



Regional Planning Commission & Economic Development District

NCC Transportation Advisory Committee NCC Conference Room, Mt. Eustis Commons, Littleton, NH Meeting Minutes March 16, 2017

Members Present: Doug Grant (Randolph), Frank Claffey (Bethlehem), Carl Martland (Sugar Hill), Shawn White (Whitefield), Ray Gorman (Colebrook), Neil McIver (Plymouth), Earl Sires (Conway), Clayton Macdonald (Stratford), Donna Laurent (Jefferson).

Staff: Kaela Gray, Planner; Kaela Gray, Planner; Barbara Robinson, Executive Director; Greg DiSanto, Planner

NHDOT: Not in attendance

Guests: Joe Elgosin (Whitefield)

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Doug Grant at 1:05 PM. A roundtable of introductions was completed.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Claffey motions to approve minutes from March 9, 2017 and January 19, 2017. Mr. White

Review of Ten Year Plan Weights:

Results of weighting process from March 9, 2017 were presented by Ms. Gray. Mr. Grant thought that the weight for the "Support" criteria was too low.

Mr. Martland thought that there was not enough discussion about the criteria during the March 9th weighting process and thought that the results would be different if another round of voting was held, after seeing the results.

Mr. Macdonald stated that the criteria were too auto-oriented and did not include any considerations for the environment or aesthetics, and that the result is roads like US-3 through the village of Twin Mountain, describing it as straight, barren, and designed for a speed of 55 mph.

Mr. Gorman thought that the "State of Repair" criteria was not high enough, although Mr. Martland thought that the "State of Repair" criteria created backwards incentives, and that a high weight was not a good thing.

Mr. Sires noted that there were only 3 projects submitted and asked why it was this low. Mr. Claffey thought that towns were not submitting projects because they have had projects rejected in the past.

Review of Ten Year Plan Scores:

Results of the scoring process were presented by Ms. Gray. 10 TAC members completed scoring sheets on time. The results were a tie for 1st between the Plymouth and Whitefield projects, with Northumberland in 3rd.

A motion was made by Mr. Claffey to approve the results. A vote was taken and the motion carried.

There was a discussion about allocation of funds. Ms. Gray explained that the region was predicted to receive \$5.5 Million and that the Plymouth and Whitefield projects together were just over \$4 Million. The Northumberland project was \$11 Million and would be ineligible for TYP funds. She asked DOT if the TAC should submit other small projects to use the remainder of the allocation, and was told no.

Mr. Sires recommended that NCC submit more projects. Mr. White noted that Whitefield has a potential project on US-3, south of downtown, that could be submitted. Mr. Grant agreed that NCC should submit more projects.

Ms. Gray explained that it is not only towns that can submit projects; NCC can submit projects as a political subdivision and the DOT districts can submit projects. If NCC staff finds a project to submit, they will submit it without having a TAC meeting because the deadline is close. She also noted that NCC would submit the additional project(s) along with a request that no additional project bumps out the Plymouth or Whitefield projects.

Ms. Laurent recommends that NCC drop the Northumberland project from the list of projects they submit to DOT.

Mr. Claffey asked about the status of the Colebrook TYP project. Ms. Gray replied that it is scheduled for 2019-21 and that NCC wants DOT to keep it on that timeline. Mr. Gorman explained that Colebrook plans to replace sewer lines under Main Street before the road reconstruction using a separate funding source. If the road reconstruction is delayed and does not happen soon enough after the sewer work, Main Street would be in bad shape during that time.

A motion is made by Mr. Claffey that NCC submit additional projects and request that those projects should not bump the Plymouth or Whitefield projects off the list. Mr. Macdonald adds that NCC should also request that the region's share should not be lower than 12% (currently estimated at \$5.5M out of \$40M statewide), if the statewide allocation is lower than estimated.

A vote is taken and the motion stands.

Existing Ten Year Plan Projects: Ms. Gray informs the TAC that NCC is sending a letter to DOT requesting that Colebrook's project be completed as early as possible for the reasons that Mr. Gorman explained. She also said that if towns want to remove projects in their town from the Ten Year Plan, they should send a letter to NCC requesting that.

Mr. Grant asked Ms. Laurent about the status of Jefferson's US-2 project. Ms. Laurent replied that she is not familiar.

Mr. White explained that Whitefield is considering removing the Hazen Road bridge project from DOT's State Aid Bridge (SAB) program because they might be able to do it for less money through other means. This led to a discussion about DOT's project estimates being higher than towns thought reasonable. Mr. White explained that Whitefield had replaced a bridge in town, using municipal funding only, for less than what they would have to pay if they funded it through DOT. Mr. Gorman explained that Colebrook has had similar experiences. Mr. Martland said that Sugar Hill has also experienced this. Mr. Claffey suggested that this must happen in other planning regions, so NCC should ask them about their experiences. Ms. Gray replied that this does happen in other regions and in other states. She explained that Vermont helps towns complete projects without the use of federal funds if they think that federal funding will make the project cost more. She will reach out to VTrans and the Transportation Planners Collaborative about this.

There was discussion about how to use the political process to address this issue. There was debate about how to involve Councilors, Senators, and Representatives on this issue. Mr. Martland said that TAC should meet with DOT and ask them to explain the difference between their project estimates and towns' estimates, particularly on the projects that TAC members provided as examples. He also said that more people should attend DOT Public Hearings on the TYP and bring this issue up there. Ms. Gray added that municipalities should collaborate to raise this issue with DOT and that TAC members should

inform their town selectmen about this. Mr. Martland said that he will also raise this issue at the upcoming NCC Commissioners meeting.

Updates:

North Country Transit: No update, Ms. Raymond is not in attendance.

RCC: Mr. Grant explains the funds that are available to towns.

Scenic Byways Committee: Mr. Martland is speaking on behalf of the Scenic Byways Committee against Northern Pass for the effect it will have on the region's Scenic Byways. The Committee is working to improve its maps, signage, and information in order to draw more visitors. The Committee is also working to get more funds. Mr. Martland update TAC on the Weeks State Park Mountain Road being decommissioned.

Mr. Grant informs the group about a forum in April in Meredith on how to market Scenic Byways.

Other Business: Mr. Grant suggests that the agenda for the next meeting includes a progress update on Kaela's task reach out to other RPCs and entities about project estimates.

There was a brief discussion about future prospects for rail in the state and the region.

Mr. McIver informed the TAC that Plymouth is working on conservation and recreation efforts that include some aspect of bicycle and pedestrian transit. Mr. Macdonald asks that the TAC receive an update on that effort at the next meeting.

Adjournment: Mr. Grant motions for adjournment at approximately 3:00pm. Mr. Claffey seconds the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passes unanimously.

Next meeting 5/18/2017 or 7/20/2017.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gregory DiSanto