

**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 one 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.