



Regional Planning Commission & Economic Development District

NCC Transportation Advisory Committee Tower Room, Littleton Opera House Meeting Minutes September 21, 2017

Members Present: Doug Grant (Randolph), Al Rossetto (Northumberland), Clayton MacDonald (Stratford), Donna Laurent (Jefferson), Raymond Gorman (Colebrook), Neil McIver (Plymouth), Frank Claffey (Bethlehem).

NCC Staff: Greg DiSanto (Planner), Barbara Robinson (Executive Director)

NHDOT: Phil Beaulieu (District 1 Engineer), Don Lyford (Highway Design, Project Manager), and Carol Macuch(Planning Bureau)

Guests: Chuck Henderson (Senator Shaheen's Office).

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Doug Grant at 1:03 PM. A roundtable of introductions was completed.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Claffey motions to approve minutes from July 20, 2017. Mr. McIver seconds motion. All in favor.

GACIT Ten Year Plan/Update:

Mr. DiSanto updated the TAC on the draft Ten Year Plan and the GACIT process. Plymouth's Highland Street project and Whitefield's US 3/NH 116 project were added to the August 23 Draft Ten Year Plan as individual roadway improvement projects. Public Hearings were held in Errol, Berlin, and Conway on September 19. Two more in NCC's planning region will be held on October 5 – Littleton (9am) and Plymouth (2pm).

Mr. Grant spoke about rural transit funding in Vermont and Maine, compared with New Hampshire. One potential source of funding is a surcharge on vehicle registrations. Mr. Gorman reports that Colebrook will vote on a surcharge this fall and it will go to town meeting in the spring.

North Country Transit Update:

Ms. Gagne not in attendance.

North Country Scenic Byways Committee Update:

Mr. Martland not in attendance. Mr. Grant explains North Country Scenic Byways Committee's funding situation. Mr. Grant expresses his opinion that the Scenic Byways are about tourism and not about roads. Mr. Gorman offers to help vocalize this issue. Mr. Grant replies that the next step is to hold a North Country Scenic Byways Committee meeting and develop a strategy for working with the State Scenic Byways Committee. The next North Country Scenic Byways Committee meeting will be in November.

NHDOT District 1 Update:

District Engineer Phil Beaulieu updates the TAC on Highway District 1. Storm damage from July 1 put District 1 behind on other projects by 6 weeks and they are still catching up on drainage work ahead of paving. Some paving projects are behind schedule, but are still planned for this year. Some bridge rehab work and tree work was also done this summer. NH 18 bridge work is nearing completion. The Gorham retaining wall and drainage structures affect District 1 maintenance crews in the winter. Mr. Beaulieu added that it would be nice if there was more local representation/attendance at the GACIT public hearings.

Mr. Beaulieu replied to a question from Mr. Rossetto about the plan to pave Lost Nation Rd.: the paving schedule is up to Pike Industries (contractor), but their plan is to pave from South to North, going all the way to US 3. Mr. Rossetto adds that DOT has done a great job on drainage work this summer.

Conway Bypass Update:

Mr. Lyford updates the TAC on the history and the future of the Conway Bypass Project.

The project consists of three parts: upgrading the existing roads, building a new local road (North-South Road in Conway), and building an 11 mile bypass around Conway. A Special Committee approved the project. Permits and approvals came in 1995. The first phase of construction was done in 1997 – a traffic signal at NH 112/NH 16 and a signal upgrade at River Road and NH 16. The local road was constructed later. \$34 million has been put into construction so far. A traffic study in 2009 showed that traffic did not grow as much as had been predicted in the Environmental Impact Statement, but it had grown some. Traffic signals have failed at peak times. Other intersections through the strip have seen great improvement because of lane configurations and the North-South local road. DOT still thought there was a need for the bypass because it would have improved pedestrian safety and regional traffic. 18% of traffic is trying to get through Conway, not travelling within. FHWA also agreed on the need for the project. DOT saw the Ten Year Plan as over-programmed and was not getting as much federal money as originally expected. DOT wanted to focus on maintaining roads, not building new roads, so the Bypass was removed from the TYP. If the Bypass were to be put back in the TYP, it would cost \$290 million when built.

FHWA wants the project to either be closed or completed, not left inactive. It would cost around \$30 million to close the project because DOT would pay back FHWA for the Right-Of-Way acquisitions and some engineering work. There will be a public hearing in Conway on October 11 about what to do with the property that was purchased – most of which is in Conway, but some is in Madison. From Madison to the Conway Police Department, DOT owns the entire property. DOT owns pieces from there to the northern end of the project. DOT is looking for regional input on whether they should hold the land for something, hold onto it for constructing the bypass in the future, or sell it to repay FHWA.

If the land is sold to the public and the project is closed, and then DOT decides to construct the bypass later, DOT would have to create a new project and go through the environmental review process again. DOT wants to know what the communities want DOT to do with the land.

DOT will likely not get most or all of the money to pay back FHWA from the sale of the land. FHWA would withhold money as a means of the State paying them back. Mr. MacDonald comments that, if the sale of the land won't be enough to pay back FHWA, it makes sense to keep the land for another use, such as the Mount Washington Valley Bike Path. Mr. Beaulieu notes – as a member of the public (Conway is outside of District 1) that North-South Road ends abruptly in a residential area and that that causes problems for those residents. Mr. Lyford notes that it would be difficult to extend the road north to connect with US 302, because it would affect active railroad tracks.

Other Business:

Mr. Grant asks Mr. Beaulieu for status on the improvements to US 2 in Jefferson and Randolph. Mr. Beaulieu replied that they are still in the Ten Year Plan (construction in 2023).

Suggestions for November 16th meeting:

Mr. Grant offers to make a presentation on public transit in other rural areas.

Adjournment: Mr. Grant motions for adjournment at 2:11pm. Mr. Gorman seconds the motion. All in favor.

Next meeting 11/16/17 at 1pm at the Littleton Opera House.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gregory DiSanto