

MaineDOT Strategic Transit Plan 2025
Steering Committee Meeting #2
Meeting Summary
Date: September 24, 2013
Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Place: MaineDOT Conference Room 216, Augusta, Maine

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members:

Marsha Bennett	Rep. Andrew McLean (by speakerphone)
Carla Dickstein	Ronald McKinnon
Dana Knapp	Paul Murphy
Mayor Jonathan LaBonte	Vicki Rusbult
Steve Linnell	Catherine Singleton
David Projansky (for Romaine Turyn)	Rep. Sharon Treat
Tom Reinauer	Jim Wood
Jessica Maurer	

MaineDOT Staff:

David Bernhardt, *Commissioner*
Susan Moreau, *Project Manager*
Lori Brann
Barbie-Jo Lord
Joan Foster

Consultants:

Peter Schauer-Principal in Charge
Tom Meyers

Welcome and Introduction:

Susan Moreau welcomed the committee members, in particular those added to the Steering Committee since the first meeting in August. Members offered self introductions.

Review of Project:

Peter Schauer quizzed members on the key points of the strategic planning process. It served as a quick refresher for those present at the first meeting, plus as a brief introduction to first-time attendees. Specifically:

1. What are the three strategic questions to be answered in the planning process?

Answers:

- Where are we?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get from where we are to where we want to go?

2. List all the modes that this plan will address.
 - Major Focus is on transit bus services (fixed route and paratransit)
 - Connectivity with other modes (ferries, rail, park and ride)

3. What mode is not addressed in this plan but is essential and the beginning of all the modes you listed in #2?
 - Walking - pedestrian issues
“All trips begin and end with some amount of walking. For a community to be transit friendly it must first be pedestrian friendly.”

4. What are the four types of outcomes expected from this plan?
 - Current service levels
 - Ideal level of service with no fiscal constraints
 - Ideal level service based on best Maine practices
 - Ideal level of service based on best industry practices

The plan will provide what you get at each level of service, and what it will cost.

5. When will the plan be completed?
 - Final public hearing in January 2015.
 - MaineDOT Commissioner gives report to Maine Legislature in March 2015.

But remember that strategic planning is a process. In a critical sense it will never be complete as those responsible adapt to changing conditions and needs.

A committee member offered in a discussion of Question 4 that the total costs of an “ideal service” may not be most expensive when looking at it holistically; i.e., including other social costs or cost avoidances.

There was general discussion about the committee’s work so far and reinforcement that the effort will follow a process to generate ideas and not stymie creativity. Unique and innovative alternatives will be considered. There will not be ambiguous recommendations. It was noted that we must be mindful of the aging population, and younger people are choosing not to have cars. Sue Moreau replied that the plan will cover those needs, among others.

Overview of MaineDOT Strategic Plan 2012 (SP-12):

MaineDOT Commissioner David Bernhardt presented an overview of the department’s strategic plan. [Powerpoint presentation from the meeting, including the Commissioner’s

overview, can be found at <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/planningstudies/mstp/index.shtml>] The Commissioner described the process and ideas that went into developing the MaineDOT Strategic Plan (SP 12). Some highlights:

- All 1900 MaineDOT employees need to be a part of the plan.
- SP-12 took a year to develop - it is the department's "compass," it is the direction of the department for the next several years.
- There is a difference between "long-range" and "strategic" plans:
 - A long-range plan is visionary.
 - A strategic plan is goal and objective based with performance measures.

The Commissioner was clear in his discussion of the MaineDOT Strategic Transit Plan 2025 that his expectation is for a strategic plan with goals, objectives, and actions with assignments of responsibility. He further encouraged the committee to be grounded in their recommendations with specific performance measures to meet expectations. He cited the 10 capstone performance measures as very important indicators to help keep on track and measure how things are going.

He also wants the committee not to be afraid to talk about funding.

He discussed the department's Vision Statement and stressed the three key words: customer; safe; reliable.

The Commissioner emphasized the importance of being responsive to the department's customers, meaning the traveling public. Those are the people who need and use transportation. He also added that it's not just today's customer, but future customers that must be included. Customers are the people the department serves, not the "things" they provide such as roads, bridges, and buses.

The Commissioner explained in greater detail the three goals of SP-12 that best serve the customer:

1. Manage the Existing System
2. Support Economic Opportunity
3. Build Trust

He also identified the department's Core Values, and gave examples of what they mean:

- Integrity
- Competence
- Service

Commissioner Bernhardt reinforced the need to measure whatever recommendations are in the strategic plan. Setting performance measures will tell him how the department is doing; whether

or not it is meetings its goals and objectives; help determine what to do next and prioritize; and identify who is responsible to take action to meet the goal and objective and to hold them accountable. Both the department's *Strategic Plan 2012* and *Maine Strategic Highway Safety Plan 2012* http://www.maine.gov/mdot/safety/documents/2010_SHSP_02142011.pdf were identified as examples of what he expects in the *Strategic Transit Plan*.

Commissioner Bernhardt and staff answered several questions after his presentation:

Q: How does the strategic plan for Transit fit in with the vision of the MaineDOT?

A: The MaineDOT Strategic Plan is still dynamic. There are goals for transit in the MaineDOT SP12 and we are open enough that, if something needs to be changes, we will change it.

Q: In partnering with private groups, when new developments come to the area, are you looking at the transit aspect?

A: (by Susan Moreau for the Commissioner): Yes, Concord Coach is a good example, having the bus and train (AMTRAK Downeaster) in the same facility. Our plan will be to prioritize connections we can make with partners. This steering committee will help come up with our priorities.

Q: How does the Strategic Highway Safety Plan fit into SP 12?

A: MaineDOT partnered with Dept of Public Safety and others to help in the development of this plan.

Q: To what extent is the Department willing to work with others? Is it once we get this ship sailing then we get others on board?

A: Commissioner responds with, "yes." Accountability is the key to all partnering.

Core Values and Beliefs - Refresher from 1st Meeting:

Tom Meyers gave a refresher on the importance of identifying core values and gave examples of how core values and beliefs may differ.

Core values are the traits or attributes we personally deem important. Values stem from beliefs. Together they are the foundation that forms a person's attitudes and guides their actions and behavior. Tom reminded the committee that MaineDOT's core values are Integrity, Competence, and Service.

Core beliefs are assumptions people make about the world. They grow from what they see, hear, experience, read, and think about. From these beliefs, people develop opinions that they hold as true. Beliefs can be correct or incorrect based on the evidence – but regardless are "true"

to the person who holds them. New evidence or experience can challenge a person’s previously-held views - or the new evidence may reinforce and strengthen what they already believe.

Everyone has an internalized system of beliefs and values that have developed throughout their lives. It is important for the Steering Committee to help MaineDOT identify its transit core values because: people put values in action in their decision-making and interactions; core values help establish priorities; organizational goals are grounded in core values. It was emphasized that core values and beliefs will set the foundation for the plan.

Exercise to “operationalize” Core Values and Beliefs:

Peter Schauer noted that the discussion of Core Values and Core Beliefs might be a bit abstract. He asked the committee two questions that reflect dispatchers’ core values that are in action every day when putting together passenger manifests (referring to demand response agencies that will NOT be able to accommodate every transportation request). First, whether a full bus or an empty bus was “better?” [Answer: more is better] Second, what type of trip is most important? [Answers ranged from “medical emergency” to “social event”]. When plotted in a table with “Number of People Served” on one axis and “Purpose of Trip” on the other, it was evident how these two beliefs interact in the decision-making process. The table helped identify the priorities, and suggested the trips that would occur – and those that probably would not.

To summarize the work that faces the Steering Committee as it establishes goals, objectives, and priorities, Peter left them with, “Is it better to get one person to the doctor, or ten people to work?”

Core Beliefs Exercise:

Tom Meyers conducted a group exercise to begin to identify the core beliefs about transit in Maine. The Steering Committee followed a process where each member wrote down answers to several questions independently, then discussed their answers within a small group, then shared the answers with the entire Steering Committee. The questions asked were:

1. How do you think the typical man or woman on the street in your region of Maine would fill in the following? I believe that public transit in my region is: _____.
2. [The Steering Committee] filled in the same belief statement for themselves. I believe that public transit in my region is: _____.
3. The Steering Committee discussed the responses to these questions and identified where their answers were similar – or different – and most important, why. They were also asked to provide the “evidence” they, and the man or woman on the street, were using to form their beliefs.

The answers and key discussion points during the meeting were recorded on large sheets of paper and collected, as were the work sheets from every member, to be used as the strategic planning process moves forward.

Identifying Transit Core Values:

Tom Meyers asked each Steering Committee member to fill out a worksheet aimed at identifying core values that might be unique to transit. It asked:

From a rider's perspective, write down 6 to 9 value words or values phrases that are particularly relevant to public transit that complement or supplement MaineDOT Core Values. Asked in another way, "If you were a rider, what would you want MaineDOT's core values to be with respect to public transit?"

Tom collected the worksheets, and the information on them will be used as the process moves forward.

"Skeleton" Surveys for Review:

Peter Schauer reported that there was a lot of interest and discussion by the Steering Committee during the first meeting about the survey component in the Scope of Work. He and Susan Moreau reviewed the project budget and identified the surveys that can be accomplished:

- Telephone survey
- Focus group (survey-like procedures)
- Stakeholder surveys (2 types)
- Customer service surveys
- Intercept surveys
- "Mass Distribution" surveys
- Peter's on-site interviews with transit agencies

The project team will have a professional survey firm help with this work where appropriate. Several members had ideas about whether or not certain facilities or stakeholders should be included in the survey (for example: medical facilities, health providers; supermarkets; hairdressers).

Peter reviewed the purpose of each of the different surveys and the groups of people that would receive them or be interviewed. [The purposes and methodology of the surveys can be found in the PowerPoint presentation <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/planningstudies/mstp/index.shtml>] The committee raised several questions and ideas during the discussion with respect to what groups or people would be especially important to gather information from.

- ACTION ITEM: [Jessica Maurer] will identify a representative from health system providers that will be asked to join the Steering Committee.

- ACTION ITEM: [Susan Moreau] said they will reach out at the Regional Transit Summit meetings (previously called Regional Plan Advisory Committees) to get some of the end-user beneficiaries such as supermarkets, hairdressers, etc. as well as the local users of transportation services to participate in the focus groups.
- ACTION ITEM: [Jonathan LaBonte] will help reach municipal leaders, mayor's coalition, etc.

Other points made during discussion of the surveys included:

- Economic Development - Mobilize Maine is another group that should be included.
- Telephone Survey – Difference between “need” and “demand.” Rural areas are high need with low demand. Urban areas are high need and high demand.
- Perhaps the questions should be re-worded to say “are we a better society because of transit services,” instead of saying “we have a right” which implies an entitlement. If it is an all or nothing question, you may get a response that is not very useful. Peter will discuss the wording with the firm doing the surveys.

Peter will finalize the surveys this week with the survey firm and MaineDOT and get them to the Steering Committee on Monday, September 30th. Steering Committee members should send their comments to MaineDOT and him by Monday, October 7th. If there's an important question the committee wants asked, the time to get it in is then. The actual surveys will begin very soon after October 15th.

Bibliography:

Peter Schauer asked the Steering Committee to continue to identify sources of written material or other information relevant to the Strategic Transit Plan.

Meeting Summary and Closing:

Peter Schauer closed meetings with a quick “around the room” comment by each person on what they have learned today. The following is a summary of the responses:

- A fundamental question for us: Is transit a “right” or is it “desirable?”
- Change interpretation of “rights.” Some words buy into an “entitlement language.”
- The Steering Committee is definitely an action oriented group.
- Applying MaineDOT Strategic Plan to Transit Plan could be transformative.
- Monumental task ahead of us.
- The survey questions should be reviewed with “Why are you asking this question and what do you need from it?”
- Expanded task from where we started.
- Commissioner of MaineDOT is really committed.

Next Meeting:

Date: October 15, 2013

Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Place: MaineDOT Main Conference Room 216, Augusta, Maine

Purpose: Final Surveys for Review, Preliminary vision, belief and value statement for MaineDOT and Preliminary Discussion on Demand and Gap Estimation