

Transportation Full Committee
Minutes
March 21th, 2007

Present: Henry Anderson, Raymond Burton, Mary Deppe, Joseph Elgosin, Dennis Fowler, Becky Newton, William Houle, Mike King, Greg Placy, Beverly Raymond, Jack Rose, and Edith Tucker.

Guests: Ed Jeffrey, David Presby, Peter Riviere, Rich Currier, and Barry Normandeau.

Joe Elgosin called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m. The meeting minutes from January were passed out and reviewed. Jack Rose made a motion to approve the minutes from and this was seconded by Henry Anderson. All were in favor, none opposed, and the minutes were accepted.

Michael King introduced the guests.

Railroad Issues

Mike King explained that in response to Bruce Sloat's railroad concerns, NCC sent letters to both NH DOT and NH DES explaining what the issues are and requesting some assistance on this matter. Both departments responded back in a timely manner and copies of their responses were handed out to the committee.

Ed Jeffrey's approached the committee and explained his side of the story regarding his railroad yards. He explained that he is currently leasing the lines from NH DOT until 2022. Currently, 95% of his business involves repairing freight cars and taking inventory of all cars.

Ed explained that on the Groveton/Whitefield line, he has some 100 cars, with 20 cars on a sidetrack waiting to be used. He also explained that he met with selectmen three years ago to see if they had any concerns about his cars and to ask if the Towns would like them moved. The towns had no issues with the presence of the rail cars.

Ed went on to explain that the cars were built in the mid-seventies and do not have lead paint. Furthermore, as a result of the letters sent by NCC, he recently met with Mr. Galluska from NH DES who took paint chip samples to be tested.

Ed explained that his rail lines are quite useful because they are able to move heating oil and service Presby Environmental, www.presbyenvironmental.com, an onsite wastewater cleaning system manufacturer.

David Presby explained that his business is growing extremely fast and that he has 40 employees in Whitefield and the number is still growing. David said that he currently has about 200,000 lbs. of plastic that he would like to move by rail because it is cheaper and easier. He has been meeting with different states all over the country teaching about the services and training people how to use them. David explained that if he can't

have access to rail in NH, he may have to consider moving this business elsewhere in order to be able to keep up with the demand for his goods and services.

David explained that in NH, almost 95% of the plants going through Concord rely on Presby Environmental to meet environmental and ground water standards. A number of tests have been done on the product and the results are that it has met and/or exceeded most of the testing criteria. Furthermore, this product is about to receive NSF approval. Also, David's company plans on shipping their products to Canada and throughout the US. The company will be expanding as time goes on and the lumber yard was just purchased on order to have a place to expand to.

David outlined that there are a few problems that his company is facing:

- 1.) The access to rail.
- 2.) The roads in and out of the industrial park (mostly town roads).
- 3.) Communications (telephone/high speed internet)

David also explained that he has been hiring more employees to keep up with the demand and that they are in the process of creating DVD's for people to use as training. Furthermore, David has spoken with some companies that would like to move to the Whitefield industrial park, but the fact that the park is lacking access to rail, telephone, and high-speed internet is becoming a problem.

Ed Jeffrey also mentioned that each year his company takes care of the tracks and landscaping, such as clearing brush back from the rails and moving the grass along side the rails. He also begins to start repairing the lines and have the bridges inspected in order to stay up to code. He says that the first train will be running by May 15th.

He also commented on the rail cars that are being stored in Whitefield, the ones that were of concern to Bruce Sloat. He claimed that these cars do not belong to him, rather they are owned by a company called "Twin State".

Barry Normandeau was present to discuss GREAT, the Groveton Economic Action Team, and North Country Renewable Energy. He explained that there is a need for active rail in Groveton to transfer ethanol.

Someone made a comment that if it is possible to use rail lines for rail, then the State should not change them to bike paths or walking trails. Someone also stated that the lumber companies in the North Country are very supportive of rail. Ed Jeffrey stated that his rail lines are active and very useful and that he is up to code and within the law.

Kit Morgan said that there are few areas in the state with access to freight and intermodal services. He also said that the North Country is one of the only areas with a freight router and that it provides the NC with a tremendous opportunity. He also stated that the State of NH bought these lines for rail and has no intentions of turning them to trails and that he hopes the North Country Council supports that.

Mike King explained that the concern from Bruce Sloat and the Transportation Committee was for safety issues in the rail yards and environmental concerns.

In response to some confusion held by the meeting guests, Mary Deppe explained that the North Country Transportation Committee drafted a letter and sent that to NH DOT and DES. This letter is NOT the same as what was personally sent by Bruce Sloat. The thoughts and opinions stated in that letter do not reflect those of the NC Transportation Committee.

Kit Morgan and Greg Placy said that DOT has gone through all of the State RR crossings and have marked the appropriate ones as inactive crossings. Those that may need to be changed on town roads need to be reviewed by the individual towns. However, if there are some crossings that the committee finds questionable on State roads, Jeff Brillhart would like to be informed as to which ones they are.

Ray Burton explained that NH owns about 400 miles of rail lines and about 200 miles of that are being leased out. The leases all go through Governor and Council and Ray supports each and every one of them. Ray also explained that Ed Jeffrey does an excellent job keeping the elected side informed about the pros and cons of his rail line and that he has addressed any complaints immediately. Ray also stated that as long as there is a customer, rail use will flourish, but if the day comes when that dies off, the lines will be switched to trails.

Joe Elgosin stated that powerplants could also use rail and that it is great to see the use of rail coming back in NH and that it is nice to have more than one carrier.

Bill Houle asked if there were any state funds available to upgrade rails and assist the rail operators. Kit Morgan replied that DOT has a rail fund made up of revenue from rail operators and from leases from abutters, etc. This is worth about \$400,000-\$500,000/year and that it is used for maintenance. He said that more money is needed but that the rail providers pay into the system too. Kit also explained that in the past, money has been retrieved from a State Capital Budget for upgrades and that there is a request for funds in right now. He also explained that DOT is supporting legislation to reallocate money for the Groveton Branch and that DOT has submitted a request to Congressman Paul Hodes for federal money. He also said there is a chance that money could be awarded from the CMAQ program, but it is not likely.

Bill Houle stated that DRED should help to leverage the funding.

Ten Year Plan

Michael King explained that NH DOT has requested that all of the RPC's review the projects on the Ten Year Plan and make any recommendations that would help to decrease some of the costs while still solving the problem. Mike explained that in doing this, NCC sent letters to all the Towns in our region and had a Ten Year Plan sub-committee meeting to review the projects. Mary Deppe passed out all of the recommendations and asked for a vote to approve the letter of recommendations for Jeff Brillhart. Greg Placy suggested that the letter include a statement about how most of

the projects were Maintenance and Preservation. Mary asked if there was a motion to approve the letter with the suggested change. Jack Rose made the motion and it was seconded by Henry Anderson. All were in favor.

Ray Burton stated that the GACIT hearings will go on as usual this fall. Ray also explained that the legislative committee put out a report about the Ten Year Plan. Mike said that NCC would get a copy of this and pass it out to the committee.

Other Business:

Michael King explained that DOT and the RPC's have been emphasizing a Corridor Approach to looking at transportation issues. There is not much information available now, but there will be more to follow in the future. This may mean a change to the approach of transportation planning.

Greg Placy said that his crew built a one mile stretch of road on Route 16 last summer and that they will be doing another stretch of 1.8 miles this summer in the town of Cambridge. The money from this project comes from the NH DOT Betterment Program.

Joe Elgosin asked how the roads fared this winter. Greg Placy stated that it was not a bad winter for the roads, but that they are not out of the woods yet.

Beverly Raymond stated that the first Technical Report is now available on the Carroll County Transit Study. She also submitted a grant to Tillotson for funding. Mary agreed to inform the committee about the website where the Technical Report is located once Beverly emails it. She also said that there will be a public meeting in which they are looking for input about transit needs.

Ray Burton passed out the Connecticut River Scenic Byways brochures.

There was some discussion about whether or not the Connecticut River Scenic Byways Council knows that they have to contact DOT before they put up any signs on the roads. Mary volunteered to contact Carol Barleon and Sharon Francis.

Ray Burton said that the DOT 2006 Fiscal Report is now available and the NCC should distribute this to the NCC Transportation Committee and Board of Directors. NH DOT's 2006 Annual Report can be found at:

<http://www.nh.gov/dot/media/pdf/2006AnnualReport.pdf> . Other DOT financial/audit reports can be found at the following sites: (FY 2006 Turnpikes)

<http://www.nh.gov/dot/media/pdf/TPK2006AnnualReport.pdf>

LBA Audit Reports (Scroll down for DOT)

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/lba/financial_audit_list.html

Ray also made a motion asking that NCC send a "thank you" letter to Carol Murray for all of her years of service. Bill Houle seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mary Deppe handed out information about a transportation survey being done by the Maine Department of Transportation. Mike said that the study is a big deal and that any help the committee can give would be great. He also suggested that the consultants doing the study, Wilbur and Smith, might be able to come and give a presentation about what is going on with this study.

Adjourn

Ray Burton made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Jack Rose. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 4:11.

Please note the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 20th, 2007.

Minutes Approved: 6/20/07