

February 28, 2003

Dear Committee Member:

I am writing to update the Commuter Rail Steering Committee regarding the status of the Commuter Rail Project since our last meeting several months ago. The project has been subject to major successes and major setbacks in the past year.

In terms of successes, the project has obtained \$5.2 million in Congestion Mitigation funds for three years of operating subsidies, has obtained another \$3 million in New Starts funding, and \$3.5 million has been included in Governor Benson's capital budget. So far, a total of \$26,000,000 in federal funds has been obtained for this project. In addition, a recent analysis conducted by Parsons-Brinckerhoff, the consulting engineers to the State for the project, indicates that depending on parking rates charged at the proposed station, our proposed service will not require an operating subsidy over a twenty-year period.

The project has also encountered two major setbacks, which threaten the viability of this project. The first occurred in October when the Executive Council voted 3-2 against extending a \$76,000 contract for the environmental portion of preliminary engineering. Those voting against were Councilors Griffin, Spaulding and Wieczorek. The second issue occurred when the New Hampshire Motor Transport Association filed a lawsuit challenging the Department of Transportation on its use of highway funds as the required state match for Federal funds. These issues are outlined in detail in the attached letter to Governor Benson.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be on **March 13, 2003 at 7:00 PM** at the **Nashua City Hall Auditorium**.

In addition to a status report on the project and a presentation from the State's consultant, the primary purpose of this meeting will be to show your support for this effort. I strongly encourage you to attend, not only for the Nashua project, but also for the future of commuter rail in New Hampshire. As you are aware, the potential ridership for commuter rail in New Hampshire is in Nashua. If this project does not go forward, it is unlikely that any other will be initiated in the state. As we enter the process for reauthorization of TEA-21, a strong show of support will be needed at this meeting.

I look forward to seeing you on March 13th.

Sincerely,

Bernard A. Streeter
Mayor

Enclosure

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