

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

MINUTES

BOARD MEETING

February 28, 2014, 11:00 am

LOB Room 203

I. Call to Order

Chair Mahon called the meeting to order at 11:09 am

II. Public Input – *Members of the public wishing to will be given an opportunity to address the NHRTA Board.*

None.

III. Minutes – *Minutes of the June 26, 2009*

Ted Starkweather made a motion to approve the minutes. David Preece made the second. Jonathan Edwards pointed out his name was misspelled. The motion to approve the corrected minutes passed.

IV. Committee Updates

Executive Committee: Work is in progress on updating the bylaws and reorganizing the Rail Authority. The Rail Authority reorganization will require legislative approval. The hope is to have the suggested language in place for the 2014–2015 legislative session.

Finance Committee: The work of this committee has just started and is focused on creating a budget for the Rail Authority and getting a line item in the state budget for the Authority. Tom Mahon gave a brief update.

Public Relations Committee: No report.

NHCC Project Committee: At the 2/19/14/ meeting the committee reviewed several governance models of other New England organizations that have responsibility to run passenger rail services: NNEPRA, MBTA, RIDOT, & VTDOT. Also mentioned – Joint Powers Authority where 2 different organizations form a joint authority to run a passenger rail service. Mike Izbicki pointed out that it is often easier to get funding from this type of authority. This is a work in progress but some type of governance model needs to be selected so the corresponding changes can be made to the RSA, bylaws and to the MOU between the Rail Authority and NHDOT.

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Jonathan Edwards asked what kind of organization would be the “other” organization that would form a Joint Powers Authority with the Rail Authority. No specific examples were given as it is still under review. Edwards suggested an advisory board model, similar to the one affiliated with the MBTA, as one method to maintain a state-wide focus.

Edwards also asked about NHDOT’s position on forming a Joint Powers Authority. Answer not available – still under review.

Edwards also asked how such a Joint Powers Authority would maintain a state-wide focus.

Bob Hall expressed a similar concern. Bob suggested some type of “Train to New Hampshire” approach based on the Downeaster’s “Train to Maine”.

Mike Izbicki stated that the FTA deals with transit and commuter rail while the FRA deals with intercity passenger rail. This division of responsibility must also be taken in account in the governance model and how the service that is provided is marketed.

Nancy Larsen asked how the Rail Authority might engage the rest of the state in providing various regional rail initiatives.

Both Mike Izbicki and Tom Mahon restated that multimodal authorities (dealing with all transit – bus and rail) was not a good fit for New Hampshire although stressed that all rail stations are expected to be able to accommodate several different modes of transportation.

Mark Brewer also had questions about how a Joint Powers Authority would work. His interpretation of “transit” name, “New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority” was meant to refer only to passenger rail. He also asked if the Executive Committee was going to make a recommendation to the full Authority on a particular governance model. They will do so at a later date – still in the information gathering mode.

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It was stated that the reorganization of the Authority needed to be in place before the design phase of the NHCC begins. This will help in getting the needed funding from the FTA and/or FRA when they feel the Authority has the capability to manage a rail service.

It was again restated that the new model needs to be in place so that a Legislative Service Request (LSR) can be submitted in the November/December time frame in order to get a change to the RSA in the next legislative session.

David Preece introduced Robert Carpenter an intern for the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission who is going to help us with some of the governance model research.

Malcolm Taylor asked if it would be possible to have a New Hampshire division of NNEPRA. This would prove to be very difficult because NNEPRA was created as a Maine-based organization and is closely related to the ME DOT. It would be possible to use the NNEPRA structure to form an independent "NH-NNEPRA".

Nancy Larsen asked how many people would comprise a reorganized Authority board. Mike Izbicki replied 5 to 7 people would be an ideal range to make decisions in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

The next steps will be to let the Project Committee continue its work and report back to the Authority on the progress it has made.

V. Other Discussion

Tom Mahon restated the Authority's Media Policy and cautioned all directors not to speak for the Authority unless they have received permission from the Chair.

Tom Mahon also reminded directors to file form 15A (financial disclosure) with the State's Attorney General's Office.

Bob Hall gave an update on the progress of getting an enclosed waiting area at the Exeter Station. Four years ago the cost to convert the baggage area of the old station into a waiting room was estimated at \$403,000. Today's estimate is

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\$496,000. The Town of Exeter voted to supply funding for the waiting room as well as to restore the 1892 depot.

Patrick Herlihy reported that the DOT is waiting for Pan Am Railways to respond to DOT's assessed value of the abandoned Hampton Branch line.

Tom Mahon reported that on March 19, 2014 he will be giving the House Public Works and Highway Committee an update on the progress to date the Authority has made.

Malcolm Taylor reported that the USDOT has just released their state of US infrastructure report.

VI. Adjourn

David Preece moved to adjourn, seconded by many.

Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:20

Respectfully Submitted,
Tim Moore