

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority Project Committee

January 10, 2014

Southern NH Planning Commission
438 Dubuque Street
Manchester, NH 03104

DRAFT Minutes

In Attendance:

Katrina Crocker	Southern NH Planning Commission
Peter Griffin	Windham
Patrick Herlihy	NH DOT
Kenyon F. Karl	Sierra Club NH/Transportation Action
Dan Kelly	Nashua
Nancy Larson	NH RTA Citizen Rep – Bedford
Tom Mahon	NH RTA Chair
Tim Moore	NH RTA Rep – Rockingham Planning Commission
David Preece	Southern NH Planning Commission and NHRTA Vice Chair
Mark Shamon	URS Corporation

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 AM. David Preece reminded the Committee members that Michael Izbicki was snowed-in at the Baltimore-Washington Airport and would not be attending the meeting this morning.

II. Public Input

Kenyon Karl reminded the members that the video from the December 2013 NHRTA - Project Committee has been uploaded on the internet.

III. Discussion of the role of NHRTA

Tom Mahon gave an overview of the draft document regarding the role of NHRTA that he and Michael Izbicki had prepared. He discussed the importance of the proposed structure of NHRTA and the need for a revenue stream to sustain the organization.

Patrick Herlihy noted that the consultants of the NH Capitol Corridor (NHCC) would be preparing a financial plan and that there needed to be a strong governance model prepared to

ease the governance transition from NH DOT to NH RTA. He went on to discuss the proposed time frame to complete the NHCC to the City of Manchester by December 2020.

Mr. Mahon stated he was leaning toward the Pease Airport Authority model.

Dan Kelly commented that we should be aware of the concerns that have been raised regarding the subsidizing of the operation. Mr. Herlihy commented that the question of subsidies will be addressed in the financial model that's being prepared by the consultants, and will be what is best for the operators. He noted that under the New Starts program there is a 50 percent match requirement for operation whereas there is a 20 percent match requirement for the capital equipment. He commented that it appears \$5-6 million will be needed to subsidize the operation and consultants will identify some possible sources of revenue for the state's share of the subsidies. He noted that there has been success in other states/regions in raising revenue from public/private partnerships through rents/leases of associated parking facilities and mixed-use developments.

Nancy Larson questioned whether the cities and towns along the NH Capitol Corridor will be responsible for the funding.

Mr. Griffin discussed a fee for car rental services as possible revenue.

Mr. Mahon mentioned that he is seeking help from UNH students in researching potential governance models.

IV. Discussion of the Operational Models

Mr. Preece introduced a draft matrix handout comparing three New England transit partnerships – NNEPRA, Rhode Island DOT, and Vermont Transportation Authority. The matrix contains language from the agreements and information on the organizations' operations. Mr. Preece announced that Patricia Quinn of the Rail Authority will be coming to talk. He is also in conversation with Karen Songhurst of Vermont Transit and Rail, which has two agreements with Amtrak. Vermont documents might not be available for viewing by Project Committee members due to approval needed by other states. Rhode Island's agreement with MBTA is also of interest. Mr. Preece suggested that inviting key staff from the three organizations to speak to the Project committee about lessons learned and mistakes made could be useful.

Mr. Herlihy noted that there may be differences between contracting with an Authority as opposed to a State, so some experiences of the other organizations may not directly translate. He also recommended reaching out to Jody Ray, Rail Administrator for MassDOT, and Mr. Mahon likewise mentioned that Mr. Ray may be willing to assist.

Mr. Preece said that he would reach out to Rhode Island to ask a contact to share their experience with MBTA agreements as well.

Mr. Kelly recommended also inviting an Amtrak representative to a Project Committee meeting in the future. It was noted that Amtrak's nearest office is in Boston.

Comments on the draft matrix of the three partnerships were requested by Mr. Preece.

Mr. Moore mentioned that he would send out the first draft of a document on rail in Pawtucket, RI that could provide a structure upon which the Project Committee could build. The Pilgrim Partnership Agreement allowed RIDOT to extend MBTA commuter rail service through Providence.

V. Other Business and Next Steps

Mr. Kelly requested that the group address the issue of the size of quorums for general business and the size of the Rail Transit Authority. Mr. Preece and Mr. Mahon also agreed that this is an issue to be discussed. Mr. Mahon noted that similar Authorities are often composed of smaller groups of around seven people. Mr. Moore added that the group could consider dividing interested parties into a core group of members and a non-essential group of members, as another organization has done. The Project Committee discussed the logistics of changing statutes and bylaws and speaking with Legislators. As another option, Mr. Moore also suggested holding executive meetings open to the public on a monthly basis and full meetings where a quorum is needed only three to four times per year. Adopting this meeting schedule would require an adjustment to the bylaws but would comply with the existing statute, which requires only one meeting annually.

Mr. Mahon said that these issues will be examined at the next executive meeting. He also mentioned that Legislators have requested that meetings be held on Mondays, in conflict with the bylaw specification of third Fridays.

The revised Project Implementation Timeline distributed by Mr. Herlihy was discussed next. Mr. Herlihy explained that items regarding the restructuring of the Rail Transit Authority have been added. Drafting the Plan to restructure NHRTA will run through March 2014. Approval of the restructure of NHRTA by the Governor and Legislature is anticipated in 2015. Project development is scheduled to begin October 2015 and end April 2017. Construction of platforms is scheduled to begin October 2015 and end October 2020. See the Project Implementation Timeline handout for further details.

Regarding financing, Mr. Herlihy noted that FRA could provide 50% of costs for a commuter rail service, but it is unclear how much they would contribute for light inter-city rail service. Regarding station/ platform design, he explained that the project study will determine what stations will look like. The unwillingness of the MBTA to construct buildings other than the station platform was discussed, as was the building at a station in Lowell, MA. The need to update the tracks and install new rails was discussed.

When speaking to municipalities about Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), Mr. Griffin recommended reminding them that TOD is a modern name for a new concept. For example, Salem and Derry had mercantile centers based on rail and grew due to their rail connections. Mr. Griffin recommended using this as a particularly useful historical reference; Mr. Preece suggested he contact Malcolm “Tink” Taylor and pass the historical reference along to the consultants.

Mr. Mahon noted that Manchester is also an example of TOD with the industrial development that took place centered around the Amoskeag mills. While Nashua was relatively developed, it also had six rail lines running through it and there are opportunities adjacent to the NH Capitol Corridor for TOD. . Mr. Mahon recommended the 1874 railroad commission report to the group. Mr. Griffin had provided a hard copy to Mr. Preece, and suggested that it be scanned and distributed.

Mr. Preece also asked Mr. Herlihy about obtaining a copy of the 1980s rail banking agreement between New Hampshire and the federal government. In the agreement, a deal was made regarding the right-of-way (ROW) along Interstate 89 with a condition for future rail reconstruction next to the highway.

The Project Committee discussed a potential Concord to Montreal connection. Ms. Larson noted that the ROW along I-89 is wide enough to allow both rail and roadway. Mr. Moore remarked that a narrow point in the ROW occurs along the shore of Lake Mascoma. The Project Committee then reiterated that making a connection from Lowell to Manchester and Concord is the first step in envisioning future railways.

The time and date of the next meeting will be based upon the availability of the contact who will speak about their experience with rail operations in Rhode Island. Mr. Preece will schedule this meeting. He also requested again that Project Committee members provide comments on the matrix of three New England case study transit partnerships, and on the DRAFT NH Rail Transit Authority Governance Options document. Mr. Preece will distribute electronic copies of the documents, as requested by Mr. Herlihy.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting stood adjourned at 10:20 am.

Respectfully submitted by Katrina Crocker, SNHPC

1/10/14