

April 9, 2008

ATTACHMENT 5

RE: New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

TO: Commission Members & RPC Staff,

On Friday, March 21, 2008 the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority (NHRTA) held its March monthly meeting.

The general agenda for each meeting is for each of the committees and the liability liaison to give a brief report on what has happened since the last meeting.

A summary of the reports follow:

Report of the Mission and Vision Committee:

Bruce Woodruff, Chairman of the committee reported the committee has reviewed the comments on the prioritized goals received from the NHARPC. Discussion was deferred to the RPC Liason Committee report.

Report of the Intergovernmental Coordination Committee

Ron O'Blenis, Chairman of the committee reported that it appears there are enough votes in the House to pass HB-1404 that sets a liability cap of \$75M dollars for issues regarding passenger rail service. The NHRTA would be the holder of self-insured insurance policy.

Other related bills: SB452 – Requires transportation planning to be an integral part of land use planning as well as mandates for the STIP to include all forms of transportation that would be integrated into a state-wide plan. [My summary of the language in the bill] No report on the status of the bill.

SB396 – Requires a state-wide transportation plan be created and continually updated; purpose to make efficient use of transportation funds. No report on the status of the bill.

Report of the RPC Liason Committee

Christine Walker, Chairwoman of the committee reported on the comments she received at the last NHARPC meeting. The NHARPC had only minor comments on the original set of prioritized goals. They did recommend that the goals be listed as a set of goals and not numbered as in the original version. The NHRTA members voted unanimously to adopt the goals as updated by the NHARPC. They are as follows:

NHRTA Prioritized Goals

As approved on March 21, 2008

- Identify and resolve liability issues that include operational and insurance cost sharing between stakeholders for existing and planned regional station facilities.
- Establish commuter rail service on the NH Main Line connecting Manchester, Nashua and Boston.
- Develop a project plan for the NH Main Line that addresses the following:
 - Track and ROW ownership,
 - Identify all conditions and/or requirements to establish Class IV (79 mph) passenger rail service and identify incremental costs necessary to provide high-speed rail service on the NH Main Line.
 - Identify the railroad operator for the Manchester-Nashua-Boston service – MBTA, Amtrak, Pan Am Railways or other.
 - Identify all station stops and service frequency along with a proposed schedule with approximate arrival and departure times,
 - Identify all potential multi-modal transportation links for each station,
 - Identify all capital costs for train sets, stations, multi-modal links, track upgrades, and signaling upgrades,

- Identify operational costs of the service as well as station maintenance and insurance costs,
 - Identify all sources of revenues for capital costs, such as CMAQ funds, and operational costs, such as rail ticket sales and parking fees,
 - Develop a funding plan to address the gaps between costs and revenues.
 - Study and identify the best approach to providing rail access to Boston-Manchester Airport.
 - Develop operating agreements and enter into contracts for use of right-of-way owned by MBTA and the Pan Am Railways.
 - Complete all engineering, environmental and design studies required as a condition of funding or to facilitate the development of the passenger rail service.
 - Secure development funding
 - Secure commitments to funding for the first five years of commuter rail service operations.
 - Complete construction of necessary rail infrastructure with the assistance of the right-of-way owners, the MBTA and Pan Am Railways.
 - Begin commuter rail service between Boston, Nashua and Manchester.
- Develop a project plan to establish rail service in Plaistow.
 - Develop a project plan to establish Concord to Boston rail service.
 - Establish working relationships with the Regional Planning Commissions, local officials and interested citizens to identify passenger rail service needs and plans for meeting those needs in all areas of the state.
 - Identify track/ROW/station issues for inter-city rail services to other New Hampshire cities as well as other proposed regional services. The purpose of this identification is to make sure track and rights-of-way remain available for use and that all supporting infrastructure remain available for the establishment of rail services.
 - Incorporate the NHRTA vision and goals into the DOT's long-range transportation plan so that all local and state agencies are working from a common set of goals.
 - Develop project plans for future rail service as it becomes integrated into a statewide and regional-wide transportation network.

Report of the Negotiations Committee

Kathy Hersh, Chairwoman of the committee reported that meetings with Pan Am Railways and the MBTA continue. There is some concern from the MA DOT and MBTA officials about NH commitment to long-term support of passenger rail. Work will continue on that issue.

Report on Legislative Liability Issues

Peter Burling, Chairman of the NHRTA reported that this issue would be tracked through reports on HB-1404.

The NHRTA directors and invited town officials will tour the Downeaster stations in NH on May 12, 2008. They will also see the Plaistow Park and Ride lot then proceed to Haverhill and take a commuter train to Boston. The return trip will be on the Downeaster all can experience the difference between the two. Also the return trip will give Patricia Quinn, Executive Director of NNERPA, a chance to provide more details of the Downeaster operations and how NH can contribute its fair share towards the operating costs.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM and adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Moore, RPC Commissioner
Plaistow