Maine Turnpike Authority
Public Advisory Committee Meeting
Portland Area Mainline Needs Assessment
June 28, 2017
4-7 pm

1. The Public Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Portland Area Mainline (PAM) Needs Assessment was convened for its first meeting at 4:00 P.M. on June 28, 2017, at the Maine Turnpike Authority headquarters located in Portland, Maine.

   Committee Members present:
   Paul Bradbury, *Chair*, Portland Jetport
   Lt. Eric Baker, State Police
   Chris Branch, City of Portland
   Peter Carney, Long Creek Watershed Management District
   Jim Cohen, Portland Regional Chamber
   Kristina Egan, GPCOG/PACTS
   Nancy Grant, Bicycle Coalition of Maine
   Ed Hanscom, MaineDOT
   Greg Jordan, Greater Portland Transit
   Ann Peoples, City of Westbrook
   Nathan Poore, Town of Falmouth
   Steve Sawyer, MBTA
   Mike Shaw, Town of Scarborough
   Kara Wooldrik, Portland Trails

   Committee Members Absent:

   Josh Benthien, Northland
   Mark Dion, Maine State Legislature
   John Melrose, NNEPRA
   Scott Morelli, City of South Portland
   Brian Parke, MMTA

   Staff/Consultants present for the Maine Turnpike Authority:
   Peter Mills, Executive Director
   Bruce Van Note, Director of Policy and Planning
   Sara Zografos, Planner
   Doug Davidson, Chief Financial Officer
   Erin Courtney, Public Relations
   Carol Morris, Morris Communications
   Paul Godfrey, HNTB
   Matthew Pelletier, HNTB
   Charles Colgan, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy & Planning, Muskie School, USM

2. **Welcome & Introductions**. Peter Mills welcomed the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) and gave a brief overview of the current state of the highway system in and around Greater Portland. He pointed out that the section of Turnpike under assessment (Exits 44 to 52) is designed to carry regional traffic

passing through the area and around Portland, and that I-295 is designed to take travelers in and out of downtown Portland. He noted that the Turnpike route is the same length and takes approximately the same travel time. He also talked about the other actions taken by the Turnpike to mitigate traffic, including bus routes (ZOOM), contributing to the Wells Transportation Center, running the GoMaine program at an annual cost of $120,000 and maintaining Park and Ride lots.

3. **Housekeeping.** Carol Morris explained the roles and responsibilities of the PAC, which is to provide educated opinions, ask questions, and represent their constituents throughout this process. The expectation is that PAC members will attend all the meetings (four over the course of the next year) and provide guidance for the Turnpike Authority's decision making.

4. **Schedule and Process.** Paul Godfrey went over the study schedule, process and proposed timing for future PAC meetings. The next scheduled PAC meeting is Tuesday, November 14, 2017, same time and location.

5. **Regional Transportation Systems**. Bruce Van Note provided information on the study's role in context to the regional transportation system. He gave a brief history of the Turnpike, citing that tourism and regional traffic has long been its focus and talked about the need for maintaining highway capacity and the importance of highways in serving regional traffic. Van Note stated the mission of the MTA and noted that MTA customers pay a premium to drive on the Turnpike and they expect and deserve quality. Towards the mission of providing a top quality toll interstate highway experience, the MTA strives to implement solutions to problematic conditions on the Turnpike before they reach a crisis point. He noted that the Turnpike is a limited access highway, meaning that the number of places to enter or exit the road are limited, which allows traffic to sustainably travel at higher speeds more safely than on a road with many smaller intersecting roads and no control of access. Stated more simply using an analogy, a pipe with no holes carries water much better than a pipe with many holes. The same is true for roads and vehicles. While the Turnpike only represents 1% of the state's highway miles, it carries 10% of the state's vehicular traffic, along with 55% of interstate truck traffic. He discussed I-95/I-295 livability implications and that this section of the Turnpike provides access to many of the key economic drivers in Southern Maine. He also referenced the Maine Legislature's recently passed bill authorizing the Turnpike Authority to examine the potential of a Gorham Connector, and noted that this possibility needs to be taken into account when assessing the needs of the Portland Area Mainline section of the Turnpike.

6. **Regional Economic Systems.** Charlie Colgan presented on *Economic Growth and Transportation Choices for Greater Portland*. He began by discussing the population increase in Cumberland County as compared to the rest of the state. Cumberland County's population had grown to 21% of its projected 2010-2040 level by 2016; the rest of Maine's population increased by only 2.3 of its projected level. Cumberland County employment grew to 21% of its projected 2010-2040 employment by 2015. Outside of Cumberland County, Maine's overall employment increased by a bit more - 22.3% - but because job loss was much higher, those counties have a longer road back. Cumberland County accounted for 27% of job losses in the recession, but 45% of the recovery. Cumberland County's role in recovery has been important in leading the state back to recovery, with the health care sector as the largest employer in the state and a primary reason why Portland/Cumberland County has grown faster than the rest of the state. At the end of the recovery, Cumberland County's net job gain will be 350% higher than the State of Maine overall.

   Charlie noted that there has been a shift from consumption of goods to services, and online shopping

is more prevalent; which all have a negative effect on retail. However, while this means the purpose of auto trips has changed, the number of trips has not. He explained that, "migration shapes everything," and reiterated the need for Maine to attract workers of all kinds from outside the state. He noted that land is still cheaper the further out you go from metropolitan areas. He noted that as the baby boomer generation downsizes or dies, there will be a large stock of housing available to people and this surplus could make a big difference in housing patterns. Lastly he discussed mobility as it relates to technology. He believes mobility will remain high because Portland has no appetite for the kind of density needed to make transit a viable option for the majority. He summarized by noting that modest growth is expected on current trends, but faster growth is needed; there will be more dense growth than in the past, but not dense enough to make significant change; and mobility will remain high, but technology will change significantly.

After the presentation, Carol opened the room up for questions from the PAC. A PAC member asked about employment statistics and how are telecommuters accounted for within these? Charlie answered that these statistics are typically categorized by place of business, so telecommuters would be captured. Peter Mills asked about the growth outside of Portland versus growth in Portland itself. Charlie answered that most of the growth will happen outside of Portland. A PAC member asked where would the downsizing senior population live? Colgan answered that most people, when asked, say they want to live at home.

7. Carol called for a 10-minute break in order for attendees to get pizza.

8. **Existing Conditions.** Paul Godfrey provided an overview of the road's existing conditions. Major takeaways are:

   - The road carries between 34,000 to 52,000 vehicles daily on average over the year (this is a two-direction volume). The low number is between Exits 52 and 53, the high number is Exits 46 and 47. Traffic typically peaks around 4 pm.
   - Average annual daily traffic dropped during the Recession but for the past three years has been climbing rapidly, in part due to cheap gas. There has been a more than a 13 percent increase since 2013.
   - The length of time vehicles are on this section of road (trip length) has been decreasing steadily since 2011. This means people are using the Turnpike to avoid local congestion.
   - Levels of service (congestion, ability to move freely) are rated A to F, with F being failing. The Turnpike Authority takes action of some kind when levels of service reach E. Currently there are three locations on the mainline and one ramp location that show level of service E. Seven mainline sections and ten ramps are at level of service D.
   - Turnpike crash rates on this section are higher than the southern section of the Turnpike and I-295 north of Portland, but much lower than the section of I-295 that goes through Portland.

9. **Questions from June 28, 2017 PAC meeting**

   - In response to Paul's analysis of traffic volume within the study area, a PAC member asked to see a graph showing the price of gas by year as well. Paul will follow up.
   - It was asked what percentage traffic increased from 2016 to 2017. Paul said that the increase from 2016 to 2017 is not much, but explained that in 2007 the MTA started this very same discussion on capacity we are having today, but the recession hit and traffic fell off.

- A PAC member asked how does the road operate? If we are looking only at summer PM traffic on the worst days, how bad is it? Is it just a few days during the summer? Paul answered that generally, these are the same levels we would see on any weekday in July/August.
- In response to the video simulation Paul showed, it was asked what level of service was represented? Paul answered LOS D/E.
- A PAC member commented that he sees LOS F on Western Avenue/Skyway Drive daily. Cars can't get onto the interstate fast enough. He wanted to know if this was modeled? Paul responded that we did not model Western Avenue/Skyway Drive, but did include the intersections on Skyway Drive where they intersect with the Maine Turnpike.
- A PAC member asked about the crash statistics, 60 crashes per 100,000 vehicle miles traveled. How many crashes? What does this mean? She asked if we could share the number of crashes that occurred due to winter storms. This prompted a discussion about fatalities on the Turnpike, with Lt. Baker stating that in 2016 there were six fatalities, actually five fatal accidents as one involved two people. Peter Mills also discussed the need for roadside clearing as it pertains to safety. As part of this discussion, a PAC member asked what is the seasonality of these events? Are 80% happening in the winter? Can you correlate to cause? How much does this play into it? Paul said we are really on the edge of the tipping point in terms of safety. He said once we start seeing these issues at non-peak times, the system is failing. Paul will follow up with more information on the breakdown of the crash statistics.
- A PAC member commented that he was surprised with the Level of Service result. He didn't expect it to be that low.
- Another PAC member commented that he drives it every day and wasn't surprised to see the low Level of Service.
- A PAC member asked what speeds people are currently traveling in this area? She sees it as a good thing that people are driving closer to the speed limit. Paul responded that traffic typically travels above the posted speed limit, which is primarily what we are seeing during non-congested times. When traffic is congested, we are seeing speeds right around the posted speed limit. Another PAC member asked what is the magnitude of this problem? What percentage of daytime hours are we trying to accommodate in the course of a year? Is induced traffic a part of this? For the number of daytime hours' question, Paul responded that we typically look at the 30th highest hour volume when analyzing a roadway. The 30th highest hour volume, also known as the design hour volume (DHV), is the one-hour period in the design year that most appropriately assesses operating conditions. For freeway facilities such as the Maine Turnpike, industry standard suggests using the 30th highest hour volume – meaning just what it indicates, that there are 29 other volumes that are higher during the year. For the induced traffic question, induced traffic occurs when new automobile trips are generated. This can occur when people choose to travel by car instead of public transport, or decide to travel when they otherwise would not have. This is more affected by local land use, but induced travel can be realized if additional roadway capacity is added. This will be more thoroughly discussed at the third PAC meeting when we discuss/evaluate alternatives.
- A PAC member commented on how changes with the Turnpike would impacts I-295, saying from a system perspective, it makes sense for through traffic to use the Turnpike rather than I-295. Peter Mills said he is concerned that the Turnpike is under-utilized. The Turnpike has to divert people onto the Turnpike rather than I-295. Once the construction on Falmouth Spur is

complete, he said the MTA will be promoting using Exit 52 rather than I-295 for northbound through coastal traffic.

- A PAC member asked about the Falmouth spur access, saying there is access on the spur to get on I-295 to go north, but not to the south. He asked if there is any thought for an on/off spur for northbound traffic? Another PAC member noted that when the MaineDOT I-295 corridor study was done in 2010, it evaluated a full service interchange at Exit 11. This is still something to be mindful of.

10. Public Comment:

- A member of the public commended the MTA for robust public process and hopes it will expand its outreach so more members of the public will be present for the next meeting. He stated that adding more lanes doesn't decrease congestion. He wanted to emphasize one piece of STPA (Sensible Transportation Policy Act), that we must assess the full range of reasonable options and must give preference to those others before going to road widening. He also mentioned climate change as an issue and needing to cut greenhouse gases emissions. He ended by saying we should reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled and urged for a strong analysis of TDM.

The meeting ended at 7 pm.