



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Franklin Regional Planning Board— *MINUTES*

Date & Time:	Thursday, March 23, 2017 / 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Location:	JW Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA – First Floor Conference Room
Facilitator:	Jerry Lund, Chair

### FRPB MEMBERS

- Jerry Lund**, Chair, Leyden, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Sam Lovejoy**, Clerk, Montague, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Joan Rockwell**, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair, Colrain, At-Large
- John Baronas**, Deerfield Planning Board
- James Basford**, Orange, At-Large, FRPB Executive Committee
- Julia Blyth**, Northfield Select Board
- Ted Cady**, Warwick Planning Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Jennifer Gross**, Wendell Select Board
- Wayne Hachey**, New Salem Select Board
- Thomas Hutcheson**, Conway Select Board, FRPB Executive Committee
- Nathan L’Etoile**, At-Large, Northfield
- Tom Miner**, At-Large, Shelburne
- Richard Nathhorst**, Leverett Planning Board
- Charles Olchowski**, At-Large, Greenfield, FRPB Executive Committee
- Nan Riebschlaeger**, At-Large, Wendell
- Mike Shaffer**, Erving Planning Board
- Bryan Smith**, Erving Select Board
- Chuck Washer**, Shelburne Select Board
- John Ward**, Alternate, Gill Select Board
- Dena Willmore**, Buckland Select Board

### FRCOG STAFF

**Peggy Sloan**, Planning & Development Director; **Liz Jacobson-Carroll**, Administrative Services Assistant; **Beth Giannini**, Senior Transportation Planner II; **Maureen Mullaney**, Transportation & GIS Program Manager II; and **Laurie Scarbrough**, Transportation Planning Engineer

<b>1. Introductions</b>	Jerry Lund, FRPB Members
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J. Lund convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. A round of introductions followed.

<b>2. Review and Approval of January 26 , 2017 FRPB Minutes</b>	S. Lovejoy, Clerk -- FRPB
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**S. Lovejoy** moved to adopt the **1/26 /17 minutes, with amendments, T. Cady** seconded the motion, and the motion passed. **Amendments – change P. Marcus to P. Perry and add Ted Cady as an attendee.**

<b>3. Presentation on Bike Tourism Study &amp; Small Bridge Program</b>	M. Mullaney, Transportation & GIS Program Manager II & B. Giannini, Senior Transportation Planner II
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BIKE TOURISM STUDY

Noting that there has been a great deal of local constituent interest regarding FRCOG’s initial efforts to promote bike tourism, B. Giannini provided a context for the project and summarized the work done thus far. Having long focused on biking in the context of regional transportation, planners have more recently had the opportunity to turn their attention toward recreational biking. After initial efforts to add trailblazing signs to bike paths, revise the printed and on-line maps, and send press-releases highlighting local assets, staff members were inspired by their research to convene a local group to develop a more complete bike tourism plan for Franklin County.

B. Giannini reported statistics on the popularity of biking relative to other recreational sports and tourist activities nationwide, as well as the tendency for bike tourists to outspend other active tourists, such as hikers. She cited a variety of successful state-wide programs and websites in places such as California, Michigan, Oregon and Montana, and indicated that Massachusetts officials are beginning to take notice.

She noted that five types of bike tourism are already established in the county: recreational/scenic, multi-day rides, bike events/fundraisers, mountain biking, and family bicycling on bike paths. The local group is comprised of members of the community knowledgeable about the local biking scene. The group plans to work with area businesses such as B & B’s to help them become more bike-friendly. It may be possible to list bike-friendly businesses on the on-line maps. Similarly, the group is looking to develop a series of map-themed rides. These might include apple orchard rides, history tours, a coffee shop circuit, and a farm stand tour. They are now reaching out to other area stakeholders. For example, B. Giannini just met with the Northfield Area Tourism & Business Association.

A key piece of the project will be an economic impact study in order to quantify the value of bicycle tourism today, as well as its potential for the future, B. Giannini said. The information will be used to encourage businesses to join in the coordinated efforts. They are currently seeking approval to hire a consultant, through the MassDOT, to conduct the study. In the meantime, they continue to develop an inventory of defined assets: places to ride, bike shops, races and related events, etc., which they will provide to the consultant. Subsequently, they will work to educate the broader tourism industry, and will consider issues pertaining to branding, social media and special events.

M. Mullaney explained that the MA Department of Tourism is the better group to promote bicycle tourism. The FRCOG initiative is a seed project but they have begun talking to parallel organizations in neighboring regions with an eye toward a future coordination, and a larger presence, at the state level.

D. Willmore initiated a discussion regarding the safety of area cyclists, especially those riding on Route 2 *en route* to cross-country cycling destinations in Charlemont. Possible ways to educate motorists, to promote alternative routes, and to encourage MassDOT to improve road safety were expressed. The FRCOG and the study group, which includes a safety task force, does not promote or recommend riding

on Route 2, B. Giannini reported. M. Mullaney noted that they have identified some routes as “not recommended” or for “experienced riders only,” but that they do not have the authority to prohibit bikers from using public roads that aren’t already designated as “limited access.” T. Cady suggested that residents in towns with no place for bikers to stop in case of emergency could affix stickers to their mailboxes identifying them as bike-friendly homes.

C. Olchowski initiated a discussion regarding the necessity of bike lanes. M. Mullaney reported that engineering roads with cyclists in mind is now standard protocol for the state, and that town planners and DPW staff routinely plan for bicycle traffic as well. She noted that the challenges are many, but that progress is being made. J. Rockwell expressed concern regarding the impacts of mountain biking on both the natural environment and on historic structures, such as stone walls, and asked planners to keep these in mind as they promote and develop routes. J. Basford noted that family biking on the paths in the Quabbin Reservoir area is another option.

In response to D. Willmore’s call for further rail trail development, M. Mullaney explained that when the railroad companies abandoned their tracks, the rights reverted to property owners, not to the towns (as they did in Hampshire County), thus discouraging such development in Franklin County. S. Lovejoy plugged the bike tourism program on Martha’s Vineyard, noting significant coordination between the ferry and bus systems, and B & B’s, to name a few stakeholders. There was discussion of including information pertaining to parking, bathrooms and water on the maps.

J. Lund encouraged planners to think beyond town boundaries, as most riders cover significant distances spanning municipalities and states. M. Mullaney indicated that they are building on collaborative relationships established while working on the scenic byway program, and intend to coordinate with NH and VT on this program as well.

The discussion concluded with a mention of the growing popularity of electric bikes. Also an appreciative reference to the 2016 Green River Festival, where the Pioneer Valley Chapter of Mass Bike (a non-profit advocacy group) offered free valet bike parking to attendees.

#### SMALL BRIDGE PROGRAM

M. Mullaney reported that FRCOG has updated its GIS system in response to questions from FRPB members regarding small bridges in the region, and that maps of individual towns are becoming available. The maps of those towns included in the path of the previously proposed natural gas pipeline indicate the owner – municipality or state – of the small bridges, are available. The remaining maps will be available within the month and interested towns should contact M. Mullaney.

M. Mullaney explained that MassDOT launched the small bridge program to assist towns that were having trouble paying for repairs, and referred attendees to their website. The website includes detailed information regarding the ownership, measurements, and inspection schedule of all structures, including culverts, bridging a span of 10 - 20 feet. She offered to assist, at no cost, any town that would like help in completing the application forms for MassDOT funding to repair a small bridge, and noted the February, June and October deadlines. The list of projects receiving funding from the October 2016 round included five bridges in the Franklin region, has just been announced, she said. While the manner in which the \$50 million will be disbursed over 5 years has not been fully articulated, M. Mullaney ventured that it will likely resemble that of Chapter 90 funds. Further, she explained that

the program is funded by a bond and therefore not dependent on the budget or the fiscal cycle. She welcomes questions, including those on spans under 10 feet, she said. P. Sloan encouraged officials to submit their applications promptly.

In response to a question from T. Cady, L. Scarbrough explained that the load limit signs are posted only when an inspection indicates that the bridge can no longer handle the load for which it was designed. M. Mullaney said that individuals can call the MassDOT's district office to ask about the last inspection date of particular bridges. Citing particularly heavy loads being transported on local roads, T. Cady indicated his preference is that the weight limit of every bridge be posted routinely.

There was a discussion about discarded railroad ties (hazardous waste) near a sidewalk in Deerfield that the MassDOT was to have removed long ago. M. Mullaney indicated that she will speak with MassDOT representatives about it at a meeting, with legislators in attendance, the next morning.

<b>4. Presentation on 10 Most Hazardous Intersections Study</b>	L. Scarbrough, Transportation Planning Engineer
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L. Scarbrough presented a report, based on data from the MA Registry of Motor Vehicles, on the most hazardous intersections in the region. The data pertains to accidents that occurred between 2011 and 2013 involving any injury or fatality, or \$1000 in property damage. The analysis accounted for the severity and type of crash, and the relevant environmental conditions, and focused on the 50 most significant crashes out of 3,304 total crashes.

Sixty percent of the crashes studied occurred in Greenfield, Montague and Deerfield, L. Scarbrough reported. Of these, 15 (or .5% of the total crashes) were fatal; 8 of those were single vehicle crashes. The latter usually involve the car leaving the appropriate lane. Sixty-nine percent of accidents involved property damage only, and 25% involved non-fatal injuries. Two thirds of crashes occur during daylight. With only a slight increase in frequency in early winter, so weather does not appear to play a significant role, she noted. The highest incidence of crashes is on Fridays, the fewest on Sundays. During this same period, there were 82 car crashes involving bikes and pedestrians, an increase of 1.7% over the previous 3-years, and most resulted in injury. A future study will examine these more closely.

Indicating that the report maps and summarizes data regarding the accidents at each of the 10 most hazardous locations, L. Scarbrough said that beyond identifying clusters, the methodology included the use of a property damage metric, also used by the state, that assigns points for hazardousness. She noted that the average severity of crashes in the Franklin region is well below that of the top 5% statewide.

A discussion about the high concentration of crashes in Greenfield -- versus for example Orange, -- noted that Greenfield draws a significant amount of traffic as the county seat, a major employment center, a shopping center, and a transportation hub, in addition to its population density.

L. Scarbrough summarized the findings, available in the report in full, regarding each of the 5 most hazardous intersections.

1. Routes 5 & 10 at Christian Lane, Whately: With 11 crashes, this site jumped up from number 25 in the last study. The speed differential was the most significant factor, she said, noting that the geometry of the intersection is significant as well. MassDOT has since installed a flashing red beacon on Christian Lane.
2. The Leverett/Shutesbury town line (Leverett Road in Shutesbury; Shutesbury Road in Leverett): There were 5 single vehicle crashes, all due to lane departures following tight curves. There were 3 injuries resulting from collisions with a guardrail, a tree, and an embankment. There are safety improvements to be made, but speed enforcement is more important. This is the first time this stretch of road has appeared on the list.
3. Hope Street and Prospect Street, Greenfield: The steep grade and a lack of visibility appear to be the problem at this intersection, which has not previously appeared on the list. It will be interesting to see how the statistics change for the period involving the courthouse construction, she said.
4. The rotary connecting Route 91 and Route 2 in Greenfield: The highest volume intersection in the county was the site of 79 crashes. This location fell from first place on the 2004-2006 list. MassDOT re-painted the stripes and added route destinations to the travel lanes in 2008. The next study will provide enough data to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes. L. Scarbrough noted that rotaries are now being built tighter to slow traffic. There was a brief discussion of the habits of motorists and bicyclists that may affect collisions between them. L. Scarbrough reiterated that the current study did not include analysis of these, but that the next study will.
5. Allen Street at Wells Street, Greenfield: Some safety precautions have been taken since the time period of the report, including the addition of an oversize flashing STOP sign, at this intersection that saw 14 crashes.

In summary, L. Scarbrough shared the safety improvements recommended in the study:

- The formation of a 2017 UPWP Roadway Safety Initiatives Task Force
- A complete re-assessment of the Greenfield Rotary safety improvements
- Conducting road safety audits at hazardous intersections
- Working with towns & Mass DOT to initiate Highway Safety Improvement projects (HSIP)

The full report is available on the FRCOG website or by contacting herself or M. Mullaney, she concluded.

<b>5. Update on FERC Relicensing of the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility</b>	T. Miner, FRPB Executive Committee
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T. Miner reported that the ground rules for a settlement agreement, the latest part of the relicensing process, were laid out at a 3/7/17 meeting in Burlington, MA. A settlement agreement, he said, is

generally developed by the applicant and the principle stakeholders. (Miner was away and could not attend the 3/7/17 meeting. K. MacPhee of FRCOG did attend.) Future meetings may be scheduled up to two per month in the future, and move between Burlington, Westborough and Northfield.

T. Miner described the confidentiality agreement introduced by FirstLight at the 3/7/17 meeting. There was a discussion regarding the difficulties it presents, particularly the inability of the municipal officials – stakeholder representatives -- to consult with each other and with FRCOG. The legality of the agreement, especially in light of the Open Meeting and Public Records Laws, was also discussed. J. Ward expressed his strong dissatisfaction with the whole relicensing process, from the beginning through the current settlement deliberations. P. Sloan stated that the FRCOG has concerns regarding the confidentiality agreement, and Legal Counsel is reviewing it. She recommended that towns seek legal counsel on the matter.

C. Olchowski noted that the filing, that week, by FERC may be significant in regards to the possibility of conducting thermo-dynamic archaeological mapping before potential sites are destroyed.

J. Ward reiterated his concerns about the settlement agreement approval process, indicating its flaw: if the applicant tells FERC that all of the stakeholders have signed the agreement, FERC will assume that due diligence has been performed and will approve it. This prompted the posing of several questions:

- If license extensions will allow operations to continue under existing conditions, would a series of 20 one-year extensions be worse than what they are proposing?
- Is Trans Canada requesting a similar confidentiality agreement?
- Is this confidentiality clause unique?

S. Lovejoy, after noting that he believes FERC may, in fact, examine the settlement proposed by FirstLight, drew a parallel between the confidentiality agreement and the rules governing executive sessions held by local Select Boards. Select Boards may go into executive session to discuss pending litigation, but the minutes must be released the moment the issue has been resolved. He questioned when the details of the settlement agreement would be released. Further, he expressed his concern regarding the number of incomplete studies, and the resulting lack of stakeholder oversight. They are trying to set up a settlement agreement before the stakes are even known, he concluded.

The possibility of others -- a FRCOG Executive Committee designee, or select board members from area towns -- attending the First Light meetings along with T. Miner and FRCOG staff were discussed, as was the potential need to consult Legal Counsel and perhaps the Attorney General.

<b>6. Planning Updates (Zoning Reform 2017)</b>	P. Sloan, Planning Director – FRCOG
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P. Sloan announced that there is another zoning reform bill being considered by the State legislature. Sloan had a few paper copies of the proposed zoning reform, and if others are interested they should contact her by e-mail.

<b>7. Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance</b>	J. Lund, Chair - FRPB
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A Coordinated Community Health Improvement Plan for Franklin County and the North Quabbin will be presented on March 31, 2017 at BFMC at 1:00 PM.

C. Olchowski announced that FRPB member Tom Herrick, from Sunderland, had passed away, and cited his dedication and many years of service.

T. Cady moved to adjourn the meeting, J. Rockwell seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Documents Distributed / Presentations Viewed:

- Agenda
- FRPB Minutes January 26, 2017 – DRAFT
- *Franklin County Bicycle Tourism Plan, March 23, 2017*
- *Most Hazardous Intersection in Franklin County, 2011-2013*
- *MassDOT Small Bridge Program* information sheet
- *MassDOT Small Bridge Program Awards from the October 31, 2016 Application Round*
- Kulik-Peake Zoning Reform Bill 2017
- “How Healthy Is Franklin County?” flyer for 3/31/17 event

The next meeting will be held on May 25, 2017. Copies of all documents are available. Please contact Liz Jacobson-Carroll at [ljc@frcog.org](mailto:ljc@frcog.org) or 413-774-3167 x101.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Lovejoy, Clerk - FRPB