



# NH Railroad Revitalization Association

February 26, 2007

Tonight's meeting was called to order by Peter Griffin at 7:00 PM at the Safety & Health Council.

## Attendees:

Name	Town
Peter Griffin	Windham, NH
Tom Noel	New Boston, NH
Stephen Piper	Dover, NH
Dick Currier	Hopkinton, NH
George Katsakiores	Derry, NH

Name	Town
Gary Kerr	Chichester, NH
Bill Remington	Concord, NH
Lenny McGee	Manchester, NH
Winthrop Buswell	Loudon, NH
Claire Zopf	Concord, NH

**Guest Speaker:** Steve Williams (Nashua Regional Planning Commission Executive Director)

## January Minutes

The January 22, 2007 minutes were accepted as written.

## Treasurer's Report

Steve Flanders was not present, therefore no report was available.

## Steve Williams

Steve Williams gave an update on the Manchester-Lowell passenger rail initiative and submitted his outline (attached) describing the scope of the project, ridership forecasts, costs, potential funding sources and tasks still necessary to tackle prior to startup. He also submitted a passenger rail liability and insurance example (attached) that has been developed to describe the costs associated with different levels of coverage that might be required. Currently there is legislation introduced as HB311 (attached), which seeks to establish a committee to study the feasibility of setting liability limits for commuter rail operations. As only two companies in the world carry insurance of this magnitude, rates are not very competitive.

Legislation has also been introduced in the Senate as SB75, which seeks to establish a NH Rail Authority for the purposes of maintaining oversight of the operations, setting fares, collecting funds, fielding lawsuits, etc. This Authority would answer to a special Board of Directors made up of representatives from all communities' local governments and state government appointees. (See <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2007/sb0075.html>)

Although contract requirements for operating passenger rail service are through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) via proposals, Pan-Am Railway (formerly Guilford Rail System) is now considered the likely entity to operate the service. MBTA was initially considered as an option when the anticipated terminus was in Nashua, but now that Manchester will be the targeted endpoint, most of the corridor is in NH on Pan-Am right of way. MBTA would have sought double tracking the entire length such that a derailment would not trap equipment north of their territory. MBTA does allow for other passenger rail operators to run on their trackage. Amtrak has also been considered as an option, but they are geared more toward intercity operations and would not likely be able to ever provide more than four round trips per day. The service will initially operate four round trips, but it is expected that ridership growth will demand more. Concord Trailways has agreed to do joint ticketing and cooperative scheduling once the rail service starts.

With the advent of new administrations in MA, relationships are now being established with Governor Duval Patrick and Bernard Cohen. Negotiations continue with the town of North Chelmsford, MA, which also wishes to have a station stop in addition to the three planned for NH.

There is a shuttle bus service planned to increase connectivity with the rest of the area that will loop around from the Spitbrook Road train station to the Pheasant Lane Mall and up around to the DW Highway businesses. Developers in Hudson are planning 2½ million square feet of new retail construction in two phases with a 500' pedestrian bridge over the Merrimack River that will provide access directly to the station's platform. Additional parking will also be part of that development.

Funding for infrastructure costs would come through the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district set up to appropriate any increases in property tax revenues. It is expected that there will exist an economic payback from having the train service in place.

It is highly recommended that NHRRA members contact their elected officials to support the passage of both HB311 and SB75 to ensure that this project continues to go forward and maintain its momentum.

### **Groveton Branch**

NH State Senator Gallus has introduced legislation as SB238 seeking to extend the time frame relative to funding the Groveton Branch Corridor repairs. Text of this bill can be viewed at: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2007/sb0238.html>.

### **Other Business**

Dick Currier met with Alan Larter to request the use a portion of the Northfield Freight House for the purposes of storing NHRRA documents and assets, but he is unfortunately seeking to rent it. In the meantime, Bill Remington will maintain such at his residence.

Peter Griffin was interviewed on NH Public Radio along with Representative Ken Weyler to discuss the merits and potential funding issues of reestablishing passenger rail service. Peter has also been interviewed on Windham/Salem local access cable TV with Dennis Coffey of HTNB to be shown in communities along the I-93 corridor.

Dick Currier submitted brochures and applications for this year's New England Rail Forum & Expo (attached). This is scheduled for March 27 at the DCU Center Grand Ballroom, Crown Plaza Hotel in Worcester, MA. For more information contact Jonathan Budzyna at 617-437-7810 or [jbudzyna@aol.com](mailto:jbudzyna@aol.com).

Tom has attempted to follow up with the IRS regarding their position on 501(c)(3) organizations lobbying, but he has not yet heard back from them. His contact at the NH Dept of Justice has, however, given the indication that the amount of lobbying NHRRA might do would not jeopardize its nonprofit status.

There was mention that NH Senate President Sylvia Larsen has stated that she will be seeking legislation to acquire rail funding this year.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM

Next meeting: Monday, March 26, 2007 at 7 PM  
Safety & Health Council  
163 Manchester Street, Concord

Minutes by: Stephen R. Piper, Secretary