APPENDIX A. MEETING MINUTES

Project Advisory Committee Meetings

- PAC Meeting #1 - January 28, 2014
- PAC Meeting #2 - March 6, 2014
- PAC Meeting #3 - April 3, 2014
- PAC Meeting #4 - September 9, 2014
- PAC Meeting #5 - December 16, 2014
- PAC Meeting #6 - January 6, 2015
- PAC Meeting #7 - January 20, 2015

Public Meetings

- Project Listening Session - August 22, 2013
- Public Informational Meeting #1 - May 22, 2014
- Public Informational Meeting #2 - October 9, 2014
- Public Informational Meeting #3 - February 24, 2015

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)
MEETING #1
MEETING SUMMARY

January 28, 2014, 2:00 pm, Plaistow Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – Robert J. Clark
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Scott Bogle
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Ron Morgan
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Jim Russell
- Pan Am Railways – Not in attendance
- City of Haverhill – Not in attendance

New Hampshire DOT Project Management Team: Shelley Winters, Patrick Herlihy

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson

Approximately 5 non-PAC members attended

PAC / STAKEHOLDER ROLES AND ISSUES

- Ron O'Blenis provided an overview of the project and how the Project Advisory Committee will fit into the process.
- PAC will be the working group to review and provide feedback on study direction and technical analysis
- PAC is to function as a sounding board for the project team and a conduit for information to/from the organizations they represent.
- **Comments:** Comment and discussion regarding make up of the PAC, ability to have additional members and viewpoints. It was explained that the study team identified recommended entities to be represented, and each entity identified who they felt was the most appropriate representative. It was concluded that any detailed public discussion items should be provided to the town representatives and those items could be discussed at the following PAC meeting. Each PAC meeting will include some open time at the beginning of the agenda for public discussion.

PROJECT SCOPE

- An overview of the scope of the study was provided. The discussion included a review of the consultant scope of services and the study process that will be followed.
- The primary product of the study is an environmental review compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act, along with the project definition and decision making process that accompanies the environmental process.
- **Comments:** Discussion occurred regarding the following study analysis:
    - **Air Quality –** It was identified that air quality analysis for the project would include both regional analysis and a local analysis (for New Hampshire) that takes into account both changes in automobile emissions and the addition of cold-start train emissions.
    - **Noise Impacts** – It was identified that a noise analysis would be conducted as part of the study which would assess the impacts from train horns sounded at grade crossings and noise from idling locomotives. The analysis would follow the procedures provided by the Federal Transit Administration.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

- The DRAFT Project Purpose and Need was distributed to the PAC. An overview was provided regarding how the purpose and need fit into the study process. The goal of the project purpose is to succinctly identify the primary reason for undertaking the project. The project need is to identify some of the issues that are being addressed through the project.
- **Comments**: discussion items included accuracy of some of the data (i.e. travel times) included in the need, difficulty in collecting accurate up-to-date travel data, and some of the potential benefits of the project, such as efficient utilization of existing infrastructure, and the potential impacts to local economic development.
- **ACTION**: The HDR Team will send the electronic version of the Purpose and Need document out the PAC so that they can provide comments upon further review of the document. Comments on the Purpose and Need will be provided to the HDR Team

REVIEW OF PROJECT AGREEMENT

- The January 2013 Project Agreement was reviewed. This agreement between the Town of Plaistow, the Town of Atkinson, Rockingham Planning Commission/MPO and the New

Hampshire Department of Transportation identified a condition necessary to progress the study. The condition eliminated from further consideration two sites (one located at 21 Blossom Road and on located at 144 Main Street). Clarification was sought regarding the location of 144 Main Street and the intent of the conditions since although the agreement was clear regarding site limitations for the layover facility, there was inconsistency regarding consideration of the subject sites for the potential sites for the rail station.

- **Discussion**: It was confirmed that the reference to 144 Main Street is limited to the town-owned property (Map 41 Lot 11). Upon further discussion it was confirmed that the intent of the agreement was to limit consideration of both parcels as sites for both the layover facility and the rail station.

COORDINATION WITH THE MBTA

- Through discussions with the MBTA a list of criteria were developed to guide the site considerations of the layover facility and the rail station. The developed criteria are consistent with previous efforts by the MBTA to extend commuter rail lines, including the one currently under construction at Wachusett, near Fitchburg, MA.

REVIEW OF PROJECT LOCATION AND RESOURCE MAPS

- DRAFT Study Area Maps were handed out that displayed the primary constraints to be used in the initial identification of potential sites. These include residential development, open space/parkland, priority habitats, wetlands and water bodies.

- **ACTION:** The HDR Team will be identifying potential rail station and layover sites, utilizing the physical criteria identified in conjunction with the MBTA and the primary constraints identified in the study area. Identification of potential sites will be presented at the next PAC meeting.

PARTICIPATION OF PAN AM RAILWAYS AND NNEPRA

- Jim Russell from NNEPRA (manager of the Amtrak Downeaster) was happy to participate in the PAC. Although they have no direct concern for a station in Plaistow, as daily users of the line they are certainly a stakeholder. Jim stated that he feels Maine has benefited from passenger rail, and his service, which started with about 100,000 passengers annually, has now grown to almost 600,000. They are currently in the process of building a new layover facility in Brunswick Maine and therefore hopes to provide some perspective to this study. He offered to host a field visit, if that would be worthwhile.

NEXT STEPS

- The next meeting will be in early April, which will be the initial public meeting, with the next PAC meeting in mid-May. Once the meeting schedule becomes solidified dates will be sent out the PAC members.

- It was agreed that at future meetings that Agendas will be sent out in advance, as will any other documents that PAC members should need to review and be able to discuss, and that the meetings will start with a study status presented by the HDR Team regarding actions and activities of HDR and subconsultants, meetings held and progress made.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)
MEETING #2
MEETING SUMMARY

March 6, 2014, 2:00 pm, Plaistow Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

- New Hampshire DOT - Shelley Winters
- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – Robert J. Clark
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Jim Russell
- Pan Am Railways – Not in attendance
- City of Haverhill – Not in attendance
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Not in attendance

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson, Katie Rougeot

Approximately 5 non-PAC members attended

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- The floor was open to the public for their comments at the beginning of the meeting. The public were informed this would be the only time during the meeting to provide comments. Follow up comments could be provided to PAC members after the meeting for discussion, as appropriate, at future meetings.

- **Comments:** Larry Gill, former selectmen of Plaistow, NH- Larry believes there is a need for a commuter rail in Plaistow, NH. He supports the efforts of the study and is disappointed that there are people that will not give the project a chance to be evaluated before forming an option on the merits of any plan.

- **Comments:** Richard Blare, resident of Plaistow, NH- Richard agreed with Larry's comments and knows there is negativity about the project. Richard explains how he is legally blind and has no way of traveling to Haverhill or Boston by himself. The commuter rail would give him a means of getting around without being dependent on someone else, reiterating the importance of transit access for the portion of the population that do not, or can not, drive.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

- The DRAFT Project Purpose and Need was sent electronically to the PAC after the last meeting. Comments were received and reviewed.

- The Purpose and Need is a required part of the NEPA process which will frame the study and be used as a tool to screen alternatives. The different alternatives considered will fit the Project's Purpose and Need.

- The Purpose and Need of the project is different from the goals and objectives of the study. The goal of the study is to analyze commuter rail service and implementation options. The purpose of the project is to implement commuter rail service to Plaistow.

- The Draft Project Purpose and Need still needs the input from the general public. Once comments are received, modifications may or may not be made to the draft.

- **Comments**: Suggestions to review Section 4.2 Commuting Cost and Travel Times and Section 4.4 Regional Air Quality Attainment and to remove Section 4.6 MBTA Train Operational Efficiency were expressed.

  ACTION: In response, it was agreed that Section 4.2 and Section 4.4 will be reviewed. Section 4.6 is included as it provides the rationale for participation in the project by the MBTA.

- Information regarding existing train schedules and FRA train horn requirements were distributed for consideration and incorporation into the study.

- A suggestion was made to change Section 4.6, MBTA Train Operational Efficiency, to state layover should be moved north of the existing Haverhill Station. It was stated that the section should remain because there are a number of reasons to move the layover which includes MBTA considerations that must be evaluated as part of the study.

- Configuration of the layover facility and station are important because of they impact non-revenue operations and capacity of the line. If the layover or station is not in ideal locations there will be cost and operational disadvantages.

- It was noted that the local RPCs have received congestion and roadway data from the National Performance Research, which uses cell phones data.

  ACTION: The HDR Team will evaluate how this data could be utilized for the study.

- **ACTION**: The HDR Team will make revisions to the DRAFT Project Purpose and Need based on the comments.

PROJECT SCOPE

- An overview of the scope of the study was provided. The study is currently in Task Two, Environmental Assessment. Upcoming tasks will include Ridership Development and Rail Service Plan Development. Ridership development will include information on future fare increases, (assumed plan is 5% every two years), gas prices projections, and congestion. The HDR team will be working with the MBTA to develop an operating schedule and an operating cost.

- Cliff Sinnott said it is important to use the experience from other MBTA expansion projects and see if it can be used for this project.

- **Comments:** A question arose if there was any way of using data from other regions to assist in ridership analysis. In response, it was noted that travel demand models are different for each metropolitan area. The results from a different region would not translate well to this area.

PARKING

- Concern about the amount of parking needed was discussed along with the possibility of a bus service connector. Bus service may be a beneficial connection to the train station but will not be part of the site option evaluation. The amount of possible available parking does not appear to be site selection discriminator at this point.

LAYOVER FACILITY AND STATION REQUIREMENTS

- The requirements for a layover facility and station were discussed. Six different layover facility and five station concept plans were distributed to the PAC members. The layout for each layover facility included six layover tracks, area for associated improvements (i.e. stormwater detention), an area for parking and crew building and the estimated limit of disturbance. The station concept plans includes the station track and platform along with parking and an estimated limit of disturbance.

- A Study Area Map was distributed to the PAC members which displayed the primary constraints such as residential development, open space/parkland, priority habitats, wetlands and water bodies.

- **ACTION**: It was requested that the two sites that were eliminated from further consideration (144 Main St and Westville Homes Site) be identified on the concept plans.

- **ACTION**: It was noted that there appears to be wetland/stream information that did not display properly on the concept plans – to be revised as required.

- **Comments:** Since the concept plans need to be explained to other people, a description of the attributes of each conceptual plan would be helpful. Developing a way to rank the conditions or a matrix for evaluating was also suggested.

- **ACTION:** The HDR Team will develop and distribute a description of each concept plan. The HDR Team will distribute an electronic version of the concept plans with the modifications discussed.

NEXT STEPS

- The next Project Advisory Committee meeting will be the 1st week in April (April 3rd at Atkinson Town Hall) and the public meeting will be in early May.

- It was agreed that at future meetings that Agendas and documents, as appropriate, will be sent out in advance.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)
MEETING #3
MEETING SUMMARY

April 3, 2014, 2:00 pm, Atkinson Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – David Harrigan; (Alternate) Robert J. Clark
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Ron Morgan
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Jim Russell
- Pan Am Railways – Not in attendance
- City of Haverhill – Not in attendance

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson, Katie Rougeot, Jamie Paine

Approximately 2 non-PAC members attended

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- The floor was open to the public for their comments at the beginning of the meeting. Follow up comments could be provided to the PAC members after the meeting for discussion as appropriate at future meetings.
- **Comments:** Larry Gill, former selectmen of Plaistow, NH- Larry stated that he has been an active supporter of the project since its early development. He expressed his concern that those in opposition to the project are not giving the project a chance before the study information is even developed.

PREVIOUS ACTION ITEMS

- The agenda for the meeting along with meeting minutes from PAC meeting #2 were sent electronically on March 25, 2014. Comments were received and reviewed. At the start of the meeting copies for these two documents were distributed. Any further comments were asked to be expressed.

- Shelley Winters said for next set of meeting minutes a deadline will be established for comments to be submitted. When a final document is produced, it will be posted on the NHDOT website.
- **Comments:** Sean Fitzgerald asked to edit grammatical mistake of the spelling of Larry Gill's name. Also, he asked if the comments in the meeting minutes could include who made certain request for info.
- Cliff Sinnott asked to include his comment to the Project and Scope section. Last meeting he said it is important to use the experience from other MBTA expansion projects and see if it can be used for this project.

INITIAL SCREENING OF SITE OPTIONS

- On March 25th an electric document of the Site Option Attributes and Plaistow Site Option #7 were distributed to the PAC members.
- The Site Option Attributes document was developed based on Sean Fitzgerald's request at the last meeting to provide a summary of the main points of each option to better understand the pluses and minuses of each. This document was produced to assist in the review of each site option.
- Plaistow Site Option #7 was developed based on review and refinement to previously developed Site Options. The site option was a variation that is different enough from the others that it was thought it should be considered as another option.
- John Weston said that through using the site option attributes and our discussion today we want to screen the seven different options into two or three. The two or three options will then be further analyzed. The goal of the meeting today is to have a working discussion to determine which sites can be screened out and which ones have potential to further analysis.
- Ron O'Blenis introduced Jamie Paine from Normandeau Associates. Jamie will be working with the HDR team on environmental issues. Through development of site options it will be critical to minimize environmental impacts. Additional investigation will be done on the revised list of potential sites. The data developed to date is based on record/GIS information and although sites may appear to work on paper, there may be issues on the ground that have not yet been documented. Jaime will lead the more detailed investigation of environmental site conditions.
- Cliff Sinnott noted that in the community attribute section of the Site Option Attributes document that a differentiation should be made to compatibility of adjacent development to a station as opposed to a layover facility. He said community compatibility for a layover isn't the same compatibility as with a station.

- **Comments**: Robert Clark identified an error in the Site Option Attributes document. In Table 1.4.1 Layover Community Attributes and Service Operation Ability, Layover 6 location should be changed from Home Depot to Haverhill.
- David Harrigan asked why the no build alternative was not included in the options. John Weston responded that the no build alternative will be considered as part of the NEPA document when comparing different build alternatives, but at this stage only possible build site options are being assessed.
- Sean Fitzgerald expressed his concern that not everyone has been to a layover facility and does not understand what mitigation needs to be done. He suggested that some information be provided regarding what types of mitigation may be possible and how effective they are.
- Sean Fitzgerald stated that he had not been able to have a detailed discussion with his board about the site options and was not prepared to endorse or eliminate any options at this time. This sentiment was echoed by the representatives from Atkinson.
- **ACTION**: Changes will be made to correct the errors in the Site Option Attributes document. The no build alternative will be included as an alternative after the site screening process.

TRACK CONFIGURTION

- Robert Clark asked if the square footage of the facility could change by using bi-level cars. It was explained that the size of the facility is consistent with MBTA design standards that establish all new facilities should accommodate a 9-car train.
- Ron Morgan explained the required length of the platform or layover facility will not change based on the projected ridership of the Haverhill line or train configuration. The 9 car train length is a requirement to accommodate projected growth on the system and because the rest of the system uses that configuration. In the future the MBTA will be only purchasing bi level cars but each train set will still consist of 9 coaches.
- Crossovers are not included in the plans now, but the future design will include them. Ron O'Blenis said the length of track will not reduce in size but the configuration of the layover may change depending on the environmental issues.

NOISE IMPACTS

- In response to questions about noise impacts and site topography, Ron O'Blenis explained that the HDR team will model the noise impacts based on the conditions and attributes at each site. The team will be using FTA (Federal Transit Administration) methodology which is a well known model utilized around the county to assess impacts from train noise.

- John Weston said the model will analyze noise in two different time periods. One test will be evaluate loud sounds, by using info. from an hour long count of ambient noise. The other will measure noise over a 24-hr period, which takes into account the different noise levels in both daytime and nighttime.
- **Comments:** Sean Fitzgerald asked if an example of the information that is evaluated through the modeling process could be provided to him.
- **ACTION:** HDR Team will provide a summary of the factors of the noise modeling analysis.
- David Harrigan said he knows someone that witnessed the train engines at Bradford idling for one hour before leaving the facility in the morning. David said the noise is one issue for the residents.
- Sean Fitzgerald suggested visiting a modern facility to have a better understanding of the operational aspect of a layover.
- Robert Clark said the time of year will produce a different noise sample, how is that accounted for?
- Jim Russell said depending on the season adjustments are made to the model.

LAYOVER OPERATIONS

- Jim Russell asked the MBTA if they would consider operations to Plaistow if there was no layover included in the project. Also, can we assume some trains may not begin their runs in Plaistow? In response Ron Morgan explained there may be exceptions but the MBTA would prefer to have an end of the line layover. He said the assumption can not be made that all trains will not stop at Plaistow, that answer can not be made until the schedule is developed.
- Bradford currently has four trains layover at night and the fifth train layovers in Boston. The MBTA position is to correct problems and reduce compromised facilities.
- Jim Russell explained that Amtrak equipment cycles on from time to time to stay warm. Any temperature below 42 degrees the engine must continue to run and can no be turned off. It was discussed that MBTA equipment is typically plugged in and it is not understood that it cycles on as Jim explained the Amtrak equipment does. This will be investigated further by the MBTA and the HDR Team.

SITE OPTION REVIEW

- **Layover 1:** Ron O'Blenis said this site is operationally ideal however it does have environmental problems including the stream crossing. Taking the property does not improve accommodations of the layover.
- Plaistow is generally not supportive of this option, the residents in this area already experiencing noise from the existing wood chip operation.

- Ron O'Blenis says from an economics point of view, using the site would likely result in the taking of two businesses. The area already has unemployment issues and this site option would impact that.
- Sean Fitzgerald suggested demoting a site rather then screening them out, categorizing as less promising or more promising.
- Layover 1 is not designed to avoid the Town of Newton; movement of the switch location would not improve the layover to avoid environmental impacts.
- **Station A:** Sean Fitzgerald believes if Layover 1 is not promising, Station A can not be promising. The Station A is located in heavily populated residential areas; local officials would be concerned of the traffic.
- Ron Morgan asked if the parking facility size in accurate in the drawings. In response John Weston explained the parking shown is about half the size, the estimated amount is 350-400 spaces. This number is an estimate until the ridership data is produced.
- **Layover 2:** As recommended at last meeting, 144 Main St property was identified on the site plan. This layover has some wetland impacts and operational issues but avoids the stream on the property.
- **Layover 3:** Jamie Paine explained that using wetlands for access is more acceptable cause for wetland impacts. He suggested impacts may be reduced by moving the layover tracks away from the wetlands and having a longer lead track to them.
- **Station D:** Ron O'Blenis said this station uses the existing park and ride for parking. However, this parking lot will have a flooding issue and the existing business on the property will need to be taken. The platform is located on the roadway which would necessitate relocating the roadway onto property owned by the adjacent apartment buildings. The benefit of this location is there are minimum environmental impacts. The station location is not ideal but possible.
- Cliff Sinnott suggested the property off of Joanne Drive as a possible layover site. Robert Clark added that using that site for the layover, would not result in the blockage of Main St. which would occur with Layover 2.
- **Layovers 4, 5, and 7:** Ron O'Blenis explained all three layovers are a variation of each other. Layover 7 has the potential to move to the south due to the wide span bridge and be modified to look like Layover 5. This layout of these layovers options will ultimately be dictated by the topography of the land and the environmental impacts.
- David Harrigan voiced his concern that these three options were close to the Westville Homes site which was eliminated from the study. In response to this comment, Larry Gill asked if the Westville Homes is still out of the study. HDR team said the site was physically too small to fit a layover facility. Shelly Winters said NHDOT has agreed and signed a MOU that the Westville Homes site will not be included as an alternative in the study.

- **Layover 6:** This layover has potential but there are operational issues. Ron O'Blenis emphasized the more efficient we can make the layover for the MBTA the less costly the project will be as a whole.
- Ron Morgan asked if the layover could be potentially double ended. Ron O'Blenis responded that it will be explored as the designs are refined and understands that a double ended facility leads to greater operational efficiency and feasibility.
- The HDR Team will plan to meet with the Pam Am Railways and MBTA to discuss operational issues.
- **ACTION:** The HDR Team will take into consideration the suggestions for potential changes to the sites options. The Team will meet with Pam Am Rail and MBTA to have a better understanding of operations.

STATUS OF STUDY SCOPE ITEMS

- John Weston explained the status of the ridership analysis. The HDR Team will be using a FTA "STOPS" model that employs cell phone and MBTA data. The MassDOT will be funding the ridership model.
- David Harrigan urged HDR and NHDOT to do a Destination Survey of the drivers on Route 125 and Route 121 during morning rush hour in order to learn how many drivers are going to destinations served by the Haverhill Line and therefore are potential train riders who might remove them from commuter traffic. Current users of the stations in Haverhill could also be asked if a Plaistow station would be more convenient.

NEXT STEPS

- The next step will be hosting a public meeting. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to be the week of May 14, 2014. Location is to be announced.
- The public meeting will address the Purpose and Need along with all the potential options. The purpose of the meeting is to allow for public feedback in order to screen out options.
- At the closing of the meeting, the Alternatives Evaluation Criteria document was distributed. These criteria provide the framework for evaluating the alternatives, once they have been screened down to 2-3 sites. The PAC members were asked to review the document and provide feedback regarding additional information that would be needed in order to be able to compare the alternatives.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)
MEETING #4
MEETING SUMMARY

September 9, 2014, 2:00 pm, Atkinson Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – David Harrigan; (Alternate) Robert J. Clark
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Ron Morgan
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Not in attendance
- Pan Am Railways – Not in attendance
- City of Haverhill – Not in attendance

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters, Lou

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson, Katie Rougeot, Stefanie McQueen

Approximately three non-PAC members attended

INTRODUCTION

- Ron O'Blenis explained that nine layovers and seven stations were presented at the last public meeting. Comments were received and considered during the screening process. Since the public meeting field studies has been performed in water resources, historical data, and archaeological sensitive assessment. Considering the resource data and railroad operational issues the options were screened down to three alternatives.
- John Weston explained that the memo was sent to the PAC prior to the meeting is only part of what will be in the final report. The purpose of the Site Option Development memo was to provide a progress level document to describe the alternative screening work to date.
- Sean Fitzgerald suggested the Site Option Development memo should state the selected options first. Sean said he would like to include government bodies' comments as part of the decision process.

- Ron O'Blenis said the presentation for the public meeting will be sent out to the PAC for comments ahead of time.
- Ron O'Blenis said the sites in the area of Home Depot / Walmart have been screen out. The resources are more challenging at this location. There are large amount of wetlands and grade differential. The site screening memo gives rational to the selected sites.
- Shelley Winters said the Commissioner has seen the concepts so far and is involved in the process.

ALTERNATIVE I (LAYOVER) - HAVERHILL

- Ron O'Blenis said the first map summarizes the locations of the three alternatives. Alternative 1 (Layover) is located in Haverhill with access from an existing bridge. The layover shows six tracks, three pairs.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if it is a problem to cross the wetlands or stream. Ron O'Blenis answered that mitigation will be needed but only the lead track crosses rather than the multiple tracks of the layover yard.
- John Weston said the wetlands identified by the scientists were based on types of soil and plants therefore the time of year the test was completed is not a factor. The wetland field studies identified vernal pools. Alternative I (Layover) is an isolated site with surrounding industrial land use.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he has been in contact with the property owner of the garage on the opposite side of the layover location.
- John Weston said we can not ignore the fact that this alternative is located in Haverhill, MA and not New Hampshire. We need to understand the agreement with New Hampshire and Haverhill.
- Ron Morgan from the MBTA said the level of deadhead in this alternative is not ideal from an operational stand point.
- Ron O'Blenis said the station, which could pair up with this alternative, would be located off to Westville Road at the existing park-and-ride.
- Sean Fitzgerald said in 2010 that there was a preliminary study completed for a layover in Haverhill, MA.
- John Weston said that he saw the design of this layover. The layover was on the other side of the tracks oriented towards Haverhill. The layout would work great for a station in Haverhill but if you are serving Plaistow it does not make sense.
- David Harrigan suggested including the apartment building near the post office in the noise analysis. Also consider noise levels for 2nd story of buildings.
- John Weston said typically for layover projects the noise monitoring is tested a maximum distance of 500-ft. The maximum distance depends on the base noise. Trucks start to drown out the noise level at 500-ft or further.

- Sean Fitzgerald asked if a 500-ft radius could be shown on a map.
- John Weston said the test limits be shown when we receive the noise monitoring data. He said he brought it up the topic today to put it into perspective that that maximum distance will be around 500-ft.
- Ron O'Blenis noted that the second map of Alternative I (Layover) shows more resources including the floodplain.

ALTERNATIVE I (STATION) - WESTVILLE ROAD

- Ron O'Blenis said alternative I (station) is located off Westville Road. The station has its own dedicated track. The station consists of parking and drop off area. The roadway will need to be realigned, affecting a few properties.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if there was any way not to take the property located on this site.
- Ron O'Blenis said the property must be taken in order to avoid major wetlands and a pond.
- John Weston explained that the requirement is to have a high-level platform. The station must have a dedicated track in order to reverse directions without affecting the mainline operations. In the past low level platforms were built but now there are accessibility requirements and issues with freights clearing the platform therefore only high level platforms are being built.
- Sean Fitzgerald stated that these alternatives show only a platform and he thought was there would a station building built.
- Ron Morgan said there as been problems in the past to make a station building work. People buy tickets beforehand and jump on the train; they will not use the station building. He suggested finding a happy medium.
- Cliff Sinnott said that in the TIGER application it was proposed to be a low-level platform.
- John Weston said according to ADA regulations it must be a high–level platform. There was a question within Massachusetts about the regulations for passenger service but it has been resolved and a high-level is required. By example, the newly implemented seasonal trains must be high-level as well.
- Ron O'Blenis said MassDOT is supporting the Knowledge Corridor project and three years ago they designed for low-level platform. Now they are redesigning for high level.
- Tim Moore said his concern is not the high-level platform, he believes the length of the platform is the problem and asked why the platform needs to be 800 feet long.
- Ron O'Blenis said all doors on the train must land on the platform. John Weston added that a person can not board through one door and exit from another car door. There needs to be uniformity within the system.

- Ron Morgan said there is problems within the system therefore anything new added should be built and show uniformity.

ALTERNATIVE II - JOANNE DRIVE

- Ron O'Blenis explained alternative II is located off RT 125 with access from Joanne Drive. The field studies provided refined wetland locations. He said that he took a trip to this site with the wetland scientist.
- Ron O'Blenis said the site has major wetlands along with vernal pools and archaeological sensitive areas along the Little River. The site includes a steep grade approaching the body of the track and along the platform. This option would require taking a few homes along Joanne Drive. A retained earth wall would be used to mitigate amount of impact of the stream crossing. This site would require a significant amount of fill.
- Shelley Winters asked how far the closest parking is to the station.
- John Weston said the parking is not located very close. If parking was closer ramps would need to be built from the parking to the platform due to the grade differential. The ramps would increase the amount of space parking would take up.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if there was a possibility to connect the park and ride on Westville Road and the station.
- Ron O'Blenis said that it was possible to build a pedestrian bridge over the tracks but they are usually not favored.
- John Weston said this alternative preserves the ability to develop on the Testa site. He said in order to connect a development on Testa to the station a pedestrian bridge over the stream must be built.
- Sean Fitzgerald believes that keeping this towards RT 125 and away from the elementary school is better. He asked where the sound wall would be located.
- Ron O'Blenis said it would potentially be located where needed to mitigate potential impacts to homes but the location will be determined when the noise monitoring data is completed.
- Ron O'Blenis explained there will be a tail track located on the existing right of way. This allows the train to pull out of the layover into station or out of the station into the layover.
- Cliff Sinnott asked if the location the existing track becomes single track.
- Ron O'Blenis said the main track in this section goes from double to single. Trains stop there often, which will be taken into consideration for the noise base.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if there is any roadway traffic analysis being completed.
- John Weston said there will be some analysis completed but not a traffic model simulation. Enough analysis will be completed to show level of service at intersections.

ALTERNATIVE III - 144 MAIN STREET/TESTA PROPERTY

- Ron O'Blenis said this site began with multiple variations and with permission from the town to use the 144 Main Street site, the following alternative III was considered.
- Ron O'Blenis explained that alternative III provides 300 spaces of parking, a drop-off and pickup area, and green space. The layover tracks are against the mainline. There is a tail track located to the south of the layover to allow movement from layover to station and station to layover without accessing the mainline track. A noise wall at this location will be similar to the MBTA Greenbush (Scituate, MA) Facility.
- John Weston said track layout is set and will probably not change but the parking configuration can vary. The layout of the parking shown is as if there was no future development.
- Ron O'Blenis asked if the conservations land could be available for development.
- Sean Fitzgerald believes it is part of the Southeast land trust and would be difficult to obtain.

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVES

- John Weston said we have come up with one additional combination of layover and station. The station would be located on the Testa property and layover will be on Joanne Drive property. Discussion indicated that this may be a preferred alternative to the current Alternative III. (Note: HDR looking at this option and will send out to the PAC a revised option for that could be substituted for current alternative 3.)
  Sean Fitzgerald said there is potential for a DOT project on route 125 near Joanne Drive intersection and asked if we considered access from Joanne Drive to Testa property.
  John Weston said the differential in grade and stream crossing from the Testa property to Joanne Drive would be difficult.
- Cliff Sinnott said when parking grows consider a new roadway. He asked if the demo of the building on the Testa property would be part of the cost of the alternative.
- Ron O'Blenis said that the demo will be part of the cost and with the demo there may issues hazmat materials.
- John Weston said hazmat has not been a great enough issue to screen out any options at this point.
- Sean Fitzgerald said we might want to show at the next public meeting what mitigation will be done.
- Ron O'Blenis asked what is the town's vision and where do they want the station location.
- Sean Fitzgerald said the Testa property as been mostly industrial use but a station may attract different uses.

- John Weston said the Joanne Drive (Alternative II) would be a more expensive site due to the retaining wall and fill. He suggested looking at the past traffic volumes into the Testa property.
- Sean Fitzgerald said the town has a safer school grant to support pedestrian safety along Main Street.
- David Harrigan suggested having a public release of the overview map identifying the sites that are being considered prior to the public meeting. He believes only the people being affected will then attend the public meeting.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he would like to emphasize the positive factors about the project rather than the negative.
- John Weston said HDR's economists have been looking into the development market in Plaistow and how a station would interact with the market potential for future development. He said the Testa property may have potential for higher density residential and some supporting retail. Local real estate professionals contacted by HDR seem to think there is an opportunity for development of this site given local vacancy rates.
- Sean Fitzgerald suggested looking at the cost benefit from the TIGER application.
- John Weston said we will have ridership and cost estimates when we have a preferred alternative. We have been looking at data that calculates the Plaistow and Atkinson residents that are employed in Boston and Cambridge. We will be looking at other towns similar to Plaistow that have commuter service.
- Sean Fitzgerald suggested looking at Rockport for comparison.

NEXT STEPS

- Ron O'Blenis said the public meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2014 in Plaistow. Everything presented at this PAC meeting will be presented at the public meeting along with noise monitoring update. Any additional information will be set to the PAC prior to the meeting.
- Noise monitoring is planned to start next week. Ron O'Blenis asked if anyone had comments of the Scituate Layover Facility.
    - Sean Fitzgerald said he noticed a large difference between the Scituate and Bradford layover facilities. He said Bradford layover looks like they made a huge mistake, there is no mitigation, no sound wall. The space at Scituate looked organized and the sound wall made a great impact on noise.
    - David Harrigan said the trains in Scituate idles for 90 minutes and a half an hour of that is moving from the layover to the station and idling the remaining time at the station.

  - Sean Fitzgerald said the newer cars at Scituate make less noise than the older. He asked how many old cars are on this line.
  - John Weston said there is a timeline when the older locomotives are retiring.
  - Sean Fitzgerald suggested comparing the new and old locomotives to show people there is changes in the system and this is what the future will bring. He suggested video production of each site.
- Tim Moore said start up demands on the configuration and where the station is located. He suggested explaining air quality during the public meeting. He believes people are concerned about the smell.
- Cliff Sinnott said he has been contact with the surrounding communities in order to receive their input in the project. He will schedule series of informational meetings.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
Meeting #5
Meeting Summary

December 16, 2014, 1:00 pm, Atkinson Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore

Town of Atkinson – David Harrigan;

Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella

Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Not in attendance

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Jim Russell (via phone)

Pan Am Railways – Not in attendance

City of Haverhill – Not in attendance

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters & Lou Barker

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Katie Rougeot, Stefanie McQueen

Approximately two non-PAC members attended

Meeting Handouts:

- Draft Recommended Alternative Screening Memo/Alternatives Analysis Summary Table
- Draft Ridership Forecasts for Proposed Plaistow Commuter Rail Extension Technical Memo
- Draft Land Use Impacts/Benefits Memo
- Draft Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
- Alternative Graphics

Meeting Notes:

- Shelley Winters introduced the PAC members and explained the agenda for the meeting. She said the beginning of the meeting would be open for public comments.
- John Sherman, a selectman from the Town of Plaistow said he received a recommendation memo at the selectman's meeting the previous held. He felt the document did not evaluate each alternative equally. He said he has developed spreadsheet that he sent to NHDOT and HDR team and has not heard feedback. He suggested ranking the evaluation criteria as high, medium, or low priority.

- Ron O'Blenis explained to the PAC that Mr. Sherman was referencing the "Draft Recommended Alternative Screening Memo" that was discussed at the Town of Plaistow Board of Selectmen meeting held on December 8, 2014. The memo was developed based on the ongoing alternative analysis and incorporated public input from the October public meeting, PAC member input from previous meetings, and written comments from the public. Ron explained that the memo was further updated and refined after the Board of Selectmen meeting on December 8th and now incorporates comments from the Plaistow Board of Selectmen. The draft memo includes a summary of the analysis for each alternative, an overview of the screening process, and provides a draft recommendation. The current version of the memo that is provided for this meeting includes an updated matrix to assist in a consistent evaluation of alternatives.
- Ron O'Blenis said he would like to discuss during the meeting to determine if each criteria should be ranked. The current evaluation of the alternatives evaluation is a qualitative assessment.
- John Sherman said that in terms of priorities, the amount of property required for acquisition is a more important consideration than walking distance to the station. He suggests identifying the properties that need to be taken and then rank the properties.
- Sean Fitzgerald said that so far, costs have not been well defined for each alternative and that risk has not been established. He expressed his concern about making a decision before going through the process.
- David Harrigan said a no action alternative needs to be included as part of the process.
- John Sherman said he has concern with Alternative II parking expansion, which requires a bridge to connect to parking. He thinks that Alternative I station makes more sense because it uses an existing park-and-ride lot. He suggests stating in the criteria the benefits, negatives, and an explanation of what mitigation will be required.
- John Sherman said that the Board of Selectmen would like to see the results. They are concerned they may not have this opportunity. They would like to see the study continue, but would like to see the results well before a decision needs to be made.
- Shelley Winters said the study is moving in a linear process. The timeframe has not changed.
- Sean Fitzgerald advised that decision process of Town of Plaistow would need to be considered in determining how public input or approval will be obtained.
- John Weston said the current process is moving towards a recommended alternative. Once the recommended alternative is determined, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will evaluate the recommended alternative and the no build option. At this point, a true decision will be then be made.

- John Weston introduced the draft "Ridership Forecasts for Proposed Plaistow Commuter Rail Extension Technical Memo" that was distributed for discussion during the meeting. He said ridership is a driver of many of the remaining tasks. Delay in the ridership was caused by MA CTPS inability to undertake the ridership work. HDR has undertaken this work and has expedited the ridership forecast development. The ridership forecasts presented at the meeting are draft results. The ridership write ups need to be reviewed for final edits, but the forecast results are considered the projected ridership numbers.
- The forecasts were developed in two different ways. The first method used cell phone data from a third-party source to help analyze where people are going. For this study, HDR considered the number of people in Haverhill, Plaistow, and the surrounding areas (approximately 5 miles around Plaistow) that travel into downtown Boston. The data shows that approximately 95% of people traveling from Haverhill to downtown Boston use commuter rail. In general, terminal stations have a high percentage of people that use commuter rail to travel to Boston. The second method used MBTA survey data and U.S. Census employment data.
- Cliff Sinnott suggested drawing a 5-mile circle on map used to show the market areas for Plaistow and Haverhill. (Other PAC members concurred with this recommendation)
- John Weston said that using the two methods of forecasting, based on existing commuter rail ridership, the number of estimated riders at a new Plaistow station in Year 1 would be between 90-100 riders. The cell phone data showed only the number of people going to downtown Boston, but there are also a large number of people that take commuter rail to destinations other than downtown. The cell phone data did not capture this information, but the MBTA data and Census estimates did account for this larger destination area.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if the cell based Boston destination area could be expanded.
- John Weston advised there would be a significant time delay to do this. He noted that the numbers of the two approaches are similar, thus it is not expected that adding the expanded cell data would not be expected to increase the numbers significantly. It also means that the forecast numbers can be described as conservative. John Weston said that the future projections for ridership take into consideration natural growth, growth in employment in Boston or Cambridge, and an increase in the number of riders based on improved access to commuter rail service.
- Cliff Sinnott concurred that over time the train will attract people to Boston. He asked how long it takes for people to change travel patterns. John Weston believes it happens quickly. He said the MBTA survey/Census employment estimates and projections include not just commuter trips but the total number of trips per week. He also said that

economist interviewed people to have a better understand of the type of development possible for this area. According to the analysis, there is a market for additional residential units and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) potential in Plaistow.

- Cliff Sinnott also believes that the population is not growing as quickly as is stated in the memo. He believes that 0.0365% annual growth rate is too high. John Weston said the growth rate used was from Plaistow's Master Plan to represent actual growth from 2010 to 2014.
- Dave Harrigan suggested adding additional citations to the ridership forecast document and making access to source data and studies easier.
- Sean Fitzgerald said ridership is an important factor and this needs to be clear to the selectmen and the public.
- Jim Russell said commuters are a part of the market but ridership for special events could also play a huge role for this service as it has for the Downeaster.
- John Weston then reviewed the near-term potential traffic impacts that would result from the projected ridership. In the AM peak hour, an additional 100 trips are expected, and an additional 46 trips are expected in the PM peak hour period. Currently, the daily traffic counts on Main Street are 6,700. Route 125 has 19,000 daily trips. Based on the anticipated ridership and additional trips, the traffic impacts on these two roadways are anticipated to be minimal. He mentioned that the traffic impacts are still underway and more details will be available at a future meeting.
- Cliff Sinnott questioned the travel times between Plaistow and Haverhill station presented in the draft "Land Use Impacts/Benefits Memo." He inquired if this was the travel time during peak hours.
- John Weston said that the travel times may be low for peak time and that HDR will evaluate them further.
- Cliff Sinnott stated there were statements in the Land Use document that do not have a reference and asked that references be provided.
- Ron O'Blenis said our initial assumption for ridership was 275 and our 2030 projection, based on the cell phone data and MBTA survey/census estimates, is very close at 279.
- Ron O'Blenis said that it is important to understand what the town wants regarding the future development of the town. The project team does not want to make assumptions as to what the Town's needs are. To that point, John Weston said commuter rail stations do not necessarily drive development, but allow for a focal point. Cliff Sinnott said the station would *promote* development.
- Ron O'Blenis said an issue with Alternative III is the potential for hazardous materials and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) does not support clean up activities as part of their projects.

- Tim Moore said existing traffic on Main Street is the problem with Alternative III.
- Ron O'Blenis said Alternative II keeps traffic off Main Street and it is not located near the school. However, the downside is it that it takes residential properties.
- Regarding Alternative I, Ron O'Blenis said that the MBTA are not saying "no" to have the layover and station separated, but they will need to make sure it is economically feasible.
- John Weston then introduced the draft "Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment." He said the three alternatives do not have any significant differences in terms of any significant noise impacts. Alternative III creates some impacts to more residents due to the location of the locomotives at the layover facility and station. There are two types of impacts: severe, which must be mitigated, and moderate, which may be mitigated.
- Shelley Winters said there will be another PAC meeting on January 6, 2015 and a public meeting tentatively schedule for mid to late January contingent upon the availability of Plaistow Town Hall.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
Meeting #6
Meeting Summary

January 6, 2015, 1:00 pm, Plaistow Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore

Town of Atkinson – Robert J. Clark

Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Ron Morgan

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Katie Rougeot, Stefanie McQueen

Approximately 15 non-PAC members attended

Meeting Handouts:

- Previous meeting handouts (Ridership Forecasts memo, Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment memo, Land Use/Economic Benefits Assessment)
- Draft Layover Facility and Station Alternatives Analysis Report

Public Comments:

- Shelley Winters said PAC meeting 6 would begin with public comment and follow with a working session among the PAC members.
- James Peck, a 37-year resident of Plaistow said many Plaistow residents are concerned about the negative impact of the project and all three station and layover locations. He said that he believes the public engagement of the project has been limited to date and understood that it was not funded as part of this project.
- Sean Fitzgerald responded and said the HDR project proposal had the firm **Project for Public Spaces** as a subconsultant to support public participation, but available funding was not sufficient to engage them. He noted that in the agreement relative to the project with NHDOT and the Town of Plaistow, public engagement was the responsibility of the Town.
- James Peck said the project website and Facebook site are not highly publicized and suggested advertising more to increase public involvement. He stated that the website

has not been updated recently with additional study materials. He suggested using the Facebook page more to spread the word. He said the public meetings have been repetitive and that, so far, costs/benefits are not being addressed. He said a Facebook page has been formed with 300 followers called "Citizens Against a Train Layover Yard in Plaistow NH." He showed concern with small ridership, low air quality improvements with limited vehicle reduction/emissions. He believes all three layover locations will cause impact to town residents.

- James Peck asked if Alternative 1 Layover is 90% in Haverhill and 10% in the town of Plaistow. Stefanie McQueen clarified that the layover footprint is located in Haverhill and access to the site is from Plaistow.
- James Peck said that it appears that Alternative 2 has a large impact on wetlands. He asked what would be done to protect wetlands. Ron O'Blenis said the layover is designed to minimize the impact. Our environmental team is working on ways of mitigating wetlands. He asked how much fill would be needed. Ron O'Blenis said he does not know the amount of fill, but the track to connect to the site will require use of fill or a bridge to minimize wetlands impacts.
- James Peck stated that Alternative 2 is 1,500 feet away from Pollard Elementary School and Alternative 3 is 500 feet away. He asked when the next public meeting would be held. Ron O'Blenis said the next meeting would be held at the end of January.
- Peter Griffin, a member of a New Hampshire railroad restoration group and resident of Windham, NH said he has nothing to gain or lose from this project but that New Hampshire as a state does. He urged Plaistow residents to look beyond the immediate downside to see the long-term upside (i.e. economic positives and mobility). He said people need to think about the future, you may have no interest in the train but the next person that wants to buy your house may want it.

Meeting Notes:

- Shelley Winters then closed the meeting to public comments and introduced the start of the PAC working session. The discussion started with a review of the draft Ridership Forecast memo that was introduced at the previous PAC meeting.
- John Weston said the previous comments received on the ridership memo were reviewed and the document is undergoing revisions. He provided more details on how the market areas were defined based on the two data sources utilized for the estimates. Both the cell phone data and the 2008-2009 MBTA survey show that 92%-95% of riders would come from the five towns (Plaistow, Atkinson, Newton, Hampstead, and Kingston).
- Cliff Sinnott commented about the high population and employment growth rate used to estimate 2014 figures. John Weston said new data from the New Hampshire OEP was released and population in the Plaistow area has actually decreased slightly between 2010 and 2014. This makes the ridership projection for 2030 based on a 0.9% annual growth rate not as robust as

previously projected. Ridership projections for 2030 dropped by approximately 30 people, from approximately 280 down to 250.

- Sean Fitzgerald asked that looking at the big picture, would a station work with these ridership numbers. John Weston said that a station in Plaistow would be on the lower end of the middle range of all MBTA stations when comparing ridership.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if a table could be provided that compares ridership at other existing terminal stations in the MBTA system.
- John Weston said one way to determine if a station is successful is how it does economically. For example, while revenue from tickets will not produce a profit for the MBTA, a successful project would provide enough ticket sales to help offset operating costs and allow a reasonable opportunity for MBTA to provide the additional trip to Plaistow. The positive aspect of this project is that the operational cost is only incremental.
- Ron O'Blenis said if the station and layover facility were located on the same site, the MBTA costs would be minimized. He also emphasized that the working assumption, based on previous discussions with MBTA, was that if a terminal station and layover station were built in the Plaistow/Atkinson area that it would accommodate current and future operational needs, and then the MBTA would operate the commuter rail service extension at no cost to the local communities or NHDOT.
- Sean Fitzgerald said local officials and the public are asking how much it will cost. He asked if the operating costs and revenue potential could be provided to show the public that they would not have to incur any of the costs. He also asked if the some comparable costs could be provided, such as the cost to operate at Bradford versus a new station in Plaistow.
- Shelley Winters said we will provide this data as best we can in a format that will help to provide some additional context. It has been understood from the beginning that the MBTA will operate the commuter rail service extension at no cost to the local communities or NHDOT.
- John Weston said that an initial estimate for operating costs based on data from a few years ago is around $400,000. He explained that HDR is working on getting up to date figures that may change since MBTA has a new operator (Keolis) and they may have a different cost structure.
- Robert Clark referenced the range of year one ridership numbers he has seen in the past (approximately 670 in the 2010 TIGER grant application and 167 in the recent ridership forecast memo). He expressed his concern that current projections show that only 1% of the area resident's population would utilize the service.
- Cliff Sinnott said there are two ways to report ridership: passengers or trips. The 2010 TIGER grant may have utilized number of trips (one-ways) which is why it is much higher than recent projections. In the current ridership numbers, we are showing the number of passengers per day, or round trips.
- John Weston agreed that the percent of area residents that access jobs in Boston or Cambridge is low, but that demonstrates why the service is needed. He suggested that not everyone could drive the 10 minutes to access commuter rail service in Haverhill. We have made conservative assumptions on ridership projections using other comparable communities that do have access to commuter rail.

- Robert Clark said ridership should be factored into a No Build option. He asked if the layover were in Haverhill, would the MBTA support operations.
- Ron Morgan said that MBTA's design standards are to co-locate terminal stations and layover facilities. He explained that there is economy in locating the facilities together. In the case of Alternative I, they are separated by 1.1 miles and it would require the movement of trains between the station and layover facility and additional deadhead costs would be incurred.
- Shelley Winters said that how each alternative addresses the MBTA policy would be incorporated into the alternative analysis matrix.
- Ron Morgan said the PAC members attended the site visits to other existing layovers, including Greenbush station and layover in Scituate, MA. Those facilities are designed to MBTA standards that include having terminal station and layover facilities constructed adjacent to each other.
- Ron O'Blenis asked Ron Morgan to look further into the MBTA's willingness to accept Alternative I with the layover and station being located in two different sites.
- Robert Clark asked if the layover is in Massachusetts would New Hampshire or the Town of Plaistow incur a cost to operate. John Weston said further conversation with MBTA is required to determine their position on supporting Alternative I. He also noted that in addition to reducing operating costs, another reason for the MBTA policy of co-locating the layover and station is reliability. Having them as a pair there is less likely to have conflicts with freight and other passenger trains and eliminating potential delays. Ron Morgan confirmed that reducing conflicts with other trains is a driving factor in the MBTA policy.
- Cliff Sinnott commented on the ridership and the percentage of people who would utilize the service. He said that with many transportation investments (i.e., bridge repairs, sidewalks, etc.), it is not possible to create a project that benefits a large percent of the population, but that does not mean they are not valuable projects. He stated that if you look at the per vehicle cost compared to the number of vehicle capacity added for the I-93 improvement project, it would be low.
- Robert Clark said that he believes the primary concern with the project is the layover facility. For people to support the project and be willing to take on a layover facility that would be a permanent fixture in the town, the ridership numbers need to be there to off-set the negative impact of the layover facility.
- Ron O'Blenis said that our ridership estimates are conservative and calculated estimates are near the assumed 275 riders that was discussed by the project team at the beginning of the study effort.
- Robert Clark said the TIGER grant said this area was a nonattainment area, but now it is an attainment area. He requested this be changed in the documents. Ron O'Blenis said that this change will be indicated in the documents.
- John Weston said the cell phone data and the MBTA data correlate almost perfectly regarding the number of people daily traveling to Boston. Currently, 95 people from the five towns are traveling to downtown Boston everyday. After looking at the cell phone data and MBTA survey data, it was discovered that many area residents who use commuter rail have a final destination

other than downtown Boston. Approximately 750 area residents work in Boston or Cambridge in places outside the typical downtown business district.

- Cliff Sinnott asked if the ridership projections presented are on the low end.
- John Weston said the 1% increase in the number of area residents from these five towns that that would access jobs in Boston or Cambridge is a conservative value If you look at the map that shows the percent of town residents that work in Boston or Cambridge, in areas similar to Plaistow they have Boston employment rates 5 to 10 percent higher. . Commuter rail service has been available in these communities for some time. He said with Commuter Rail service he does see Plaistow growing to this over time, but does not know how long it will take.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he would like to see a comparison of ridership at other recently opened stations, such as Greenbush station in Scituate. He asked what the ridership estimates were before the station opened and how has ridership increased since service began.
- Shelley Winters concluded the ridership discussions and said the next thing on the agenda will be the Noise and Vibration Assessment report.
- Robert Clark said he does not see calculations of noise caused by the train horns. He said the number of horns a day should be part of the study.
- Ron O'Blenis said that train horns are not blown when trains exit and enter the layover facility; they are only tested on the start up. The majority of new train horns will occur when the train passes the at-grade crossing at Rosemont Ave in Haverhill, MA. The number of horns a day in Plaistow will be approximately 5-6 when the trains start up at the layover facility.
- Robert Clark asked how far away from the Rosemont Ave crossing does the horn start blowing. Ron O'Blenis said approximately 900 feet before crossing.
- Ron Morgan confirmed that the horn gets blows at crossings as well as at start up. He explained that the start up horn is not as intense as the crossings, and is usually very short.
- Sean Fitzgerald said Plaistow would not be receiving a layover like the one in Bradford. The new facility will be designed to current standards similar to the one at Scituate. He suggested relating the noise decimals to relatable everyday noises (i.e. lawn mower).
- Ron O'Blenis said the analysis looks at the existing ambient noise and adds in the anticipated noise from the project. Each alternative is located relatively far away from any of the receptors (i.e., residences, schools, etc.). The locations of the layovers are substantive mitigation by itself. Two noise walls are recommended for two clusters of residences in Haverhill. For the other receptor locations, mitigation is recommended through the introduction of improved building insulation, window treatments, or air conditioners.
- Sean Fitzgerald said we should support the best mitigation process. He would like to see how the introduction of additional sound walls at the layovers would compare to other mitigation measures.
- John Weston said noise does not build on itself. Each added noise does not necessary make a bigger nuisance. In many cases, the level of noise will blend in with current ambient noise.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked to have the noise model include a sound wall at each layover site to determine how significant a sound wall would be. He mentioned the sound wall at the Scituate layover and from 500 feet away you could not hear the trains.

- Ron O'Blenis said federal standards allow for noise mitigation per dollar spent at receptor. At Scituate, the residents were located very close to the layover facility. Here the closest receptor is typically 1,000 feet away.
- John Weston said noise impacts are identified as being moderate or severe. Each type of noise and noise impact has different types of actions to mitigate the impacts. Most of the noise impacts are in Massachusetts. There is another category below moderate that could be mitigated, but this is not typical. This type of mitigation is over and beyond any state or federal mitigation.
- Cliff Sinnott said it would be helpful to see what federal funds will pay for and how much actual sound is added. He asked if the analysis took into account both day and nighttime conditions (Ldn) and if most of the trains occur during the nighttime timeframe.
- John Weston said most the day and night conditions were accounted for and that most of the train's movements into/out of the layover are included in the night time frame.
- Cliff Sinnott stated the graph on vibration on Page 12 of the Noise and Vibration Assessment was easy to understand, but he was having trouble understanding a similar graph on Page 8 related to noise. He said it could be helpful if a similar graph was developed for noise as for vibration.
- Ron O'Blenis said that the graphs on pages 8 and 12 are used for calculation purposes and do not show results for this project.
- John Weston said that for added vibration you start with zero and have only one variable. He said he will talk with the noise and vibration experts and see if we can develop a graph for noise based on existing noise level.
- Robert Clark suggested providing a graph that shows overall existing, added noise, and noise levels with mitigation, including sound walls.
- Shelley Winters said the comments about displaying the data in a graphical form would be considered. Revisions will be made to the conclusion section of the document to have a better understanding of the document without having to read it in detail.
- Ron O'Blenis distributed a draft summary table that shows the number of noise impacts for each alternative and explained that this is a first step to summarizing the complete noise impacts from the report.
- Shelley Winters thanked the PAC members for their comments and said the revisions to the Noise and Vibration Assessment will be made and another draft will be produced. She asked if there were any further comments on the Land Use and Economic Benefits document presented at the previous PAC meeting.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if the Land Use and Economic Benefits document could include an executive summary, a summary table, or bullet points. Shelley Winters said his comments will be taken into consideration.
- John Weston said the Town of Plaistow's Master Plan includes a goal related to pursuing a train station, but that it does not go into great detail. John Weston asked if the town could provide their feedback on the details of the Master Plan as it relates to station related development. Sean Fitzgerald responded that transportation is part of the Master Plan.

- Ron O'Blenis asked if there have been any other proposals for the Testa Realty property (Alternative III site).
- Sean Fitzgerald said the Testa Realty property has been looked at a few times and that it has been considered for a TOD project, but additional traffic on Main Street due to development on this site is a primary concern. Main Street traffic calming is a top priority for the Town of Plaistow, and additional impacts may not work with ongoing efforts to reduce traffic in the village center.
- Ron O'Blenis asked if this supports Alterative II because access is off Main Street. Sean Fitzgerald responded that he would like to make sure the study is complete before supporting any alternative. Sean also mentioned the jobs numbers included in the report, 645,000 jobs in New Hampshire, and 445,000 jobs in downtown Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. He emphasized the importance of land use to increase jobs, access to jobs, and providing more opportunity.
- John Weston said people are using commuter rail to reach further then just downtown so the access to jobs number may in fact be higher than the 445,000 figure provided in the draft. He said the report will include additional job growth estimates in Plaistow based on capital costs for the project.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked to highlight employment opportunities and include the Town's unemployment numbers in the Land Use and Economics Benefits document. He asked the study team to explain how the project will help residents.
- Cliff Sinnott said it was helpful in the report to compare a new station in Plaistow to other terminal stations. He asked if the proposed trip time between Plaistow and North Station includes proposed track and bridge improvements along the corridor. John Weston said the bridge improvements are included, but he will check about the track improvements.
- Shelley Winters introduced the next topic, Chapter 9 of the Draft Alternatives Analysis Report. She indicated that the chapter an evaluation matrix that was revised based on previous comments at the Plaistow Board of Selectmen and PAC meetings to include a response to each evaluation criteria for all three alternatives.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he would like to see details on cost, in particular the added cost to the town due to loss of property or tax revenue for acquisition of properties for each alternatives. In addition, he would like to see potential revenue to the Town from parking or other sources.
- Ron O'Blenis said the study will recommend the location of the layover and station, but continued feedback is needed make this decision.
- Robert Clark said that the MBTA position needs to be determined to see if Alternative I can be eliminated at this point. Sean Fitzgerald asked how much it costs to operate the train for the deadhead trips required in Alternative I. Ron O'Blenis said the questions about the MBTA's position will be looked into.
- Robert Clark requested if the maps in Appendix E could include the location of the layover and station tracks could be include on the existing land use maps. Stefanie McQueen said that the tracks can be included and the maps can be updated.

- Cliff Sinnott asked if this would be the last PAC meeting before the next public meeting. He said he feels that another meeting is needed to review the evaluation matrix and to produce a result. Sean Fitzgerald agrees and would like to have the Plaistow Board of Selectmen involved.
- Robert Clark said he would also like to have the Atkinson Board of Selectmen involved. Shelley Winters said that Plaistow selectmen reached out in order to get involved, and Atkinson is welcome to do them same.
- Ron O'Blenis said our job is to take your comments into consideration and come to a conclusion.
- Cliff Sinnott said the alternative analysis process is to locate where a layover and station could be built, not if any project should be built.
- John Weston confirmed that the true decision on the project would be made during the EA (Environmental Assessment) process. However, if none of the alternative sites were recommended during the alternatives analysis process, an EA process would not be advanced.
- Shelley Winters closed the meeting by saying that another PAC meeting will be scheduled for the week of January 19 and a public meeting will be the week of January 26.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
Meeting #7
Meeting Summary

January 20, 2015, 1:00 pm, Plaistow Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – Robert J. Clark
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Ron Morgan
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Jim Russell
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission- Todd Fontanella

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters, Lou Barker

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Stefanie McQueen

Approximately 5 non-PAC members attended

Meeting Handouts:

- Plaistow Commuter Rail Benefits Summary
- Capital Cost Estimate
- FTA Noise Assessment Example Memo
- Revised Draft Alternative Analysis Chapter 9 (Recommended Alternative) – includes updated Evaluation Matrix
- Draft Layover Facility and Station Alternatives Analysis Report

Public Comments:

- Shelley Winters introduced PAC Meeting #7 and opened the floor to public comments.
- James Peck, a Plaistow resident, said that he represents a group of 400 citizens who are against a layover facility. He said he appreciates the response to comments from last meeting. However, he said the study's Facebook page still needs work. He stated that based on CMAQ program goals, the project should measure air quality in one of two ways. One being the cost of the project verses vehicle miles traveled (VMT) removed and another cost of the project verses tons of emissions removed. He pointed out that

since the ridership includes existing commuter rail riders, the emissions would not include a full reduction of VMT or emissions for these 104 existing transit riders (i.e., reduction would be five miles, not 80 miles one-way). He said he would like to see the results of this analysis in the Alternative Analysis Report. He also stated that CMAQ funds could be used for other projects in the state; they are not tied to Plaistow. He suggested it will be helpful to Plaistow, region, state and residents see the cost/benefits.

- Ron O'Blenis advised that there are discussions to extend the contract for the study to allow additional time for PAC and public comments. He noted that as part of the annual town meeting process, the Plaistow Board of Selectmen and public are preparing warrant articles for vote in March 2015. A contract extension would allow adequate opportunity to consider results of any vote as part of the public input for the study.
- Sean Fitzgerald said the Town supports the extension of the study and feels like the study should not be rushed for completion by March. The Town's Board of Selectmen would like a vote to occur within four months after the study is completed. They feel the March vote would not allow citizens to have as much info as possible before voting. After the study is complete, the town would undertake a public outreach campaign to engage the public and make sure under-represented citizens are involved in the process. The Town has received a lot of information in the last several weeks. The Town is busy with preparation for Town Meeting right now and would not want to miss the appropriate review of materials related to this study. He would like to get town boards involved in the project, including the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. He asked if the remaining project budget could support any additional public engagement. The town will send letter to NHDOT to support extension of project to allow proper presentation of study materials to the town and public. He would like the PAC to go on record to support extension of the project.
- Robert Clark said that the cost benefits and ridership are almost done. He would like NHDOT to evaluate no build at this point, rather than just extension of the contract.
- Shelley Winters said she would like to still review the three alternatives with the PAC and get public input on the alternatives to be able to finalize the Alternative Analysis report. The contract extension would really extend the Environmental Assessment (EA) process and allow for proper FTA review. The Alternative Analysis process is almost finalized and is not the reason for the contract/study extension.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if the Alternative Analysis includes a No Build option. John Weston said if none of the three alternatives is determined to be feasible as part of the Alternatives Analysis process, then a No Build alternative becomes the recommendation. If that occurs then the project work effort will not progress into the formal Environmental Assessment (EA) phase, but would rather conclude with documenting the rationale for the No Build conclusion. If a build alternative is

recommended, than it moves into the EA process, which involves comparing the selected alternative to a No Building option. He stated that the question for today is whether there is an alternative that is even worth proceeding into the EA process.

- Ron O'Blenis said he is concerned with the town vote and how it fits into the public process. A general discussion of the Board of Selectmen and public warrant articles on a town vote followed. The study team expressed the concern that to proceed with the study, public input is needed at two parts during the process: the first is if any of the three alternatives are preferred; then, later, the second decision on if the project is preferred over a no build scenario. The timing of the public vote needs to fit with the study timeline to make sure public input is meaningful to the study decision-making process.
- Robert Clark said that the citizen petition asks if you are in favor of having a layover facility and commuter rail service in the Town of Plaistow.
- Sean Fitzgerald expressed concern that public thinks the layover facility will be like Bradford.
- Robert Clark stated that on March 15, 2015, citizens will vote on the project and a second warrant article put forth by the Board of Selectmen may or may not happen based on the outcome of the citizens' warrant article. He said January 30th is the deliberative session.
- John Weston introduced the Plaistow Commuter Rail Benefits Summary paper. He stated that the project has four primary potential benefits: jobs, property values, public benefits, and economic development/expansion/growth. The benefits are in general not site specific. Jobs related to station development are really linked to supportive development in Plaistow. The potential for associated development is not well defined yet, so two different development scenarios were considered for the benefits assessment. The first example is the development of the Testa and Chart property site as a transit-oriented development (TOD) type with 20-25 retail shops. This potential development scenario has a benefit of adding up to 1,000 jobs. The second development scenario was completed for this study that looked at just the Testa Realty site. This scenario is mostly a medium density residential development type, with limited commercial development. This scenario would add approximately 36 jobs.
- Ron O'Blenis said the station can help induce jobs not directly create them.
- Robert Clark asked if these benefits were for all three alternatives.
- John Weston said that yes, with some variation. He stated that the likelihood of these benefits occurring depends on the desire of the Town of Plaistow for certain types of development.

- Ron O'Blenis said it would vary based on which alternative is selected. For example, if Alternative III is selected, the potential development area for TOD on the Testa Realty property is reduced to accommodate the layover and station.
- John Weston said that the potential for station-related development is driven by the Town and real estate market (i.e., zoning, market demand).
- Ron O'Blenis said that the Testa Realty property is zoned industrial; it would need to be rezoned for TOD.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he has discussed rezoning the site in the past.
- John Weston said another job driver is construction. Approximately 325 jobs per year during construction are expected to occur related to station and layover construction. It is likely these jobs would not be local to Plaistow, but rather regional due to type of jobs. Another potential benefit is an increase in property values related to station development. A number of studies have shown that on average, commuter rail can increase property values within one-half mile of a station by 10% or more. In some cases, the increase has been up to 23%. Studies also have shown that during times of economic decline such as the recent recession (2007-2009), areas within close proximity to stations have a greater ability to retain property values. One example is the area around the Bradford station that performed 1000% better than non-transit areas of the town. A third potential benefit is economic development. This benefit is based on the ability for employers that locate near transit to attract from a larger job pools. This benefit is hard to quantify at this point however.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if these benefits are included within the alternative evaluation matrix.
- John Weston responded that no, these benefits are not specific to any alternative, but rather common for all alternatives.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked why these properties in Bradford performed 1000% better than other properties. He asked if this shows the value of multimodal access.
- Robert Clark asked if the large increase was because these properties were undervalued and then they finally went up. He said that it was important point from the findings to note that the influence occurred within the one-half mile.
- John Weston said yes, the one-half mile was the major number in Bradford, declined after that.
- Sean Fitzgerald suggested creating a new table that shows other communities with commuter rail service and how property values have changed over the past 5 years. This could perhaps show how well a station can help insulate property values. He suggested using State of Massachusetts data on equalized assessed evaluation value for this analysis.

- Cliff Sinnott asked if there is a conservative number for the one-half mile area incremental difference. He asked if the property impact of an alternative could be considered, looking at how the loss of property taxes for a site is offset by increased property values within one-half mile of the stations.
- Sean Fitzgerald said that the I-93 project did not use this metric to evaluate cost/benefit/person. He asked if there is some reasonable standard to apply to this study's analysis.
- Ron O'Blenis said not really, because it is really a public policy question. The cost/benefit metric for TIGER grants helps to compare projects on a national level, but is not necessarily good to use to compare local benefits.
- Cliff Sinnott asked if there are measures that can be used to help the public understand the local impacts/benefits.
- John Weston said jobs related to adjacent station area development are the primary benefit tied to these types of projects. To understand the full potential of this adjacent development, we need to understand how the Town would leverage the station and if it would result in additional development.
- Robert Clark said the 2010 TIGER grant assumed a $2.3-$4.9 million benefit, a ridership of 700, and large development around station.
- Cliff Sinnott thought that the cost/benefit in TIGER grant did not include economic development. John Weston said TIGER grant is mostly driven by station development not just on ridership and a reduction of vehicle miles travelled (VMT).
- John Weston introduced the Capital Cost Estimates.
- Robert Clark asked which capital cost will be funded by MBTA.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he believes that the Town cannot afford MBTA commuter rail service if the station and layover are not co-located. He stated that most communities would be unable to support the operational subsidy needed to support operations. He described that at the onset of the discussions about moving commuter rail to Plaistow involved a relocation of a layover to North Haverhill. The Town of Plaistow was then approached about the possibility of extending service to Plaistow and relocating the layover facility near the new station.
- Ron O'Blenis said that it is also our understanding that the Town could not support an operational subsidy.
- John Weston said that what our $400,000 operations and maintenance (O&M) cost estimate is in the right range for the MBTA cost to operate. This estimate is not markedly different from the initial estimate and in reality the additional operating costs would be offset by the additional revenue (ridership) gained

- Sean Fitzgerald said he had asked if the extension of service to Plaistow could be tried before a new layover facility is built. He said that he was told no because of the concern for inefficiencies. He said that he had asked MassDOT if they would already have extended service to Plaistow if the state line was further north, and he said that he was told yes service would likely already extend to Plaistow.
- Robert Clark said that he asked at the last PAC meeting if the MBTA feels that putting the new layover in Massachusetts is feasible.
- Ron Morgan said that he is still waiting for a decision. Robert Clark asked if MBTA is waiting for a recommendation to make their final decision.
- Ron O'Blenis said he is not sure if it is relevant, because part of the Alternative I layover is in Plaistow.
- John Weston said that the alternative costs were all close with the exception of the layover costs. He said that the Alternative II costs were higher due to bridge and retaining walls required to avoid wetland and floodplain areas. John Weston said that the additional costs for Alterative III are tied to the demolition and acquisition of the Testa Realty property. He said that Alternative I's costs illustrate the efficiencies of using an existing park-and-ride lot and lower real estate costs.
- Cliff Sinnott asked what the mainline track costs included.
- John Weston said that the mainline track costs include the cost for signal systems and interlocking that will need to be installed on mainline to prevent impacts to freight and other passenger services (e.g., Amtrak's Downeaster) due and eliminate the need to lower speed on this segment of the track. He stated that Pan Am would not let impacts to freight service occur.
- Jim Russell asked if Pan Am has been involved in the study. Ron O'Blenis said that we have been in contact with them.
- Sean Fitzgerald said that the contingency costs seem high. John Weston said that a 30% contingency is based on FTA guidance.
- Sean Fitzgerald said he would like the capital cost summary table to include funding sources to help local public officials understand the costs.
- Ron O'Blenis said MBTA will help contribute to the match for federal funding. He explained that the federal funding source is still unclear at this point. John Weston said sources for federal funding changes frequently. He has discussed the project with FTA and it does not meet criteria for New Starts or Small Starts. He stated that this project is not a good candidate due to ridership/number of riders, transit supportive land, and financial planning of project sponsor. Mr. Weston explained that state funding sources are probably unlikely. TIGER grant type funding is the most likely option at this point, but it could change.

- Sean Fitzgerald said during the TIGER grant application process, MBTA agreed to pay for the layover with agreement that the state/town would help cover station costs and acquisition of one train set, possibly through the use of CMAQ credits. John Weston said that MBTA no longer needs additional train sets. He stated that he had not heard that MBTA obligated to pay specifically for just the layover. We have heard local match would be paid by MBTA.
- Sean Fitzgerald mentioned the capital bond bill. He suggested putting potential funding sources in the capital cost estimate table.
- Shelley Winters asked if what Sean Fitzgerald actually wanted for local officials was a breakdown of anticipated Federal funding % and MBTA funding % to determine if MBTA's contributions satisfy the entire matching fund requirement. Shelley indicated that most likely funding sources would provide 80% federal funding for capital and a 20% match would be required. In addition, quick math based on the capital costs estimates indicate that the value of layover facility would fluctuate for each alternative from 13% of the total project cost to 20% and instead we are trying to ascertain the total project cost for all infrastructure improvements and then later determine federal and other (MBTA) matching funds.
- Ron O'Blenis said the town of Plaistow is not anticipated to pay match or operating costs. Also only limited discussions can be held with MBTA until a decision is made on a layover in the Plaistow area.
- John Weston then introduced the FTA Noise Assessment Example Memo. He introduced additional graphics were prepared to show the area that would experience noises higher than the existing ambient noise, including all areas that would experience severe, moderate, or minimal impacts. The graphics were projected to the group. The graphics showed the difference for each alternative how the addition of noise wall(s) would impact the areas experience higher level of noises. In some cases, the addition of a noise wall reduces the noise level in some areas below the existing ambient noise levels. He explained this is for outdoor noise, not what can be heard inside residences or other buildings.
- Sean Fitzgerald stated that this appears to show that noise walls would mitigate more than just project related noise in some cases. He asked if electrical substation costs are included in the capital cost estimates. Ron O'Blenis responded that yes, the relocation costs are included.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked if a comparison of the number of buildings would be impacted with or without these additional sound walls could be prepared. He also asked if we could compare the number of properties impacted in the three alternative sites to the Bradford layover site.

- John Weston said while many houses in Bradford are 135 feet from the layover tracks, the homes are located higher than the tracks, which complicates the ability to reduce noise impacts from sound walls. Sean Fitzgerald asked if the issues with Bradford layover and how the new layover would differ would be presented at the next public meeting.
- John Weston introduced the revised draft of Chapter 9 of the Alternative Analysis report. This chapter outlines the alternative screening process and includes the alternative evaluation matrix that has been discussed at previous meetings.
- Shelley Winters pointed out that the highlighted cells in the evaluation matrix are the items that were updated since the previous meeting.
- Robert Clark commented that air quality has not been addressed yet, and said he would like to see the impacts. He said that air quality should be a top consideration for the Town of Plaistow. He asked if results from cold start engines would be included in the analysis. Ron O'Blenis said that these tests would not be completed as part of the study.
- Ron O'Blenis said that the air quality analysis for this study is still underway.
- Cliff Sinnott said that while air quality is important, especially on a regional level and for potential funding sources, he believes that air quality impacts would be similar for all three alternatives. The results of this analysis would really impact the No Build decision.
- John Weston stated that this is also an issue for MBTA and that they are actively procuring new locomotives that meet higher EPA Tier 4 standards. By 2020, they hope to significantly reduce the number of existing locomotives that meeting lower Tier 2 standards.
- Shelley Winters asked the group to provide their opinion of each alternative's key benefits or issues based on the evaluation matrix that was provided. She asked if after the review of alternatives if there was a consensus agreement on which, if any, of the three sites was being recommended by the Project Advisory Committee. The results from the group discussion on the benefits and issues of each alternative are provided below.

Alternative I

Key Benefits/Advantages	Key Issues/Constraints
- Limited impact on wetlands - Lowest overall costs - Reuse of existing park-and-ride facility - Compatible with immediate area	• Operational issues tied to 1.1 mile separation of facilities (mentioned most frequently) • Access to Route 125 is not the most convenient of the alternatives • Concern with future land use compatibility

	• Town can't support operational subsidies that seem likely for this alternative • Most impacts to Atkinson residents • Most residential properties within one-half mile of two sites

Alternative II

Key Benefits/Advantages	Key Issues/Constraints
- Co-location – reduces impact to freight/Amtrak - Operationally ideal for MBTA - Mitigation of wetland impacts seems possible (bridge and other context sensitive solutions) – scale of wetland impact seems limited - Best access to Route 125/ best opportunity to capture regional traffic/makes most sense from a regional transportation perspective/best opportunity to attract riders - Existing lighted intersection and access to Route 125 - Future development potential of adjacent sites is higher (Testa site is not used for station/layover and would therefore be fully available for development) - Fewest residential properties within one-half mile of site & least noise impacts - Smallest land impact of all sites - No Town property used	• Seems to have the most environmental impacts/concern to public (mentioned most frequently)

Alternative III

Key Benefits/Advantages	Key Issues/Constraints
- Operationally good for MBTA	• Concern with traffic impacts on Main Street (mentioned most frequently) • Less regional access opportunities • Reduces opportunities for TOD development on Testa site • Impact on schools and adjacent neighborhoods • Includes reuse of Town land • Currently zoned industrial

- John Weston reviewed what he heard:

  - Alternative I: operations issues are the primary concern, MBTA's concerns over complications are apparent; most residential impact.
  - Alternative II and III are close in terms of issues and benefits.
  - However, Alternative II seems to be preferred due to benefits of regional access and lower local roadway impacts, less impacts on Plaistow Village, existing signalized and designed intersection with Route 125 at Joanne Drive, smallest site impact, fewest noise impacts, primary concern is wetland impact on site
- Cliff Sinnott agreed that this is what he heard and interpreted it to mean PAC consensus was reached for Alternative II. John Weston said that moving forward with Alternative II leaves options open for Testa Realty and town-owned site.
- Cliff Sinnott asked that since the Alternative II site is adjacent to the Testa Realty site, could this site connect to the Alternative II station. John Weston responded yes, but the trick is how to create a hospitable pedestrian environment between the tow sites.
- Sean Fitzgerald asked what additional information or analysis would be done on the Alternative II site as the recommended alternative. John Weston replied that the Environmental Assessment with include regulatory and permitting reviews. The NEPA process will be followed to complete a more thorough investigation of wetland impacts, the air quality process, FTA review, SHPO review of archeological and historic impacts, additional cost information, and an implementation and financing plan.
- Sean Fitzgerald stated that a lot of information has been received in the past 60 days.
- John Weston said that a frequently asked question list will be prepared and will be available at the public meeting that helps summarize the work done to date and answer important questions.
- Shelley Winters stated that the next public meeting is Wednesday, January 28th at 7pm in Plaistow Town Hall. She said that the next PAC meeting is dependent on whether the contract is extended.
- Cliff Sinnott stated that he would submit a letter in support of a contract extension to NHDOT. He mentioned that the next TAC meeting will be held on Thursday January 22nd and he will be presenting the status of this project.
- Shelley Winters concluded the meeting.

PLAISTOW LISTENING SESSION

August 22, 2013, 7:00 pm, Plaistow Town Hall

NHDOT: Mark Sanborn (MS), Patrick Herlihy (PH), Shelley Winters (SW)

HDR Engineering: Ron O'Blenis (RO), John Weston (JW), Pamela Yonkin (PY)

Town of Plaistow: Shawn Fitzgerald (SF), Town Manager

Approximately 50 people attended the listening session.

Summary of comments

Introduction by Mark Sanborn: (MS)

- Early public meeting because of public debate related to this rail project
- Will assure that study information reflects the needs and interests of the people in the community
- Overall discussion of history of the project that included acknowledgement that current project effort will follow established federal project review and assessment procedures
- Noted that because are at the very beginning of the study, won't be able to answer many of the questions at this time
- Only the progression of the study has been approved – no approval beyond completion of the study has been given
- Westford Homes and Penn-Box sites are off the list for consideration of the layover facility
- Local support required to be "feasible"

Project Description by Ron O'Blenis (RO)

- Emphasized that study team is at the very beginning of the project
- Noted presentation limited to a description of the project and geographical limits
- Potential extension of commuter service that currently goes to Haverhill out to Plaistow
- Noted that beyond MA the railroad is owned by Pan Am Railways
- MBTA and Pam Am Railways have agreement that would allow for commuter trains to be operated to Plaistow but not beyond Plaistow town limits
- 12 month major activity timeline
- Looking forward to listening to comments

Overview of Process of Study by John Weston (JW)

- Presented framework of the study and the timeline
- Progressed with oversight of Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Following FTA guidance for plan and design a transit project used nationwide
- Study will produce an Environmental Assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that include public information and input
- Alternatives will be considered that will include a no-build alternative
- Noted that there will be follow up meetings
    - 3 public meetings will be held to present information of study efforts
    - Community Advisory Committee will be established – will meet on a regular basis and be open to the public

Public Comments

Public Comment: She lives approximately 1,000 feet from actual railroad tracks; wants train station at park and ride and wants to take day trips into Boston. Not too convinced about layover station, but would like the railroad station.

Public Question: How many NH residents (specifically Plaistow residents) will be employed during the study? There should be some consideration of employment of Plaistow residents.

> **Answer (RO)**: No one on HDR team lives in Plaistow. Up to 20 people working on the study.

Public Question: Under Task 4, Ridership Forecasts – indicates we will review. He is looking at page 8 of the Benefit Cost Assessment (BCA) of related project grant application.

> **Answer (Ron)**: Ridership of referenced previous BCA done by MBTA. The BCA was done by our company. No data was created; HDR used existing data.

Public Question: Feels that Plaistow has already indicated their displeasure with this project. Doesn't understand why we are looking at this again, just because it is potentially federally funded.

> **Answer (MS)**: NHDOT was directed by the town (MOU with Plaistow) to pursue this study. Money used is Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funds administrated by FTA, despite being all taxpayer dollars, and it can only be used for a study of a commuter rail service. These dollars, if not spent on this

project, could not go into fixing bridges, for example. MS doesn't feel comfortable speaking to the "wishes of the town."

Answer (Shawn Fitzgerald): Welcomed all. Acknowledged that Selectman John Sherman and Selectwoman Joyce Ingerson were in attendance. The ballot question posed to the town was "Would you support a layover facility in Plaistow?" The study considers "How do we feel about a train station?" Shawn wants to get as much info as they can so that the townspeople can make an informed decision based on the results of the study. He is happy to meet with anyone to discuss this project.

Public Question: How many people gave you this (direction for the study)?

Answer (Mark): Board of Selectman, who you elected.

Public Question: Two-thirds of the town residents say they don't want this, but we are taking taxpayer money to study something no one wants. Is the essence that the MBTA will be in NH? They know they have some options for rail to the south. It is only 5-6 miles away, which isn't a huge distance. Concerned that the real end game is Lowell-Concord extension. Do we need to take the layover facility so that the MBTA can build the line to Concord? Is this what this project is about? Who would pay for construction and maintenance if this gets approved?

Answer (MS): Two ongoing studies in NH are related to rail. One is the NH Capital Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Service Development Plan (FRA and FTA funded) – examining transit, bus, intercity rail, commuter rail from NH to MA. This travels on a different line than what we have in Plaistow. MA interest involves the fact that they have an inefficient line that ends in Bradford. They have capacity issues in layover facility and it affects their operations. Part of the study is considering how to fix this. MBTA would provide a real service to Plaistow. The statement that studies appear to be being "mixed" is not true. They are not. No trade off. We'll provide ridership, cost, BCA and within that economic development, sustainability assessment. MS emphasizes that Plaistow will get X for Y investment and the communities will have to decide what they want to do. How much it costs and where funding comes from will come out of the study. Can't identify this right now but it will be available at conclusion of the study.

Public Question: Where would advisory committee come from?

Answer (MS): HDR and NHDOT and Board of Selectmen in Plaistow and Atkinson, RPC, etc. and MA will be consulted. Wide variety of different stakeholders on both sides of the border will be inlcuded. If you are not identified as someone to be on the committee, every meeting is open to the public and will include public comment.

Public Question: What are potential layover site locations? Looking for minimal to no impact to Plaistow residents.

Answer (RO): We will be looking at this. HDR has not looked at sites in any detail. We will look everywhere along line between Haverhill and ends of study limit. We will have these discussions as we go through the process to better understand impacts. Have not identified any sites yet.
Answer (JW): Typically we look at big long list of things we consider. Top on list is impacts including wetlands impacts, floodplain impacts, and noise/vibration. The last one will be the big one. We have a process that measures existing noise and volumes of noise generated by idling or trains passing by. The impact on traffic, air quality, bugs/bunnies, etc. as well as land use impacts. This will go through a federal review.

Answer (RO): These are defined by federal agencies. These are established procedures.

Answer (MS): Mentioned environmental justice. A location won't be chosen without folks in neighborhood being able to talk about the impacts. Just reemphasized in last reauthorization bill.

Public Comment: Nation needs a network of high speed rail like that in Europe. This will make a huge difference to how nation fares in the world. This is important. Elephant in the room is the layover facility. His understanding is that you can't get one without the other. Idling is the huge issue (an hour before service starts). Bill is an engineer and he doesn't know of a single reason why you would have to idle for an hour. Trains need train, steam, engine oil circulating. Easily done with a track side facility where you park the locomotive. If a layover facility must be built it has to be equipped with whatever it takes to get trains started in 5 minutes and that way, they won't have 4 locomotives idling and rumbling in their neighborhood.

Public Comment: Locomotive engineer on commuter rail system from MA. There are lots of employees who travel from Plaistow to Boston. Long term effect of trains to NH would be very beneficial. Is there an ulterior motive? He says Bradford facility is completely inadequate. Today's layover yard is not Bradford. Mentioned air brake tests, etc. 40 new locomotives are energy efficient, don't leak, don't stink. Don't be afraid of a layover facility. What you see in Bradford is not what you will see in the future – minimal exhaust and vibration with new facility. It will benefit you long term.

Public Comment: Recent Plaistow resident, formerly in Haverhill. Vibration and noise from railroad station was bad enough. MBTA wants to take in revenue to meet operating costs. $143 million in tax assessments currently. People should be aware of this.

Public Question: Re: train idling. Part of it is the requirement of an HVAC. They have to be warm enough for people to ride in. Bill is right that a lot more can be done at modern layovers. MBTA track record is not so great at some of the more modern layovers. They have had to be pushed to do that. Some of the trains are amazing and filter the air. They emit CO2 but they actually clean the air. How do we know what we get in NH when MBTA can only afford to

replace half of the fleet? How do we guarantee we don't get the worst engines here in Plaistow?

Answer (MS): Answer will come and will be part of the study.

Public Question: Not supportive of this. Freight trains are bad enough. Her house vibrates and we don't even have any layover or rail station here. Concerned about no town sewer. There would be impact on community with the installation of bathrooms at the new layover facility. Will Plaistow residents have a say in this? They feel like they need the final say. If voters choose this, she's okay with this. If she feels "railroaded," she's not okay with this. Wants bus service set up from park and ride in Plaistow into Haverhill to see who would park and take the train. She doesn't know anyone who would take the train. Could we have a station without a layover? Will eminent domain come into play? Will people be compensated for property impacts?

Answer (MS): One of the alternatives considered will be what would a rail station look like without a layover facility. In terms of decision making process, there is a state law that any public funding of any kind that is looking at passenger rail beyond planning study has to go through NH State Legislature. Any contract to implement anything would have to go through Executive Council. Lots of places in the process where they can work with their elected officials. It is possible for Plaistow residents to speak with state reps about conditions for moving forward.

Public Question: Plaistow had put together a report that said they wanted the train to come here to get the cars off the road. 500 cars off the road in 2014. Not sure where they got that number. If you want to take cars off the road, why are you allowing more businesses along Route 125. How will we research number of cars using Route 125 who are going to and from Boston? How accurate will this be in the study?

Answer (RO): While many times we will look at cars taken off the road as a metric, we want to look at this as the fact that highways are going to be congested. The reality is that when cars are taken off the road for some reason, others likely come on. The service addresses the question of congestion but doesn't necessarily reduce it. The service could provide alternatives for travel for residents of the area. Regarding ridership, we will work with MBTA with their process for estimating ridership numbers in their system. We want consistency. Exactly how we go about doing this is TBD. Some FTA models being utilized are just coming out and we want to see if they would be appropriate for this study.

Answer (MS): We are not claiming congestion solving with this project. This is looking at benefits that result with alternatives to what exists.

Public Question: Bus commuter station in Plaistow already. Going by at different times of the day there are about 15 cars there who take the bus to Boston. Why do we think they will hop the train to Boston?

> **Answer (SW)**: Lack of direct connection to Boston may be part of the reason that the bus is not being used. Bus service from Plaistow currently travels to Boston via Newburyport, MA.

Public Comment: They did windshield surveys on Route 125 and asked whether people would take a train. This is all part of the history. Park and Ride lot was studied as a bus and train station. She lives 500 feet near railroad in Atkinson. She doesn't understand why people are so surprised. You know you are buying a house near the railroad tracks when you buy it. We have been working toward passenger/commuter rail service for years. We are trying to get a sustained environment for land use and economic development. Please let the study happen. The questions are really good, but she feels like things are very one sided.

> **Answer (MS)**: Want to make sure that every voice is heard and respected.

Public Comment: Who of you goes to Boston everyday? She does every single day and she feels safe riding the existing bus, which is why she moved to NH. She referred to a news report of a knife pulled on conductor on MBTA. She feels safe on her bus. She doesn't see big need for this but she also worries about safety.

Public Comment: Comes here because he has served on a few different planning agencies. When you reintroduce a new mode of transportation, there is always a downside and it is very easy to get caught up in that. Look at the bigger picture. Don't think just about how it might hurt you. Think about how it might benefit you. Could be resale and new owner interest in rail service to Boston. Could mean the difference between selling and not selling house in timely manner. There could be reverse commute – convince a company from Boston to relocate because of commuter service. React to fact, not hearsay.

Public Comment: Her concern is one of safety. Worried about fires (as reference to recent Canadian train incident).

Public Comment: Asks that during the study we consider efficiency of service. She's ridden MBTA from Haverhill to Boston and it has been very, very slow. You need modern cars and a timely service. Current service is very slow and it chugs along.

Public Comment: Will we look at crime rate statistics with train station coming into town? People not taking the train to the South Shore.

Public Question: Looked at TIGER assessment, and it looks good. What do they gain? What traffic will come through town? Concern about fleet assumptions in TIGER BCA.

Answer (MS): TIGER was put together for second round. It will be reviewed, but do not presume that anything in there will represent the preferred alternative from this study.

Public Comment: Does not have luxury of driving car. He is legally blind and the only way he can get to the train station is his dog. He would love a train station in Plaistow. This is a study and it is new and comprehensive and will evaluate whether a train makes sense for Plaistow. New layover station will be different than the old ones. Older demographic in Plaistow and maybe they could take advantage of a train. Consider the reverse commute and opportunities for coffees shop and subsequent employment due to station area development. Students who don't drive can access Boston museums, etc. A person can get desensitized to train noise. Freight trains will continue to run. That doesn't change with a commuter rail. Take the opportunity to look at this and think with your minds not your heart.

Public Question: What are the plans to the north? Could you need two layover facilities?

Answer (MS): Will be part of the alternatives assessment. Impacts of ridership north and south will be considered. Pretty sure we won't need two layover facilities.

Public Comment: This operation that will provide alternatives started many years ago. The town has had an interest in making good decisions now and in the future. He likes the idea that there is a study that will address the negatives. He knows of noise and pollution as issues. If it doesn't work for Plaistow, it won't go. He wants to see facts and make a decision not just make a decision.

Public Comment: Highlights guidance used on planning board. Existing park and ride has 275 parking spaces. In the August 2010 BCA, we are looking at 2,500 riders in 2017 and 2,000 in 2025. BCA did not include parking demand estimate and different modes (bike, kiss and ride, walking) will be part of this study, but 300 parking spaces and 2,000 commuters is a potential issue. Concerned about car overflow. Please make sure enough parking is provided as part of each alternative considered.

Public Question: Also concerns about parking and local traffic. How people will get to facility on Westville Road? Likely impact on Main Street traffic. The warrant article that was passed was not a vote to stop the project. It only dealt with the layover facility. The issue related to it only being 4-5 miles from Plaistow Park and Ride to Haverhill station is true, but it is not doable in less than 15 minutes. 15 stoplights. Commuter could save 15 minutes off commute. The bigger concern is the stops in MA and they may not be efficient enough for us to reduce a lot of traffic. Lots of people commute to MA, but this commuter rail project may not help a lot of commuters. It depends where you work in MA. If layover is not in Plaistow, where could it be? Board of Selectman looked at the possibility of a site in Haverhill. Is part of the study to consider the financial viability of the MBTA?

Answer (JW): As projects move through the federal process, FTA checks on transit agency's viability. FTA requires each and every project receiving federal money to go through an assessment of what the financials of the agency that invests and operates the service look like. MA did pass a whole new set of transportation revenues, so MBTA looks like they are getting out from under their financial problems. We assume that the MBTA will be able to afford it as part of our study, but the FTA review of the MBTA's finances will happen during final design, the step that happens right after this process.

Answer (MS): MBTA would not agree to operate this if they didn't think they could handle this. In our process, the costs of each alternative will be determined.

Answer (RO): Our study won't look at the financial viability of MBTA specifically but FTA will be making the determination based on experience with MBTA as a whole.

Public Question: When this study is complete in about a year and information comes forward that this is viable, he can't imagine a set of circumstances where the Selectmen would move forward without the okay of the townspeople. He's very interested in the economic impacts of layover facilities and train stations. He would like to know what the property tax impacts would be because of train station and layover station being in Plaistow. Also, with respect to track rights, he understands that Pan Am agreement with MBTA to extend into Plaistow stopped at Main Street line. Is that correct?

Answer (MS): Will get back to them on property value impacts.

Answer (RO): It is not quite the town line but it is the milepost within a few hundred feet of town line.

Public Comment: 5 miles is a long ways if you are a bicyclist or walker. It's not all about kids or adults going down to Boston, there is other non-commuter traffic. Bus doesn't work for after school or weekends. Please keep an open mind on this.

Public Question: Are you saying that even if the town votes that they don't want anything to do with this, the state could say you are going to get one anyway? He feels like Plaistow is getting what Haverhill doesn't want and the state wants rail service because they want rail service.

Answer (MS): Any money spent by NH (federal or state) has to be approved by state legislature. In terms of the ability of a town vote being included in that or the ability of all the towns impacted to be included, it is all up to your elected officials. The question is really for the state reps. NHDOT does not want rail just for rail, but DOT has been directed by various elected officials to move forward with the study to look at this project at the request of the town. It has to do with the direction NHDOT has been

given by duly elected public officials. We are committed to gathering facts and information.

Answer (PH): If it comes to a point where the study is completed and there is a recommendation to go forward and Plaistow says no, he can't imagine a situation where DOT would say we want to go forward. Additionally, implementation requires a bill sponsored by state reps be submitted and approved for passenger rail to come to Plaistow.

Public Comment: What about eminent domain? MBTA is broken.

Public Comment: Several people mentioned that rail is subsidized. He just wants to remind people that highways are heavily subsidized.

Public Comment: There is no host community law to have the people to vote on whether they want a train or layover facility. He thinks they should talk to reps to see about getting host community law passed. An honest study is what everyone in the room would like. Can we get an honest study if we are relying on MBTA numbers provided by HDR who is currently working with MBTA on a number of projects? He is skeptical. HDR has been working with MBTA for past three years on this project.

Public Question: A little shocked by ridership numbers. Haverhill station never exceeded 600 riders a day. Can we discuss how we will do a ridership study? Is it independent of MBTA?

Answer (MS): Modeling is being determined and will be discussed with the public and advisory committee meetings.

Public Question: With respect to the study, is there an ombudsman that would have the opportunity to review what is done? We want Town of Plaistow to be in a good position to make decisions based on information. Trains need to be considered. I saved money on wear and tear on my car, gas, etc. using the train.

Answer (MS): DOT will review. Also talk to local and state officials about political process.

Public Question: Can we ask additional questions after this meeting? Has HDR done other studies like this?

Answer (RO): We've done a lot across the US and locally. We will do an unbiased study and we have done it before and we will use this expertise and Ron appreciates comments and we promise to be unbiased and provide the best study we possibly can.

Public Question: Surprised to hear that Pan Am would extend tracks north of Main Street. That area is single tracked. Won't they insist on double? Also concerned about train whistles at grade crossings.

> **Answer (RO)**: He thinks the extension beyond Main Street was to facilitate complete review. If more track improvements is needed, project is responsible for that. We also have to consider and provide for both freight and passenger operations.

Public Question: Is the study just NH?

> **Answer (RO)**: From Haverhill. MA north to Plaistow.

Public Question: Concerned that Plaistow will need to incur additional costs for police and other safety measures. If ridership isn't there, despite station and layover facility being built, what prevents the MBTA from not closing the station down and keeping the layover facility? What if MBTA doesn't make money at this station?

> **Answer (MS)**: There would be negotiations with MBTA that would protect the rights of a passenger station and layover station. There would be discussions and an agreement. He mentioned MBTA agreement with RI. No matter what, the service won't make money. It will be subsidized.

Public Question: Asked Downeaster whether they would participate in this service, and they were not interested unless an entire set of tracks would be built through NH. Downeaster might want to revisit if there was a station in Plaistow.

> **Answer (MS)**: Downeaster is a stakeholder and Patricia Quinn of the Downeaster will be part of the conversation. Patricia will be participating in the study.

Public Question: Wonders about snow removal protocol at current park and ride. Plows can clear a single strip and put snow on other parking places and he knows this couldn't be done with 2,000 cars in that lot and it is Important to consider.

> **Answer (MS)**: Costs and size of parking facility will be included in the alternatives. Also, the existing park and ride is not necessarily where the station is going to be located.

Request to see where two sites for layover facility have been nixed. RO identified on map Westville Home site and Pen box property

Public Comment: Encourages people to wait and see the study. Maybe you will change your mind.

Public Question: The word subsidy keeps coming up. Will this be paid by taxpayers?

Answer (MS): It will be subsidized with taxpayer dollars if the project moves forward. Funding will be considered for each alternative and will be transparent. We will say how much it costs and these are the legal options to pay for it and this is the benefit/dis-benefit. It would be public transportation that would be subsidized with tax dollars.

Public Question: How much does it cost from Haverhill to Boston?

Answer/Comment (Audience Participant): She believes it costs $7.50.

Public Comment: Thinks that train service is a benefit for residents and businesses both. We want people to be patient and see what the studies show. If it is going to cause harm to Plaistow residents, I don't want it either.

Public Question: Let's not forget that the layover yard is part of the package.

Answer/Comment (Audience Participant): Indicates this is not a given.

Answer (MS): We will evaluate an alternative with no layover facility. He won't deny that MBTA would like a layover facility. Can say that for each alternative considered, the transportation, economic development, quality of life, environmental and other benefit/dis-benefits will be estimated and discussed.

Public Question: Question about RI station. What town is the station in and is there a layover facility there and is there ridership at that station? Was there resistance to the layover facility? She would like some sort of research done about the people who live in that area and if they feel that they have personally benefited as a town from this facility being in their back yard?

Answer (JW): Agreements go back 15 years. RI pays for capital improvements. MBTA operates service on annual basis. The capital improvement that RI made was for a layover facility in Pawtucket. This is the trade they made to operate into Providence. They made another trade where RI bought new commuter rail vehicles and MBTA operates down to Wickford Junction to get to TF Green Airport. Layover facility was an old freight yard, there were no neighbors. It was industrial zoned.

Public Comment: People in Bath wanted commuter rail to go to Bath. They got layover facility and rail station and they asked for it and they got it despite complaining now.

Public Comment: Wanted to comment on 17 year old attendee comment. Lucky enough that every place he lived had trains. 100 years ago you could take a trolley to Hampton Beach. It's good to have the possibilities and he hopes we can find a way to make it work.

PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION ADJOURNED

Related Questions and Answers

During the week of August 19, 2013, several questions and/or comments were received prior to the public Listening Session regarding the Plaistow Commuter Rail Extension Study. The questions and/or comments were similar to those addressed in the Listening Session held on August 22 at Plaistow Town Hall. Below is additional information related to the submitted questions and comments.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

The public and stakeholder involvement process for the study will include the development of a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). The makeup of the SAG will include the wide variety of stakeholders and parties that have in interest in the study process and outcome. SAG meetings will be held on a regular basis (approximately every 2 months) to review and discuss study material and provide input and advice to NHDOT and HDR on study process and analysis. All SAG meetings will be open to the public and provide a time during the meeting for public comment.

Examination of Alternatives

Consistent with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations and the National Environmental Policy Act process, the study will include an analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives. Alternatives analyzed will include those that meet the project purpose and need, which will be developed in coordination with the Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Noise Analysis

The Study team will conduct a thorough analysis of predicted noise and vibration impacts in and around the station and layover sites. The analysis, following Federal Transit Administration guidance, will include the measurement of existing noise levels at various sites across a 24 hour period. This site specific base line data will then be used to predict noise levels based on known noise impacts from idling train locomotives. Utilizing this approach, quantitative data will be available regarding specific impacts and the locations of those impacts resulting from the construction of a train station and layover facility.

Hazardous Materials

As part of the Environmental Assessment, an environmental professional will conduct predictive analysis of the project site and properties within 1/8 mile of the site to identify recognized environmental conditions. This will include the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products, or conditions that indicate an existing release, past release, or material threat of release.

Air Quality

As part of the Environmental Assessment, air quality issues will be identified generally and qualitatively in relation to Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA). Existing air quality conditions will

be identified through current published air quality data sources. Air Quality Conformity will be evaluated qualitatively that will include conditions included in the proposed project, including changes in levels of both automobile and train locomotive emissions. Emissions levels from the existing and future MBTA locomotive fleet, including older locomotives, the newer Tier 2 certified HEP engines, and the EPA Tier 3 locomotives to be delivered in 2014, will all be incorporated into the assessment.

Ridership Projections

The development of ridership estimates will be conducted in a manner approved by the Federal Transit Administration. There are currently several modeling techniques that may be acceptable to use for this study. Each of these techniques incorporate data available through previously conducted surveys to determine existing travel patterns along with trip times, travel prices along with other variables to estimate ridership on a proposed service. The study is currently in the process of determining the most accurate and cost effective technique to use in projecting ridership for the study.

Train Operations

As part of the study, HDR will develop train operating plans to identify the impacts on train operations resulting from the station and layover facility locations. This information will be incorporated into the environmental impact analysis, which will be used specifically for the noise, vibration and air quality analyzes. Furthermore, this information will be incorporated into the estimate for operating and maintenance costs, train system capacity analysis, and train coach requirements.

End of Document

PLAISTOW LISTENING SESSION

August 22, 2013, 7:00 pm, Plaistow Town Hall

Summary of Issues/Comments for Study from Public Comments

1. Who pays for construction?
2. What Layover Sites will be examined?
3. Will Environmental Impacts of the layover be looked at?
4. Examine options for train idle options.
5. Is there a way to know which MBTA locomotives are used in Plaistow?
6. Examine existing waste and water systems.
7. Surveys of area resident support.
8. Consider service from Haverhill.
9. Consider station options without layover.
10. Analyze traffic impact (+/-) from service.
11. Include Safety Issues in Study (Personal and System).
12. Include Economic Benefits.
13. Examine Rail Operations Efficiency.
14. Include evaluation of local traffic.
15. Analyze adequacy of parking.
16. Economic Impacts/Property Values.
17. Consider non-auto owners.
18. Include Grade Crossing Noise.
19. Local Cost Impacts (Municipal).
20. Site Plan Issues (including snow storage).
21. Comparison of Layover Stations in Region.

PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION ADJOURNED

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION
MEETING #1
MEETING SUMMARY

May 22, 2014 7:00PM, Plaistow Town Hall

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters, Patrick Herlihy

Project Advisory Committee Attendees:

- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – David Harrigan; (Alternate) Robert J. Clark
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott

HDR Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson, Jamie Paine

INTRODUCTIONS AND INITIAL PROJECT ACTIVITY

Patrick Herlihy began the meeting by introducing himself as the Director of Aeronautics Rail and Transit at NHDOT and Shelley Winters as the Administrator for the Bureau of Rail and Transit and the NHDOT project manager of the study.

Shelley Winters:
She explained that this will be the first official public meeting for the study in which work efforts will be presented. She affirmed that public input will help shape the direction of the project as it moves forward. HDR is the consultant assisting NHDOT in the federal environmental review process for the study that is overseen by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The study will develop information to evaluate the merits of rail service. This will include determination of where associated facilities would be located. At the end of the study we will develop a recommended alternative that will be considered if it should be progressed to implementation.

It was noted that there will be a total of three public meeting and we will be looking for input at different stages of the process, not only from the Public Advisory Committee but from the local citizens.

All updated information will be available on the project's Facebook page along with the NHDOT project website.

Ron O'Blenis:
Shelley introduced Ron O'Blenis who is the lead of the project from HDR.

A PowerPoint presentation was given to identify project work to date and planned activities to evaluate the extension of the MBTA Haverhill line from Haverhill, MA to Plaistow, NH.

He noted that there had been a listening session in August 2013 to begin the project. That meeting was held prior to any work beginning on the project. The listening session was intended to convey to the public that the study was being initiated without any preconceived assumptions.

He gave an overview of the NEPA process, which is the federal mandated environmental process. The NEPA process is organized to provide a structured and objective process to evaluate a potential project. The process is focused on facilitation of public input during the process and develops of alternatives that can be considered by the public and public officials to determine if the potential project should be moved forward.

To facilitate input from the public, a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) has been formed. Members are David Harrigan from Atkinson, Sean Fitzgerald from Plaistow, Cliff Sinnott from Rockingham Planning Commission, Todd Fontanella from Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, Cynthia Scarano from Pan Am Railways, Jim Russell from Northern New England Rail Authority, and Ron Morgan from MBTA. A representative of the City of Haverhill will be part of future meetings. PAC members from the study team are Shelley Winters from NHDOT and Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson, Katie Rougeot, and Jamie Paine from the HDR Team.

The first PAC meeting discussed the scope, purpose, and need of the project, the project agreements (that eliminated the Westville Homes and 144 Main Street property owned by the Town of Plaistow for consideration of station or train layover sites), and the basis for progressing the study. At the second PAC meeting, the purpose and need were reviewed in more detail. Additionally, initial site options were reviewed. At the third PAC meeting, further development of the site options was discussed in preparation for this public meeting.

PURPOSE AND NEED

It was noted that in the NEPA process there is a requirement to define the purpose and need for the project. At the end of the study process, the site options must be consistent with the purpose and need of the project. The draft purpose is to provide an additional

travel mode option that increases overall mobility in Plaistow and surrounding communities. The needs are to increase mobility and provide additional travel options for the community.

The need is linked to economic development, understanding the community's master plan, and how the extension of commuter rail in Plaistow fits into the region. Frequently, economic development is linked to rail projects and this is part of the needs identified for this project as well.

Reference was made to a slide titled MBTA Commuter Rail Lines. It was explained how geographically a Plaistow location is comparable to other lines of the MBTA system and even how it fits into the region.

SITE OPTIONS

It was noted that site option attributes were analyzed to assist with evaluation of options are based on community needs, environmental impacts, and train service operations for the MBTA passenger and Pam Am Railway's freight operations.

For the community attributes, the study looked at the parcels being impacted, distance to the residents, noise, impact to adjacent business, how does the site option supports potential development, and how it fits to the Master Plan.

Environmental attributes are part of the federal process. The study will look at the wetlands, stream crossing, and wildlife habitat. Historical and archeological land will be a main focus because many of the sites are potentially located on these sensitive areas.

Service operations attributes consider how the project fits into the MBTA train operations. The project will be about possible passenger service. Currently the rail line has freight and the Amtrak Downeaster in the study area is freight. The agreement is the freight operations will continue and not impacted by any project alternatives.

REQUIREMENTS

The main requirements for a station were explained. It was noted that platforms must be a sufficient length to serve the full length train and the station needs parking and pick up/drop off areas. The station will be designed to MBTA Standards as this is to be an extension for the MBTA.

This station will be a terminal station, which means there will need to be some train holding capacity. The station needs a dedicated track where the trains can wait until a return trip without being on the mainline. Platform must be 815-ft provide for maximum train of 9 cars

(the design size of the MBTA system), which will allow for anyone to exit the train on the platform. The station must provide parking and access road.

The layover facility is where trains are parked at night. Trains are stored from the last trip of the day to the first trip in the morning. The preferred location is directly off the mainline, as close as possible to the station and on the same side of the station. When considering freight and a double track, as in this case, having the station and layover on opposite sides causes conflicts. The layover must meet the MBTA standards and accommodate the 6 train sets that are used on the Haverhill line. The layover will have space between tracks for train car servicing, employee parking and access road.

NEWBURYPORT COMPARISON

To illustrate elements of a layover site, the Newburyport layover and station were presented for comparison to how a station and layover may be configured in Plaistow. Newburyport is also a terminal station, meaning the train stops here and returns to Boston. The station is not located in the same spot as the layover facility. The station platform runs along the mainline and the trains run in and out of the layover facility. A major roadway divides the layover and station.

The station platform is typical of the MBTA, it is raised platform with tracks on both side. There is station building with appendices. The reason for the spacing between the tracks is for light maintenance. The hotel power is to plug the trains into electric power at night to operate the heating or air conditioning of the cars at night to decrease noise.

MITIGATION

In development of alternatives and consider the attributes of a site it is noted that sometimes there are impacts. In considering an alternative, means to mitigate these impacts is also evaluated. Noise and visual impact can usually be mitigated by a noise wall or visual barrier.

If the facility is close to residents, vibration impacts can be mitigated through the use of rubber mats or larger ballast selections. Vibration is usually an issue with moving trains rather then standing trains.

Wetlands are a major aspect to consider. The study team will be going into the field and looking at GIS data to further evaluate wetland impacts for possible sites.

The team will evaluate noise by first developing a baseline for existing noise. Standard federal guidelines and methodology will then be used to calculate potential impacts. The

amount and type of impact will then be used to evaluate means to mitigate the impacts for each alternative that is evaluated.

OVERVIEW MAP

A location map was presented to depict the location of options that were to be presented. There were three area groupings. The northern section is in the Kingston Road area, then the middle cluster is located between Route 125 and Main Street in Plaistow, and southern area is southerly of Route 125 to an area just over the state line in Haverhill, MA.

John Weston:
It was explained that the study is in the beginning in the exploratory process. The study team has identified what is believed to be every potential site that a layover and station could fit. The site options were limited to locations that would not require taking a lot of valuable property or homes.

It was noted that the study team is going to look at all the options then consolidate to two or three alternatives that will be evaluated further by acquiring more detailed information.

Ron O'Blenis:
It was noted that the reason we only go as far as the Plaistow/Newton town line is due to the agreement with Pan Am Railroad and the MBTA that limits the potential expansion of commuter rail service to a milepost that is approximately at the Plaistow/Newton town line.

SITE OPTIONS

It was explained the direction in which the site options will be presented begin at the Newton town line and continue southward to Plaistow, Atkinson, and Haverhill.

Discussion of the site options began with Layover 1. It was explained that the highlighted areas are the GIS maps for residential and the green and blue are wetlands and waterways. The layover is located near Kingston Road near the Newton/Plaistow town line. The site shows a layover facility only; there are six tracks with the separation to allow service access. This site has great impacts on existing business. It was noted that the businesses are Pro Bark Industries and Atlas Motor Express. From an operational point of view this layout works.

Station A is located on the opposite side of Layover 1 on Kingston Road. There are no wetlands, but a station on this site is not consistent with master plan. This site is located in a place assumed to be less attractive for potential service users.

Layover 2/Station B is located in the middle area; it is located next to 144 Main Street on the Testa property. The layover splits off the main line and is placed diagonally across the Testa site. Access to the station is off Joanne Drive.

The targeted potential ridership is 225 passengers. Detailed ridership will be completed in the future. This was used to create an initial station parking lot size.

Only one parcel is being impacted for Layover 2/Station B, but it is within the stream buffer and does not cross a stream. A question was asked, "What is the consultant's definition of impact?" It was noted that Impacted means part of the layout is in a resource area. If that is the case then it will need to be determined what the specific impacts are and how they could be mitigated. Another attendee brought up the noise issue, asked if the consultants would take into account added noise. It was explained that noise will be examined by determining noise impacts from to adjacent residents and other receptors.

Layover 3/Station C objective is to minimize potential property impacts. This layover is crossing a stream and generally resources agencies would see this as a significant negative impact. This site has potential for adjacent development and from an operational stand point it is good.

Station D is located in the same middle area, using the existing park and ride on Westville Road. As part of the station requirements there must be a separate track from the main line therefore the station is located to avoid the wetlands. This would require taking the tire property but would fit with the Master Plan vision and avoid wetlands.

Layover 8/Station F is located in the middle area. This site is located on Joanne Drive in a wooded area. The initial layout seeks to avoid the identified pond, but we will make field visits to get a better understand of the wetland impacts.

Layover 9/Station G is located on the 144 Main Street property and the Testa property. This was added after initial discussions with the town. This site is operationally good, minimum wetlands and provide for potential adjacent development.

Layover 4 is located in Plaistow closer to Haverhill. This layover is located beyond the Westville homes site and the Wal-Mart and Home Depot site. The layover has to cross a significant stream and there is a great elevation change on the site.

Layover 5/Station E seeks to eliminate some of the impacts of the elevations of Layover 4, but more of the stream is impacted.

Layover 7 is located in the same area as the Layover 4 and 5, but it is oriented in the opposite direction. This requires access through a private way off Route 125. There is a

stream crossing which will need to be looked at in more detail. A question was asked "What do the consultants consider close to residents?" It was noted that not near residents is about a quarter mile and at this point it is not as close as others.

Another attendee raised a concern about noise and asked if the additional noise from the trains will be considered. It was confirmed that they will be considered.

Layover 6 is located in Haverhill just over the state line. This site in Haverhill was developed to place the layover in a more industrial area away from residents. The downside is this layover is a great distance from any of the station. From an operational point of view it could require crossing the double main line, which is not ideal.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps for the study team will be addressing public comments and refining the alternatives as noted previously.

Activities will include looking at land use, neighborhood character, and zoning. While this has been done initially, there will be more detailed analysis. There will also be an evaluation of the social-economical and environmental justice. Air quality, noise and vibration will be evaluated further.

Through additional screening of the sites it will be determined if the sites have hazardous materials and how that may impact the alternatives. The visual and aesthetic considerations relates to how an alternative fits into the Town's Master Plan. Reducing impacts to natural and cultural resources, specifically wetlands, will be a big part of the project. Operational feasibility will be analyzed to look at how an alternative works with existing and future freight or the passenger operations.

The ridership estimate will be looking into more detail, to determine the amount of ridership at this station. This will be used to refine the needed amount of parking.

The study team will be working with the PAC members to refine the alternatives, taking comments and input into the alternative development. A PAC meeting is planned for the end of July and a public meeting in September. [*Note: the next PAC meeting is scheduled for September 9th and a public meeting is scheduled for late September/early October*]

John Weston:
It was noted again that the presented options are concepts and that the study team will move next to evaluate the initial options to develop up to three alternatives for further evaluation. The alternatives could be combinations and/or refinements of the initial options. From the alternatives, the study team plans to screen the alternatives down to

one. This alternative will be presented for public comment. It was noted that the final alternative could be a no-build recommendation or an alternative for passenger service that could be considered for potential further development toward implementation.

It was noted that in addition comments taken during the question and answer session to follow that public comments can be provided online using the website.

Sean Fitzgerald:
It was noted that the Plaistow Board of Selectmen has reviewed all the sites except one layover 9, but that option was included in his presentation to the Board of Selectmen. Copies of his presentation were made available. It was noted that the presentation included a detailed review of each site with the pros and cons. It was noted that he has met with Atkinson officials and citizens to obtain their input.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

COMMENT: Catherine Webster (12 Jasmin Drive, Atkinson, NH) What is in hand outs and what is not? You are considering sites that are not in the handout at all, layover facility 7 in the handout and layover facility, 7 is substantially the same at 4 and 5 yet it is not listed in the cons (referring to Sean Fitzgerald handout) that there's serious opposition in Atkinson. From a traffic stand point, Atkinson has two points of access, both the midpoint locations would impact that east road access 4, 5, 6, 7 would impact the Rte. 121 Atkinson access to 495. This may cause more problems with traffic then it would solve. She was more concerned about the environmental impacts to wetlands behind the Bryant Woods. She asked the consultants what their favored locations were. **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** The presentation from Sean was for the selectmen to help them understand where we were in the process. Sites 8 and 9 were added after speaking with the selectmen. Traffic will be analyzed, ridership will help us understand where people will be coming from and what level of congestion that may be. Noise and vibration will be analyzed and some mitigation used could be a noise wall. The site visits to address wetlands are planned for after this meeting. At this point we have not picked, we are presenting all the options, more analysis is required. **RESPONSE: Sean Fitzgerald** The presentation handed out was developed almost two months ago and updates have been made since then.

COMMENT: Alexandra Pechy & Daughter (128 Newton Rd Plaistow, NH) Alexandra supports the project; she and her daughter spend a lot of time traveling to Boston for medical care. She emphasized the need for mobility for disabled individuals. A train coming into Plaistow could be a "lifeline" for people that do not have a car, limited mobility and need to get to the city.

COMMENT: Audrey Peck (206 Oak Ridge Rd Plaistow, NH) She asked where the 225 riders came from. **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** This is based on the existing ridership from Haverhill and comparison of ridership from other MBTA stations. The study team will update the ridership estimate that is based on a ridership modeling analysis. **COMMENT: Audrey Peck** She explained that she only sees 8-10 cars registered in NH at the Haverhill Station. She asked how the consultants plan to obtain the hard data for the ridership. **RESPONSE: John Weston** The consultants will develop a ridership model created by Federal Transit Administration. It uses real time data from cell phones and tracks traffic patterns. The model will be used with information from the MBTA ridership models. Along with that, we will use population and employment information from the State of MA, Boston MPO, and Rockingham MPO. We will pull all that information together to have an understanding how people move back and forth. This data is used to develop ridership for work trips only. We want to be able to understand how many people from Plaistow go to Boston. **RESPONSE: Sean Fitzgerald** Ten years ago the town knew that 50% of residents traveled south to MA. The importance of the study is to get an understanding of ridership.

COMMENT: John Halloran (Collard Rd) Asked what is the problem with the existing layover and station in Haverhill. John is concerned about the ridership data not being accurate and building something that is not necessary. **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** The methodology we use is reasonably accurate, as John Weston said after we development the models we will come back to the public with detailed analysis.

COMMENT: Steve Halloran (Newton Rd Plaistow, NH) Asked why is the station only moving 5 miles up the road from Bradford, why would you not go further north? **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** The existing layover facility in Bradford holds four trains and the service runs 6 trains. Trains at night that do not have a space to stay in Bradford run a basically empty non revenue service into Boston and come back out in the day. There would be a relatively large expense to run between Bradford and Plaistow. **COMMENT: Steve Halloran** Why is it Plaistow's problem to make up for the MBTA's expenses? **REPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** The facility in Bradford is not able to be expanded, the MBTA in the past looked to extend further north in Haverhill. Though this discussion there was some support to extend the service to Plaistow. The MBTA in exchange for the location of the layover in Plaistow would operate the trains and provide passenger service to Plaistow. **RESPONSE: Sean Fitzgerald** The State of MA appropriated $10 million five years ago to move the layover north. **COMMENT: Steve Halloran** Asked if anyone done analysis on Rt. 125? **RESPONSE: Sean Fitzgerald** Plaistow plans to widen Rt. 125 but it is unlikely to see other road widening.

COMMENT: Max P. (12 Spiny Ave) He advised that his Father runs Atlas Motor Express in Plaistow and asked what will be impacted with the layover being proposed? **RESPONSE:**

Ron O'Blenis If we located the layover facility in that section of Plaistow we would cut off the access to the existing business which would be a negative impact. The Town of Plaistow did not recommend this site as their preferred site.

COMMENT: Tom Kelley (Aspin Drive, Atkinson, NH) Asked if medical issues associated with rail would be analyzed. Expressed concern about the increase of noise from the layover. **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** The noise analysis will follow Federal Transit Administration model (that the Federal Railroad Administration has adopted for noise analysis). A base line of noise will be established then an estimated of added noise and how that will increase the base line. Impacts to receptors will be determined in the modeling.

COMMENT: Ms. Halloran (Newton Rd. Plaistow, NH) Why hasn't the MBTA put up noise barriers at Bradford layover facility? **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** We can not speak for the MBTA but we can say that the number of complaints to the MBTA has decreased. The MBTA has set up a program limiting the amount of time a train can idle. Additionally, the newly purchased locomotives are dramatically quieter than previous generation.

COMMENT: Ron Snow (53 year resident of Plaistow) His land is located directly behind Westville Homes. His concern is the environment issues and vibration the layover will have on his house. **RESPONSE: Sean Fitzgerald** The Plaistow Board of Selectmen signed an agreement with NHDOT that Westville Homes will no longer be considered in the study.

COMMENT: Eric Bell (4 Tracy Ln Plaistow, NH) Concerned the ridership numbers produced will not be accurate. Believes people are incentivized to go to Bradford station because of the speed of the train. States he will never take it from Plaistow because of the time of travel. **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** He visited the Haverhill parking locations and counted about 100 NH plates so there appears to be demand for the service from NH residents.

COMMENT: Pat Caroll (Wightman Rd) There was a vote issued by the Town and majority voted against the layover in Plaistow. Believes that the MBTA is giving a service to Boston and in return more noise and environmental issues.

COMMENT: Bill Consentino (Atkinson Selectmen) Believes that Bradford's problems should not become Plaistow's. If Plaistow does not want this in their town the consultants would take that into consideration.

COMMENT: Camille English (Marianne Drive) Asked if any of the consultants live near a layover facility. **RESPONSE: John Weston** Said he has lived near a layover facility and

realizes the trains produce noise but does have dramatically impact to him. **RESPONSE: Shelley Winters** We are not here to advocate any particular location. At the result of this study no build is still an option. From the NHDOT and consultant perspective we are here to give an overview and an understanding of the options.

COMMENT: John Kimball (Plaistow Selectmen) Explained that is not a done deal we are studying to get more information. Request to do this study came from the Plaistow and Atkinson Board of Selectmen. The approval and funds have come from that governor's council and that is why the study is taking place.

COMMENT: Larry Gill (Resident of Plaistow) Noted that when he started working for the Town (of Plaistow) that for positive improvements to happen transportation needs must be addressed. A lot of money is spent on improving Rt. 125 but the traffic is going to get worse. He understands there will be issues with the layover facility but mitigation can address them. He believes that the study should continue and if it is not then the town loses.

COMMENT: Bob Wallogon (Brightwood Atkinson, NH) Believes that the residents of Plaistow and Atkinson do not want the study to continue.

COMMENT: Olaf Westfailin (221 Oakridge road) Supports the idea of a train station and would like to have the opportunity to travel or work in Boston.

COMMENT: Leah (East Rd) Believes there is a problem with traffic and having a train station is an option to consider.

COMMENT: Dave Harrigan (Atkinson) Atkinson representative to the PAC responded that he does not believe the selectmen of Atkinson requested the study. People want access to Boston and they have that through Haverhill. Believes that using cell phone data and computer models is a passive way. He suggests looking at NH plates at Haverhill Station. Believes that people want to drive rather than take a train. Said the bus station failed because people did not use it and the train station will have the same problem.

COMMENT: Jayne Harrison (Mayberry Drive, Atkinson, NH) Asked if is a part in the process that you look at mitigation in other places to see if they work. She asked if there was any guarantee that the MBTA will stop using the layover facility if the passenger service is phased out. **RESPONSE: Ron O'Blenis** There is experience that after a noise wall is put up that they work. The noise walls reduce the noise but do not completely eliminate it. Once

we define the options future we were continue to develop an agreement with the MBTA.

COMMENT: **Anna Welch (Bayberry Drive, Atkinson, NH)** Her concern is how long is the process will last. **RESPONSE:** **Ron O'Blenis** We plan to come back to you in September with sites we are not going to concern and for the ones that have more potential mitigation analysis will be performed.

COMMENT: **Kay Colloway (Atkinson)** Believes it would have been helpful to have the presentation before hand, asked if the September meeting could provide that. **RESPONSE:** **Ron O'Blenis** He believes that sometimes it's better to show it and explain it before distributing it. If there is document that we believe would be helpful to the public it will be posted on the website.

COMMENT: **Steve Holloran** If there is an interest in this area then why are they not here to support it. **RESPONSE: John (Plaistow Selectmen)** Believes the people that support the project do not attend the public meetings.

COMMENT: **Jill Center (7 Maple Ave Plaistow, NH)** She has lived 15-ft from the railroad tracks for many years and believes the trains do not produce that much noise. She believes cars emissions are dirty just like trains. The cars are becoming too numerous and this is one way to solve the issue.

COMMENT: **Tony (Atkinson)** Raised a concern about the estimated ridership. **RESPONSE:** **Ron O'Blenis** The cell phone data will be a useful tool for calculating ridership, that data we did not have before.

COMMENT: **Audrey Peck** Believes the word "needed" in the need statement is not the correct word to use. She believes it is wanted by a few and is not needed. Said a train to Boston would not help with economic development because most of the residents of Plaistow do not work in Boston. She is concerned about the increase of cars into Plaistow.

COMMENT: **Atkinson Residents** Suggested having a survey from surrounding towns. **RESPONSE:** **John Weston** The reason preference surveys do not always work is because people do not tell the truth or do not understand the question. **COMMENT:** Concerned about if the idle time is considered when calculating the environmental issues. **RESPONSE:** **Ron O'Blenis** We will be working with the MBTA to determine how long the train's idle time is.

<u>COMMENT:</u> Atkinson Resident Asked who makes the final decision on this service? She believes that the layover is getting moved to Plaistow because no one in Plaistow can pressure the MBTA. She is concerned the people that are being affected will not be the ones making the decision if the project gets built.

Session ended at: 9:35 P.M.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION
MEETING #2
MEETING SUMMARY

October 9, 2014 7:00PM, Plaistow Town Hall

PAC Attendees:

- Town of Plaistow – Sean Fitzgerald; (Alternate) Tim Moore
- Town of Atkinson – David Harrigan; (Alternate) Robert J. Clark
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission - Todd Fontanella
- Rockingham Planning Commission – Cliff Sinnott
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Not in attendance
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority – Not in attendance
- Pan Am Railways – Not in attendance
- City of Haverhill – Not in attendance

NHDOT Team: Shelley Winters, Patrick Herlihy

HDR Engineering Team: Ron O'Blenis, John Weston, Kris Erikson, Stefanie McQueen, Katie Rougeot

PRESENTATION

- Ron O'Blenis, project manager from HDR, provided the presentation. Noted agenda of the meeting to include: welcome and introductions; overview and background of the study; environmental assessment process; alternative development; alternative analysis process; and next steps. Ron introduced the members of the Project Advisory Committee in attendance.
- A PowerPoint presentation was used to provide the overview of the Project's development. Highlights from the presentation are provided below.
    - The goal of the study is to evaluate the 5.3-mile extension of the MBTA Haverhill Line commuter rail service from Haverhill, MA to Plaistow, NH. In the 1990s, the potential rail extension was identified and studied. In 2008, MBTA contacted Plaistow staff to discuss the potential location of a layover facility and station in the town area. In 2010, MBTA obtained the rights to operate on Pan Am Railway Lines. In 2011, Plaistow CMAQ application to NHDOT was funded that provided funds for this study. In 2013, the feasibility/environmental assessment study began.

- It was explained that the project is in the environmental assessment process for evaluation of alternatives. It was noted that the last meeting included a presentation of nine layovers and seven station locations, shown on the site options map. From public comments, PAC comments, and a review of at issues at each site, alternatives have been screened down to three.
- Layover sites are now located along Hilldale Avenue with access from Atkinson Depot Road (Route 121), east of Route 125 with access from Joanne Drive, and on the Testa property with access off Route 121A (Main Street). Station sites are all in Plaistow: one off Westville Road at the existing park-and-ride, a station off Joanne Drive, and one on the Testa property. All sites in Atkinson, NH and the northeast end of Plaistow abutting Newton, NH have been eliminated for further consideration.
- Since the last meeting, further field studies for the three alternative sites have been completed. More detailed field studies included wetland, historical and archeological resources.
- It was noted that traffic, air quality, noise, and vibration analyses will be completed.
- Details of the three alternatives were explained. Each alternative includes a layover. The layover requires six tracks in three pairs, allowing for access between pairs and includes buildings at each potential layover facility for maintenance and train crews with employee parking. The plans included connection to the double track Pan Am railway's mainline.
- Per MBTA standards, all stations must include a high-level platform that is long enough to accommodate all doors for all coaches to have access to the platform for handicap accessibility. The station platform must have a dedicated track to free up the mainline when stopped at the station and for freight clearance.
- Alternative I layover is located in Haverhill, MA just south of the Plaistow town line. There is a reasonable amount of dry land available for a layover facility, but it would require an impact to one business, a stable and tack shop. Alternative I station is located in Plaistow off Westville Road in the existing park-in-ride. The platform is located further north to avoid a pond to the south. The station would affect one business and require realignment of Westville Road.
- Alternative II has station and layover on the same site and is located off Joanne Drive just east of Route 125 and south of the Testa property. Parking is designed to fit between water resources and wetlands. A single lead track crosses the stream rather than the layover ladder. A tail track is located to the north of the station to allow movement in and out of the layover facility without affecting the mainline track.

- Alternative III is located on the Testa property and the 144 Main Street site owned by the Town of Plaistow where the water tower is located. Access is from Route 121A (Main Street). The station platform is between the layover facility to the east and parking to the west. The tail track allows access to the station and layover without using the main tracks, which is required to support freight and the existing Downeaster passenger service with the extension of the MBTA commuter service.
- From the three alternatives, the PAC suggested we develop a hybrid of Alternatives II and III. This option includes the layover from Alternative II and the station from Alternative III. The layover is located off Joanne Drive and the station is on the Testa property with access from Route 121A (Main Street). The parking design can be changed depending on the plans for further development.
- The three alternatives including the hybrid have enough research completed from an environmental and permitting standpoint to move forward in the process. That is to say that there appears to be no significant environmental impact from any alternative that would eliminate it from further consideration.
- Noise and vibration analysis is underway using the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) Guidelines. The FTA guidelines are standard throughout the industry.
- The Noise and Vibration analysis steps will include identify noise-sensitive land uses, measure existing noise levels, calculate allowable increase in noise, calculate project-related noise levels, determine if impacts will occur, and identify mitigation measures as needed.
- Noise-sensitive land uses are broken down into three receptor categories. Category 1 is where quiet is an essential element, such as a concert hall; Category 2 is where overnight sleep occurs; and Category 3 is institutional land uses, such as schools or libraries. Receptor categories will be considered in the noise analysis.
- To assist with understanding of any noise impacts, at the next meeting headphones with an audio model of the base noise, with added noise, and noise with any proposed mitigation will be available.
- It was noted that the PAC members have been to the MBTA Greenbush (Scituate, MA) layover facility to see how that recently constructed facility works adjacent to a neighborhood. The committee observed the trains entering the layover in the evening. There was observed a noise wall located on the side of the layover adjacent to the neighborhood. The sound wall is approximately 1-foot above the top of the locomotive. Members of the PAC observed that from 500 feet away, the sound of the train was not very noticeable. A walkway and

landscaping was provided along the sound wall, incorporating it with the community.

- At the Greenbush layover facility, there is a sign posted with start up and shut down times. The start up time is about an hour and forty minutes. This start up time is typical for the MBTA; one hour is for start-up and to run tests and the remaining forty minutes is to move from the layover to the station.
- The presentation moved to discussion of considerations of the purpose of the study that is to provide additional travel model options that increase overall mobility in Plaistow and surrounding communities. Travel mode options for Plaistow and surround communities are deemed to be needed to improve mobility and access to employment for residents and businesses in the Plaistow area, while increasing opportunities for economic development.
- A map of the MBTA commuter rail lines was presented that compared geographically how Plaistow would compare to other location of the MBTA system based on the relative distance from Boston.
- An employment-related data slide was presented. It was noted that in Plaistow, there is a reported relatively high level of unemployment. Improved access to Boston has potential for employment growth, which could be a benefit to the community. A table was presented that identified that census estimates show that 4% of Plaistow residents work in Boston, compared to similarly distanced communities with existing commuter rail serviced that have 7% or 8%.
- A slide was presented relative to highway travel times in the area from information from the state rail plan. Travel times between NH and Route 128 can be up to 40% longer during peak travel time and from Route 128 to Boston can be up to 100% (twice as long) during peak travel time. While commuter rail is not a solution to solve congestion on I-93, it is an alternative mode of transportation for potential riders.
- A quote was presented from the *Business New Hampshire* Magazine article to highlight that people are looking for alternative modes of transportation. The article was in reference to proposed commuter rail service of the NH Capital Corridor that would potentially service Nashua, Manchester and/or Concord. The article describes how a CEO of a Manchester-based company was talking to 60 technical individuals and asked how many would come up to Manchester to work—only four hands went up. When the CEO asked the meeting attendees whether they would be interested if they could ride on a train from North Station and be in Manchester in an hour—34 hands went up.
- It was noted that demographic information indicates that the average age in the Town is increasing. To help maintain a demographic age balance, this project

could encourage younger households to move to the area, as well to retain the younger generation who are from area. Additionally, it was noted that station sites might have the potential for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) that could induce local development of residential and business projects. The public was encouraged to consider the potential benefits of the project and ask the question as to what the community wants to see happen in the Town in the near and long-term future.

- The next steps of the study are to complete the alternative analysis, including traffic, noise and vibration, air quality, cost and ridership. Then a final recommendation will be developed based on public comments and input from the PAC to help support the selected recommendation. Then, a Draft Environmental Assessment of the Preferred Alternative will document this information from a formal point of view. The next PAC meeting is expected to be in November and the targeted public meeting is planned for December.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

- At the close of the presentation, the public was asked to consider the information presented and offer comments, questions, and suggestions targeted to alternatives and the analysis. During this part of the meeting, the Town Manager of Plaistow responded to some of the attendee comments and provided a review of local events that led to the initiation of this study and how a commuter rail service could benefit the community in reducing travel times, generating local economic benefits, and helping residents reach key destinations in Metropolitan Boston.

The following comments were received during the meeting:

- Two attendees questioned the Consultant's use of an October 2014 pro-passenger rail article in *Business New Hampshire* Magazine citing transit's importance to the Millennial generation seeking tech jobs – and a Manchester tech employer's finding that his ability to attract top tech talent would be far better if rail service connected Manchester and Boston. Also questioned was the accuracy (underestimation) of projected passenger rail travel times that this Study's consultants (and the NHDOT Capitol Corridor consultants) have shared with the public to date.
- A commuter to/from Boston advised that he used both the Haverhill and Newburyport MBTA stations. He believed that a new stop at Plaistow would attract service workers and medical trips, but not many professionals. He believed that policymakers should be helping professionals to work remotely instead of developing more commuter rail service.

- A Plaistow resident was a commuter in the past and supports the system. She noted concern about the cost of the trip since Plaistow will be located in a high zone. Young commuters will want to access the station by walking or biking; Westville Road is not equipped for bikes. A property is more desirable when located near a train station.
- A Plaistow resident questioned the validity of the Consultant's proposed use of cell phone data to predict travel patterns.
- Extension of commuter rail service to Plaistow promises to be extremely costly given the amount of riders the service would attract (note that ridership and cost estimates have yet to be developed).
- New Hampshire residents pay high property taxes and receive few services. More transit service would benefit residents and make it less costly to live in the state.
- If Plaistow gained commuter rail service, concern was noted that the Town of Plaistow would have no say in the ownership and/or operation of a station or a layover facility.
    - *The Consultants advised that a potential Plaistow service would involve a bi-state agreement similar to that used for other interstate operations (i.e., the Pilgrim Partnership).*
- The project should not have a negative impact upon the Amtrak Downeaster or Pan Am freight operations.
- The MBTA does not allow overnight parking at the lots that it owns and it should be allowed.
    - *The Consultant noted that some MBTA Commuter Rail lots (i.e., Reading, are owned by the host communities and overnight parking is allowed.*
- A South Hampton resident who is a high tech entrepreneur commuting from South Hampton to Boston, recommended that everyone look at this carefully because the evidence shows that Massachusetts will not widen Route 125 between Plaistow and I-495. The train would allow an alternative and serve as a safety valve. The key question for residents should be where you put a station in town. He believes people should keep their mind open.

Meeting attendees also asked that the following questions be addressed as part of the study:

- How will this study propose safe bicycling and walking to/from a future Plaistow station?
- How will the study address commuter parking on adjacent streets?
- Who will own the proposed station and layover facility improvements?
- Would commuter rail service in Plaistow increase economic activity near the station, improve access to jobs, or reduce unemployment in the community?
- What will be done about air quality?

Meeting attendees made the following recommendations, including preference for station or layover facility location, during the meeting:

- The Town's residents, not the Selectmen, should vote in a referendum to decide whether commuter rail comes to Plaistow or not.
    - *John Sherman, Vice-Chair, Plaistow Board of Selectmen advised that the Board has discussed this issue and determination will be made of how to best include the public in the decision whether to move forward or not with any recommended alternative.*
- An Atkinson resident wanted the Consultants to prepare an analysis of property values, and an analysis of the Bradford layover facility.
- A commenter (New Hampshire Railroad Revitalization Association representative) asked attendees to consider the economic relationship that Southern New Hampshire has with the Boston market – similar to the regional relationships that form the CT/NJ/NY Tri-State Area. New transit services are an opportunity for southern NH residents and businesses – not just for jobs, but also for other trip purposes, i.e., recreation. He also suggested that commuter rail service would add value and marketability to residents' properties.
- A Plaistow resident commented that most of this evening's speakers supporting extension of commuter rail to Plaistow are not residents of the Town. Further, speakers' comments have been essentially the same as provided at previous meetings. She hoped that other speakers would avoid restating comments that have already been recorded. She requested that the Consultants, and/or the Town, perform a project impact study for: a) parking on streets adjacent to a future commuter rail station, and b) police department and community security. Finally, she felt that the MBTA ought not to be expanding service given its existing debt.
- A resident suggested looking at the negative aspects of the Bradford Layover Facility in order to not repeat them in Plaistow.
- A Plaistow resident supports the station, but does not believe a layover or station should be located in the middle of town. He believes the two alternatives located in the middle of town should not be considered.
- A Plaistow resident believes people are not supporting this project because they do not see the benefits.
- A Plaistow resident is concerned about Alternative III being located close to the Pollard School. When he decides to raise a family, he does not know if he would send them to Pollard Elementary because it is located next to a layover facility.

- An abutting property owner to Alternative III (Testa property) indicated his opposition for Alternative III given he purchased the land for conservation purposes.
- A Plaistow resident thinks that access to a station should be from Joanne Drive rather than Main Street.
- A commenter questioned whether a new layover facility would reduce noise and other externalities – it would be the 'same MBTA operation'. Further, he recommended that the Consultant should change its analysis to label the 'No-Build' option as 'service, 4.5 miles away'. He felt that the term 'No-Build' was disingenuous, as there is service in the area that residents in Plaistow use.

Comment forms were provided at the meeting. Meeting attendees submitted the following written comments after the meeting concluded:

- A commenter believes every town citizen should receive a postcard survey or survey at voting to see who would use the service (weekly, daily, or recreational). She would like every citizen to have the right to vote on this. She does not want NH to welcome MA practices and anything to do with the MBTA to make us more like MA. She wants our state to continue to be different and more laid back. She said many of us moved from MA to NH to get away from exactly this. She suggests investing the same funds to build a cancer treatment center in Plaistow at one of these stops, then the poor people affected and traveling to MA for treatment wouldn't have to travel. She believes this would be welcoming and provide jobs. She asked the question: "Will residents have to put up with parking on sides streets with people trying to avoid paying to park?" She stated that no impact study on Plaistow's police and security has been mentioned.
- One resident says there has been a lot discussion in Town about the traffic on Route 121A (Main Street) and how to slow it down and discourage traffic coming through (to avoid Route 125). It seems that Alternative III or the hybrid option of Alternative II/III would increase traffic through Town particularly near the Pollard School. The voters made it clear that they did not want a train station. Most of them want a quiet community where the business stays on Route 125, not in Town, off Main Street. The resident would not like any more traffic on Main Street. They said in Alternative III and option of Alternative II/III that they do not see people taking the train to Plaistow. How would they get anywhere? They said they could see people using the train to go to work elsewhere and making a stop at Home Depot, Walmart, or Market Basket, which doesn't help anyone in Plaistow.
- A commenter prefers Alternative I, Alternative II is maybe, and Alternative III is never. He said traffic must not be increased on Route 121A through Town. Since shoppers from MA will use this as transportation, what means of transport, (sidewalks, etc.) will be

planned to the shopping centers? Overnight parking for at least one night should be allowed for those going overnight to Boston as an example. Newburyport did not allow overnight parking, which made it personally unusable when he worked in Newburyport. First train should leave early enough to get to work in the Boston area on time. He does not want the already high property taxes to go up as a result. Last train returning should be late enough to allow a return from Boston sports events. He believes there should be no parking fee.

- A commenter supports the station on Westville Road (Alternative I or II), however she is concerned about the cost. She pays federal taxes and does not want anyone to act as though federal grants are free. She would like overnight parking so she can take trips to NYC, Washington, D.C. and beyond. She would like to provide bike and walking paths from the train station to major thoroughfares, Route 121A (Main Street) and Route 125 (Plaistow Road). She says residents of a certain age here are not aware of the twenty-something generation's tendency to be car-free and use public transportation, and she said "good luck getting the word out about that". She said she has seen trouble attracting 20-somethings to work in Waltham right on a bus route. She prefers not to have the layover portion and wishes to provide context in maps and higher resolution.
- A resident does not see the benefits and asked where did the Consultants get the Plaistow numbers on the slide? She questioned the figure about 4,032 workers in Plaistow, that 4% work in Boston, and 48% work in MA.
- A resident voiced his concern that he thought this was voted down.
- A resident asked "what is the benefit of the project?"

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