options. This will likely be a consultant-assisted project. This plan will attempt to identify a potential model for coordinating human services transportation throughout the region.
- Also included is an update to our area-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. This would fold in the Warren County Plan, as well as a similar plan in Washington County, as there is some interest in a bike plan for that area as well. The regional bike plan produced by the MPO is now over 10 years old.
- Task 3.6 is the Climate Change Adaptation Planning, which would look to identify and assessments of transportation infrastructure that is potentially vulnerable to increased frequency and severity of weather events. This is a labor-intensive process which will be driven by interest of the local municipalities in participation.
- A/GFTC is expected to prepare a TIP sometime this fall, as the STIP expires this year. The funding levels are still unknown. We are behind one year in TIP cycle at the behest of NYSDOT; they were unwilling to provide regional allocations due to uncertain funding availability. Since the STIP is expiring, the TIP must be updated.

**A motion was made to approve the 2012-2013 A/GFTC UPWP.**

*MOVED BY: Ralph Bentley SECONDED BY: Mike Valentine MOTION CARRIED*

5. **Greater Glens Falls Transit Update** (Scott Sopczyk): 2011 was a very strong year for GGFT, with over 340,000 riders, the largest total in the history of the system. So far for 2012, ridership is over 7% higher than last year. Some of this may be

related to the cost of fuel or the mild weather. The Capital Plan is in good shape, with the planned replacement of the paratransit buses scheduled for the summer. The schedule changes that were implemented last year as part of the Transit Development Plan recommendations seem to have increased ridership and were well received. For example, at Adirondack Community College, prior to the schedule update, sales of monthly passes were around 12 per month. Now, the sales are around 50 per month. This doesn't count increases in students riding the bus and paying cash. GGFT also met with the Dean to discuss the construction of the new dorms and what types of transportation demand that may create. Financially, State and Federal resources have been managed well – the availability of necessary Federal funds appears to be sufficient at this time. Operating costs and the overall budget could be substantially impacted by a significant rise in fuel costs. Service planning for the summer is almost completed. Dennis Dickinson asked whether service ran during Americade, and noted that he had heard from a business owner interested in discussing services. Scott agreed to follow up.

**6. TIP**

- A. Project Updates (Aaron): There is no direct representation from the DPW staff of Warren or Washington Counties present. However, DPW staff did give a comprehensive update at February's TAC meeting, so if anyone is interested in those updates and does not have access to the meeting minutes, A/GFTC can supply them.
- 1) Warren County: Ralph Bentley noted that the replacement of the Middleton Bridge over the Schroon River, which had previously been in a stalemate with DEC, is now moving forward under an agreement with the Governor and DEC. This is a very important bridge for access to residents of Horicon and Chester.
  - 2) Washington County: No report.
  - 3) Saratoga County (Mike Valentine) We are continuing to work with DOT on the Route 9 safety project in South Glens Falls. Capacity and parking issues are being considered. The Village is also looking to implement infrastructure improvements concurrently with the highway project. Frank Bonafide noted that the DOT project is not a reconstruction project and that subsurface infrastructure work will likely delay the project.
  - 4) NYSDOT (Frank Bonafide): In terms of project updates, Route 29 bridge over Black Creek in Salem is moving forward, with a spring letting. Route 4 in Hudson Falls is moving forward with a summer letting, and DOT has been working with the Village for the sewer infrastructure betterment. The Route 9 safety project (SGF) discussed previously is moving forward, with a tentative fall 2012 letting. However, construction is more likely to occur in 2013, assuming that the infrastructure issues can be worked out. Aaron noted that this delay may be advantageous to the Village as it gives them time to work out the infrastructure issues. Frank noted that DOT is flexible in terms of the timing. The Route 197 Bridge over the Hudson is on track to be let in summer 2013, as is the Route 4 Bridge over the Champlain. Route 28N over the Upper Hudson RR in Johnsbury is on track to be let in fall/winter 2013. Frank thanked the Committee for endorsing the STIP listings for the Accelerated Transportation Programs. The Governor's proposed budget includes numerous items that impact DOT, including the proposal to create jobs and address infrastructure needs through the "NY Works" program. The project listings include \$250 million statewide for paving, \$212 million statewide for bridges, and \$750

million for signature projects. The recent action was for the bridge and pavement preservation work. Once the budget is approved, the goal is to release projects for bid in April and May. The list of projects will not be released until the budget is passed. The list was generated at the Regional level based on DOT's assessment of priorities. Most of the projects are preservation-oriented and involve thin pavement overlays or deck replacements on bridges – projects which will be quick to commence and complete. The goal is to address 2,000 lane miles and over 100 bridges statewide. As part of this, the Region will get a large influx of funding in addition to their core program. This will go to projects that are needed but could not have been afforded otherwise. DOT is borrowing ahead to accomplish this, but it appears that federal funding will be level; local projects should therefore not be affected. Mike Valentine asked who bears the cost of interest associated with bonding, and Frank noted that he would need to look into that. The current plan would put DOT three years into the future with regard to borrowing, which is aggressive in terms of DOT practice but is conservative compared to other Departments across the country. Mike asked if the costs will be carried into the TIP, and Frank and Aaron noted that it will not affect the TIP. Mike asked whether this accelerated program will push a project through faster than expected. Frank noted that these are mostly new projects, in addition to DOT's core program. Frank also reported on the consolidation efforts in the Governor's budget. The current proposal is to consolidate the DOT into six regions from eleven. In addition, Region 1 is moving as part of the "re-stacking" effort, and will be co-located with DOT Main Office at 50 Wolf Road. The move is taking place in April. Regional personnel may be out of touch by phone for a few weeks, but email should be a good way to contact DOT.

B. Amendments and Modifications (Aaron): There were none.

7. **Other Items:** Wayne LaMothe noted that Warren County is finishing a re-designation of the old Dude Ranch Scenic Byway as the First Wilderness Scenic Byway. This was initiated by ANCA (Adirondack North Country Association), and the plan is almost ready to go to DOT for comment. The hope is that the branding completed for the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor can be included on signage along the byway. The alignment is being extended south to Corinth and north to Chestertown. The Dude Ranch was never formally designated, so having a formal designation for the First Wilderness will open up a funding stream, assuming the scenic byway program is kept.
8. **Next meeting and adjourn** (Aaron): The next meeting will be in mid-August. It may be possible to coordinate the meeting with the Adirondack Gateway Council, since there is a large overlap of membership. If there are any schedule conflicts, please contact Aaron.

**A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2:38 PM.**

*MOVED BY: Mike Valentine SECONDED BY: Ralph Bentley MOTION CARRIED*