



**North Country
Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting
At the
Bethlehem Public Library
2245 Main St, Bethlehem, NH 03574
And via Zoom
Tuesday, June 13th, 2023
10:30AM-12:00PM**

MINUTES

1. Call to Meeting and Roll Call

The Meeting was called to order at 10:36AM.

Carl Martland, Sugar Hill
Clayton Macdonald, Stratford
Stan Judge, Shelburne
Robin Irving, Lancaster
Chuck Henderson, Senator Shaheen's office
Ray Gorman, Colebrook
Stephanie Weiner, Congresswoman Kuster's Office
Paul Robitaille, Gorham
Michele Cormier, Randolph

David Campbell, Jackson (Virtual)
Brigitte Codling, Haverhill (Virtual)
Jennifer Boucher, Haverhill (Virtual)
Rosalind Page, Lisbon (Virtual)
William Rose, NHDOT (Virtual)

2. Approve Meeting Minutes: May 9, 2023 **

Two changes noted by attendees:

Stephanie: Note that my first name is with a PH.

Stan: add: "...As a result of an oilspill" to Shelburne update section on increased activity at the pumping station.

Ray Motioned to approve the minutes from the May 9th, 2023, meeting as amended.

Michele Seconded.

Motion Carried.

3. Regional Transportation Plan **

Nick presented the Regional Transportation Plan.

Carl: Additional comments regarding the plan:

- Possibly add the details supporting the changes in behavior from COVID.
- Adding the Mountain Road, Weeks State Park to the Scenic Byways section.
- Pie Chart showing cars per person. Insert description/clarification on this data

Members discussed the different statistics and data in the plan. A note that it is imperfect data. Members wanted to see other regionally important routes included int the plan (Freight, etc.).

Nick will double check the statistics moving forward and will include member comments on the list of updates that will be done in the next fiscal year.

4. On-Call Engineering & Projects

Nick presented the on-call engineering services. RFQ is out now for the next 2 fiscal years.

5. Discussion:

a. Funding Opportunities

Nick presented the Funding Opportunities.

Michele: Randolph Energy Commission is moving forward with \$300,000 application for energy system improvements to the town. As a town, working on some FEMA funds dealing with Hazard Mitigation. With the Durand Rd project, anything that deals with ditching and similar, is included. Requires a 25% match.

b. NCC Projects

Nick provided an update to the TAC about ongoing NCC projects:

- Traffic Count Program
- SADES/RSMS
- Corridor Management Plans
- Outreach for new members

c. Scenic Byways

Carl provided an update 5 weeks ago to the TAC about scenic byways activities.

- Corridor Management Plan update is upcoming
- Byway Enhancement Awards

Carl noted that Bethlehem town center is a byway attraction. Area includes a trail right behind and through Main street and numerous historical markers and attractions.

Stephanie: how far up do the markers go?

Carl: About a half mile. Up to the old restaurant near the golf course. A really great area to see historic markers and see the sights.

Nick: Additional information for the CMPs. Will be making one big plan including all the byways. Will also identify historic markers and scenic areas that may need improvement. Effort will include outreach to towns along the byways.

d. Updates from Communities

David (Jackson): Working on our Capital Improvement Program. Including all our departments. Big question is how to use solar for all of our municipal facilities. Big ticket item is rebuilding the Jackson fire station and upgrading the School. Waiting for the Valley Crossing Bridge to be constructed. Should be a big impact for traffic in/around the Falls. Rain continues to destroy our roads in Jackson and NHDOT has been very active fixing roads.

Rosalind (Lisbon): Believe we successfully submitted our NBRC grant. Had some initial issues submitting but are hopeful in our beginning efforts for downtown revitalization. Nick has provided some conceptual layouts.

Jennifer (Haverhill):

- Approved for a SS4A grant to prepare a Safety Action Plan.
- Will be submitting forms for reimbursement for December storm.
- Over \$100,000 in damage.
- Beginning early stages for looking at safety plan for Police and Fire.
- Received \$1,000,000 for broadband. Looking to serve unserved customers, and will then move to
- Hoping to move a lot forward with the Selectboard.

Carl (Sugar Hill): Peak of the lupine in Sugar Hill. Stop by Pearl lake Rd.

Stan (Shelburne): Energy committee is very active. Studying improvements and upgrades to the Shelburne fire station. Specifically regarding solar power. Town is interested in Community power. Coos County produces more power than it needs, sitting with idle capacity. Member of our Energy Committee is member of state board.

Purchase of Beirut land for conservation (SPNHF). On the border of Gorham and Shelburne. Includes state forest, Appalachian corridor, and sections of the Androscoggin River.

Clayton (Stratford): Ground Array solar installation should be going forward this summer. Waiting for supply chain issues to work themselves out. Anticipate operation by the end of the summer. Municipal structures should be totally solar powered by the end of the year. Looking into the standard energy efficiency upgrades as well.

Transportation-wise: Excited about trying to get sidewalks installed and rebuilt and extended between the different areas of North Stratford Village. A Quebec company is proposing a Boston-Montreal passenger service, have promised to stop in Stratford. This would be a great incentive to put in infrastructure around the stop. An old plywood mill is nearby, which could be converted into housing. Owner of the mill asked why the stop not be at the mill, which could be mixed use development.

- Would require grade separation and many other improvements.
- Unless you build, then nothing is going to happen.

Robin (Lancaster): Submitted two projects to NBRC. Also contacted EPA and other agencies for grant funds. Big thing in Lancaster is housing. Lancaster has applied for HOP grant, currently doing community engagement.

- Clear pattern that 55+ age group do not want people moving in, and want housing to stay the same.
- Lancaster's current zoning doesn't address anything but single family homes. Needs to be addressed.
- Have a few projects that deal with new/innovative housing types. Lancaster is trying for a cottage-community that is sustainable.
- New town website. Want to include mapping updates that have been ongoing. (Tax Maps, Tie Sheets (W/S projects), and other town assets).
- Map Information has been sent off to contractor. Currently mapping service lines (Curbstops to house).
- Looking for capital funds to support a general public works building (and not Water/Sewer/EMS). Difficult to find funds for general municipal buildings.
- Zoning ordinance or downtown area requires commercial operation downstairs, but many have relocated to outside of downtown due to high rents/leases.

Ray (Colebrook): Received a grant for Public Works complex focused on solar operations. Doing a lot of planning for construction for main street for water and sewer.

Stephanie (Kuster): Not a lot from the office. Not a lot of Transportation news. Keeping tabs on things and also the Night Train.

Paul (Gorham): Big change in administration.

- Newly hired Town Manager (Peter Gagnon). Varied background.
- New road agent hired on. Came from NHDOT.
- Have been working with NHDOT on washouts along 114.
- There is huge amount of interest in Gorham. Land sales are through the roof. Four properties being advertised for almost \$1mil.
- Working on HOP Grant application for downtown parking.
- Last vacant lot downtown just been sold, and owners interested in seeing what can be done. This is inside the urban compact so developers can build to the lot lines.
- Received grants on sidewalk improvements. Looking at housing downtown. Want to encourage multi-story buildings (3-4 stories) that are mixed use. This was the historic situation.
- Major discussions on housing, workforce housing, etc. See Manufactured housing as a solution to attempt. Want to start discussing this option with the town and work through options for manufactured homes.

Robin: The manufactured homes of today are not the ones of yesterday. Many different types that are certified in different ways.

Paul: Huge segments of the population are being left out of housing market. Smaller manufactured homes are a way to provide options for everyone.

Michele (Randolph):

- Town Personnel is an issue. We lost our Road Agent to the NHDOT.
- Have a new hire for Road Agent. He is not from in-town so it may pose issues during the winter months understanding the local conditions.
- Town has joined Community Power. If it works out it will benefit the whole town.
- Selectboard has been discussing permitting for solar projects.
- Town recently applied for Special Exception requirement for free-standing solar.
- Durand Rd project will be starting this Summer. Will be doing the project in phases. Town approved up to \$2mil for 1/3rd of roadway (this phase). Structured funding to make sure it was balanced across

Members discussed how their ARPA funds have been utilized and saved for future projects and budgeting. Must be used as specific projects.

Carl: Add one thing. Just came back from England. Travelled around using trains and buses. Buses were everywhere. Was able to utilize regular VISA card to tap when getting on the bus. No bus ticket and pre-loaded card required. Very helpful and easy to use.

Paul: Big discussion with HOP discussions have been how do we get people around town if we keep developing the separate “cottage communities” or other dense developments outside of downtown. Ties into discussing how expensive vehicles have gotten. Increasingly expensive and prohibitive for low income workers. We need to stress transportation options and transit to make sure people can get to their jobs, services, and healthcare.

Nick discussed the Vehicle inspection and repair program introduced by the GCRCC and getting them established throughout Coos County.

Michele: Concord Trailways goes to Littleton and Gorham. Connects down to Boston and Concord. Nothing connects to Portsmouth and Dover. Need our northern communities to be able to get to the Main Campus of UNH. The lack of East-West transportation is a big issues in the state.

Nick will add Transit and Transportation discussion to the next agenda to have members drill down on these concerns. Could come up with new work and projects to address transit gaps and concerns.

Chuck: Were there any issues with the Blackhawk demonstration at the Berlin Airport?

Paul: No, none noted, and I was present at the entire event.

Chuck: Note on workforce, in Dover, a nursing home/residential facility had severe workforce issues. Instead of a tiny home community they did a cottage community development. Included public community center for visits and socializing. Innovative concept that is good to consider.

Michele: Conway is building a ton of hotels, but where will the workers come from? Will those hotels be filled? This could open up future housing opportunities.

6. Other Business

7. Adjourn

Ray Motioned to adjourn.

Paul Seconded.

Motion Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 12:10PM

*****Indicates vote of the TAC is required***

An in-person quorum (7) is needed in order to conduct any votes, so please plan to attend if you are willing and able. If this is not possible, please use the information on the following page to attend virtually. While attending in-person, please wear a face covering for the duration of the meeting and keep a safe distance between yourself and others. Thank you.

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