

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
SRPC Rail Working Group  
Meeting #2 1/23/15  
4:30pm pm to 6:15 pm

**Staff Present:** Shayna Sylvia, Communications and Outreach Specialist

**Convener:** Bob Jaffin, Rochester

**Attendees:** Rick Healey, Rochester Planning Board; Mike Taylor, Golden Eagle Rail Corporation; Bill Connor, Somersworth; Kenyon Karl, Maine Sierra Club; Brian Tapscott, Somersworth City Council; Dale Sprague, Somersworth City Council; Richard Towle, Federal Railroad Administration; Louis Barker, NHDOT; John Hotchkiss, Middleton; David Schwanke, Golden Eagle Rail; Victoria Parmele, Northwood; Merry Lineweber, Rochester; Peter Griffin, NH Rail and Revitalization Association; Dawn Fernald, Wentworth Douglass

## 1. Welcome

Bob Jaffin welcomed the group. He shared that he has been writing articles for a four part series on rail that have been featured in the Rochester Times. The articles focus on rail as a primary backbone and economic driver. He thanked attendees for their involvement in the startup of the SRPC Rail Working Group.

## 2. Mission Statement and Goals

B. Jaffin opined that the group should focus on defining their role. He added that SRPC is already working with other regional planning commissions, and is routinely in contact with Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, Rocking Planning Commission, Lakes Regional Planning Commission, and North Country Council among others. Bob shared that transportation is a network emphasizing the importance of involving other regional planning commissions.

B. Jaffin opined that the primary focus of the SRPC Rail Working Group should be on the area between the Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport, Maine and Newburyport. He emphasized the importance of local support for rail using Rochester as an example. NH North Coast runs through Rochester. He gave some examples of rail projects in the state.

B. Jaffin mentioned the potential for the Olympics in Boston and shared how this could affect areas of NH. He cited the importance of "shovel ready" projects. He opined that there should be statements of work for projects that are prepared prior to grant opportunities. He added that this group would be a good opportunity for brainstorming. UNH could become involved with these efforts.

B. Jaffin shared that the area needs to market and share their cultural, and natural resources to encourage tourism that could support a rail network. He shared an example of leaf peepers taking a train from Dover. He added that local companies such as Index Packaging are interested in rail siding. He expressed the importance of listing projects in not only the SRPC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, but

in multiple planning documents such as the REDC CEDS. Rail operators should be involved. B. Jaffin shared that David Schwanke from Golden Eagle is here today to highlighting the importance of rail operator involvement. There are many opportunities for drawing tourists in to the state that could use rail services.

B. Jaffin introduced David Schwanke from Golden Eagle Rail. **(See Agenda Item #5)**

B. Jaffin asked the room how this group should be defined. B. Connor suggested that each attendee share what they believe is important. He shared that Golden Eagle is important. He added that fixing broken sections of rail is important such as in Madison, along with sending letters of support for rail to Gene Chandler, Chairman of the Committee for Public Works and Highways Rules. D. Schwanke shared that Golden Eagle wants the Madison section to be fixed so Golden Eagle can run through there, and then they could help maintain it. B. Connor shared that this is the number one priority. D. Schwanke shared that communities are eager to put Rail to Trails in areas with broken tracks but that this makes it expensive to repurpose the area for rail in the future. D. Schwanke stated that saving rail and moving tonnage via rail is important.

B. Jaffin mentioned that there are other opportunities for rail to carry fiber optics through rail rights of way. B. Jaffin opined that there could be a sub group to focus on the integration of trails, rail, off-roading, and utilities. Kenyon Karl shared that many rights of ways already have fiber optics in them. Louie Barker added that there are easements reserved in the right of ways for communications. A discussion ensued concerning the importance of discussion between trails, rails, and public utilities, in addition to broadband.

B. Jaffin shared that the work that Golden Eagle hopes to do will rebuild rail connections across the United States and hopefully allow people and businesses to rely less on air travel/delivery. D. Schwanke reiterated that everyone needs to work together on these efforts. V. Parmele asked if these ideas/efforts are realistic. A discussion ensued about the timeline for these processes and how it would happen over the next 10+ years. K. Karl shared that speaking from the vantage point of the Sierra Club climate change needs to be considered and there needs to be opportunities for taking more cars and trucks off the road.

B. Jaffin introduced Peter Griffin from the NH Railroad Revitalization Association. He is involved with regional planning on the board for Southern Regional Planning Commission. P. Griffin shared that at one point there were 24 points of rail access. Currently the only through trail is the Downeaster. He opined that we have tourist destinations, but no rail lines service these areas. P. Griffin supports Golden Eagle in their efforts and asked if D. Schwanke has identified a point person from every town/city along the rail lines they are most interested in. He shared that the opportunities for freight accessible zoning should be explored. K. Karl shared that a self-propelled car is being planned by the MBTA with subway schedules out to Greenville, Ma. B. Jaffin reiterated the importance of these opportunities for the region in addition to the state, and New England.

B. Jaffin shared that the group of stakeholders present are important. Mike Taylor shared that we should consider the needs of the state as a whole. We need to get an understanding of what the communities need. Where are products being shipped? D. Sprague opined that the group should reach out to others in the state to get an understanding of their needs. The legislators need to be involved as well. D. Sprague

shared that a survey could be sent out to gather input on thoughts about rail in the state and needs for rail. D. Sprague opined that endorsement from representatives could go a long way. He shared that he is a state representative that sits on the House Committee for Public Works and Highways with Gene Chandler. Chairman Chandler is already aware of rail issues in the state. D. Sprague discussed budgeting set aside for Capitol Corridor studies and whether certain committees would endorse this funding, and who would and wouldn't be the appropriate person to contact with letters of support. He added that the focus should be on contacting those in southern New Hampshire and portions of Maine. Councilors in the area need to be involved.

P. Griffin asked D. Sprague if he think it is more effective to start at the local level versus the state to determine what type of land is developable to support rail, and what kinds of zoning ordinances would have to be considered. This would be an alternative to sending letters of support to state legislators. D. Sprague shared that there is some value in this. He opined that Chambers of Commerce need to get involved as well.

P. Griffin shared that D. Sprague had created a list of important points of contact and how these individuals are important to contact. These individuals should be involved in this process . B. Jaffin opined that private industry could be involved at a greater rate than it currently is. B. Jaffin added that the Planning Commission should take one of the lead roles in this process. The group needs to create an actionable list.

A discussion began concerning possible funding sources for rail and rail related projects and how having a source of shovel ready projects is important. David Schwanke interjected sharing that the tough issues are accessibility to the legislators and senators, and the creation of tax free zones. This would influence businesses who would take advantage of freight. Zoning and supplying three phase power to potential areas for businesses are also an issue. A discussion ensued about enticing businesses and how this could work on local and regional levels.

D. Sprague readdressed contacting legislators and shared that the need for rail could be framed instead by the influence and benefits it could have on a particular community. A mission of this group could be education. B. Jaffin shared that tourism is also an area that should be focused on when considering passenger rail in the region. He also opined that rail right of ways should be examined to understand the types of zoning and what entities are surrounding rail right of ways. A list could be put together with these entities. This type of resource could be used by a bigger audience. D. Schwanke shared that it is important to not only have contacts, but the correct contacts.

D. Sprague agreed that setting up a direct contact system would allow businesses to learn about opportunities for establishment in the region and state. B. Jaffin asked how these ideas can be addressed through this forum. B. Jaffin shared that we need to understand the unfulfilled needs on the rail right of ways and currently available solutions.

V. Parmele mentioned the aging population in NH, citing the amount of Northwood residents that want to age in place while still having access to services. This need for transportation is a key service right now. David Schwanke agreed that this is a concern.

The group defined the importance of involving tourism industries, and expressing support of rail to our legislators. In order for the group to further identify their role they must reach out to the municipalities to get a sense of their needs.

B. Jaffin gave the example of the complexity of transportation in other countries in their intermodal infrastructure and asked how can we encourage this in the region/state.

The first step is coming up with survey/support materials to put out to relevant contacts. B. Jaffin shared that there is an abundance of projects that this group could request/encourage. B. Connor shared that we should encourage a fully operational track and train up to Madison. He opined that we pick one item to focus on as a group. This can then be accomplished by working with the state representatives and senators. Rick Healey agreed with B. Connor in his support for Golden Eagle. He added that tourism, and natural and cultural resources should be factors that would draw potential passengers to the area. R. Healey shared what he views as important in attracting rail in the state/region.

D. Sprague asked how much interaction the NH Rail Transit Authority has had with lobbyists. P. Griffin shared that the PR firm working with the NH Rail Transit Authority is being renewed and he assumes they will be identifying important groups and their lobbyists to contact. A discussion ensued concerning the PR firm and the work they are doing with the NH Rail Transit Authority, in addition to how the Rail Transit Authority was funded. The group is currently looking for sponsors. P. Griffin discussed lobbyists and their role in rail. D. Sprague suggested that these lobbyists be contacted using the the survey/support materials that the group should send out. A discussion ensued concerning this effort. D. Schwanke believes this is the quickest way to the legislatures and the senators. P. Griffin suggested the NH Rail Transit Authority could be involved as well. B. Jaffin shared that a state agency could not do this. D. Sprague opined that this group could. P. Griffin shared that the NH Rail Transit Authority could potentially provide outreach and education to lobbyists. P. Griffin asked D. Schwanke if he has been in contact with all communities along the rail lines. He has not been in contact with all of the municipalities. He shared that he has done outreach with communities.

P. Griffin asked about Chambers of Commerce and municipalities with town on their industrial land opportunities. D. Schwanke shared that he has talked to Conway, Whitefield, and the Mount Washington Chamber of Commerce. A discussion ensued about different rail corridors in the state. P. Griffin asked how the group can help Golden Eagle. D. Schwanke shared that letters of support are helpful. A discussion ensued concerning supporting restored rail service in general versus a specific entity.

B. Jaffin shared that each member needs to do their share as far as involving other stakeholders that they are connected with. B. Jaffin opined that communities along the line are not interested should express this.

B. Connor made a motion to have B. Jaffin, the convener of the meeting, put together a draft letter for the group to endorse at the next meeting. Jon Hotchkiss asked where individual letters of support could be sent. B. Jaffin suggested the NH Rail and Transit Authority. B. Jaffin stated he would share that information. He added that a contact point at Golden Eagle could be included as a recipient as well.

The groups discussed potential contacts to add to the contact list. Dick Towle asked if communities have expressed interest in freight instead of searching out businesses/towns. A list of interested communities would be good to have when others are asking for specific interested parties.

### **3. Timeline**

See Agenda Item 2

### **4. Brainstorm**

See Agenda Item 2

### **5. Attendees Update**

David Schwanke introduced himself as the CEO and Director of Finance for Golden Eagle Rail. He shared that Golden Eagle has met with Somersworth and shared that they are a tool that municipalities can use in their interest and planning for rail. He opined that tourism and marketing such locations are important concepts, but that collaboration between towns is the essential component. D. Scwanke noted the importance of the integration of transportation networks siting buses as important for getting people to and from trains/rail. There needs to be a collaborative effort between transportation modes, businesses, etc. All parties bring a tool to the toolbox. B. Jaffin added that freight shipped by port should be considered as well. A discussion ensued about the shipping of produce and the proximity of ports where these resources are shipped. B. Jaffin opined that a freight basis for rail is essential before passenger rail (**See Agenda Item #2**)

### **6. Moving Forward**

B. Jaffin shared that a tentative date will be shared with the group within the week. The meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

*The next meeting will be held on April 2, 2015 at 4:00 pm.*