

Transportation Full Committee
Minutes
December 19th, 2007

Present: Henry Anderson, David Auger, Raymond Burton, Joseph Elgosin, Glenn English, Beverly Raymond, Jack Rose, Bob Stevenson, Bill Watson, Doug Grant, and Steve Young.

Staff: Mary Deppe and Michael King.

Call To Order:

Glenn English called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and explained that the bylaws had just been approved and that the Steering and Full committees have been combined and is now one committee.

Everyone around the table introduced themselves and the minutes and agenda were passed out. Glenn English introduced Councilor Raymond Burton and gave him the floor. Councilor Burton discussed a number of different topics including:

- A calendar by the "Safer Roads Group" that has a lot of great information.
- The Town of Bath also made a historical calendar, of which there are few copies.
- There was a rail meeting sponsored by the Genesee and Wyoming Rail Group, at which 23 miles of improvements for low-grade rail were discussed. The group is looking for \$8.5 million in funding various sources (economic development, transit, etc.) and would like to have the weight limit increased for the rail cars. This group may be looking for a letter of support in the future.
- Governor Lynch will be nominating a new DOT Commissioner on or around January 16th, 2008.
- Governor Lynch nominated Nick Toumpas as the Assistant Commissioner of the NH Department of Health and Human Services.
- GACIT signed the final report of the Ten Year Plan and it now needs to be reviewed and approved by Governor Lynch and the general court by January 15th, 2008.
- There is no new cash in the Ten Year Plan draft.
- The gas tax increase bill was not approved.
- Thanked Chuck O'Leary and Bill Watson's Planning Committee on all the hard work done on the Ten Year Plan.

Approval of Minutes:

Glenn English asked the TAC to review the minutes. Steven Young made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 19th, 2007 meeting and it was seconded by Beverly Raymond. A vote was taken, all were in favor, none opposed, and the minutes were approved as written.

Bill Watson – Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance – NHDOT

GACIT - Bill Watson explained that the GACIT approved the TYP draft and that it has now been forwarded to Governor Lynch for his approval. He explained that there was good attendance at the public hearings around the State. He went on to mention that there was a lot of discussion at the Conway and Berlin meetings. The themes of most meetings were safety and preservation. Bill explained that he was asked to put forth a fiscally constrained Ten Year Plan and that the first six years of the plan are fiscally constrained while the other four get "cloudier". The first projects in the first six years of the TYP are either under design or almost completed design. The other four years have yet to be designed. He mentioned that the State Legislature needs to consider bonding and using other revenue sources. Bill went on to explain that there are some concerns about revenues and inflation showed in the Ten Year Plan and that the problem may have been understated. He also reiterated that the Highway Trust Fund is broken and needs to be fixed. Bill discussed the Block Grant and mentioned that the allocation of funds going to towns has stayed level while the funding going to other State agencies has been increasing. He stated that DOT needs to figure out the best way to wean other state agencies off of this funding.

Someone mentioned that the communities in the North Country will be very happy once work begins on the Conway Bypass Project and that it is really great to see it moving forward.

Bill also mentioned that a study was done about possibly increasing the membership on the GACIT committee and shortening the length of the TYP to be closer to 4 or 6 years. He stated that DOT will continue updating the TYP every 2 years and Michael King stated that there are STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program) amendments happening all the time. Bill explained that the main priorities in the TYP for NHDOT were:

- 1.) Red List Bridges
- 2.) Safety
- 3.) Preservation

Ray mentioned that the Councilors sent a letter to Governor Lynch asking him to let them set the discount rate for the EZ Pass. He mentioned that increasing the toll rate wasn't popular, but it is helping to improve the situation.

Transportation Enhancement – Bill Watson explained that there will not be a round of TE funding this year. The program has been over-awarded and DOT wants the awarded projects to catch up with the funding. The money is out until 2012 and the program is accepting no new projects. North Country Council will send a letter to communities to inform them that the next round will most likely take place in 2010. Bill explained that it is the same situation with CMAQ funding.

Scenic Byways – Bill explained that there were two projects in the North Country that were awarded funding in the last grant round. Money will be freeing up soon and projects will be allowed to resume eventually. The transfer of administration between the Office of Energy and Planning and DOT is holding up the process. He explained that there will be a new State Scenic Byways Coordinator on January 14th, 2008.

There was some discussion about how the Scenic Byways program created a rule that there are no new signs allowed along Scenic Byways on the State Right-of-Way. Committee members spoke about how some businesses were being asked to take down signs that already exist and it is not fair.

Bill explained that there will be another round of Scenic Byways funding in 2008 and that award notifications for that last round will be sent out in 2008.

There was some discussion about the Conway Visitor Center and how there have been some complaints about the design. Bill Watson stated that the building was designed by a local committee.

SPR Funding – Bill explained that Dean Eastman is a new DOT planner. He also explained that there will be a \$50,000 price tag on Corridor Studies. DOT will be looking at linking transportation planning with conservation planning and a number of RPC's have showed interest in applying for that. He stated that DOT will solicit for projects in mid January and contracts will be done up in July. There are two levels of projects, the higher level includes multiple towns and the other is more localized. Mary explained that at the last TAC meeting there was interest in doing Corridor Studies on Route 3 and Route 302. The NCC Community Planning group was in favor of a study for Route 3. Glenn English explained that there needs to be a study on Route 302 in Haverhill before there are big problems.

Transit

Beverly Raymond discussed Transit issues that are happening in the North Country. She also explained that she will be meeting with Mary Deppe before each quarterly meeting in order to continuously update the Regional Coordinated Transit Plan. Beverly handed out a copy of the Preferred Service Plan for the Carroll County Transit Operations Expansion. Bev also explained that the services that North Country Transit can provide depend on the amount of funding that is available. She mentioned that if they can coordinate with larger Human Service groups, then they might be able to get the hospitals to offer assistance to medical patients.

Glenn English and Michael King said that they will try to help and open some doors with the Dartmouth Regional Technology Center to help North Country Transit. Mike also suggested that Beverly meet with Lakes Region Planning Commission and discuss what she is doing with transit in that region.

There was some discussion about how the Plymouth area is in the middle of North Country Council and Lakes Region Planning Commission and has not received a lot of assistance with public transit.

Beverly explained that she needed local assistance with the Carroll County Transit project and that she needed people to go to their towns and talk about how important the project is. Henry Anderson explained that the cost of gas is making it too expensive for volunteer drivers to continue offering assistance.

North Country Transit just released their second newsletter and it is available at www.tccap.org.

Other Business

Bill Watson mentioned that Public Transit Administrator, Shelly Winters, took over Ken Hazeltine's position. He also mentioned that DOT is not planning on cutting jobs and that there are currently hundreds of positions available.

Bob Stevenson stated that there are a large number of signs in Jackson and wanted to know how to get rid of some of them. Bill Watson said that he should contact Bill Lambert and Greg Placy of NHDOT.

Michael King mentioned that there is a newly formed Rail Transit Authority and he has been appointed by Governor Lynch to be a member. The last meeting focused on the commuter rail from Boston to Nashua.

Adjourn

Joe Elgosin made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Steve Young seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Minutes Approved 4/9/08