

NCC Transportation Advisory Committee
Littleton Opera House, Littleton, NH
Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2018

Members Present: Carl Martland (Sugar Hill), Doug Grant (Randolph), Raymond Gorman (Colebrook), Cabot Ronish (Whitefield), Clayton McDonald (Stratford), Joe Chenard (Lincoln)

NCC Staff Present: Alex Belenz; Danica Melone

NHDOT Staff: William Rose

Guests: Kelsey Sullivan (NHDES), Elizabeth Strachan (NHDES), Jessica Wilcox (NHDES), Chuck Henderson, (Senator Shaheen), Brian Bresnahan (Rep. Kuster)

Call to Order: Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM. Introductions were made.

1. Approval of Minutes. The board reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Grant moved to accept the minutes, the Board agreed unanimously with the motion.

2. Chair Election. Mr. Grant noted that he had indicated his desire to step down from his Chair position at the May meeting. Mr. Belenz added that he had heard from Mr. McDonald that he was interested in sitting as chair. Mr. McDonald spoke to the Committee regarding his interest.

Mr. Gorman moved to nominate Clayton McDonald to be the Chair of the Transportation Advisory Committee, Martland seconded, and the Committee agreed unanimously.

3. Regular Updates

North Country Council Updates.

Mr. Belenz began by discussing the current traffic and parking situation in Franconia. Mr. Grant mentioned that the signs on Interstate 93 regarding parking had substantially helped parking issues and traffic congestion. Mr. Rose added that the signs were helping on the weekdays but not so much on the weekends. The committee discussed some ideas to alleviate the parking issue.

Mr. Belenz discussed that NCC was continuing work on culvert assessments, noting that NCC had done about 120 assessments thus far and will be assisting NH Fish and Game in covering as much as the Androscoggin River watershed as possible. Mr. Belenz added that NCC had been working with the Littleton Parking Committee to help address parking concerns and that NCC would be conducting a parking study of the downtown area. Mr. Belenz noted that NCC is continuing to work to implement

the recommendations of the Corridor Management Plans for North Country scenic byways. Most recently, the state approved several changes to remove overlapping byway segments. NCC will be notifying affected towns.

Mr. Belenz then discussed that letters of intent for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) were due last week. NCC worked with Albany, Bethlehem, and Whitefield to assist them with their submissions, and a number of other North Country towns submitted letters of intent as well. DOT will be reviewing the letters to determine eligibility. At the next meeting of the TAC, members will rank the TAP projects in the region and NCC will submit the rankings to DOT. Instead of having the applicants do presentations, the applications will be made available before the meeting for members to review. Mr. Belenz added that the meeting date for the next meeting will likely need to be changed to accommodate DOT's schedule for receiving the regional rankings.

North Country Transit

Ms. Gagne not in attendance.

Scenic Byways

Mr. Martland explained that over the last few months the NCSBC had focused on proposed route changes recommended in the Corridor Management Plans. Mr. Martland discussed the current byway routes and how there was many overlapping sections and that the proposed route changes are focused on eliminating overlap with State or Federal byways.

Mr. Martland discussed that NCSBC had conducted a series of public hearings in the towns with proposed route changes and that there was a positive response to the proposed changes. Mr. Martland added that he has been looking into strategies for marketing for the byways and had recently noted that many tourist maps fail to advertise or denote the Scenic Byways.

Mr. Martland discussed that the NCSBC is looking at providing increased amenities along the byways to enhance the experience such as increased parking, safe pull-offs, signs, and more. Mr. McDonald asked if the Scenic Byways could be highlighted through online platforms such as Google Maps where the Scenic Byways could be labeled. Mr. Martland explained he felt the first step was to work with state agencies and other organizations producing road maps to start highlighting them.

District Engineer Updates

Mr. Beaulieu not in attendance.

4. The Future of Electric Vehicle Charging in NH Towns

Ms. Wilcox introduced herself as the Grants Manager from the Coalition of Clean Cities along with her title at NH Department of Environmental Services, explaining that her job is focused on working with different agencies and organizations to help reduce petroleum use/dependency. Ms. Wilcox discussed that their coalition includes numerous businesses and fleets who have adopted or are looking at adopting electric vehicles (EVs). Annual EV registrations have increased up to 30% in counties like

Hillsborough and Cheshire. EVs have also improved their battery life so that users can drive further distances without recharging, and they have become more affordable. Ms. Wilcox described several types of EV cars, such as the AEV (all electric vehicle) and a PHEZ (plug-in electric vehicle).

Ms. Wilcox then explained that there are three types of charging stations for EVs, starting with a Level 1 which uses the standard three-pronged outlet plug. Level 2 chargers typically used by fleets, businesses, towns, etc and will provide faster charging than Level 1. Level 3 charging stations look similar to gas stations and offer the fastest charging.

Ms. Wilcox explained that, based on growing trends with EVs, municipalities should be considering strategies for accommodating residents and visitors with EVs. Ms. Wilcox also discussed benefits and costs of EVs, adding that many car manufacturers have made commitments to increase EV production. EV infrastructure is expanding, and there is increasing usage of EVs in areas neighboring New Hampshire. Municipalities should be considering how they can plan for EVs in their community, whether that be residents who want to own an EV, or tourists who want to visit the state and need somewhere to charge their car. Ms. Wilcox explained some EV planning concepts, such as creating EV incentives in zoning codes. Ms. Wilcox discussed several successful examples of EV infrastructure improvements, such as at UNH's campus and in Portsmouth.

Mr. Chenard discussed his concern for EV usage in an area of the country where it can be very cold. Mr. Martland responded that from his experience in owning an EV, when it's at the coldest outside his car does fine but he does see a reduction in the kilowatt hours compared to the summer. Mr. Chenard mentioned that he was concerned that if less people are buying gas then there could be a shift in how road usage was taxed. Ms. Strachan replied that if EV ownership increased enough to cause significant a decline tax revenue from gas sales, then there might be a conversation about looking at how to tax EVs. Mr. Chenard discussed his concern about horsepower and battery efficiency from EVs if you're towing a load, such as a boat trailer. Ms. Wilcox and Ms. Strachan discussed that EV batteries continue to improve their efficiency, adding that there are EV pick-up trucks similar in size to Ford F-150s. Mr. Belenz asked about available grant funding for EV infrastructure. Ms. Wilcox responded that there are no grants available through the state at the moment, however there are incentives and rebates available through the state and through the NH Electric Coop.

5. Regional Transportation Plan Kickoff

Mr. Belenz discussed that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) would be updated from 2015 and reviewed some of the core topics that would be in the plan. Mr. Belenz explained that the previous RTP used federally-defined Labor Market Areas (LMAs) to break up the region and identify transportation-related needs, issues and opportunities. The plan also identified specific projects based on solicitation from towns.

Mr. Belenz reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the previous plan. Strengths of the plan included significant public outreach and the usefulness of the LMA approach in assessing commuting patterns and looking at the relationship between transportation and economy. Some of the weaknesses of the

plan are that it is difficult to read and interpret, the projects are not derived from identified needs, issues, or opportunities, and the LMA approach makes it difficult to identify specific infrastructure needs and projects.

NCC is proposing that the updated RTP use a corridor-based approach. This approach will make it easier to identify needs, issues, and opportunities in the region's travel corridors, which will better support the identification of specific projects in the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan., This approach will also assist in the development of a plan that is more actionable and a more useful reference for state and local officials. Mr. Belenz added that NCC will be employing multiple strategies for public and engagement and input. Mr. Belenz also noted that the RTP update would not identify specific projects – rather, it will identify the needs, issues, and opportunities that will form the basis for project identification and prioritization in the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan, which informs the state Ten Year Plan.

Mr. Belenz explained that NCC is working on baseline data analysis and that public engagement efforts such as a survey, public forums, direct outreach to municipal officials would be key to updating the RTP. Mr. Belenz added that NCC will be looking to hold a roundtable discussion with community partners in the NCC Region to gain their input.

Mr. Grant suggested that the RTP address community transportation needs, such as mobility services for medical appointments and other needs. Access to regional healthcare centers and other services are important. Mr. Belenz explained that at the corridor level they will be looking at the key linkages – this will help inform the needs, issues, and opportunities that the plan will highlight. Mr. Martland added that it might valuable to integrate byways, bike paths, and public transit into the plan. Mr. Belenz added that they will look at various travel modes within corridors. Mr. McDonald asked if there was any consideration for rail lines into the plan, Mr. Belenz replied that there would be.

Mr. McDonald asked if the PowerPoint presentation could be sent to the entire committee and with a solicitation for further suggestions on the RTP. Mr. Martland asked about funding for the plan. Mr. Belenz responded that NCC has set aside funds for the plan through their contract with DOT. Mr. McDonald asked if there was a timeline for the project – Mr. Belenz said they are looking at about a year until completion but added that they do not have a detailed timeline yet.

6. NCC TAC - Discussion on How to Best Serve the Region

Mr. Belenz directed attendees to the posters hung up in the meeting room, and indicated that attendees should provide the feedback requested on the posters. Committee members spent about 15 minutes providing feedback using the posters.

After the poster activity, Mr. Grant suggested that Mr. Belenz reach out to the members who weren't currently present so that they could also give input. Mr. Belenz indicated that he would send around a brief survey to the TAC. Mr. Gorman suggested potentially utilizing conference calling for members not

present at future meetings. Mr. Martland suggested TAC hold joint meetings with other committees and could conduct site visits.

Mr. McDonald discussed that the TAC might benefit from some sort of visioning process so that members could create a long-range vision of what they see for the future of transportation planning in their communities. Mr. Grant added that it would be good to better understand the correlation among transportation, quality of life, etc. Mr. Belenz discussed that this could be accomplished to some degree by marking the RTP an actionable plan with goals and visioning.

Mr. McDonald motioned to adjourn, Mr. Martland seconded, and members unanimously agreed to adjourn at 2:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Danica Melone.

DRAFT