

Simplification Study
Policy Working Group – Urban Issues Subcommittee

Friday, February 5, 2010
Maine Municipal Association

Attendees:

Subcommittee Members

Mike Bobinsky, Portland
Dale Doughty, MaineDOT (Co-chair)
Jerry Dostie, Augusta
John Duncan, PACTS (Co-chair)
Rob Kenerson, BACTS
John Melrose, Maine Tomorrow
Chip Swan, Hampden

Subcommittee Staff

Peter Coughlan, MaineDOT
Kate Dufour, MMA

Other Guests

Paul Niehoff, PACTS

Absent

Michelle Beal, Ellsworth
Mike Roy, Waterville

Meeting Notes:

Items 1: Approval of January 22nd Meeting Notes

Co-chair Dale Doughty convened the meeting at 9:46 a.m. Mike Bobinsky moved and Jerry Dostie seconded approval of the January 22nd meeting notes. During its two and one-half hour meeting, the Subcommittee had discussions and took actions on the following issues:

Item 2: Policy Working Group Committee Meeting

Co-chairs, Dale Doughty and John Duncan briefed the Subcommittee members on the January 29th Policy Working Group (PWG). At that meeting, Dale and John provided an overview of the Subcommittee's work to date. The PWG approved of the Subcommittee's work plan and schedule.

Dale also provided an overview of the PWG's January 29th meeting, including a recap of Bruce Van Note's request of the Transportation Committee for an extension of the Highway Simplification study deadline from January 15, 2010 to July 15, 2010 and the PWG discussion regarding the need to educate, not only the members of the Transportation Committee, but all legislators and the general public on the need for a more stable and sustainable source of road and bridge funding. Dale also mentioned that at its February 12th meeting, the PWG will be exploring the "24-7-365" (i.e., one level of government having fulltime responsibility on a section of road) approach to maintaining rural collector roads, but will be withholding taking a position on the proposal until the details are fully developed and reviewed.

Item 3: Status and Approach to MMA's Cost Survey

MMA's Kate Dufour provided an overview of the municipal winter and summer maintenance cost survey that is currently underway. On behalf of the Urban Issues and Standards and Cost Subcommittees of the PWG, a municipal cost survey was mailed to all municipalities on Wednesday, February 3rd. Although the survey due date is February 17th, eleven communities had already submitted surveys. Kate provided an overview of the responses received.

Item 4: Winter and Summer Roles Review

MaineDOT's Peter Coughlan provided an overview of state and municipal winter and summer maintenance responsibilities over the collector road system and a history of the term "urban compact". According to Pete's research, the term "compact" was first used in 1913 and defined in 1951. The 1951 definition is still in effect today. The Subcommittee discussion then turned to whether or not there was an opportunity to review that definition, if a revision of the definition was necessary. That issue was discussed in detail in item 5 of the agenda.

Item 5: Urban Compacts

In order to help the discussion along, the co-chairs posed four questions: 1) should the balance between access and mobility determine the location of urban compacts; 2) should the current density requirements found in the compact definition (i.e., structure nearer than 200 feet apart for a distance of ¼ mile) be amended; 3) should population play a role in determining if a municipality is defined as an urban compact; and 4) should town line and federal urban area boundaries be incorporated in the state's definition of urban compact.

As a result, the Subcommittee determined that the "urban compact" distinction was important and needed to be preserved. However, the Subcommittee concluded that amendments to the definition should be explored. To guide the process for redefining the "urban compact area" definition, the Subcommittee developed a matrix for scoring the feasibility of proposals, including: 1) mobility and access; 2) customer service, both with respect to public safety and employment of maintenance practices that mirror practices currently used; 3) improved resource use efficiency; and 4) cost effectiveness. The Subcommittee also discussed the importance of creating a process for allowing non-compact communities to "opt-in" to provide the level of services that are provided by "officially" defined urban compact communities.

The MaineDOT was charged with developing a new definition that takes into account an "opt-in" provision and explores how the state's definition could be better incorporated into the federal definition of urban area and existing town boundaries. These proposals will be reviewed at the Subcommittee's February 23rd meeting.

Item 6: Future Meetings

The Subcommittee has scheduled meetings for the following dates:

- Tuesday, February 23, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at MMA (lunch will be provided).
- Wednesday, March 10, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at MMA (lunch will be provided).

Item 10: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.