



NH Railroad Revitalization Association

February 25, 2008

Tonight's meeting was called to order by President Peter Griffin @ 7:00 PM at the Health and Safety Council in Concord.

Attendees:

Name	Town
Peter Griffin	Windham, NH
Bill Remington	Concord, NH
George Katsakiores	Derry, NH
Sam Langley	Boscawen, NH
Dick Currier	Hopkinton, NH
Gus Sheedy	Derry, NH
Dennis Grimes	Bedford, NH

Name	Town
Tom Noel	New Boston, NH
Gary Kerr	Chichester, NH
Stephen Piper	Dover, NH
Steve Flanders	Weare, NH
Lenny McGee	Manchester, NH
Winthrop Buswell	Loudon, NH

January Minutes

The January 28 meeting minutes were accepted as written.

Treasurer's Report

Steve Flanders reported the organization's account balance. He reported dues receipts of \$102 and paid \$22.75 for printing costs.

Guest Speaker – Kit Morgan, Administrator NHDOT Bureau of Rail & Transit

Kit Morgan has been the Administrator of Rail & Transit for 14 years and spoke on issues from a NHDOT perspective as follows.

Without being able to comment on the New England Southern situation with Pan-Am Ry and their intent to resume operations in the Concord area, Kit did mention that NHDOT owns the line north of Concord beginning at the switch behind the Holiday Inn. Peter Dearness, President of NEGS, is committed to continue service to the one customer north of Concord and will continue to interchange with Pan-Am.

NHDOT is maintaining a good relationship with the 27-member board of the NH Rail Transit Authority. Peter Burling is the Chair, Steve Williams is Vice Chair and Kit is the Governor's appointee. The NHRTA's goal in the first biennium will be to establish priorities and then move toward implementation in the next biennium. Staffing needs will come from the NHDOT or from regional planning commissions or both. Having an established Rail Authority makes the return of passenger rail more visible and there exists a broad coalition by having members from all over the state. Initial funding will be coming from the City of Nashua to cover costs associated with the Alternatives Analysis studies and preliminary engineering. Most of this work has been done for the segment Lowell – Nashua (in 1999), but now the scope of the project extends to Manchester. The NHRTA will be asking the congressional delegation to fund the study from Nashua – Manchester. The NHDOT will be submitting this request on behalf of NHRTA. NHRTA must define the service, operations, capital improvements and will play a role as work begins. The NHDOT and NHRTA will keep the Governor and Legislature informed as work progresses. The financial commitment will be needed to give NHRTA what it needs and the Legislature will need to make funding a priority. It is anticipated that \$800,000 will be needed to fund the consultant Alternatives Analysis study (to compare with other rail options, other modes or to simply do nothing). \$3 million will then be

required for preliminary engineering and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement. Funds committed to date are from federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) sources and total about \$30 million. These funds would be used for the construction of stations at Manchester, Merrimack and Nashua and would go toward the costs of track upgrades. CMAQ funds are also typically available to help cover the operational costs for the first three years. The funding sources for the remaining \$50 million project balance have not been established yet.

The liability insurance cap legislation came out of the House Committee with a vote of 14-0 in favor of sending it to the full floor next week with an opinion of “ought to pass”. It is expected to be found to be constitutional [based upon precedents set in other states].

The I-93 Transit Study was a commitment NHDOT made as part of the I-93 widening. It has identified a list of alternatives including buses and light/heavy rail. An in-depth evaluation of the “short list” will be forthcoming after looking at the M&L corridor to Boston, M&L corridor to Anderson Station in Woburn, I-93 to Boston, I-93 to Anderson Station, median light rail and a dedicated shoulder for buses with a final decision coming within the next few months. Then a strategic plan to implement the best option and time frame will be drafted. Potential station stops will be looked at as well as rough costs, environmental impacts and land use to encourage Transit Oriented Development. Right now the four best options are as follows:

- 1) M&L corridor to Boston
- 2) Dedicated shoulder for buses
- 3) Baseline Alternative (the best that could be done with little investment – more bus service in traffic)
- 4) No build

The M&L corridor to Boston has been deemed the best option as the corridor is already in place, but some obstacles exist (encroachments, grade crossings). Buses in traffic are still very subject to congestion. Bus service on a dedicated corridor would be cost-prohibitive and rail in the I-93 median would not be logistically feasible. Consultants have shown successful operations of buses on dedicated shoulders, but they are still subject to congestion. More public meetings are anticipated to be held in the spring. Horizon forecast is 20-25 years. Much information can be found at www.I93transit.org.

Other Business

- Win commented on continuing efforts to write letters to legislators and newspapers
- Bill attended the 2nd meeting on the relocation of the Concord Steam Company plant. They’ve gotten Planning Board approval to build and are going for their environmental permits. This move is expected to generate an additional 300 trucks per week traveling through Concord. Bill reiterated that rail service be investigated and mentioned that Peter Dearnness is also investigating a wood chip source in Ashland that is next to the rail line.
- Gary raised the issue again about what questions NHRRA should ask on the Survey Monkey web site and also asked that the survey in its final form be placed on the NHRRA web site. Members are encouraged to visit the site at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=6CyOoggG5Eev4VKj7pYZRg_3d_3d and give feedback. He also requested information on the status of printing NHRRA bumper stickers.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM

Next meeting: Monday, March 24, 2008 at 7 PM
Safety & Health Council
163 Manchester Street, Concord

Minutes by: Stephen R. Piper, Secretary