

DRAFT MINUTES
SRPC Rail Working Group
May 19, 2015
4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Convener: Bob Jaffin, Rochester

Members: Kenyon Karl, Maine Sierra Club; Louis Barker, NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit; Peter Griffin, NH Railroad Revitalization Association; Victoria Parmele, SRPC Executive Committee; Selectman Jon Hotchkiss, Middleton Select Board; Denise Roy Palmer, Wentworth Economic Development Corporation;

Staff Present: Shayna Sylvia, Communications and Outreach Specialist

1. Welcome/Introductions

Jon Hotchkiss welcomed the group. He shared a brief history of the Reunion Grange (where the meeting was located). This building was renamed Hotchkiss Commons after renovations funded by himself and his wife.

Bob Jaffin thanked Jon Hotchkiss for hosting the meeting. A discussion ensued about further use of the meeting space. B. Jaffin asked Shayna Sylvia about the status of the template that was created for individuals to submit projects. S. Sylvia shared that she had created an electronic form, and that it was sent out to the group.

Introductions were made around the room.

2. TIGER VII Grant

Denise Roy Palmer mentioned that the Wentworth Economic Development Corporation is working on the Cotton Valley Rail Trail project with a dedicated group of volunteers. The trail runs from Sanbornville to downtown Wolfeboro. B. Jaffin opined that this effort is a very viable project for the group to look at. A discussion ensued concerning grant funding for this project and a review of grant applications by either NHDOT or NHDRED. L. Barker shared that NHDRED was involved in this project as it is a trail process. B. Jaffin opined that it is important to involve NHDRED in the SRPC Rail Working Group in some capacity. This group could be an opportunity to involve multiple state agencies, Regional Planning Commissions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

B. Jaffin shared that TIGER grant funding is differentiated by rural versus urban projects. Projects submitted should also be included in RPC and MPO documents as project listings.

B. Jaffin asked Lou Barker who the group would need to contact to identify where vertical clearances are needed for double stacking. L. Barker responded that PANAM would know, and that NHDOT has a list as well. A discussion ensued concerning sizes of vertical clearances.

P. Griffin asked about clearances on the Conway Branch line. L. Barker shared that NH Northcoast would know the clearances on their line. P. Griffin asked if double stack issues were addressed in the 2004 Conway Branch study, which they are not.

B. Jaffin asked D. Palmer if there has been a distinction between rail and trail and rail to trail concerning the Cotton Valley Rail Trail. D. Palmer shared that there is still rail in the ground, which runs to Wolfeboro. Kenyon Karl asked about where the tracks start and stop in this area. This was discussed.

Bob Jaffin asked the group if they had begun writing down information on their own concerning potential projects. D. Palmer cited the Cotton Valley Rail Trail project sharing that the group of volunteers working on the project do not have a great enough understanding of TIGER grant funding to see how it could benefit them. A discussion ensued concerning qualifications for TIGER grant funding and the types of projects that are commonly supported. B. Jaffin shared Golden Eagle's interest in rail, and explained that there is a potential for partnerships, and projects that contain a range of components in multiple municipalities.

K. Karl discussed the use of trolleys in conjunction with other methods of transportation (i.e. rail). D. Palmer shared that Wolfeboro has trolley service. B. Jaffin opined that information on these different areas of transportation needs to be compiled in one area. B. Jaffin added that he had SRPC staff recreate a NHDOT map showing rail in the state and that freight would most likely be coming through the area, not to the area.

B. Jaffin shared that K. Karl offered a restored parlor car at the Seashore Trolley Museum as a potential meeting place. A discussion ensued concerning the use of that space for a future meeting. K. Karl reviewed the types of vehicles that are at the Seashore Trolley Museum.

Peter Griffin shared that he would like to see a dialogue begin with North Country Council to look at a joint project for the northern end of the Conway branch. He opined that an appropriate focus would be on rail from the Seacoast area up to Conway due to the fact that Conway is a tourist destination. There are running rail lines up north that offer service, but the connection between the seacoast and up north is lacking. A discussion ensued about multi modal options for travel between these two areas. B. Jaffin opined that the focus could be on Dover at one end. D. Palmer added that there could be potential stops along the way between the Seacoast and up north. D. Palmer suggested that Lakes Regional Planning Commission get involved.

J. Hotchkiss asked if it would be possible to use the tracks to have an excursion train to showcase what the line has to offer. This could lead to a bus up to Conway to showcase where rail could eventually take passengers. B. Jaffin shared that Golden Eagle was interested in this as well. A discussion ensued concerning insurance policies and underwriting for this type of event. K. Karl shared that the track up to Conway needs to be repaired and that currently an excursion trains could not make it up past Ossipee. A discussion ensued concerning the idea that a bus could be used to take passengers along the rail showcasing cultural and historic resources. L. Barker shared that this type of showcase trip has been used by other rail entities across the U.S. B. Jaffin opined that the communities interested need to work together and share their cultural and historic resources with each other. If there was enough interest from an event

like a bus tour, it could create support for rail in certain areas of the state. P. Griffin added it would be important to identify commercial land for sale along these rail corridors as well.

The rail line from NH North Coast to Ossipee was discussed. D. Palmer asked about the TIGER grant funded project on that rail line. L. Barker gave a report of the culvert currently being fixed as part of this project. Track work will follow this upgrade. Old rail running along and near Route 11 was discussed. This is now a rail trail. A discussion ensued about this trail and weighing the costs and benefits of running passenger rail in different areas of the state.

B. Jaffin thanked the group and asked them when they would like to schedule the next meeting. A discussion ensued concerning the next meeting location. L. Barker opined the importance of involving PANAM and NH Northcoast. P. Griffin suggested inviting the head of NH Northcoast to speak to the group. PANAM could also be contacted.

P. Griffin cited the importance of emphasizing the group's focus on economic development. A discussion ensued concerning the possibility of changing the name of the group to incorporate that focus.

3. Attendee Updates

This agenda item was tabled.

4. Membership and Structure

This agenda item was tabled

5. Next Steps

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

The next meeting will be held on June 16, 2015 at the McConnell Center.