

**New Hampshire State Rail Plan  
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 24, 2011 9-12  
NHDOT Headquarters, Concord**

*Attending TAC Members:* Mark Scarano, Grafton County Economic Development Council; Justin Slattery, New Hampshire Department of Resources & Economic Development; Peter Griffin, NH Rail Revitalization Association; Tim Murphy, Southwest Regional Planning Commission; Kerrie Diers, Nashua Regional Planning Commission; Nancy Larson, Merrimack Community Development / New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority; Peter Dearness, New England Southern Railroad; Tom O'Neil, Ciment Quebec; Cliff Sinnott, Rockingham Planning Commission; Tim Moore, New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority; Mike Tardiff, Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission; Christine Walker, Upper Valley – Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission; Charles Hunter, New England Central Railroad; Matt Caron, Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission; Jay Minkarah, Manchester Economic Development Office; Cynthia Scarano, Pan Am Railways; David Preece, Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission; Paul Hallett, Conway Scenic Railroad; Malcolm Taylor, Lakes Region Planning Commission; Brian Law, Law Warehouses; Maria Stowell, Pease Development Authority; Robin Comstock, Manchester Chamber of Commerce; Michael King, Northcountry Council; Marc Ambrosi, Strafford Planning Commission; Allison McClean, Public Service Company of NH; John Rymes, Rymes Oil & Propane; Thomas Fargo, NHDES.

NHDOT Staff

Kit Morgan  
Lou Barker

Consultant Team

Ronald O'Blenis, HDR  
Pamela Yonkin, HDR  
Dick Flynn, CTC Group  
Jim Stoetzel, Transit Safety Management  
Carol Morris, Morris Communications  
Ben Ettelman, Morris Communications

HANDOUTS: Study Vision Statement, Study Goals

PURPOSE/SUBJECT: This was the first of three Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings for the New Hampshire Rail Plan. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce members of the TAC to the Study Team, outline the vision and goals for the study and obtain input from the TAC.

BACKGROUND:

*Meeting began at 9:02 am*

### Welcome and Introductions

Kit Morgan, Administrator of the Bureau of Rail and Transit at NHDOT welcomed the committee and thanked them for participating in the process. Mr. Morgan explained that this is the first new rail plan for the State of New Hampshire in ten years and that the Study Team needs the committee's input while putting the new rail plan together. Mr. Morgan introduced Lou Barker of NHDOT and turned the floor over to project manager Ronald O'Blenis.

Mr. Ronald O'Blenis, Project Manager for the HDR Consultant team, welcomed all committee members and thanked them for attending. Mr. O'Blenis explained that the purpose of the meeting was to give committee members an idea of what the NH Rail Plan hopes to accomplish, and to share some of the data that the Study Team had compiled to date. Mr. O'Blenis explained that the Study Team would like as much interaction and participation from the committee as possible, as their input would help guide the direction of the new rail plan.

Mr. O'Blenis introduced the Consultant Team: Pam Yonkin from HDR; Dick Flynn from CTC Group; Jim Stoetzel from Transit Safety Management and Carol Morris from Morris Communications. Mr. O'Blenis then asked the Technical Advisory Committee to introduce themselves.

*Members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) introduce themselves*

### Overview of NH State Rail Plan

Mr. O'Blenis presented the TAC with an overview of the study:

- Objective of NH State Rail Plan Study
  - Update 2001 NH Rail Plan
  - Incorporate new PRIIA expectations
  - Enable NH to apply for federal funding
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
  - Advise NHDOT and HDR Team
  - Provide guidance on issues and strategy
  - Consists of freight and passenger rail stakeholders

### Vision Statement for NH State Rail Plan

Mr. O'Blenis presented the TAC with the NH State Rail Plan Vision Statement and asked the committee to provide feedback on the statement:

*"Provides an efficiently utilized and well-maintained railroad system, expanded as appropriate to accommodate increases in freight and passenger demand for rail*

*services.*

*It is a system that is fully integrated with the national and statewide transportation system, connecting the state's urban and rural communities, maximizing the opportunities for economic growth, and providing safe, secure and reliable transportation of people and goods."*

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce stated that from an economic development perspective there needs to be mention of the need for inter-connection between New Hampshire and other states in the region for both commerce and trade.

Christine Walker of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission asked if the statement referred to just freight and passenger rail or other modes as well.

Mr. O'Brien responded by explaining that the intent was between passenger and freight as well as other modes. Mr. O'Brien explained that it is important to make sure that rail is viewed as part of the transportation system as a whole.

Mr. Cliff Sinnott of the Rockingham Planning Commission stated that he would like to see something in the statement that reflected the need for energy efficiency.

#### NH State Rail Plan Goals

Mr. O'Brien presented the general goals for NH State Rail Plan:

1. Maintain the NH rail system in a state of good repair
2. Provide a rail system that is financially stable
3. Expand the rail system and its capacity to accommodate growth in freight and passenger demand
4. Provide a rail system that is environmentally supportive
5. Facilitate the ability of NH railroads to be competitive regionally, nationally, and globally
6. Support economic initiatives
7. Realize public benefits for public investments
8. Encourage public-private partnerships related to rail services

Mr. Michael King of the North Country Council commented that the Rail Plan should be used by the state to prioritize its scarce resources and asked whether the intent of the Rail Plan is to prioritize those goals?

Mr. O'Brien answered yes and explained that one of the elements of the Rail Plan will

be a benefit cost analysis and assessment and prioritization will be inherent in that process.

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce stated that from both an economic development and public awareness perspective, Goal #6 needs to reflect more regarding the interest in economic development, commerce and trade enhancements and what this means for business and quality of life.

Ms. Christine Walker of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission asked if you are looking specifically at rail to determine whether its environmentally friendly it may skew the outcome because rail has environmental impacts, I would like to see a comparison of rail versus other modes to determine the comparative environmental impacts of all modes and rail.

Mr. Thomas Fargo of DES commented that in terms of the economy he would like to see something less reactive and more about promoting future growth.

Mr. Peter Griffin of the NH Rail Revitalization Association commented that this exercise should promote is the restoration of a multi modal transportation system in New Hampshire and a choice of transportation will attract new business.

Nancy Larson of Merrimack Community Development suggested that it would be wise to specifically address the integration of rail access with the airport and that focus on modal options from the airport will create an abundance of new economic opportunity for the region and for the state as a whole.

Mr. Peter Griffin of the NH Rail Revitalization Association commented that there is a precedent out there for how the connection of rail and air will fuel an economy and that is Providence, Rhode Island.

Mr. David Preece of the Southern NH Planning Commission commented that Goal #8 should have another objective to explore another options or subsidies to support rail including public and private partnerships.

Ms. Cynthia Scarano of Pan Am commented that while it's great that all of the members of the TAC are supporting rail, it's important to note that municipal planners need support at local town meeting level to support rail in order to make this more viable, and that land use issues are very difficult for planners to tackle alone.

Ms. Kerrie Diers of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission commented that one thing that is missing is sustainability and incorporating that word and concept into this plan is important because there is a lot of funding sources available for sustainability related projects and that will make local planner's jobs easier when working with the public.

Mr. Peter Dearness of New England Southern Railroad commented that it is important to create and sustain a structure for rail within NHDOT because without that entity there is good possibility, and it is already happening with NHRTA, that the resources needed to put this plan into place will not be available in the future.

Mr. Brian Law of Law Warehouses commented that as a user, he is looking for a reliable system, and whatever railroad provides reliable service will be financially viable.

Mr. Ron O'Blenis asked whether that reliability made Mr. Law's business better able to plan and respond economically.

Mr. Brian Law of Law Warehouses responded, yes it does and that he was not sure where that fits under the private and public partnership spectrum, but that he used rail considerably when it ran on a reliable schedule.

Ms. Allison McLean of the Public Service Company of NH commented that there is an action item that is missing, regarding an education component and that a lot of people do not understand the benefits that passenger and freight rail can provide to communities.

Mr. Peter Griffin of the NH Rail Revitalization Association suggested that for future meetings the Study Team bring two graphs, one of the historic rail system, and one of the existing rail system to show how much we have lost, and how important this process is to creating connectivity.

Ms. Nancy Larson of Merrimack Community Development commented that she would like to see a statement about promoting a relationship between rail and the recreation/tourism industry, and maybe touch on the possibility of bringing back the snow trains.

Mr. John Rymes of Rymes Propane and Oil commented that as a user that there should be mention of not only maintaining, but to protect the rail lines so we don't lose more to walking trails, etc. Mr. Rymes explained that a couple of the lines that he uses are in danger of being closed and that a lot of people have a negative view of trains which touches on the education piece.

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce stated that people in the economic development field are absent a critical marketing tool that makes attracting new businesses to New Hampshire easier, and that the lack of rail makes New Hampshire less competitive with other states and regions.

*Mr. Ronald O'Blenis made a presentation that covered the topics of the existing rail line in New Hampshire including abandoned lines and miles of railroad by carrier.*

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce asked who owns the Downeaster Rail Line.

Mr. O'Blenis answered that the Downeaster runs on Pan Am's line, the service is supported by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, which is primarily supported by Maine and it has an agreement with Amtrak to run their service.

*Ms. Pamela Yonkin of the HDR Consultant Team made a presentation that covered the topics of: Modal Share by Weight 2007; Value Modal Share 2007; Rail Shipments by Direction; Trade with Canada: Modal Share by Weight; New Hampshire Top Five Originating Commodities by Weight and Value; New Hampshire Top Five Terminating Commodities by Weight and Value and Total Carloads Carried Via Rail: origin, destination and through traffic.*

*The TAC provided the following comments and feedback during the presentation*

#### Modal Share by Weight 2007

Mr. Michael King of Northcountry Council asked what "other" was.

Ms. Pamela Yonkin responded that other includes multiple modes, mail, parcels, pipeline and anything else that could not be defined otherwise.

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce asked about the cargo at the airport, and why it is shown as 0%.

Ms. Pamela Yonkin responded that it is very small and that this would not include anything traveling through, so anything that stops in Manchester and moves through is not reflected here.

#### Value Modal Share 2007

Mr. David Preece of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission asked if it would be possible to expand this chart to include the New England Regional statistics.

Ms. Pamela Yonkin responded that they can and that this is only state data but we could look at Maine and Massachusetts and get a regional perspective.

#### Rail Shipments by Direction

Mr. Cliff Sinnott of the Rockingham Planning Commission asked whether this chart reflected the shipments through New Hampshire.

Ms. Pamela Yonkin answered that no, this chart does not include the through-shipments and the final data will reflect that data.

Mr. Dick Flynn from the CTC Group commented that through the interview process he is trying to get more information about how users are sourcing material, as this affects the distance that freight travels.

New Hampshire Top Five Terminating Commodities by Weight and Value

Mr. Charles Hunter of New England Central Railroad commented that most of the paper mills have closed.

Ms. Pamela Yonkin responded that yes they have and these are the 2007 data so it is likely that this will shift when we look at more current data.

Total Carloads Carried Via Rail: origin, destination, and through traffic

Ms. Cynthia Scarano of Pan Am made the comment that this chart needs to reflect where those trucks are coming from within the state as that will affect whether rail is cost-prohibitive for these carloads.

*Mr. Ronald O'Blenis made a presentation that covered the topics of Regional High Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail; Amtrak Boardings & Alightings in NH FY 2010; The Amtrak Downeaster and the Downeaster Ridership.*

Mr. Jim Stoetzel of Transit Safety Management commented that it is important to look at the Downeaster in terms of a national perspective and that there are 20 plus state-supported services in the country. The Downeaster is one of the most successful operations in terms of ridership, public support, recovery ratio and support of the states.

Mr. Peter Dearness of New England Southern Railroad commented that the boogie man is that railroading is in a strait jacket constitutionally and that this is the only state that does not have programs that actively participate financially and provide grant and loans to freight rail and passenger rail operations. New Hampshire needs to reverse this trend.

*Mr. Ronald O'Blenis presented a synopsis of initial interviews that were done with the TAC Members:*

*The TAC Members separated into three break out groups and collaboratively answered the following five questions:*

- 1. What is the overall current and expected economic condition for New Hampshire over the short and long term?*
- 2. How important is New Hampshire's transportation network to the success of business in this state?*
- 3. How important is freight and passenger rail to New Hampshire's transportation network?*

4. *If the rail system remains unchanged, how would this affect the economy locally, statewide, and regionally, over the short and long term?*
5. *If rail services were enhanced, what changes would be beneficial and what would be the result locally, statewide, and regionally over the short and long term?*

(NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUPS AT END OF THIS DOCUMENT)

Break Out Group Commonalities and Other General Comments from TAC

Mr. Peter Dearness of New England Southern Railroad commented that with the price of diesel going up, freight rail would continue to have an advantage and during the recent recession, 15% of trucking businesses went out of business.

Ms. Cynthia Scarano of Pan Am commented that all three groups agreed that the success of rail lies heavily in improving the development around rail, which will provide more opportunity to increase the customer base of rail users.

Mr. Peter Griffin of the NH Rail Revitalization Association commented that all three groups agree that the current, road-based transportation system is at or nearing capacity and providing additional modes is important.

Mr. Ronald O'Blenis asked the TAC if this is important to existing customers or for the ability to attract new customers?

*Several members of the TAC replied, "It is important to both existing and new customers."*

Mr. Peter Griffin of the NH Rail Revitalization Association commented that if you offer people choice, both passenger and freight, it will attract new customers and users and that tourists will be new customers as well.

Thomas Fargo of NHDES commented that a commonality was that there is a need to increase public awareness regarding the benefits of freight and passenger rail.

Mr. Mark Scarano of the Grafton County Economic Development Council commented that smaller businesses will not see the benefits of rail until companies like UPS use rail and in turn lower their costs, we need to keep the small businesses in mind who need goods delivered promptly and cost effectively.

*Mr. Ronald O'Blenis asked the TAC if there was any conversation regarding the consolidation of facilities to improve service.*



Ms. Maria Stowell of the Pease Development Authority commented that Pease maintains the capacity to have a rail line in Pease, but people tend to look to the highway system for their transportation needs.

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce commented that all three groups discussed connections to the port, UNH and Manchester Airport.

Mr. John Rymes of Rymes Oil and Propane commented that the need for increased reliability was a commonality as well.

Mr. Peter Dearness of New England Southern Railroad commented that the medical and education industries have the need to be interconnected by rail.

*Mr. Ronald O'Blenis asked the TAC what the big take aways from the breakout session were.*

Mr. Thomas Fargo of NHDES commented that New Hampshire has to make some enhancements to the rail system or the state will be left behind economically.

Ms. Robin Comstock of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce commented that she heard a lot of skepticism among the TAC regarding a return investment on rail, that rail can compete with the reliability of surface transportation. Ms. Comstock felt that she sensed a lot of skepticism as to whether NH will be able to move in a more train-oriented direction.

*Mr. Ronald O'Blenis asked the TAC whether the perception that New Hampshire has a strong sense of entrepreneurialism still exists?*

Mr. Thomas Fargo of NHDES commented that the first couple of goals seem to be defensive stating that we need to defend what we have now. We want this to be a pragmatic, realistic plan but we want to promote rail development, not only protect what we have.

Mr. Malcolm Taylor of the Lakes Region Planning Commission commented that there is still a residual reluctance to provide new transportation infrastructure and while these types of developments are friendly towards business the state seems reluctant to spend money on them.

Mr. Cliff Sinnott of the Rockingham Planning Commission commented that New Hampshire does not have a good track record of investing and being innovative in terms of business development; the attitude seems to be more about reacting to the market and facilitating the outcome. Some states and countries have economic strategies; New Hampshire needs to have this kind of attitude towards economic development.

Mr. Michael King of Northcountry Council commented that many on the TAC are a little negative right now and in New Hampshire, all you hear on the news is what they are cutting. We are not ready to spend money and economically we are in a downturn.

Mr. Dennis Gagne of Eastern Propane & Oil commented that it's hard to try and keep an open mind in terms of building new infrastructure in this economic climate. Mr. Gagne commented that the state should look at marketing the residential part, rather than the commercial part. From an economic development prospect, we have to build a lot to make it economically sustainable. There is a market for rail, but from a goals point of view, we should split the residential and the industrial/commercial goals.

Mr. Paul Hallett of Conway Scenic Railroad commented that maybe the time to build rail back up hasn't arrived yet, but we feel that our mission is to preserve and protect the rail that we own so someday the rail will be there. Mr. Hallett commented that rail is going to be resurrected at some point, but currently we are a nation that changed from manufacturing and using bulky machinery – everything is getting smaller - I think the day will come when those corridors are resurrected but 20 years ago the rail lines served a purpose and that purpose has not been replaced

#### Closing Remarks

Mr. Kit Morgan of NHDOT thanked the members of the TAC for participating and providing valuable input. He mentioned that they will meet again in a couple of months at the next TAC meeting and that he hopes all that came today will participate in the upcoming meetings.

*Meeting adjourned at 1 pm.*

#### **Notes from Breakout Groups**

##### **Breakout Group #1 Notes**

1. What is the overall current and expected economic condition for New Hampshire over the short and long term?

- The economy in the State of New Hampshire has hit bottom. We are cautiously and carefully making our way back on up.
- Employers are spread thin and there is considerable uncertainty.
- Many things contribute to the economic condition of NH, including:
  - Taxes
  - Education system
  - Workforce skills
  - Regulation
- Regulatory reforms hinder growth
- Change in the political system may also affect the economy

2. How important is New Hampshire's transportation network to the success of business in this state? Provide examples.

3. How important is freight and passenger rail to New Hampshire's transportation network?

- 80% of economic growth is expanded businesses
- Southwest Airlines will only expand service if the customer base is already there.
- Rail is a way to expand that customer base
- Mode choice is important
- Major tourist attractions in the state are inaccessible except by car
- A strong infrastructure – transportation, broadband, etc. – is essential to economic growth
- A robust rail system has a value. If the NH rail system is strong, the distribution of goods is enhanced.
- It was noted that increased tolls, higher gas prices, may affect truck distribution.
- The importance of logistics was highlighted.
- The group felt that a strong rail freight system can lead to an expanded passenger rail system.
- If the rail infrastructure gets worse, business will be impacted and there will be even more diversion from rail to trucks.
- Freight rail operations and maintenance costs are the same per mile regardless of whether the rail line serves one business or several businesses. If the number of businesses is decreased, the freight rail provider will reallocate its resources and reliability on that line serving one business may become less reliable.
- Rail-based business is decreasing. It is important to keep what rail-based business we have.
- The Pan Am Railways representative mentioned that the Ayer rail yard is to capacity. Rail-related business activity is necessary to keep the lines.
- The group thought it would be helpful to find out why shippers who used to use rail stopped.
- A comment was made that external factors (e.g., fuel costs) drive decision making for shippers.
- It was mentioned that regulatory costs are too burdensome for business and manufacturing.
- It was suggested that we go to existing business to see what they would need to consider using rail more frequently for shipping. One participant mentioned that there was a 43% increase in international exports from existing businesses. This was the largest in the US. It is important to continue to try to grow existing NH business.

4. If the rail system remains unchanged, how would this affect the economy locally, statewide, and regionally, over the short and long term?

- If the rail system is unchanged, it will be a missed opportunity.
- Truck traffic will increase, further stressing municipalities.
- There is a lack of transportation redundancy in NH.
- A lack of diversity in modes could decrease competitiveness.
- Increased fuel costs could decrease businesses relying on trucking.
- Pan Am Railways representative mentioned that an intermodal facility, for example, would allow a dedicated train.
- There is a lack of rail connectivity. So much has been lost in NH (compare before and after rail maps).
- The question was asked, “How much will we pay for transportation redundancy?”

5. If rail services were enhanced, what changes would be beneficial and what would be the result locally, statewide, and regionally over the short and long term?

- Expanding rail could increase the number of students, diversity of students, and enhance the quality of education.
- If you could get passengers to and from the airport via rail, you could get these people to areas all over the state.
- It would be an opportunity to enhance NH’s urban centers; revitalization.
- There is the potential for a lack of “flow” in the absence of this type of rail connectivity.
- There could be the opportunity to increase freight through the airport and port.
- We could potentially move cargo from the port west to east.
- It was mentioned that there would be no guarantees that an improved rail system would spur economic development.
- We discussed a few existing NH businesses that might consider expanding with improved rail service.
  - Wiggins Airways
  - Mail (USPS, UPS, etc.)
  - Hendrix Wiare
  - Max Steel

### **Breakout Group #2 Notes**

1. What is the overall current and expected economic condition for New Hampshire over the short and long term?

- Heavy manufacturing is diminishing in NH (this type of manufacturing lends itself to freight rail)

- Tourist industry will continue to grow
- High-Tech and Advanced Manufacturing industries will grow
- Overall the economy in NH is stagnant but it is better than in other parts of the country
- One growing industry in the state is big-box retail and that is not a sustainable industry
- Starting to see some businesses prepare for growth (small end manufacturing)
- Southern part of the state has much different perspective on future of industry and economy than northern part of the state

2. How important is New Hampshire's transportation network to the success of business in this state? Provide examples.

- There is an opportunity to take advantage of using freight rail for lumber transport. Lumber is being shipped up into Canada and being shipped back as plywood, all on trucks.
- The current transportation system is reaching the point of capacity and there is insufficient land or funding to expand the state's roadways
- The traditional roadway system is being taxed beyond what can be maintained because of the high cost of road maintenance and the deteriorating condition of the existing roadways
- If freight traffic increases this will only multiply the deterioration of the already over taxed and dilapidated condition of the state's roadways

3. How important is freight and passenger rail to New Hampshire's transportation network?

- Very important if it reduces the cost of shipping as the cost of transport goes to the business and is ultimately passed on to the consumer. This hurts the overall economic vitality of the state by creating a less business-friendly environment for existing and prospective businesses as well contributing to cost of living for consumers/citizens of the state.
- It is important to the future of freight movement as the current roadway system is deteriorated and there is not sufficient funding to maintain the system in the future.
- It will not be important if there is not additional emphasis placed on the benefits of freight and passenger rail throughout the state (education).
- Currently there is only limited importance to existing industries within the state as most are not rail oriented, (although this could change with rail opportunities).
- It is important to attract business growth within the state as lack of freight rail options contributes to a less competitive

- Importance depends on location as in many locations the highway system still has the advantage as being closely available to most regions in the state

4. If the rail system remains unchanged, how would this affect the economy locally, statewide, and regionally, over the short and long term?

- It will cost New Hampshire prospective jobs/industries and other economic opportunities by offering a less competitive package as compared to other states, especially if neighboring states continue to upgrade and integrate more rail options.
- The long term benefits of upgrading rail options would have short-term costs, but no change will have long term, negative effects on economy locally and statewide.
- If the rail system remains unchanged it creates a no-start for certain industries and hurts New Hampshire's ability to be competitive with other states and regions in terms of attracting new business and new industry to the state.
- The lack of options and continued reliance on vehicle based transport will have negative effects on the environment which will have adverse economic effects on the state in the future (quality of life, tourism).

5. If rail services were enhanced, what changes would be beneficial and what would be the result locally, statewide, and regionally over the short and long term?

- New Hampshire would be more competitive with other states and regions in terms of attracting new business/industry if the overall rail network in the state was upgraded/enhanced.
- New industry opportunities exist with the ability to double stack containers on freight rail.

### **Breakout Group #3 Notes**

1. What is the overall current and expected economic condition for New Hampshire over the short and long term?

Positives:

- Overall, when recovery starts, NH will be well placed vs. other NE states to take advantage due to age of working population
- Growth areas are high-tech manufacturing, tourism and services, health care (both in jobs and investment)
- The North Country is a bit behind
- Rochester adding a 300,000 big box development, opening in 2013

- Strafford County: Rte. 16 improvement a positive, some jobs growth happening, health care opportunities
- Merrimack: 700,000 square foot retail center to open Nov. 2012

Negatives:

- Grafton County lost 20% of its manufacturing in the last five or so years.
- Pease still has a quarter of a million square feet of open space from the early 90s; it was twice as much but has been filled in by small manufacturers and service companies.

2. How important is New Hampshire's transportation network to the success of business in this state?

3. How important is freight and passenger rail to New Hampshire's transportation network?

- If NH is moving to a consumer-based economy, this is not a good sign for freight rail in the state.
- There is a disconnect in terms of understanding of how to use freight rail.
- At least one recent Manchester developer was completely uninterested in rail proximity to a potential development site
- In terms of transportation in general, the location of the interstate drives the location of industry.
- There are some intermodal opportunities in the Seacoast area that are not taken advantage of.
- In Pease, it is the access to I-95 that is key, esp. for the workforce. They are trying to link airport development to rail, but climate has been an issue in terms of having to do everything inside.
- Manchester Airport: Lack of rail at airport is major negative to growth (this was unanimous)
- Manchester: Key to growth is being able to attract young workforce and to do this need a good transportation network.
- Freight rail is less important than it could be because:
  - There is not sufficient connectivity
  - Timing and convenience of service is an issue, especially with some carriers
  - Noted again that most businesses do not know enough about how freight rail works to know how to make it work for them

- Freight rail is beneficial to business because:
  - For some products (propane, biomass), it is significantly less expensive than trucking
  - New transportation regs for truckers (CSA 2010) will make trucking rail more attractive.
- If freight rail is to work in NH, business development needs to attract the ones suitable for rail and develop the business

4. If the rail system remains unchanged, how would this affect the economy locally, statewide, and regionally, over the short and long term?

- There would be an increased need for highway capacity
- It would reduce economic opportunity in NH – contribute to making the state uncompetitive
- Rail is a big driver for airport growth – by not enhancing at Manchester, we will block growth
- Right now freight rail is not reliable, track is in bad shape, there are some doublestack issues, and speed issues.
- If these are not addressed as part of a regional freight plan, NH will miss opportunities. Business does not stop at the border.

5. If rail services were enhanced, what changes would be beneficial and what would be the result locally, statewide, and regionally over the short and long term?

- Improving the infrastructure would mean that the rail system would require less maintenance dollars
- Passenger rail and freight can enhance each other if done sensibly
- The frequency of freight service affects which businesses can use it – increasing frequency will broaden demand
- Reliability is a huge factor, and the perception (and in some cases the reality) is that it is bad. This reduces marketability.