

Public Health and Transportation Coalition (PHT Coalition)

Meeting Summary

May 13, 2013

1:00-3:00

Greater Portland Council of Governments Conference Center

At today's meeting, the Coalition was briefed on the Maine Healthy Air Coalition and Safe Routes to Schools. The concept of a regional approach for Safe Routes to Schools was proposed. This concept will be further developed for additional discussion at the next Coalition meeting.

Elizabeth Trice (Convenor), Grants and Special Projects Coordinator, Cumberland County

Zoe Miller (Convenor), Director, Healthy Maine Partnership, Healthy Lakes Region

Effie Craven, Coordinator, Maine Clean Air Campaign

Sarah Cushman, Director, Safe Routes to Schools

Carl Eppich, Transportation Planner, Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System

Rick Harbison, Transportation and Land Use Planner, GPCOG

Valerie Landry, Facilitator

Paul Niehoff, Senior Transportation Planner, Portland Area Transportation System

Resa Redhunt, Opportunity Alliance

1. Announcements

National Day of Civic Hacking has been scheduled for June 1. Elizabeth Trice will be participating and is interested in how the event might be used to further the PHT mission. <http://hackforchange.org/>

2. ACTIONS

	ITEM	ACTION	PURPOSE	RESP	DATE
1	Clean Air	Effie Craven will add PHT members to the Maine Clean Air contact list.	Engage PHT member support for Maine Clean Air initiatives	E. Craven	By 6/1
2	Regional Approach to Safe Routes to Schools	Schedule meeting on regional initiative regarding Safe Routes to Schools.	Prepare for June PHT meeting at which time an in depth discussion will occur regarding if and how to use a regional approach to Safe Schools as a catalyzing initiative to advance the PHT vision.	C. Eppich	?

2. PENDING BUSINESS

	ITEM	ACTION	PURPOSE	RESP.	DATE
1	Legislation – <i>An Act to Update and Clarify the Laws Governing the Operation of Bicycles on Public Roadways</i>	Alert PHT members to developments in bicycle legislation that has been voted Ought to Pass out of the Transportation Committee.	Demonstrate support for enhanced safety measures	J. Tasse P.Niehoff	ASAP

2	Complete Streets Study Group	Engage PHT members in discussion regarding the DOT study group on Complete Streets.	Determine how PHT members can be involved in the process.	J. Tasse P. Neihoff	ASAP
3	Maine Rural Health Research Center	Invite David Hartley, PhD, Muskie School, to a PHT meeting	To learn more about the work of the Maine Rural Health Research Center and the intersection with the PHT mission.	E. Trice Z. Miller	Pending discussion
4	Spreading the word: Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain, John J. Ratey http://www.amazon.com/Spark-Revolutionary-Science-Exercise-Brain/dp/0316113506	PHT members with copies of the Spark book are reminded to read it and pass it on or return to Elizabeth Trice.	“Spark” thinking and action on physical activity and brain health.	E. Trice	June

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Maine Healthy Air Coalition Introduction, Effie Craven, MPH, Maine Healthy Air Coalition <http://www.ctbh.org/documents/MEHealthyAirCoalitionFactSheet6-11.pdf>

The Maine Healthy Air coalition is a group of 26 statewide and local health care and public health organizations concerned about air quality in Maine. It is affiliated with the American Lung Association. Maine Healthy Air has an office in Augusta with 12-15 staff including lobbyist Ed Miller. Maine has the largest healthy air coalition in the nation. Priorities include:

- Support Tier 3 gasoline standards, which if adopted would be the equivalent of taking 33 million cars off the road.
- Coordinate the “Trek Across Maine” <http://www.lung.org/associations/charters/northeast/events/cycle/trek-across-maine/>
- Support the Clean Air Act

3.2 Safe Routes to Schools, Sarah Cushman Coordinator

The Maine Safe Routes to School—Walk and Bike to School Program is a statewide effort among Maine communities to increase bicycling and walking to school for improved public safety, public health, fiscal responsibility, and a cleaner environment. The Maine Safe Routes to School Program is part of the national, federally-funded Safe Routes to School Program. The program also is working to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions (that can be particularly concentrated around schools where vehicles pick up and drop off students).

History

The concept of safe routes to schools was introduced in Maine by John Balicki prior to it being a federal priority. An increasing body of research indicates that physical activity results in improved classroom behavior and ability to learn.

Activities

Methods to carry out the work include:

- Communication such as monthly newsletters.
- Networking with groups such as Healthy Maine Partnerships, DOE, Maine CDC
- Community Technical Assistance on walk and bike to school activities
- Mini grants
- Portland Walking School Bus Program (currently at East End and Reiche, will add two more schools in the fall). Adults are screened to be volunteers and accompany children to school. It requires substantial coordination, including assessing and mapping routes, ensuring coverage, and providing training for volunteers.
- Evaluation/planning such as school travel planning efforts, policies, siting policies, transportation funding, and state and local advocacy
- Education such as coordinated and district wide bike pedestrian safety education
- Encouragement such as youth led walk and bike campaigns
- Enforcement such as student safety patrols, local law enforcement strategies
- Engineering such as coordinated efforts to prioritize and seek funding for projects

Issues

Formerly, Maine received \$1 million from federal DOT to encourage Safe Routes to Schools. 90% of the funding was used for infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalks. However, whereas Safe Routes to Schools previously had been a federal DOT mandate, it is now an “optional” program. This development threatens to undermine continued efforts.

3.3 Regional Approach to Safe Routes to Schools, Carl Eppich

Regional planning for Safe Routes to Schools could be powerful strategy to increase both awareness and infrastructure improvements that benefit both students and residents of communities in southern Maine. PACTS has 18 communities in its region, many of which are grappling with limited resources, including resources for transportation. One concept would be to create a framework to identify, evaluate, prioritize, and address safety opportunities and gaps in infrastructure. Current data sets could be evaluated for use in the initiative. Members at the meeting expressed high interest in helping to develop the concept. To that end, a meeting will be scheduled before the next PHT meeting to further the discussion.

Next Meeting

June 10, 2013 1:00 – 3:00

Greater Portland Council of Governments