

## COMMISSIONER'S HANDBOOK



**THE ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION**

156 Water Street, Exeter, NH 03833

Phone: 603-778-0885 Email: [Email@therpc.org](mailto:Email@therpc.org) [TheRPC.org](http://TheRPC.org)

**Welcome and congratulations** on your appointment as a Commissioner of the Rockingham Planning Commission.

Being an RPC Commissioner is a rewarding and impactful experience, allowing you to help guide the region to a sustainable and resilient future. Your most important duty as RPC Commissioner is to represent the needs and interests of your community as we work in collaboration to plan for the region. As a Commissioner, you provide a conduit for two-way communication between the Commission and your community.



The Commission serves three main purposes: 1) to provide member communities with individual technical assistance in planning; 2) carry out regional land use and transportation planning as required by statute; and 3) to facilitate communication and cooperation among our Members to help solve problems that transcend municipal boundaries.

As a Commissioner you will also serve as a representative to the Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Committee. Serving in this capacity, you will be involved in the regional transportation planning process and will help prioritize transportation needs in the region.

Our meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday of the month resulting in approximately ten meetings a year. Our practice is to meet in various locations, such as town halls and community centers around the region. You will receive an email the week before each meeting which includes the meeting location, agenda and related materials.

I invite you to read the attached Commissioner's Handbook in order to learn more about your duties as a commissioner, how the commission functions, allocation of your community's dues, and opportunities to participate in the RPC committees. Additionally, the Handbook provides links to access the RPC website at [www.theRPC.org](http://www.theRPC.org) to see more information about the Commission, your role as Commissioner, how the agency operates, the RPC communities and our current work plan including regional transportation planning.

We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have, either in person, by email or by phone. If there is anything else you need, or if you have questions along the way, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Tim Roache, Executive Director

# WELCOME!

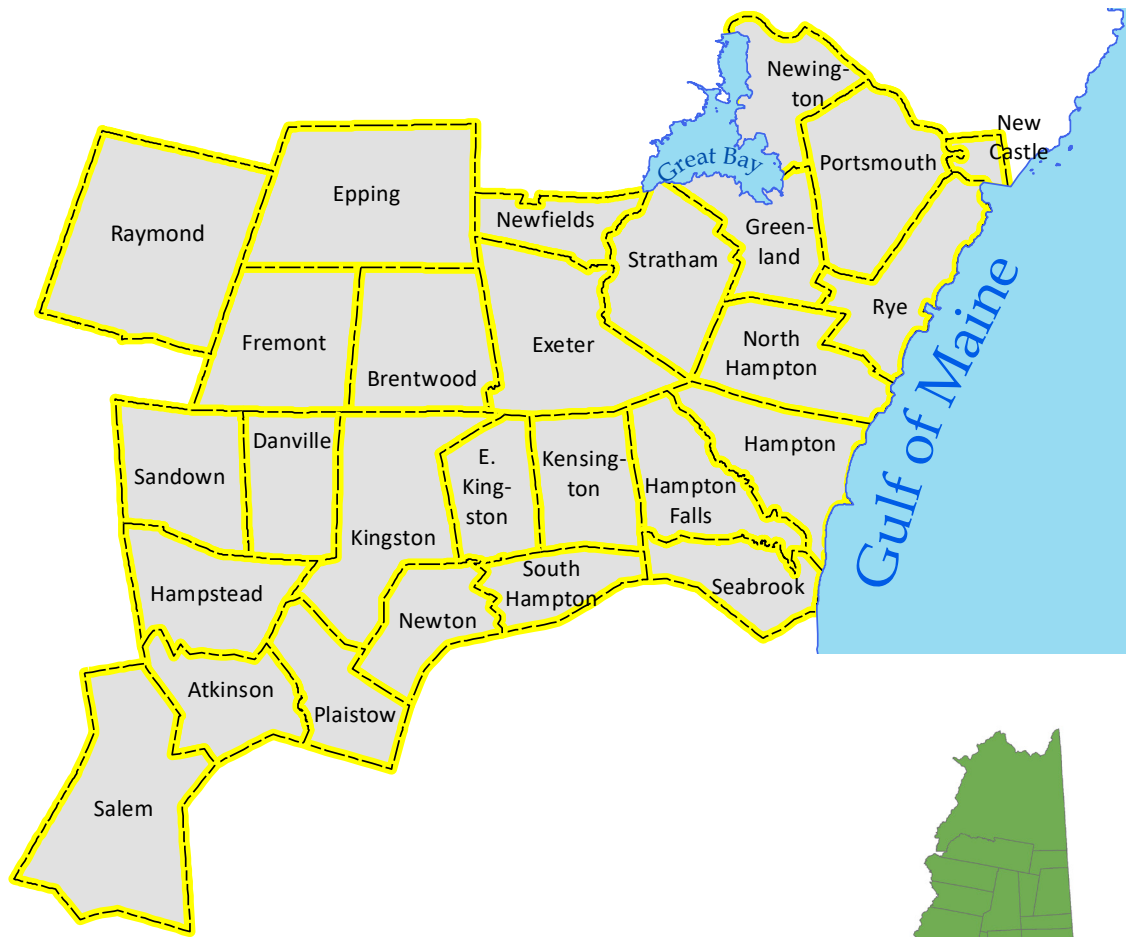
## Welcome to the RPC Commissioner’s Handbook. This Handbook is for you!

Your participation and the contributions you make while working with the Commission will be of great value to our region as well as for your community. Most importantly, your city or town appointed you as their representative and they are counting on you to take advantage of the benefits and services available to your community as a Member of the RPC.

In this Handbook you will find information about the Rockingham Planning Commission and the Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization, your role as a Commissioner, opportunities to participate on the RPC Committees, and how to access more information.

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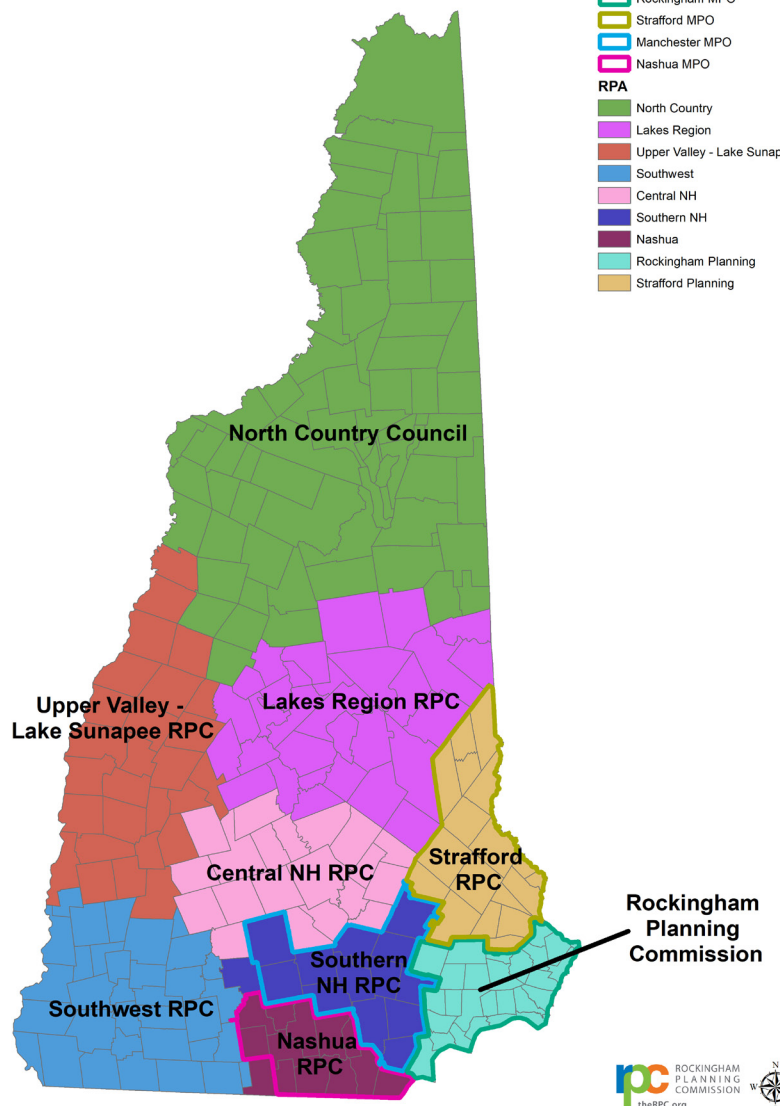
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  - Manchester MPO
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- RPA**
- North Country
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  - Upper Valley - Lake Sunapee
  - Southwest
  - Central NH
  - Southern NH
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  - Rockingham Planning
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Above: The RPC Communities

Right: New Hampshire's Planning Commissions. The four designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations are highlighted by a line around the represented region. The same 27 communities are in both the RPC and Rockingham MPO.



Rockingham Planning Commission



## WHAT IS THE ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION?

**T**he **Rockingham Planning Commission** (the RPC) is one of nine regional planning commissions in New Hampshire. Established by RSA 36:46 in 1982, our region is comprised of 27 member communities in southern New Hampshire. Operating as a political subdivision of the State of New Hampshire, the Commission serves in an advisory role to local governments in order to promote coordinated planning, orderly growth, efficient land use, long range transportation planning, and environmental protection.

Commissioners are volunteers nominated by their local Planning Boards and appointed by Select Boards or the City Council. The term of office is 4 years; the member community may choose to appoint an alternate commissioner to vote when the delegated commissioner is absent; alternate members are encouraged to fully participate in

meetings. We meet about 10 times a year to adopt and oversee the annual work program and budget, establish Commission policies on a variety of land use and transportation planning issues important in the region, and to discuss current planning topics. The Commission is funded by membership dues, service contracts with individual municipalities for the preparation of special documents and projects, and state and federal grants aimed at strengthening local and regional planning.



## WHAT IS THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION?

**A**s a Commissioner you are also a member of the Policy Committee of the Rockingham Metropolitan Policy Organization (MPO), which is the federally designated transportation planning agency for 27 communities in southeastern New Hampshire. The MPO is part of a regional partnership with the United States Department of Transportation, New Hampshire Department of Transportation and other state agencies, regional transit agencies, community leadership, local planning and public works officials, the business community, and citizens across the planning area.



The MPO leads in the development of the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and contributes to ongoing conversations about land use, economic development, climate change, the environment, safety and security, and public health issues.

In cooperation with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, the MPO works to plan, prioritize, and select transportation projects in our region for federal funding appropriated through the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration 10-year plan, and is responsible for ensuring the region is in compliance with federal planning requirements and national ambient air quality standards. In all of its programs and activities, the MPO also complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other federal and state non-discrimination statutes and regulations related to transportation.

For a list of current [Commissioners](#) you can visit our website.

## What is Your Role?

As a commissioner you will be acting as an agent both of the Rockingham Planning Commission and the municipality you represent. Your role is to act as a liaison between your community and the Commission. We want you to share your knowledge of your community and in turn take information about the RPC back to

your community. Most importantly, you are in a position to recognize opportunities for the RPC to provide information and planning services for the municipality you represent. You will also be asked to contribute to the Commission through decision-making and policy setting.

## What kind of Input Will Be Asked of Commissioners?

You are expected to make your opinion heard and support the nature and scope of the Commission's regional and local work programs. Review and approve the Commission's annual operating budget which will be spent to support the work activities outlined in the work program. Provide input on what you think the Commission's policies should be in specific areas like natural resources, land use, local technical assistance, water resources, housing, transportation, recreation, and open space.



Review staff produced plans and reports and communicate that information to your community when needed.

## When Do We Meet ?

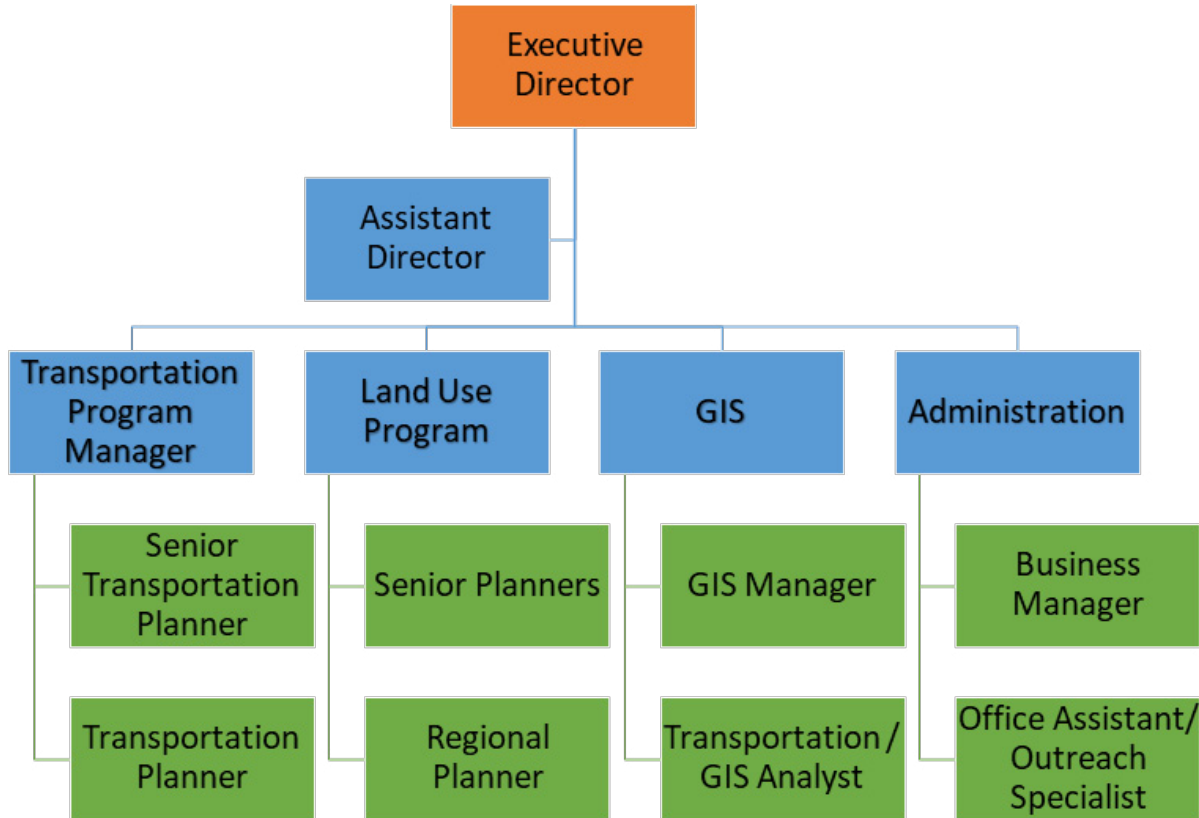
Commission meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Commission's office or at different communities in the region. We meet on average ten times a year. In addition, an Executive Committee meets monthly and is empowered to make decisions about the operation of the Commission within

the prescribed limits outlined in the by-laws. Some Commission meetings (about four per year) are also designated as MPO Policy meetings at which non-member towns and certain state and federal agencies involved with transportation are included in the decision making.



The RPC relies upon their staff members to carry out the work needed by our communities and the state. For a current list [Staff Members](#) you can visit our website.

## Staff Organization Chart



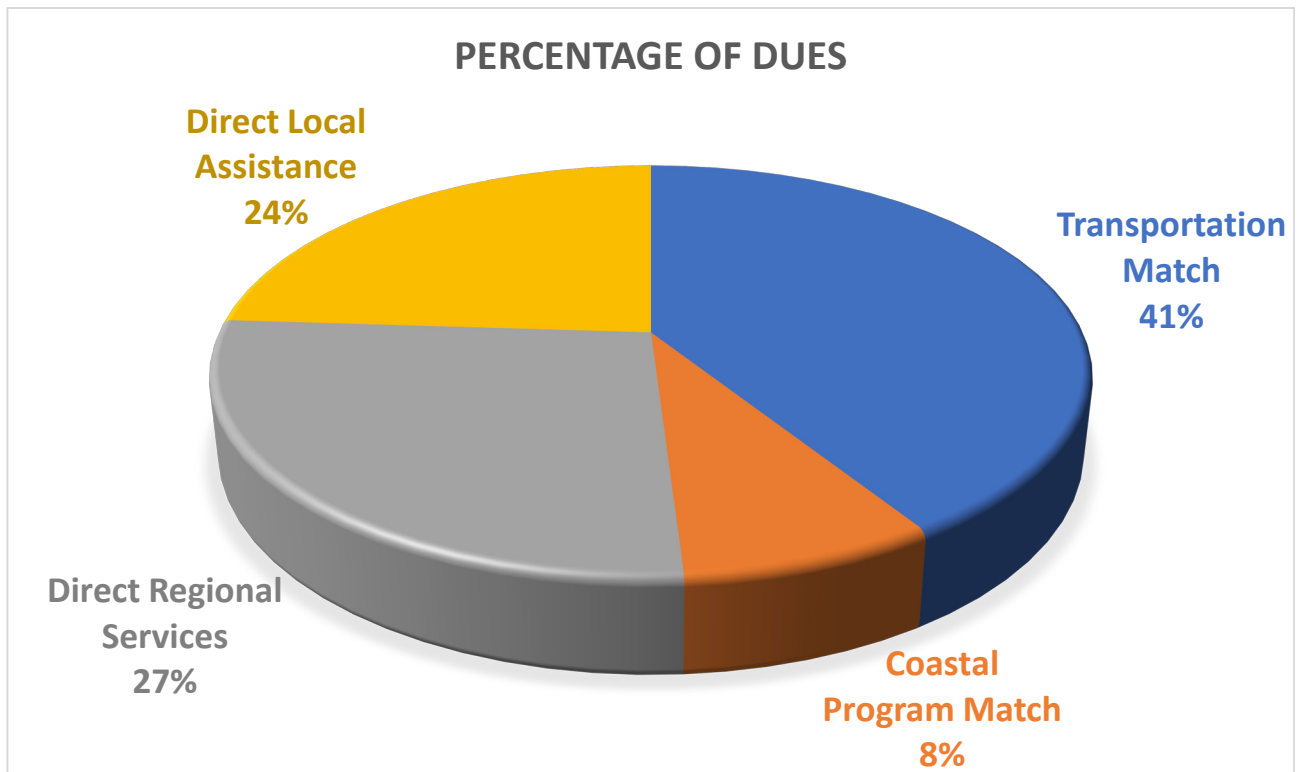
## WHERE DO YOUR DUES GO?

Membership dues are used to support regional planning programs, the largest of which is our transportation planning program. Under federal law and state directive the RPC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region. A typical distribution of annual dues across our programs is shown in the table below.

The RPC in its role as the MPO is responsible for administering the Federal Transportation Planning process and coordinating it with the State's Ten Year Transportation Plan. The funding for this comes from the Federal Highway Administration and requires a non-federal match. In a typical fiscal year, the RPC uses approximately 41% of the local dues collected to match the federal funds and support this function. If the dues were not available to support this role, transportation construction dollars would be frozen in the region impacting progress on paving and transportation improvements region-wide.

The remainder of the dues are used to support other programs of community and regional interest. These include the coastal program work, standard map sets, projects of regional benefit like developing model ordinances and our electricity aggregation program. Dues can also be used to support a member community with technical assistance, which generally takes the form of Geographic Information Systems services, review of ordinances, grant writing, providing information services and other tasks that require a fixed number of hours of staff time assistance.

Dues paying members of the RPC are eligible to receive technical planning assistance. In addition, member municipalities may engage the RPC to support larger task items, such as Master Plan updates and other services that require a significant amount of a planners' time and effort to complete. Non-dues paying communities can contract for services at a non-member rate.





Commissioners are encouraged to participate in additional RPC activities. Contact the executive director if you have an interest in joining a committee. The Executive Committee appoints committee members.

## Executive Committee

The Executive Committee oversees the Commission work program, the policy action of the commission and is responsible for the Commission in the interim between regular meetings. Its authority is established by the Commission to include carrying out the policies of the Commission, acting on personnel changes, taking action on routine monthly financial statements and executing contracts. The Executive Committee shall report all its activities to the Commission at the next regular Commission meeting.

The Executive Committee consists of the officers of the Commission, including Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Immediate Past-Chair, as well as eight at-large members, provided that not more than two members shall be from the same community. A quorum



consists of five (5) members. The members are nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected annually by the Commission.

The nominating committee submits recommendations for Commissioners who have been especially active for their communities to serve on the Executive Committee. The full Commission appoints members of the Executive Committee at the Annual Meeting.

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## Legislative Policy Committee

The Legislative Policy Committee consists of a Chair, Vice Chair and up to 7 members as appointed by the Executive Committee. The function of the Legislative Policy Committee is threefold: to monitor and recommend positions on proposed legislation that is of specific interest or concern to the Commission members and the region generally; to develop Legislative Policies subject to adoption by

the Commission; and, to periodically organize a Legislative Forum on topics of interest to legislators, commissioners and municipal officials. The Committee tracks various legislative bills that may have impacts on our communities or the RPC, and provides letter of testimony on some bills.

The Committee meets on an as needed basis.



**Regional Impact Committee**

The Regional Impact Committee was established to assist in carrying out the requirements of RSA 36:54-58 – Developments of Regional Impact. The purposes of the Regional Impact Committee are: to fulfill the Commission’s responsibilities and obligations under the Developments of Regional Impact statute; provide notice to potentially affected municipalities concerning proposed developments which are likely to have impacts beyond the boundaries of a single municipality;

provide opportunities for the Commission and the potentially affected municipalities to furnish timely evaluation and recommendations to the municipality having jurisdiction; and, to encourage the interests of neighboring municipalities and the region to be considered during deliberations and decision-making. The Regional Impact Committee meetings occur as needed based on the receipt of a notice of regional impact from a municipality.

**Regional Master Plan Committee**

The Regional Master Plan Committee is responsible for overseeing the development and updating of the comprehensive Regional Master Plan, as defined by RSA 36:47. The Committee consists of at least three members but is open ended in number. Members are appointed by the Executive Committee. Meetings are as needed; the committee is required to report annually to the Commission.



**Communications Committee**

The Communications Committee meets as needed to address the Communication Plan for the RPC. Members discuss community outreach, branding, and the website. The committee welcomes contributions on how to better disseminate

information about the RPC to our communities, transit authorities and other agencies. Once a month a newsletter is sent to subscribers, we welcome members to share any items that are of interest.

**Personnel Committee**

The personnel committee conducts the annual review and salary recommendations of the Executive Director; establishes and maintains the Personnel policies of the Commission and when needed to coordinate the search for qualified

candidates for Executive Director. The Personnel Committee shall also serve as an appeals body for personnel matters that involve appeals by staff to a decision or action taken by the Executive Director.

**Nominating Committee**

A Nominating Committee of five representatives, including the Chair as ex officio, shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Commission at least 60 days in advance of the Commission’s Annual Meeting. Each representative of this Committee shall be from a different member municipality. The nominating committee may select one or more

candidates for each office. The report of the Committee shall be distributed to all voting Commission representatives no less than 30 days in advance of the annual meeting. In addition, the Nominating Committee may, at its discretion, submit nominations to fill vacancies in standing committees and nominations for Commission annual awards.

### Ad Hoc Committees

From time to time, Ad Hoc Committees will be established when needed to address concerns such as review of bylaws or strategic planning.

### The MPO Policy Committee

The MPO Policy Committee is charged with providing policy level recommendations, approvals and endorsements of the Rockingham MPO concerning transportation issues that have a bearing on the MPO's continued, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning process. This includes activities such as:

- Establishing the policy direction of the MPO through its adopted plans and policy statements;
- In cooperation with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), establishing procedures and requirements whereby Section 112 (PL) and FTA Section 5303 (Metropolitan Transit Planning) funds will be allocated and made available.
- Adopting and amending the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Long Range Transportation Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Reviewing and commenting on individual projects, programs, plans, and reports relative to the adopted transportation policies and positions;
- Reviewing and endorsing technical reports and studies prepared by the MPO staff or consultants;
- Ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendment of 1990 by making conformity determinations for MPO TIPs and MPO transportation plans, with assistance from NHDOT.
- Adopting and/or revising plans, policies and findings recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee, including technical reports and memoranda;



- Providing a mechanism to facilitate and broaden public involvement in transportation planning and decision making processes.

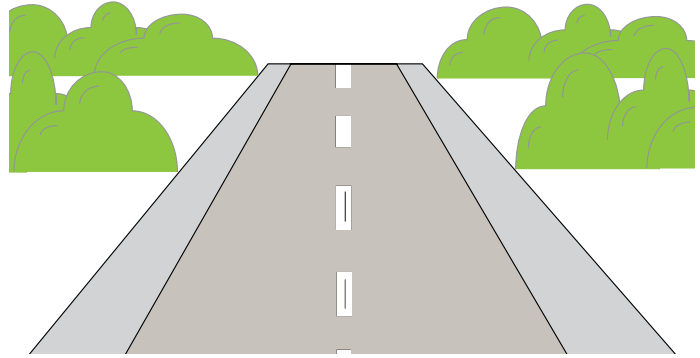
Voting membership on the Policy Committee includes Planning Commission representatives, plus representatives appointed by the NHDOT, NHDES (Air Resources Division), COAST, MTA/CART, UNH Wildcat Transit, the Pease Development Authority, and RPC non-member communities.

Non-voting members include federal transportation agency representatives, neighboring MPOs/RPCs, non-public transportation providers, and other state and federal transportation officials and other participants. The MPO Prospectus provides a detailed listing of the Policy Committee and Technical Advisory Committee membership broken down by voting and non-voting status.



## Transportation Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is established by the Policy Committee as a standing committee of the MPO. The main purposes of the TAC are to provide technical guidance and recommendations to the RPC staff and the Policy Committee concerning transportation issues that have a bearing on the MPO's 3C's planning process, to review major work products prepared by staff as part of the transportation planning program, to provide a forum for individual members to bring transportation related issues and concerns to the attention of the MPO staff and Policy Committee, and to advise the staff and Policy Committee on major transportation issues in the region. The TAC does not establish policies for the MPO but may make both technical and policy recommendations to the organization.



Membership on the MPO TAC includes a representative from each of the 27 Study Area communities (Including communities that are not currently RPC members) plus staff from RPC, NHDOT, NHDES, COAST, CART, UNH Wildcat Transit, Pease Development Authority, and other state and federal planning partners and other participants.

## WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE

- The [RPC Bylaws](#) have information concerning the RPC's authority and purpose, membership, officers, what constitutes a quorum and voting procedures, election of officers, adoption and amendment of bylaws, meetings and hearing, order of business, finances, committees, employees, and the history of the organization.
- The [Meetings](#) page has agendas, minutes and meeting documents.
- The [RPC communities](#) are featured on our website where maps and other relevant documents can be found.
- The [RPC Regional Master Plan](#) serves as a resource to RPC municipalities in developing local master plans, in recommending regional priorities, goals and actions, and identifying areas of potential regional collaboration and cooperation. The plan focuses on the subjects of land use, transportation, economic development, housing, infrastructure, energy, and cultural, historic, and natural resources.
- Further details about the MPO, the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Technical Advisory Committee, Bicycle and Pedestrian plans, and more, visit [RPC Transportation](#).
- [Environmental](#) information including land conservation, water resources, waste management and other resources.
- [Maps and Data](#) resources: the RPC has maintained a Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Find us on social media: [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

TITLE III  
TOWNS, CITIES, VILLAGE DISTRICTS, AND UNINCORPORATED PLACES  
CHAPTER 36  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS  
Regional Planning Commissions

Section 36:46

36:46 Formation of Regional Planning Commissions. –

I. If no regional planning commission exists in any specific planning region as delineated by the office of strategic initiatives, then 2 or more municipalities in said planning region and having planning boards may, by ordinance or resolution adopted by the respective legislative bodies of said municipalities, form a regional planning commission.

II. If a regional planning commission already exists in any specific planning region as delineated by the office of strategic initiatives, then any municipality in said planning region and having a planning board may, by ordinance or resolution adopted by the respective legislative body of said municipality, become a member of the regional planning commission. A regional planning commission may also include municipalities located in an adjacent state.

III. Each municipality which shall become a member of a regional planning commission shall be entitled to 2 representatives on said commission. A municipality with a population of over 10,000 but less than 25,000 shall be entitled to have 3 representatives on said commission and a municipality with a population of over 25,000 shall be entitled to have 4 representatives on said commission. Population as set forth in this section shall be deemed to be determined by the last federal census. Representatives to a regional planning commission shall be nominated by the planning board of each municipality from the residents thereof and shall be appointed by the municipal officers of each municipality. Representatives may be elected or appointed officials of the municipality or county. In any county or counties in which a regional planning commission has been formed, the county may, by resolution of its county commissioners, become a member of said regional planning commission and shall be entitled to appoint 2 representatives on said commission. The terms of office of members of a regional planning commission shall be for 4 years, but initial appointments shall be for 2 and 4 years. In municipalities entitled to 3 or more representatives, initial appointment shall be for 2, 3 and 4 years. Vacancies shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as original appointments. Municipalities and counties may also appoint alternate representatives. A representative to a regional planning commission shall, when acting within the scope of his official duties and authority, be deemed to be acting as an agent of both the regional planning commission and of the municipality or county which he represents. In addition, regional planning commissions are encouraged to consult, at their discretion, with agencies and institutions operating within the region whose activities influence planning and development in that region.

Source. 1969, 324:1. 1991, 72:4, eff. July 12, 1991. 2000, 200:3, eff. July 29, 2000. 2003, 319:9, eff. July 1, 2003. 2004, 257:44, eff. July 1, 2004. 2017, 156:64, eff. July 1, 2017.

## History 1972-1974

In 1972, Governor Preston, through Executive Order No. 15, combined the seventeen (17) regions in New Hampshire into six (6) Sub-State Planning Regions for the purpose of reducing administrative duplication and creating more sustainable regional planning agencies. Strafford Regional Planning Commission, (headquartered in Dover); Southeast New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, (headquartered in Exeter); and Southern Rockingham Regional Planning District, (headquartered in Salem) were merged into Sub-State Region Number #6. This action took effect on July 1, 1972.



In March 1974, the towns through town meeting vote and cities through action of the City Councils, voted to administratively combine the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, the Southern NH Planning Commission, the Southern Rockingham Planning District to form a single administrative entity called the Strafford-Rockingham Regional Council which conformed to the area defined as Sub-State District 6. With this vote, municipalities gained dual membership in both their respective regional planning commission and in the Council, and their representatives became members of both organizations.

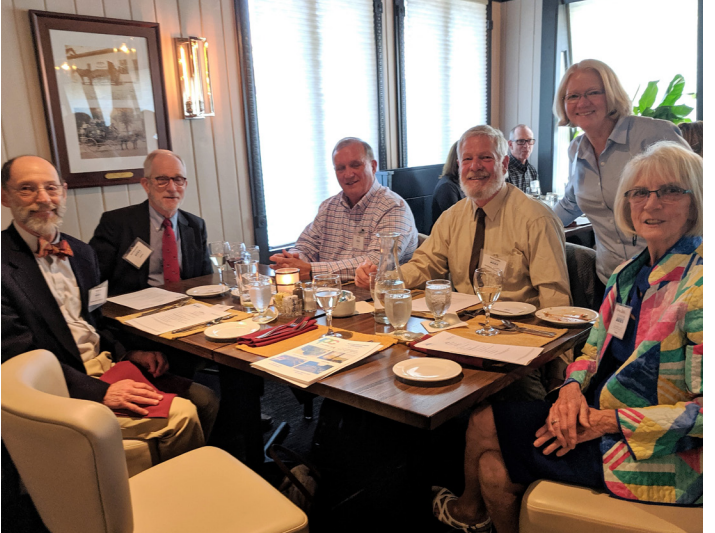
## History 1975-1982

Executive Order Number 82.7, dated June 16, 1982, merged the Southeast Regional Planning Commission and the Southern Rockingham Planning Commission, into the present Rockingham Planning Commission, serving 27 municipalities within Rockingham County, and which remained Sub-State Planning District 6. The third planning commission, the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, became an independent regional planning commission to serve Strafford County as well as the Towns of Newmarket, Nottingham and Northwood in Rockingham County, and was established as a new Sub-State Planning District 7.

Following this separation, the Strafford Rockingham Regional Council, given the absence of the Strafford County municipalities, voted to rename itself the Rockingham Planning Commission. Because the Rockingham Planning Commission maintained the designation as Sub-State Planning District 6, membership was deemed to be continuous from the date of the first municipal vote to join either the Southern Rockingham or Southeast Regional Planning Commission, most of which votes date from 1969 through 1973.

## History – 1983-2016

On July 21, 2007, Governor John Lynch, by letter to the Federal Highway Administration approved the re-designation of the Salem-Plaistow-Windham and Seacoast MPOs which each covered portions of the RPC region, into a single MPO co-terminous with Sub-State Planning District 6. At the request of the Town of Windham, Executive Order Number 2013-2 dated January 24, 2013, was issued transferring Windham from Sub-State Planning District 6 to Planning District 5b (the Southern NH Planning Commission). At the request of the Town of Raymond, Executive Order Number 2016-7 dated November 2, 2016, was issued expanding the Rockingham Planning Commission to include Raymond.



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