New York State Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
WORKING GROUP MINUTES

WORKING GROUP: Transit Working Group Teleconference

MEETING DATE: Monday, March 7, 2016 – 1:30 PM to 3:00PM

MEETING LOCATION: Conference Call

LIST OF ATTENDEES BY ORGANIZATION:

Adirondack/Glens Falls Transportation Council – A/GFTC: Kate Mance
Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study – BMTS: Scott Reigle
Capital District Transportation Committee – CDTC: Anne Benware, Carrie Ward
Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council – ECTC: Tina Hager
Genesee Transportation Council – GTC: Bob Torzynski
Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council – GBNRTC: Not Present
Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study – HOCTS: Barb Hauck
Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council – ITCTC: Dwight Mengel, Fernando de Aragon
New York Metropolitan Transportation Council – NYMTC: Angelina Foster
Orange County Transportation Council – OCTC: Not Present
Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council – PDCTC: Mark DeBald
Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council – SMTC: Aaron McKeon, Mario Colone
Ulster County Transportation Council – UCTC: Not Present
Watertown Jefferson – WJCATC: Not Present
New York State Department of Transportation – NYSDOT: Tom Vaughn, Colleen Smith
US Office of the Secretary of Transportation – Stephanie Gidigbi, Avital Barnea

MINUTES:

1. Introductions

2. Presentation on Federal Programs: TIGER and Ladders of Opportunity by Staff from the Office of the Secretary (OST)

Stephanie Gidigbi of OST presented on Ladders of Opportunity and how it relates to transit on the regional level. Avital Barnea of OST presented on TIGER program applications. The presentations are included in Attachment 1. The bullets below include the Q&A following the presentations.

- de Aragon: For TIGER Grants, is there a different definition of rural and urban?
    - Barnea: Rural and urban definitions are according to Census urbanized area numbers. 50,000 is the cut off. If you were in the urbanized area in the Census, you are considered urban. Check census website to confirm.
- DeBald: In terms of right-of-way (ROW), are there any special considerations that we should know for projects?
    - Barnea: ROW is an eligible expense under TIGER, but traditionally USDOT has not funded much for ROW under TIGER. ROW is also not eligible for TIGER funding until NEPA is completed. In the past, we've told people to stay away from ROW costs because, while eligible, it has not been very competitive in the past. We're often looking for shovel-ready projects where we can make a lot of impacts on the construction side.
- Gidigbi: Has the NYSAMPO heard of Ladders of Opportunity?
    - Torzynski: We've heard about it at GTC and included it in the coordinated plan we are adopting later this week. It ties in with a number of initiative like the Monroe County Antipoverty Initiative and other local initiatives for economic development and

transportation. We – mostly because it was one of the planning factors – understand it based off of the MPO joint letter for FHWA and FTA.

- Gidigbi: How you are using it or how have you heard of it?
    - DeBald: We've used it in the development of the UPWP. It's a planning emphasis area noted it in the UPWP.
- Gidigbi: In terms of the Federal government and supporting work, what could we do (in the form of technical assistance, etc.) that would be of value to you to help support the opportunity agenda and help make better decisions?
    - Torzynski: One of the things in New York State is that the MPOs have little or no influence over land use decision making. It would be helpful to have tools or gain a better understanding of how to educate municipalities to make decisions to support public transportation and transit supported development. Before investing in transit, we want to make sure that the land use is headed in the right direction.
    - Gidigbi: The Secretary will be going out and giving a larger talk about the importance of transit investment, encouraging local governments to consider the land use component in transportation coordination. They are two separate conversations but the impacts are critical. When one is not talking to the other it makes a big difference.
- Gidigbi: Are there tools that the government could offer to help with reconnecting communities? Particularly related to addressing aging infrastructure while supporting economic revitalization?
    - Benware: We are all aware of the I-81 project in Syracuse. It is currently going through the environmental review process. It is a good opportunity to reconnect the community.
    - de Aragon: Throughout Upstate New York, any area has issues with aging infrastructure. When developing the ITCTC TIP, our biggest project is rebuilding a retaining wall that is holding up a state highway through the center of the city. There are also many bridge replacements, and it's challenging to find the money to replace infrastructure given regular maintenance and repairs.
    - Torzynski: GTC had a project that looked at bridges throughout the region to establish what the prioritization would be in terms of decommissioning or closing down because there are not enough resources to maintain. We called it "Strategic Disinvestment."
    - DeBald: In smaller cities, it is a cash flow problem. We don't have funds or resources to make the local match, we can only do one project every two or three years.
    - Gidigbi: We will hopefully put out a Reconnecting Communities Challenge in the future to help solve these issues. (e.g., What is cost effective to reinforce, close down, or transform? How do we start a community conversation? How do we make decisions on disinvestment?) Any additional examples are helpful so we can determine what we can offer. We know about the larger projects like Syracuse, but other local issues help to show the funding required to get to the next level. A lot of these structures are aging and what we do with it is a challenge for every community. The Secretary has something called the "Beyond Traffic" vision for everyone required to do a LRP.
    - de Aragon: Our city applied twice for a TIGER Grant unsuccessfully. It is on Stewart Avenue, connecting downtown with Cornell University. It's an important transit route and provides a key connection between downtown and largest employment center. It's falling apart and expensive enough that the City has not been able to work with the funding alone. We are ruining transit vehicles by running them along these corridors. The project falls through the cracks that because it is important locally, but not important regionally or nationally.
    - Barnea: Debriefs with the TIGER team will tell you how to improve the application to be more competitive. It is good to highlight Ladders of Opportunity in the TIGER grant

application showing how it will revitalize and contribute to reconnecting the community. This is what the Secretary likes to see.

- DeBald: We have agencies that are contemplating applying for TIGER, but the six percent acceptance rate is a deterring factor given the level of effort required for the application.
- Barnea: An applying agency can submit up to three applications. We see repeat applications and every round is a new round. If an application comes in several years in a row and continues to improve, we keep that in mind.
- Gidigbi: The criteria is a big piece – tell your story and show that you have an opportunity. We are keen to the notion that transportation plays a role in economics. Make it easy to see the need.

3. Comments on NPRM Public Transportation Agency Safety (Due March 4)

Bob Torzynski noted that no comments were received on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for Public Transportation Agency Safety. In terms of 5310 recipients, it appears that only recipients that provide public transportation services (i.e., with operating authority) will be subject to these plans.

Tina Hager noted that the language is general and would expect that statewide planning regulation would have more detailed and defined information.

4. Upcoming 5310 Program Funding Round (& Implications of FAST Act)

Tom Vaughn noted that there will be three MPOs with lasting 5310 funds from 2014: BMTS, SMTC, and CDTC. NYSDOT is in the process of securing improvements to the application for the next go-around to make it more user friendly and database friendly. This will include a review of the FAST Act to make sure that it does not miss anything.

Tompkins County is interested in being a direct recipient designated by the state for 5310 and would like to run their own process given this process works with FTA. Elmira is in the same position.

5. Transit Representation on Policy Committees

Bob Torzynski asked the group in regards to Transit Representatives on the MPO Boards if there were any issues with meeting this requirement. He stated that GTC has had transit representation for many years on its board by the transit agency's CEO. All participants on the call agreed that they believed their MPO's were meeting this requirement, which stems from MAP-21.

6. Round Table Discussion

No announcements.

7. New Business?

Dwight Mengel announced that on June 23-25, 2016, Tompkins County is hosting training and conference events addressing sustainable community mobility, including:

- Event 1 – June 23-24 Creating Innovative Solutions for Health Care-Related Transportation by Applying Design Thinking Strategies
  This national level training by staff from the National Center for Mobility Management is open to participants in New York State and New Jersey. This program is limited to 36 people. There is no charge. To learn more and to apply to be a participant in this course, visit www.nc4mm.org/training or contact Carolyn Jeskey at Jeskey@ctaa.org, 202-415-9659.
- Event 2 – June 23-24 Mobility Solutions Summit

The summit has two tracks focusing on Solutions and Best Practices (1) the Business of Shared-use Mobility – from Bike-share, Car-share to Lyft, Uber and Back (presented by the Shared-Use Mobility Center (Chicago, IL) and (2) Better Practices in Community Mobility, Ride share, Volunteer Driver, Public Transit, Mobility Management, Public Policy, etc. Invitation to follow.

- Event 3 – June 25, Transportation Camp - Ithaca 2016
  Transportation Camp is an unconference based on the model of transportationcamp.org. Participants create the program. More information about T-Camp will be published by March 31.

Bob Torzynski recognized the USDOT national transit map initiative. The initiative will pull together GFTS feeds for USDOT to make a comprehensive map of transit systems in the country. This use of GTFS may indirectly tie in with other transit data issues.

Tom Vaughn noted that NYSDOT has a contractor in place to manage the 511 Trip Planner that uses a GTFS feed. They are reaching out to agencies without a direct feed already.

NEXT MEETING:

Next meeting will occur next quarter unless a specific need arises.