



DRAFT MINUTES
SRPC Rail Working Group
Inaugural Meeting 1/23/15
5:00pm to 6:30pm

Staff Present: Cynthia Copeland, Executive Director; Shayna Sylvia, Communications and Outreach Specialist, Natasha Leuchanka, Regional Planner; Sarah McGraw, Planning Technician

Members Present: Bob Jaffin, Rochester

Guests Present Debra Murphy, Golden Eagle Rail; Stephen Piper Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority; Rick Healey, Rochester Planning Board; Tom Crosby, Madbury; Mike Taylor, Golden Eagle Rail Corporation; Brian Beeler II, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority; Bill Connor, Somersworth; Kenyon Karl, Maine Sierra Club; Brian Tapscott, Somersworth; John Nolan, Rochester Times; Paul Mueller, NH-1 News; Dale Sprague, Somersworth City Council; Rad Nichols, COAST; Kevin Ryan, Rochester Economic Development; Jonathan Shapleigh, Rochester Economic Development Commission; Brian Caple, Somersworth Rail Committee; Richard Towle, Federal Railroad Administration; Seth Creighton, Rochester Planning; Christopher Parker, Dover Planning

1. Welcome

Bob Jaffin welcomed the group and introductions were made around the room.

2. New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Bob Jaffin explained the role of the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority. He shared that there are currently 28 directors with the ability for the Authority to expand. Legislation has been submitted to reorganize the Authority so that they may not only receive federal funding, but have a smaller board of directors with a larger advisory council. B. Jaffin added that any city, town, or regional planning commission may petition to become a member as long as there is a possibility of commuter rail running through that region or town/city.

Rad Nichols questioned whether it was just communities that could petition to be members. B. Jaffin responded that this was currently the case per the RSA. B. Jaffin addressed the critical needs for marine transportation of freight to support the transfer of freight from boat to rail, and the need for buses to support inter-modal transportation and passenger rail. The focus for rail should span beyond the capitol corridor.

3. New England Rail Coalition

B. Jaffin gave an update on rail news in the state. He shared that NHDOT has issued two requests for proposals (RFPs) for operations from the ME state line to Lunenburg, VT, and one to operate from Ossipee to Conway. He added that there had been four TIGER grants affecting the state in the last four years. Expansion of current passenger rail was discussed. Somersworth has led the talk about rail in the region.



Milton and Wakefield have expressed interest as well. B. Jaffin spoke about the knowledge corridor (Boston to Springfield), in addition to discussing the Vermonter and their route. The other potential route could operate to NYC via Springfield, New Haven and down the northeast corridor. Other possibilities include a hotel train from Montreal to New York. The implications of a potential Olympics in Boston were discussed as well. B. Jaffin expressed the importance of inter-modal services.

B. Jaffin introduced Debra Murphy and Mike Taylor from Golden Eagle Rail. D. Murphy shared that Golden Eagle is a privately funded company looking to put in freight and passenger services between Portland and Montreal. This will take multiple resources and components in order to be successful. Passenger rail would eventually include ski trains, passenger trains, dinner trains, etc. as a supplement to freight rail. M. Taylor added that Golden Eagle will focus on freight, followed by passenger rail service. He added that Golden Eagle will provide a tool that communities can take advantage of. Assistance to North Country would be provided through rail to the Balsams and White Mountains. Golden Eagle's plans include working with hotels and ski resorts. Golden Eagle plans to increase and create jobs by expanding rail in the state.

M. Taylor reviewed a map of rail (currently used, and currently unused) in the state. He explained that Golden Eagle submitted a proposal for the RFP to run from Ossipee to Conway. He also expressed the importance of multi-modal systems with the integration of buses, and bus routes. D. Murphy added that many think that transportation is one way or another, but it really needs to be a system with many options for transport. The ideal situation for Golden Eagle would not only be rail to Conway, but to other areas in the North Country and Vermont. Potential shippers have been identified as well. There is a section of rail that needs to be repaired for this to occur.

There is also potential for a casino train traveling into Maine. Golden Eagle's plans rely on private funding. Golden Eagle's goal is to be running passenger services by 2016-2017. There are shippers in Berlin who are interested. Tom Crosby asked if there is rail all the way from Portland to Montreal, which there is. Running rail on these lines would require interchanging with PANAM, Northcoast, and Vermont Rail. Bill Connor asked if Golden Eagle would be working with the state to repair a one mile section of track in Madison. M. Taylor explained that no agreements have been made but the Golden Eagle has been in talks with the state.

Dale Sprague shared that at the Somersworth Rail Advisory Committee the North Country Councilor Joe Kenney fully endorses the project. D. Sprague shared that it is important to our region to ensure that connections are expansive to Dover. D. Sprague shared that COAST will be an important component of rail expansion. R. Nichols shared that CMAQ funding may not be useful for rail operations, but that the expansion should fall under the Federal Railroad Association (FRA). B. Jaffin expressed the importance of marine transport and the ports for intermodal transportation. He shared a map of America's Marine Highway Corridors.

4. SRPC Working Rail Group

B. Jaffin shared that he would now address the 'why here, why now' considering this meeting. He shared that demographics in the region, and state are important to consider. He shared that millennials are



interested in alternative modes of transportation. He explained that the region already has options for alternative types of transportation that we could expand upon. The possibilities of a ski train, and Northern New England Passenger Rail service to NYC require a strong transportation network. There are many important factors to consider. Geography, location, and access are some of these factors.

5. Opportunities

The expansion of rail ties in to economic development as well, not only in the tourism industry, but in other areas. B. Jaffin discussed option for tourism, park and rides, transportation terminals, regional events and attractions that could encourage and support the expansion of rail in the region. B. Jaffin opened the conversation and inquired as to whether these stakeholders are interested in being involved moving forward.

6. Moving Forward

Brian Beeler from the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) shared that NNEPRA runs from Brunswick to Boston. He shared that the Amtrak Downeaster has reached capacity, and that in order for others to operate on these lines upgrades must be made. Amtrak is interested in seven round trips, but the capacity isn't sufficient enough for that. The current slots are maxed out, so infrastructure improvements are necessary. NNEPRA is very interested in the issues being brought forward, and is always applying for grants. Currently they have a grant application in for improvements in Massachusetts that will affect the Downeaster. B. Beeler shared that the bus service at rail locations is extremely critical; He named COAST and Wildcat Transit an example. B. Beeler explained that during the week trains that run during commute times are usually sold out. The train is also often sold out in the summer due to tourism.

D. Sprague added that Patricia Quinn from NNEPRA expressed the same concerns as B. Beeler. Upgrades are necessary to support more trains for more individuals. D. Sprague shared that Somersworth understands the benefits of rail in the region, and wants to be connected to this system. B. Beeler addressed Chris Parker concerning rail. C. Parker opined that the rail in Dover is one of the keys to the success of the city. R. Nichols added that he is unclear as to how we can put all of these components in to place considering the lack of financing. This is a key conversation that needs to take place. C. Parker agreed with what R. Nichols shared, and opined that we need to maintain what we have in order to consider expansion.

B. Jaffin shared that this is why we need to consider public private partnerships. It is important to organized and understand these barriers and brainstorm how to address them. If we understand needs, then we can be prepared for funding opportunities like TIGER grants. B. Jaffin opined that hospitality is part of the equation, and economic development in general. D. Murphy shared that Vermont completed a project to look at properties along rail lines that were available for industrial development.

D. Sprague shared that the hospitality industry has to be involved as well, and that the involvement and presence could influence transportation options. It is important for projects to be 'shovel ready'. R. Nichols



explained that the potential of a Boston Olympics would most likely translate in availability of American Reinvestment Recovery Act funding for necessary infrastructure improvements. B. Beeler shared that NNEPRA was able to expand to New Brunswick because their projects was 'shovel ready'. B. Beeler added that there needs to be political will supporting these ideas. He added that people are more interested in alternative transportation. He stated that for the first time in 2014 UNH did not sell out of parking passes although enrollments increased, which speaks to that. B. Beeler opined that stakeholders representing all modes of transportation need to be involved in the conversation.

B. Connor addressed Golden Eagle and questioned their expectations. D. Murphy shared that there are interested parties for freight looking to ship anything from pellets to biomass. Golden Eagle wants to focus on areas where they can be up and running the fastest. B. Jaffin opined that grocery store chains could take advantage of freight opportunities. B. Jaffin gave an example of healthcare facilities and the immense need for transportation.

D. Sprague opined that as political will is extremely important the idea of taking trucks off the road should not be proposed as part of increasing/expanding rail. He added that hospitality should be a focus as well. Inter-modal transportation was stressed.

Dick Towle added that we are seeing private rail growth with companies such as Golden Eagle, and Sun Rail in Florida. He addressed the Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts, and how rail operators gained Lowe's as a customer for freight delivery. He shared that NH once had a viable rail line that ran through the state to New Haven, and then to Washington, opining that it could be possible again with infrastructure upgrades.

B. Jaffin shared that he will plan another meeting in February to gauge interest in further participation. It is important to be prepared for what is coming, whether potential grants, rail expansion, etc.

R. Nichols asked if NHDOT was informed about this meeting, which they were. R. Nichols reiterated that persistence is importance as NHDOT is extremely busy. B. Connor asked about the MBTA Green Line Expansion. B. Beeler responded that the project is expansive and will affect the Amtrak Downeaster's operations.

B. Jaffin shared that he contact everyone for a second meeting within the next couple of weeks. The meeting ended at 6:30pm.



Summarized Notes Taken During Open Discussion Period

- Importance of regional thinking/collaboration addressed
- Importance of capacity building addressed
- Inter-modal transportation is very important to consider in the process of planning for rail
- City of Somersworth is very interested in rail and the possibilities for a rail stop/trolley services
- There is lots of interested in rail but the real challenge is funding
- The possibility of public/private partnerships should be heavily considered
- It is important to start the conversations about rail NOW!
- The influence of the potential Boston Olympics was discussed
- Funding is often dependent on projects that are "shovel ready"
- The focus should first be on perfecting current services first
- The importance of business taking advantage of freight transportation was discussed