



**Nashua Region Complete Streets Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
9/15/2020**

ATTENDEES:

Chris Buchanan, Town of Amherst Julie Chizmas, City of Nashua Ryan Friedman, NRPC	Tom Christensen, NH Rail Trails Coalition Nelson Disco, Town of Merrimack Matt Waitkins, NRPC
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CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Waitkins called the meeting to order at 1:05pm.

AGENDA ITEM #1: NH101A RAIL TRAIL DISCUSSION

Continued the discussion about the feasibility of developing a rail trail and/or rail-with-trail bike path along the NH101A corridor.

Matt provided an update of recent efforts

- Discussion with Chuck Redfern, President, NH Rail Trails Coalition
 - Chuck has a lot of experience in the rail trail world. He was a key participant in a Keene, NH group named Pathways for Keene that in 1995 that began the process of what has become an impressive system of rail trails in the southwest corner of NH. His suggestions regarding the type of official organization to create:
 - Strongly encouraged creating a 501C3 nonprofit that will allow collection of tax-deductible funds.
 - He suggested that in the interim of time when 501C3 is being organized, that we ask Bike Walk Alliance of NH (BWANH) to act as fiscal agent. I spoke with BWANH Board member Dave Topham about this. He discouraged the idea because it would take some time for BWANH to agree to take on FSVRT as an affiliate and by that time we could already have 501C3 status squared away. Additionally, BWANH would take a portion of any donations to our effort.
 - Chuck suggested a Board of Directors of 10-15 people.
 - 2 key members of the Board should be an attorney and a treasurer (qualified accountant).
 - Boiler plate tasks are going to include bylaws, etc.
 - I suggested that NRPC would provide staff assistance, mapping, etc, and he wishes he had had that assistance back when Pathways for Keene was being developed.
 - Chuck's suggestion for how to proceed with public outreach:
 - Local planning boards along the corridor in order to identify existing easements. It may be that whoever buys the ROW will look to sell it and developers will be very interested in purchasing pieces of the ROW.
 - Congressional Delegation
 - Executive Councilors
 - Bords of Selectmen
 - Nashua City Hall
 - Conservation Commissions and other interest groups.

- Media support; he suggested it will be VERY important to get the Nashua Telegraph on board to help educate the public about the effort both in print and online.
- Social media.
- Chris Constantino has volunteered to work on 501C3 status.
- Information regarding current events along the corridor:
 - Pan AM does intend to sell the corridor.
 - There's a reasonable chance the sale will happen in advance of November election day.
 - PAN AM has begun replacing the ties along the corridor with the intention of upgrading the track to Federal Rail Authority Class 1 status. This is probably a condition for the sale of the corridor. Pan AM is not replacing the actual rail, just the wooden ties.
 - There is definitely interest from several very large RR companies in purchasing Pan AM's holdings.

Discussion:

Julie suggested other media outlets for getting information to the public including The Union Leader (it has a Nashua section), and the various online Patches.

Nelson suggested contacting Wendy Hunt, president of Greater Merrimack-Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Chris asked how quickly an organization could be formed, aside from the effort to acquire nonprofit status. The consensus was that a working group could be formed now, and recruitment of Board members can proceed. Matt, Julie, Chris, and Tom will likely be members of the group moving forward. Ryan suggested he could be mapping, and staff support oriented, not a Board member. Nelson will provide support as needed.

There was some discussion regarding the short length of rail corridor in Merrimack and Hudson. Consensus was that Merrimack and Hollis are nonetheless important partners in this effort.

There was discussion about what to name this group. Matt had suggested the temporary name could be Friends of the Souhegan Valley Rail Trail. It was suggested this name could be limiting because we want to encourage a network of trails, not just one trail. Additionally, not all the trails this group may work on will be rail trails. It was suggested that the bylaws governing this group could be flexible to allow for funding to be used on other trail efforts. It was also suggested that for the purposes of marketing and educating the public about this effort, that Friends of the Souhegan Valley Rail Trail would be a good name to start with.

Tom volunteered to donate some funding to the effort just to get a bank account going. He suggested joining the Greater Merrimack-Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce and the NH Rail Trails Coalition.

Tom said the NH Rail Trails Coalition will be a good resource.

There was discussion about having a meeting in early October and whether it should be a project kickoff meeting or a smaller meeting with potential Board members invited. It was decided the meeting would just be for potential Board members to inform them of this effort. Meeting date is Wednesday, October 7 (7:00pm-8:30pm). A public kickoff meeting will be held sometime after that. There was discussion about who should be invited to the meeting in October. Matt has a list of individuals who may be interested which he will distribute to the group. The group can add to the list.

A blurb about what this group is up to needs to be developed prior to reaching out to potential Board members. the blurb will be used to articulate a consistent message.

Next steps:

- Create talking points for recruitment of Board members.
- Reach out to potential Board members.
- Prepare for October 7 meeting
- Proceed with effort to create 501C3.
- Begin developing materials for public outreach effort, and kickoff meeting.
- Join the Greater Merrimack-Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce and the NH Rail Trails Coalition.

AGENDA ITEM #2: STATEWIDE, REGIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES

Statewide Updates:

- NH Statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan: NHDOT and consultant (Alta Planning and Design) have scheduled a meeting with Regional Planning Commissions for September 22 to review progress on the statewide plan. The focus will be on fine tuning the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLS) component of the plan. the Nashua Complete Streets Committee will be asked to provide feedback.
- **Local update:**
 - The City of Nashua and NRPC have been collaborating on a bicycle and pedestrian Level of Service project. Julie, Ryan, and Sara Siskavich (NRPC) presented a webinar recently about the project. Tom complimented Ryan on the effort. Matt said that Sara, Ryan and Julie will be presenting results at the next Complete Streets meeting. Julie said the City is looking for ideas regarding how to generate interest in bike-ped pop-up projects. Pop-up projects are temporary installations of proposed bike-ped improvements that demonstrate the impact of those projects.
 - City of Nashua Heritage Rail Trail East; Julie said that City of Nashua has scheduled a virtual meeting for Tuesday, September 22 (6:00pm) to discuss this project. See the attached flyer.

ADJOURN:

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, October 20, 1:00 pm.