



Regional Planning Commission & Economic Development District

NCC Transportation Advisory Committee Littleton Opera House, 2 Union St, Littleton, NH 03561 Meeting Minutes June 26, 2018

Members Present:

Doug Grant (Randolph), Clayton MacDonald (Stratford), Donna Laurent (Jefferson), Carl Martland (Sugar Hill)

NCC Staff:

Alex Belenz (Planner), Brad Falco (Intern)

Guests:

Chuck Henderson (Senator Shaheen), Brian Bresnahan (Rep. Kuster)

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order by Chairman Grant at 1:06 PM. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of minutes was tabled until the July 19th meeting due to lack of a quorum.

Discussion of Critical Rural Freight Corridor Candidates:

Mr. Belenz stated that the purpose of today's meeting was to discuss potential candidates for designation as critical rural freight corridors (CRFCs) in the North Country. Designated CRFCs become part of the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) and eligible to receive funds from the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP). Designation of roads into the NHFN ensures that federal resources are directed to improve the performance of the most critical freight highways. CRFCs in NH will be designated through the Statewide Freight Plan, which is currently being developed by NHDOT. NHDOT has asked the regional TACs to weigh in potential candidates for CRFC designation, thus the purpose of today's meeting. Mr. Belenz clarified that there is not a formal process for ranking and submitting CRFCs like there is for the Ten Year Plan or TAP; rather, this is an opportunity that NHDOT has provided for the TAC to provide input on regional freight needs and opportunities as they move forward in their planning process.

Mr. Belenz led TAC members through a presentation covering the NHFP, CRFC designations and criteria, and relevant data and information related to the movement of freight in the North Country (note: a copy of the presentation with detailed information and data is available here: http://www.nccouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CRFC-Presentation_06262018_print.pdf). Connections to the existing NHFN (Interstate 93, US 2 in Maine) are important when considering CRFC

candidates. Data showing truck traffic and inbound/outbound freight tonnage on North Country roads indicates a significant level of freight activity along US 2, US 3, NH 115, and NH 16 between Gorham and Berlin. There is also significant level of truck traffic in the Mt. Washington Valley. Additionally, there are a number of manufacturing, waste management, and agricultural-related operations in the North Country that generate freight movement.

After the presentation, Mr. Belenz opened the floor for discussion amongst TAC members. Mr. Grant noted that NH 16 from Conway to Gorham is a significant connector. Mr. Martland noted that the truck traffic levels seen in the North Country are not particularly significant compared to other areas of the country. Mr. Martland also expressed caution over the designation of CRFC's through town centers and other areas that may be incompatible with higher volumes of truck traffic. The concern is that CRFC designation would encourage increased truck traffic through these areas. Mr. MacDonald agreed and added that environmental impacts of freight movement should be considered. Ms. Laurent noted that CRFC designation might not necessarily increase truck traffic, and might help some of these communities with the costs of maintaining roads impacted by significant truck traffic. All members agreed that the Statewide Freight Plan and associated CRFC designations should not encourage the movement of freight through town centers and other areas that are incompatible with high truck traffic. Members agreed that a corridor comprising US 2, NH 115, and US 3 would be a suitable candidate for CRFC designation, with a spur route up NH 16 from Gorham to Berlin. In Berlin, the corridor could connect to the industrial area where Burgess Biopower and the landfill are located.

Ms. Laurent noted that Airport Rd off of NH 115 carries significant truck traffic down towards the Mt. Washington Regional Airport and intermodal rail facility. The primary truck access to this area is off of NH 115, due to steep grades on Colby Rd near the intersection with US 3. However, many vehicles use it as a cutover from US 3 to NH 115. Ms. Laurent also noted that the condition of the road is quite poor, and has direct access to a high volume freight corridor in NH 115, which is part of the connection from I-93 and US 2. Ms. Laurent suggested that the section of the road down to the airport be considered for a CRFC candidate.

Mr. Grant reviewed the suggested corridor: a main corridor consisting of US 2 from the Maine border to the intersection with NH 115, the full length of NH 115 from US 2 to US 3, then US 3 to the intersection with Interstate 93, a spur corridor consisting of NH 16 from Gorham to Berlin, ending at Burgess Biopower, and a spur corridor connecting to the Whitefield Airport from NH 115. Mr. Grant suggested that the NH 16 corridor in Conway heading south towards Concord be considered. Members noted concerns with this designation, primarily that it was far from existing NHFN routes. Mr. Grant also suggested the remaining length of US 2 (from the intersection with NH 115 to the Vermont border) be considered. Mr. Macdonald noted concerns with designating a CRFC through the center of Lancaster. Mr. Belenz noted that it could be opportunity for infrastructure improvements in Lancaster; however, members agreed it would be best to avoid town centers where possible.

Mr. Macdonald suggested that the spur corridor up through Berlin could be extended along the east side of the Androscoggin River up to the Berlin Airport. Mr. Bresnahan noted that the road is in poor condition, and there are a number of manufacturing-related operations along that stretch of road (e.g.,

Presby Steel). Mr. Henderson suggested that the corridor leave NH 16 at the intersection with Hutchins St in order to bypass downtown Berlin. Members indicated support for the corridor to extend to the Berlin Airport and to leave NH 16 at Hutchins St.

Mr. Grant suggested that Trudeau Rd in Bethlehem be considered as a spur corridor off of US 3. The corridor would extend to the Casella landfill. Members were in support of this idea.

Mr. Belenz then reviewed the proposed CRFC candidates supported by the members present:

- A main corridor consisting of US 2 from the Maine border to the intersection with NH 115, the full length of NH 115 from US 2 to US 3, then US 3 to the intersection with Interstate 93.
- A spur corridor consisting of NH 16 from Gorham to Berlin, crossing the Androscoggin River on Hutchins St, and ending at the Berlin Airport
- A spur corridor connecting to the Whitefield Airport from NH 115 along Airport Rd, ending at the intermodal rail facility.
- A spur corridor along Trudeau Rd starting at the intersection with US 3 and ending at the Casella landfill.

Members agreed that these were the corridors that they supported. A vote was not taken due to the lack of a quorum. Mr. Belenz indicated that he would submit a letter to NHDOT detailing the proposed CRFC candidates and rationale for designation.

Meeting adjourned 3:00 PM by motion of MacDonald/Martland.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Alex Belenz.