

4/24/03

# Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** April 3, 2003                      **Project Number:** 9124.04

**Location:** Pembroke Town Hall  
Pembroke, NH

**Re:**                      **Fourth (2<sup>nd</sup> Round) Public Meeting for the  
Salem to Concord Bikeway Feasibility Study**

---

## Meeting Summary

Kerrie Diers the Pembroke Town Planner welcomed all the participants to the Town of Pembroke.

Ram Maddali of the NHDOT outlined tonight's agenda including: Public Input, Evaluation of options, Suggested route, Future Steps, and Panel Session to address ideas and concerns of those in attendance.

Reviewed Project Purpose and Identified Corridor for those in attendance for the first time.

Reviewed Study Process, introduced Rizzo Associates the consultant retained by the DOT to conduct this study and the Citizens Advisory Committee formed to assist with process.

Ram requested that attendees pick up and fill out one of the comment sheets that have been provided.

Tom Jameson the Bicycle Pedestrian Transportation Coordinator for the NHDOT review the information received from the comment/public input forms, emails, and telephone calls. Issues of concern included:

- Connectivity (to Park-n-Rides, to schools, to town centers, access to community facilities)
- Rail Service Restoration, future impacts
- Trail Surface, Advantages and disadvantages of Asphalt Pavement or compacted gravels
- Maintenance Issues (Who will be responsible for maintenance, Towns, State, Independent user groups)
- Road Crossings, Mid-block crossings and Main Intersection's crossings have unique challenges,

Present and future ATV (motorcycle) current use is part of the State recreation picture.

Right of way, the North end of rail corridor(s) primarily private ownership

Domenic Ciavarro of Rizzo Associates was introduced and discussed the Evaluation of options explored in this study. The Bikeway within the I-93 Right-Of-Way, the utilization of the existing highway network with appropriate improvements to enhance bike and pedestrian safety, and the development of the abandoned rail corridors

Through the study process, it became apparent that a combination of these options would make up the most technically feasible route. Referred to map and power point slide outlining general advantages and disadvantages. In addition it was noted that private ownership will be an issue for utilizing the abandoned Concord and Portsmouth Rail bed (Suncook Branch, B&M RR). Although existing network of streets connects with all originations and destinations, it was felt that only advanced cyclists would use the on-street option.

Quantitative Analysis broke down options into three categories. Purpose and Need – Alternative Analysis evaluation summary power point slide was presented. Noting that all three options adhere to the purpose and need, however the rail-trail ranked highest in most categories. Construction and Design power point slide illustrating mileages of 13 for I-93 Bike path, 36 for On road option and 29.4 rail to trail. Cost for on-road improvements is for approximately 13 miles of roads that have significant safety issues. Design issues for on road include storm water design and impacts to adjacent properties when considering curbs and sidewalks. None of the costs for options include design or Right-of Way components. The I-93 Bikeway within Right of Way will cross intersecting roads at grade and impact up to 9 acres of wetlands.

Resource Impacts and Community Compatibility analysis slide was presented. Access to I-93 bikeway and on road limited, but due to the flat profile of the existing grade the RR alignment is accessible to all users. Safety is better for I-93 and RR alignment because of their exclusive ROW.

Paul Smith of Alta Planning and Design was introduced and did a presentation of the recommended route. Route into the City of Manchester is 24 miles and features 19 miles of the Manchester and Lawrence Rail Bed converted to a trail. Proposed to go around airport by way of bike shoulders and sidewalks on Harvey Road, thence on a dedicated path along fence around the end of the new runway to Perimeter Rd and return to rail bed from Perimeter Road and into Downtown. On road alignment through Manchester is projected on Depot Street, Canal Street and River Road. The route would continue on the proposed Heritage Trail through Hooksett to Merrimack Street. Hooksett provided a detailed map of proposed trail, which was incorporated into proposed route. From the Hooksett District Court the concept it to utilize the long abandoned Suncook Branch of the B&M RR (Concord & Portsmouth RR) to Concord. PowerPoint slides of the proposed route were shown.

Trail – Highway crossing issues at busy high volume highways such as the section adjacent to NH Rte. 28 will have the trail crossing incorporated into existing adjacent highway intersections with marked crosswalk and added pedestrian activated components in the signal system. Trail – low volume highways will include Trail stop signs and proper site distances for all legs of the intersection.

In response to an inquiry about Rail with Trail it was acknowledged that the Windham section would have difficulty with the concept due to wetlands and rock cuts that limit the amount of Right of Way that is usable.

The Town of Derry owns a segment of the rail corridor and has constructed a short section of paved trail. Delaware Rock owns small section and they have a low fill across the bed for haul road. Another intrusion into the corridor is in Londonderry where a business has their driveway on portion of the rail bed (adjacent 20 feet width is in State ownership). Manchester has a successful grant to construct a section of rail trail. They have developed and initiated a number of projects. There has been coordination with Ron Johnson of the City of Manchester with the intent to develop options for the City and NHDOT to consider.

=

The connection to the Heritage Trail in Hooksett is via Martin's Ferry road. North of the Amoskeag the city has obtained only a few easements, and with the railroad ROW only 66 feet there is no flexibility. In addition, that although it is conceivable that a 20-foot offset could be attempted, the rail with trail concept has not been embraced by Guilford Transportation Industries.

In Hooksett the proposed alignment will utilize Merrimack Street to connect with the long abandoned Concord and Portsmouth (Suncook Branch, B&M RR) at the Hooksett District Court Building. Trail will continue through Allenstown and into Pembroke with 3 options for entrance into Concord with the intention of connecting with the proposed Concord trail network. These options are Bow Lane to US 3, trail into Concord then up Garvin Falls Road to US 3 (Manchester Street), the third is to cross the Merrimack on a bridge over the dismantled railroad bridge piers into Concord via Bow Junction (Hall Street). Questions regarding the City of Concord redevelopment plans that will impact Garvin Falls Road usage will influence possible bike and pedestrian application. Persons in attendance were asked which of the 3 northern route options they favored. They expressed support for the route of the abandoned railroad including the crossing the Merrimack River

In addition the facility (Salem to Concord) should be envisioned as a trunk line with other trails branching off.

Ansel Sanborn, Administrator Bureau of Transportation Planning, NHDOT was introduced to discuss Future Steps. This feasibility study ends with a report to the Commissioner NHDOT. The Consultant will incorporate comments from Tuesday and tonight. The revision of the report will soon be on the website. On April 15<sup>th</sup> the Citizens Advisory Committee will weigh in and on May 1 the report will be finalized and

submitted to Commissioner Murray. Discussion on what to do from here is up to the communities.

This Study is an outgrowth of the I-93 Bikeway study concept and the reaction to public comments at the I-93 Public Hearings. The report will be sent to the communities within the corridor. Towns need to consider moving this from Feasibility study to Transportation.

Technical Feasibility is for all users and modes that would have a possible interest in these facilities including ATV Needs

The Project will have to be Environmentally Sound specifically historical, cultural, animals and wetlands. Some individuals will see the facility as an intrusion and this will have to be addressed.

Affordable: In the perspective with all the transportation needs in the State. (Do we have to spend money here? Where does money come from? Note that the Department did not say that it was going to spend money on a bikeway; it only is an estimate of costs. Major portion of State Highway funds are routed through the 10-year plan process. This process is in the course of being updated. The TE/CMAQ funds are an option. Bike/ped qualify for and meet criteria. Match can be monetary or by donations of equipment and labor (sweat equity). Communities can ask State to be a bigger partner in these efforts.

Public Acceptance is an issue. These meetings are attended primarily by bicycle pedestrian advocates, but people with other viewpoints are out there. Communities need to have a debate. NHDOT will attend and make a presentation and answer questions if invited. This will be hard work; tough discussions and hard choices will have to be made.

#### Question/Answer Session

ATV usage on bike ped facilities built with federal funds is prohibited by law – ATV's are currently using 4-5 miles of the rail bed as part of a designated recreation facility. It is the only legal area in Southern part of the State. 500 miles (versus 6000 for snowmobiles) in the State are available for legal use and displacement could require the State to replace trail access for legal ATV use (Bob Spoerl, Department of Resources and Economic Development (Bureau of Trails). Manchester & Lawrence owned by NHDOT, DRED owns Windham to Fremont Station, no other place for them to go. State has to balance transportation and balance recreation needs. These are the issues that the communities need to address. Concern over the potential for Legislative changes. ATV on snowmobile trails as an example. State regulations apply to State property. Once Federal Funds are use on facility the jurisdiction changes (per law/statute). Most bike paths are not plowed; therefore Congress voted an exception for Snowmobiles. Federal funds are the predominant source of funding.

Is trail wide enough for parallel trails? In some locations yes with ROW between 82 and 99 feet wide, however locations through wetlands and/or rock cuts are out. Proposed

section is 3 gravel, 12 pavement, 3 gravel. DRED representative state that dual paths would be a management nightmare. Also, issue not limited to ATV's, off road motorcycle use has to be included.

Who has Liability? Town facilities, town would assume liability similar to that for a public street or sidewalk. Owner can determine allowance of snowmobiles and maintenance.

Future Rail use clarification, the studies for reactivation are on the section south of Manchester.

Can the TE/CMAQ program 20% match be a predetermined community maintenance program? No the (soft match) has to do with construction such as donations of equipment, materials, labor (sweat equity) and/or easements. Important note that the match must be preapproved! City (town) could propose that their purchase of land could be offered as their match.

John St. Hillare, CAC Manchester Representative and member of the Queen City Trail Alliance (CMAQ cosponsor with the City of Manchester), "On application list everything. Don't do any thing beforehand." In their case they were able to get a commercial company to build part of the trail and this commitment was applied to the match. (Purchase of Railbed by Manchester involved FAA funds, easements not applicable to match.)

Recommended route takes advantage of abandoned rail bed and low density on road sections. Route needs to be straight, not steep to maximize use.

Paving of trail is not a decided. It will be a "Town" issue. Public comment to date has been split. Introduce different components and different maintenance issues. Need a manufactured material for proper surface. Proper lift thickness and compaction will give surface adequate stability for all traffic. It still would need to be graded and rolled. This surface can meet ADA requirements. At this time DRED does not have funds to roll surface. Note that DES prefers open gravel and doesn't like Asphalt. Snowmobile could contribute to damage asphalt and horse traffic can contribute to pavement distress.

John St. Hilare - He is putting together a "Corridor Committee" to work on planning the Salem to Concord Bikeway (Ped). If all the communities pull together (we) can approach towns, municipalities, agencies and group them together for joint project efforts. Contact him to sign on. (Had sign up sheet).

If NHDOT funds the project will Town have any say? Town will end up with responsibilities.

If one community refuses other communities should work on building the project because of local utility (what works within that town). In the town/community that does not participate attempt to find out if it is specific to one issue and then address that issue.

Snowmobile club participates in maintenance of trails they use. Clear brush; build bridges, care of the track. And respect for the landowners. Snow Mobile club has 580 members, they are a resource. Make the trail a community effort.

SCORP the Statewide effort to achieve a balance recreation plan. Tom Jameson advised the attendees that the SCORP document is online.

Health and Wellness benefits of the bikeped way are legitimate justifications for the promotion of developing the facility.

Who determines Bike access to highways? The State through the RSA's.

Paul Doolittle of Derry outlined how Derry began the process of trail development 10 years ago with a successful CMAQ grant. They had 60 volunteers and when a large contractor built a section of trail the volunteers disappeared. Recommend that a strategy that keeps up community participations is developed and followed. Need social capital, community ownership in the facility and the process. There are limited amount of people who are able or willing to make decisions. The key is how long term a vision these decision makers have. Can a Social Organizer be hired through the CMAQ grant?

Concern that little has been heard from Concord.

What is needed to get Congressmen (Senator) to take this project to Washington?

Why are there no projections of usage in study?

Bring to communities and tie together with other transportation needs. In some communities with urban elements a 20-minute drive can be replaced with a 5-minute walk.

The April 15, 2003 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting is open to the public. NHDOT will do publicity, (will send out a press release.