



NRPC TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
01/21/09
APPROVED

Members Present:

- Mark Sousa, Nashua Transit System
- Kristi Gillette, Nashua Transit System
- Steve Laurin, Town of Merrimack
- Bill Parker, Town of Milford
- Steve Dookran, City of Nashua
- Joe Mendola, City of Nashua
- Jeff Babel, Hollis DPW
- Jean Marie Kennamer, City of Nashua
- Roger Houston, City of Nashua
- John Cashell, Town of Hudson
- Kathy Hersh, City of Nashua CDD
- John St. Pierre, Amherst DPW
- William Ross, NH DOT

Others Present:

- Tim Roache, NRPC Principal Transportation Planner
- Matt Waitkins, NRPC Transportation Planner
- Steve Wagner, NRPC Regional Planner
- Karen M. Baker, NRPC Administrative Assistant

MEETING OPENED AND REVIEW OF MINUTES

Tim Roache opened the meeting at 12:06. He started with introductions and moved onto approval of the minutes from the November 19th TTAC meeting. Steve Laurin moved to approve the minutes seconded by Jean Marie Kennamer. All were in favor and the minutes were approved as submitted.

PASSENGER RAIL STATION SITE EVALUATION REPORT

Steve Williams briefed the group on the rail station status and introduced John Weston of Parsons Brinkerhoff to present the findings of the Passenger Rail Site Evaluation. Weston provided a power point presentation starting off with the first level of screening criteria and the potential sites and the issues associated with the locations (i.e., access, parking, track platform configuration, grade crossing closure, land use, size, environmental impacts, etc.). The 6 sites and some issues associated with them that were evaluated were as follows:

1. Beazer East
2. John's Manville - Truck Platform not ADA compatible & soccer field in area
3. Sagamore Bridge @ Exit 2 - Adjacent Residential Issues
4. East Spit Brook Road/Nashua Landing - Parking Issues
5. River Crossing - Roadway Access and Wetlands Issues
6. Pheasant Lane Mall - Adjacent Uses an Issue with Mall and Wetlands to the South

Comments, questions, suggestions, and other issues are listed below:

- Kathy Hersh mentioned talk she had heard about in straightening the tracks between East Hollis & Bridge Street.
- Old rules were the reason why NH can't have lower level platforms even though MA has them.
- Weston responded to Roger Houston that they did not look into changing roadway configurations when asked why not change the roads instead and use existing rails connects like is done to the west in Wilton. Williams added to this that there would be noise impacts and did

not hear from the western part of the state on need so it was not put as priority when they asked Parsons to do the evaluation.

- In response to Steve Laurins suggestion to have low level cars for low level platforms, Weston informed that Low Level Cars (trains) are not allowed to operate in the US on the same rail as freight. Additionally, they need to be the same strength.
- Hersh asked if the platforms could be partially ADA accessible and if the change in the law was legislative or regulatory. Weston responded it was regulatory and the new regulation says that every door of the train has to be ADA.
- Steve Wagner asked if the platform height regulation could be met if 2 cars not being used were shut. Weston did not think MBTA would go for that.

After further discussion on the sites, Weston said that based on the information evaluated, he would look more in depth at the following three potential sites.

1. Beazer
2. Sagamore Bridge
3. East Spit Brook - Nashua Landing

Hersh asked if the layover station should be further north where service is going to or as far as Manchester. Weston said that it makes no sense. Hersh also asked where the platforms need to be located in relation to the tracks. Weston said it did not matter, but they can't have pedestrians' crossing over freight tracks.

Weston said that bridges would need to be rehabbed in areas of potential station sites. Williams confirmed with Weston that there would be no projected work in areas of wetlands or rivers. Weston said that that was correct and in addition, bike and pedestrian improvements at access areas into the station would be necessary.

Weston provided Travel times from Nashua to Boston for the 3 sites:

- East Spit Brook/Nashua Landing or the Sagamore Bridge - 60 to 65 minutes total trip
- Beazer East - 65 to 70 minutes total trip with their being a Chelmsford Station.

Weston proceeded to go over cost per station for all three locations adding that the cost would not include track work or parking. Each platform would be 2.3 million plus other cost would give a total of 3.725 million.

Hersh asked if platform regulations were changed, would prices be higher or lower. Weston said they would be much lower.

Weston also provided costs on station access:

1. Beazer - 33 million
2. Sagamore Bridge - 18.5 million
3. East Spit Brook - Nashua Landing - 27 million

Weston said no costs for North Chelmsford are included in cost estimates for NH stations and improvements will have to be made in MA if you want rail to NH from MA. This was in response to questions from Kennamer. Additionally, Weston said total cost to get rail from Lowell to Manchester will be \$300 million.

John Cashell felt Nashua Landing should be the site of focus due to issues with river & residential areas the other two sites.

Hersh briefly summarized some of the obstacles that she has dealt with in trying to get a station site as well as other types of development in the City of Nashua concluding that the issue is not were they want a stations site, but who is ready and are we ready. She added that she would like to at some point have a whistle stop at the Bridge/Hollis Street potential site area.

PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT CAPITAL AND OPERATING FUNDING

Williams led this discussion referring to the funds set aside for transportation and the potential for several streams coming down from the stimulus to help with transportation projects. He informed the group of the dialogue from Lisa Levine of Paul Hodes office discussed at the Legislative Forum. Williams said that even if they get all the funding streams from the stimulus, there is still the operating and maintenance issue which will require additional funds. He elaborated saying there would be a \$10 million a year operating cost for Nashua. Fares would pay for about half of this budget. There is the potential for maybe an additional \$1 million from rents from vendors, parking and advertising. This still leaves an about \$4 million needed for operating. Currently they are trying to come up with a solution or way to get these additional funds. He asked the group for ideas. Some of the ideas currently on the table were as follows:

- Auto Registrations - additional \$10 extra on registrations
- Tolls - additional 5 cents
- Property Tax Increase - \$25 on a \$300,000 Home
- Gas Tax
- Airport Tax on Outbound Tickets - Additional \$1 (Williams felt airport would not want to pay for entire thing on the backs of passengers)

Laurin asked if the collection would be regional or statewide. Williams said the ultimate goal is just not region, but area based to get money. A member referred to Denver, CO and how they paid for their rail project by bonding the entire thing and paying for it out of general funds.

Williams informed the group of upcoming legislation and gave a brief description of the bill.

HB212 - permits a municipality to assess certain impact fees for improvement on a portion of a state highway located within the municipality.

He also referred to two other pieces of legislation: 1) for 5 cent gas tax over the next three years to balance DOT budget; and 2) shifting authority of tolls from government & council to legislature.

The meeting adjourned at **1:38pm**.