



Regional Planning Commission & Economic Development District

**NCC Transportation Advisory Committee
White Mountains Community College – Main Campus, Room 100
2020 Riverside Drive, Berlin, NH 03570
Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2018**

Members Present:

Clayton MacDonald (Stratford), Doug Grant (Randolph), Raymond Gorman (Colebrook), Joe Chenard (Lincoln), Stan Judge (Shelburne), Paul Robitaille (Gorham)

NCC Staff:

Alex Belenz (Planner), Brad Falco (Intern)

NHDOT Staff:

Lucy St. John (Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance), Linda Dusenberry (Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance)

Guests:

Scott Thompson-Graves (WRA), Julie Woo (WRA), Mania Flaskou (IHS Markit), Chuck Henderson (Senator Shaheen), Joe Elgosin (Whitefield)

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order by Chairman Grant at 2:04 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

The meeting minutes of January 18, 2018 and March 15, 2018 were reviewed and unanimously approved without edits by TAC members by motion of Judge/MacDonald.

North Country Council Updates

Mr. Belenz provided an update on NCC transportation field data collection efforts:

- NCC has started work on a culvert assessment project for the Androscoggin River watershed. The project is a partnership between NH Fish & Game, WMCC, Androscoggin Watershed Council and NCC. NCC is working in Randolph, Gorham, Berlin, Shelburne, and along NH 16 north of Pinkham Notch. The goals of project include identifying barriers to fish and aquatic organism passage, identifying culverts that are in poor condition, causing erosion, or are otherwise incompatible with the surrounding landscapes, then using that information to support capital improvements planning and restoration work.
- NCC has started their traffic counts program for 2018. NCC can provide local traffic counts for municipalities at no cost to the towns – let Alex know if your town is interested. NCC will be doing local traffic counts in Berlin, Warren, Albany, Sugar Hill, and Lisbon.
- NCC is utilizing NHDOT's Road Surface Management System (RSMS) program again in 2018.

RSMS is a data collection program that is designed to assist communities in prioritizing road improvement and reconstruction projects on paved local roads. It includes an assessment of pavement condition, working with local officials and municipal staff to prioritize local roads, and forecasting improvement projects to develop a plan and estimated costs for local road improvements. The goal is to help towns do informed, cost-effective planning for road improvements. Alex be sending out a notice with more detailed information – towns can contact NCC, and we will work with towns on first-come first-served basis.

Mr. Grant asked about the status of the Highland Street reconstruction project in Plymouth – is it DOT’s responsibility? Mr. Belenz replied that the project is in the Ten Year Plan, and is currently slated for 2025. The NCC TAC had listed this as their highest-priority project for the Ten Year Plan, and NCC provided testimony to the House Public Works and Highways Committee that the project should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Mr. Belenz provided an update regarding the Town of Plymouth. Plymouth’s request to leave the NCC planning region and join the Lakes Region Planning Commission was approved by the Governor yesterday. The town selectboard felt their economy was more aligned with the Lakes Region economy. NCC is still working out how this will affect our ongoing work in Plymouth, and will work with Lakes Region Planning Commission to ensure a smooth transition.

Mr. Belenz indicated that NCC will be kicking off the process to update the 2015 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in July. NCC will work closely with the TAC to develop the plan. NHDOT will also be providing guidance to RPC’s on how to better align RTP’s with Regional Transportation Improvement Plans. More details will be provided at the July meeting.

North Country Transit

Mrs. Gagne was not in attendance. Mr. Elgosin noted that NCT has not sent a representative for several meetings. Mr. Grant replied that NCT continues to provide services despite increasingly scarce funding sources – their staff take on a lot, so it is understandable that they would miss some meetings. Mr. Robitaille indicated he would follow up with Ms. Gagne to see if NCT can send a representative to a future meeting.

North Country Scenic Byways Council

Mr. Martland has been out of the country so Mr. Belenz provided the update on NCSBC. Mr. Martland and Mr. Belenz recent completed public hearings regarding new byway designations. Hearings were completed in Whitefield and Jefferson regarding the designation of NH 116 from Whitefield to Jefferson as a segment of the Presidential Range Trail, and a hearing was completed in Milan regarding the designation of sections of NH 110A, 110B, and 16 in Milan as segments of the Woodlands Heritage Trail. Mr. Martland and Mr. Belenz in the process of planning hearings in Berlin, Gorham, and Shelburne regarding the designation of sections of NH 16 as part of the Woodlands Heritage Trail and US 2 as part of the Presidential Range Trail. All action items are expected to be ready for consideration by the New Hampshire Scenic and Cultural Byways Council (NHSCBC) for their Fall 2018 meeting.

NCC has submitted requests for de-designations of certain byway segments to NHSCBC that will be considered at their meeting next month. These de-designations were recommended in the 2015

corridor management plans that were developed by the NCSBC. The main goal of the de-designations is to reduce overlap with other byways and provide more coherent touring routes. All request de-designations are for segments of byway that overlap with one or more other byways, so roads will completely lose byway designation status.

Mr. Grant provided an update from the Marketing Scenic Byways in New Hampshire Forum that was held earlier in May. The main takeaways from the forum were that online resources and local engagement are critical to promoting scenic byways. Mr. Henderson emphasized the importance of local buy-in for promotional efforts. Mr. Chenard added that there are lots of examples of interesting local history that could be highlighted by towns to byway travelers.

Franconia Notch State Park Alternative Transportation

Mr. Belenz provided an update on Franconia Notch Alternative Transportation. NH Division of Travel and Tourism has released an RFI for transit providers for the operation of an overflow parking shuttle. The feedback from the RFI will be used to inform the development of an RFP that will go out at a later date. Members provided the names of several transportation service providers that the RFI could be sent to. Mr. Henderson noted that the ideal candidate for a shuttle system will be a local company that takes a true entrepreneurial approach to operating the system. Mr. Belenz added that DOT will be focusing their efforts in Franconia Notch on public awareness and warnings regarding the parking ban this summer, rather than enforcement.

District Engineer

District engineer not in attendance.

Ten Year Plan

Mr. Belenz noted that the Ten Year Plan was on the Governor's desk as of the morning of May 24th. There have been no significant changes to Ten Year Plan projects in the North Country since the plan was submitted to Governor and Council in December. Ms. Dusenberry indicated there have been several major changes statewide, including expanding electronic tolling and the removal of the commuter rail study. Mr. Belenz noted that the vast majority of the public testimony given at the bill hearing by the House Public Works and Highways Committee was in support of the commuter rail study, and that the study would have been paid for entirely by federal funds.

Mr. Robitaille asked for an update on the Conway Bypass project. Ms. Dusenberry indicated that she would provide an update that Mr. Belenz could send out to TAC members. Mr. Robitaille noted that the Town of Gorham has always viewed the project as being an important economic development opportunity. Mr. Chenard added that the level of traffic in Conway likely interferes with the local economy, and there are similar issues in Lincoln.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the TAC will be on July 19th in Littleton. Staff from the NHDES Air Resources Division will be attending and presenting about electric vehicle infrastructure. Mr. Belenz

asked if members had any suggestions or requests for agenda items. Mr. Elgosin asked if anyone from the NHDOT Bureau of Aeronautics would be able to come, Mr. Belenz indicated he would look into that for a future meeting.

Other Business

Mr. Grant noted that senior mobility will become an issue of increasing importance for the North Country region. A handful of agencies provide services to northern Grafton, northern Carroll, and Coos Counties. As the region continues to age, demand for these services will increase, while the agencies providing these service compete for stagnating or diminishing funding sources.

Mr. Belenz asked Ms. St. John to provide an overview of the Statewide Freight Plan Open House that was to be held directly after the TAC meeting. Ms. St. John provided an overview of the public outreach that was done as part of the plan, including surveys, stakeholder interviews, and several open houses. Another Open House event will be held in June or July. The purpose of this outreach was gather input from around the state on issues related to the movement of freight. Once the state completes the Freight Plan, it will be eligible to receive federal dollars for improvements on roads that are designated as part of the National Highway Freight Network. The designation of Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs) and Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs) will be accomplished through this plan. Up to 75 miles of CUFCs and 150 miles of CRFCs can be designated in NH – once they are designated, they are considered part of the National Highway Freight Network. One of the goals of the public outreach is to gather information that will help NHDOT identify candidates for these designations.

Mr. Belenz added that he would like hold a special TAC meeting in June to discuss potential CRFC candidates in the North Country. NHDOT has asked that all candidates be received by June 30th. Mr. Belenz and Mr. Grant will work together to identify a date in late June for this meeting. Mr. Elgosin noted that the two intersections of NH 116 and US 3 in Whitefield are problematic due to the grade of the roads and the angle of the intersections. Members suggested that the District Engineer be present at this meeting, and suggested reaching out to local/regional freight, logging, and waste hauling operations for their input. Mr. Judge noted that there are safety concerns with trucks turning on to North Rd off US 2 in Shelburne – due to the sharp angle, many trucks approach the turn too fast. There are also concerns with the intersection of US 3 and NH 115 – trucks turning severely limit sight distances.

Mr. Grant asked when the next North Country Scenic Byways Council meeting is – Mr. Belenz indicated it will be July 19th. There was no May meeting, so we could look at the possibility of moving it up. Alex will check with Carl Martland to see what his thoughts are.

Meeting adjourned 3:12 PM by motion of MacDonald/Judge.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Alex Belenz.