

**Simplification Study
Policy Working Group**

**Friday, February 26, 2010
Maine Municipal Association**

Attendees:

Policy Working Group Members

Michelle Beal, Ellsworth City Manager
Dave Bernhardt, MaineDOT
Bob Belz, Auburn Public Works Director
David Cole, Gorham Town Manager
Clint Deschene, Hermon Town Manager, (Co-Chair)
Greg Dore, Skowhegan Road Commissioner
Jim Hanley, Pike Industries
John Johnson, Jay Public Works Director
Rob Kenerson, BACTS
Galen Larrabee, Knox Selectman
John Sylvester, Alfred Selectman
Bruce Van Note, MaineDOT, (Co-Chair)

Policy Working Group Staff

Peter Coughlan, MaineDOT
Dale Doughty, MaineDOT
Kate Dufour, MMA

Other Guests

Denny Keschl, Belgrade
Glen Ridley, Litchfield

Absent

Elwood Beal, Lisbon Public Works Director
Richard Freethey, Brooklin Selectman
Ryan Pelletier, St. Agatha Town Manager

Co-chairs Bruce Van Note and Clint Deschene convened the meeting at 10:15. During its four hour meeting, the Policy Work Group (PWG) discussed and took actions of the following issues:

Item 1: Revisions to Agenda

None.

Item 2: Administrative Matters

- a. *Quick Review of Charter.* The PWG reviewed the charter provisions of the Urban Issues and Standard/Cost Subcommittees and determined that subcommittee meeting notes would not be posted on the MaineDOT website until authorized by the PWG. It was also discussed that the meeting notes were intended to provide the Subcommittee members with a record of issues discussed, and therefore generally for internal uses only.
- b. *Comment Form.* MaineDOT's Peter Coughlan informed members that since its last meeting on January 29th, no one had submitted any new comments, feedback or suggestions regarding the PWG's work.

- c. *Ryan Pelletier's Status.* Due to the acceptance of a new job with the Northern Maine Development Commission, Ryan Pelletier resigned from the PWG. MMA's Kate Dufour was asked to confirm the resignation and to inform Ryan that the PWG would like him to continue to serve on the working group. If Ryan declines the offer to remain on the PWG, the Department was directed to fill the vacancy with a municipal or state representative from Aroostook County. The PWG thanks Ryan for his service on the working group and wishes him the best.
- d. *Mike Roy's Status.* Due to a medical leave, Mike Roy, Waterville City Manager, has taken a temporary leave from serving on the Urban Issues Subcommittee. At its February 23rd meeting, the Subcommittee decided to seek PWG approval to add (not replace Mike) another mid-sized urban compact community representative to its current membership list. Possible replacements include the public works directors from either Camden or Rockland. By consensus, the PWG authorized Peter Coughlan to contact the potential candidates and to work with the Subcommittee to add to its membership.

Item 3: Cost Survey Results Overview

MMA's Kate Dufour provided an overview of the municipal winter and summer maintenance cost survey that was sent to municipal officials statewide on Wednesday, February 3rd. Since the original mailing, 70 communities have provided cost data. During the discussion it was determined that the deadline for submitting completed surveys to MMA would be extended from February 17th to March 5th. The PWG was also informed, that in addition to analyzing the data according to average and weighted average cost by population group, at its February 23rd meetings, members of the Urban Issues and Standards/Costs Subcommittee asked that the summer maintenance data be analyzed with and without the paving expenditure data. The Subcommittees also asked that the data be: 1) analyzed on a lane mile basis rather than a center line mile basis; 2) grouped and analyzed on the basis of the number of winter and summer road miles maintained; and 3) analyzed on a contracted vs. in-house winter roads maintenance basis. The next steps for the survey process are to carefully review the received information for accuracy, make follow-up calls to respondents to clarify any questions about the provided data, and to provide the most up-to-date and accurate data to both Subcommittees for discussion at their March 10th meetings.

Item 4: Subcommittee Reports

- a. *Standards/Cost Subcommittee.* MaineDOT's David Bernhardt provided an overview of the progress made by the Subcommittee at its February 5th and 23rd meetings. In addition to reviewing state and municipal road construction and maintenance standards, the Subcommittee is developing a standard to be in place when one entity (state or municipal) transfers a road to the other entity. As currently drafted, the "road condition at transfer standard" requires that after taking into consideration pavement condition, culverts, ditching/drainage, safety issues, clear zones and signage, the transferred road have an expected life of 10 years. The Subcommittee is scheduled to meet again on March 10th and 24th.

- b. *Urban Issues Subcommittee.* MaineDOT's Dale Doughty provided an overview of the progress made by the Subcommittee at its February 5th and 23rd meetings. To date, most of the Subcommittee's attention has been focused on amending the existing definition of "urban compact areas", which was adopted in statutes nearly sixty years ago in 1951. Under existing law, urban compact areas are defined as the densely built-up areas (i.e., the existence of structures every 200 feet for a 1/4 mile) in communities with populations greater than 7,500. Although the Subcommittee has not yet settled on a proposed definition, they have agreed to explore other factors, including: 1) the provision of municipal sewer and water service; 2) comparison of through trips versus local traffic; 3) service center community designation; and 4) sustained density (i.e., the existence structures every 200 feet for a number of miles, etc.). The purpose is to develop a definition that: 1) balances local access and state mobility benefits; 2) facilitates state/local coordination of street maintenance efforts; 3) enhances customer satisfaction and public safety, and 4) preserves or enhances the local tax base. The Subcommittee is also discussing how roads within compact areas should be maintained and funded.

Item 5: Road Classification Simplification Draft Proposal

Co-chair, Bruce Van Note, led the PWG through a spirited three-hour discussion of a Department drafted, extremely preliminary, concept proposal developing and implementing a 24-7-365 maintenance and capital responsibility structure, which would divide year-round responsibility over the state aid major and minor collector road highway system between municipalities and the state. The document also includes proposals to restructure the state local road assistance program, currently known as the Urban/Rural Initiative Program (URIP), to correspond with the proposed responsibility changes.

While the three-page document outlining a draft framework for the proposal was provided to the PWG, members were asked to treat the document as a working draft and until all final decisions are made to use it only as a tool for guiding the working group's discussions. After discussing both the positives and negatives of the proposed concept, the PWG agreed that before anyone could support or oppose the draft proposal, more detailed information, in the form of impact data (i.e., where the major and minor collectors are located in each county) was absolutely critical. As a result, MaineDOT staff was tasked with generating the responsibility and fiscal impact data. Specifically, the PWG requested data to show on a county-by-county basis: 1) number of minor collector miles; 2) number of major collector miles; 3) local road assistance funding changes; and 4) the aggregate fiscal impacts to both the state and municipalities.

The PWG agreed that regardless of the version of the proposal ultimately endorsed by the working group, its success is dependent on at least two important factors. First, any proposed plan needs to identify a more suitable and sustainable revenue source for road and bridge project funding. Second, the final proposal needs support from the broad municipal community; that is, the Maine Municipal Association's membership.

Item 6: Future Meetings

The PWG has scheduled meetings for the following dates:

- Friday, March 12, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at MMA (lunch will be provided).
- Friday, March 26, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at MMA (lunch will be provided).

Items 7: Other Matters

John Sylvester shared with the PWG a letter the chairs of the York County Legislative Delegation sent to MaineDOT Commissioner, David Cole. The letter raises many York County transportation issues, several of which the PWG and its created subcommittees have been tasked with reviewing, such as the application of state roadway standards.

Item 8: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.