



Meeting Notes

Attendees: See Attached Sign-In Sheet

Date/Time: June 25, 2004 – 10:00AM

Project No.: 09023.00

Place: Ossipee Town Hall, 2nd Floor

Re: Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility
Study – PAC Meeting

Notes taken by: R. Swierk

On June 25, 2004, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility Study met. The following is a brief summary of the discussion of the meeting. A copy of the agenda is attached for reference.

- Introductions were made.
- Kristine Wickham of VHB distributed a handout containing Guidelines and Procedures for the PAC, then briefly discussed some of the key points in the handout. It was requested that the PAC review the Guidelines in detail and that at the next meeting discussion and/or approval of them would take place. Kristine also noted that there had been a request at the prior night's public meeting to post the names and contact information for the PAC members on the project Website. The group agreed to this request.
- Marge Webster asked about dates of future PAC meetings. Kristine Wickham stated that the tentative plan is to have public meetings on Thursday nights and PAC meeting on the following morning if needed. Additionally, two combined public/PAC meetings will be held. The group agreed that that was okay. Kristine Wickham said that the Project Team would post the dates of the Public Meetings and PAC meetings on the project Website as soon as they are finalized.

Study Team Presentation and Discussion

David Wilcock of VHB gave a presentation that provided an overview of the Project Team; outlined the FTA project planning process; provided a project overview; described logistics such as the project work plan, schedule and Website; and provided a framework for discussion of issues and needs related to the proposed transportation center. This presentation was similar to the one presented at the previous night's public meeting. The slides from the public meeting presentation will be made available on the project Website.

The following is a summary of some key points discussed during the presentation:

- In discussing the FTA planning process, David Wilcock stated that the goal is to develop a study consistent with FTA guidelines, so we can move smoothly into the Alternatives Analysis and preliminary engineering (assuming the community determines the transportation center is feasible) and not redo work.

- David Wilcock reiterated that there does have to be a transit element for the project to proceed through the FTA review process because of the funding source. In terms of uses to include in the transportation center and what the facility could do for Ossipee, David pointed out that a number of good ideas were mentioned at the previous night's public meeting. For instance, the transportation center could help bring in visitors and capture tourist dollars. If there is sufficient demand there might eventually be an opportunity to create a local shuttle service like Molly the Trolley in Wolfeboro.
- Tom Dodge said that the process that is being followed is a good one, and he is glad that input from the community is being solicited.
- In discussing potential users for a transportation center in Ossipee, David Wilcock referred to the Amesbury Transportation Center project that both VHB and Domenech Hicks & Krockmalnic (DHK) have been working on recently. DHK is an architectural firm that on the Consultant Team for the Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility Study. David introduced Mickey Krockmalnic of DHK, who made several points about the Amesbury Transportation Center project:
 - MVRTA, the local transit service, will operate from the facility;
 - The Council on Aging will occupy the part of the building; the Council will help operate the transit center during certain hours of the day;
 - The FTA has agreed to fund the shell of entire building including the second floor because it approved of the linkage between the MVRTA and the Council on Aging in the building; the Council will fund the interior tenant improvements to the 2nd floor
- Blair Folts asked if the Council on Aging is paying market rent in the Amesbury Transportation Center project. Mickey Krockmalnic replied that he is not sure since he has been primarily involved in the design side, but he can provide information to allow Blair to contact the transit authority directly. Blair stated that she would be concerned about rents because the rates on Route 16 are high compared to the rest of Ossipee, and it might be hard for some tenants to afford space in such a facility. David Wilcock added this Feasibility Study process will look at how the proposed facility would be operated, to address these kinds of questions and to make sure that there is plan for making the facility viable in the long term.
- Harry Merrow asked if the proposed facility would be limited to one building or if it could include multiple buildings. David Wilcock stated that a transportation center is generally one building, but the site could be laid out to include other buildings later. David added that the initial transportation center building could include both transportation and non-transportation uses, similar to the Amesbury example. This would have to be approved by the FTA.
- Tom Dodge asked whether the new stations that were established for the Downeaster rail service were multi-modal, multi-use stations, and what the planning process for those stations was like. David Wilcock said that a station site selection process was first conducted to identify which communities should be served. The State of Maine was responsible for providing platforms at the stations, with the towns responsible for site planning and space planning for the actual stations. David said that many of these stations have connecting trolley services, bike paths, etc. Tom Dodge said that these could be potential models in addition to Amesbury.
- David Wilcock stated the Project Team has suggested some general activity nodes in today's meeting, but the Team will need input from the PAC and the community to identify additional potential station sites and to screen this pool of sites.
- Kristine Wickham gave an overview of the Public Involvement process for the Feasibility Study and distributed copies of the Public Involvement Plan to the meeting attendees.
- Tom Dodge said that there are two other sites that might be possible for the transportation center, and asked if they have been considered. The two sites are the area around the intersection of Route 16 and Route 171 where a gravel pit could be reused, and areas along the existing active

rail line farther to the south. David Wilcock stated that nothing has been ruled out yet, and further input is welcomed.

- Blair Folts asked whether the project could include the reuse of an existing building rather the construction of a new one. David Wilcock said that it could, if the building proved suitable. Harry Merrow asked if the current building owner would still own the building, if a building were to be reused. David Wilcock replied that it would need to be discussed with NHDOT and FTA. The building could be sold or could be leased – the Portland Transportation Center is an example of a transportation center where a portion is leased (to Concord Trailways).
- Harry Merrow said that some pieces of information that would be useful to collect, if they are available, including how many people board the Concord Trailways bus at West Ossipee, and how many people board the C&J buses from Portsmouth from the Ossipee area. David Wilcock said that the Project Team can try to get that information, to the extent it is available. Ken Hazeltine said that one source for bus ridership figures from Ossipee would be how many tickets were purchased at the store in Ossipee. However, specific information about origins and destinations of riders at the Portsmouth Transportation Center is not available.
- David Wilcock gave an overview of the goals of the Purpose and Need statement for the project. He noted that there is often a tendency to be generic, which makes it difficult to narrow down sites. He said that the Purpose and Need is intended to be a living document; for instance, additional statistics or information can be added to the statement later when it becomes available. David also pointed out that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Website has a good discussion on Purpose and Need, including a “checklist” of items it should address.
- Tom Dodge asked whether a valid element of the Purpose and Need statement could be to reduce traffic on Route 16 and encourage alternative modes of transportation such as rail travel. David Wilcock replied that this could certainly be an element, and proximity to rail could be a factor in screening alternate sites. It was pointed out that the historic Ossipee rail depot has now been sold, and developing it would be problematic due to contamination/EPA issues, so it is unlikely to be a feasible site for the transportation center.
- David Wilcock stated that the same goal, of encouraging use of alternative modes of transportation, could be established for intercity bus service as well, and this could also be used in the screening of alternate sites. Mickey Krockmalnic pointed out that rail and bus modes are certainly not mutually exclusive – that some sites might allow both rail and bus access.
- Mark McConkey asked a question about the format of today’s PAC meeting and upcoming PAC meetings. David Wilcock replied that today’s meeting is intended to be more open-ended, while future meeting will be more focused on specific topics. However, David stated that input is welcomed throughout the meeting.
- John Swanson asked whether the transportation center would pay taxes. Ken Hazeltine of NHDOT replied that it is his understanding that the private spaces in the facility would pay taxes, while the public spaces such as waiting areas and restrooms would not be taxed.
- Harry Merrow asked if it is possible that the town could own and operate the transportation center. David Wilcock replied that this is possible. However, FTA will want to ensure the long-term viability of the transportation center in that case. Ken Hazeltine pointed out that FTA does ask for grant money back if the project fails to sustain itself.

Committee Discussion on Purpose and Need

David Wilcock concluded the presentation and shifted to an open discussion on the Purpose and Need for the proposed transportation center. He invited the committee members to offer their comments. The following is a summary of the key points of discussion:

- David Wilcock stated that the State of Maine has a statewide strategy to encourage people to visit Maine using alternative modes of transportation, of which the Downeaster rail service is a part. He said this could be an example for Ossipee in the longer-term.
- Tom Dodge said that the transportation center should be in a pedestrian-friendly environment, which would seem to steer it towards an already-developed area such as the village center. David Wilcock asked if he was suggesting that this is a need for the transportation center, and Tom said he thought so, but would like to hear what other people think. Mark McConkey said he agreed that it should at least be near a walking area, but not necessarily in the village center due to concerns about disturbing the character of the village.
- Ken Hazeltine said that the group should keep in mind that the restoration of passenger rail service is probably decades away, so it needs to think about both the shorter-term transportation needs of the community and the long-term vision.
- Marge Webster stated that the group needs to have a vision of where the town is headed as it thinks about the Purpose and Need for the project. She pointed out, for instance, that Ossipee and the county as a whole have a growing population, an aging population, and a population that needs transportation to health care, services, to Boston, and to airports. She said she thinks the group should think long-term and think about locating the transportation center in a node that has the potential to be developed more fully in the future.
- Harry Merrow said there is a real opportunity for the transportation center to serve skiers, campers on the lakes, summer visitors, and people commuting to Rochester, Dover and Portsmouth. He asked how information on possible usage could be gathered. David Wilcock replied that to some extent, the Project Team can look at information on the U.S. Census Bureau Website, but this data may be somewhat limited for our purposes. Marge Webster noted that the 2002 Website has more up-to-date information that can be looked at as well.
- David Little asked at what point transit operators should be brought into this process, to find out if there is an interest in serving it. David Wilcock said that private operators will probably not make a commitment to serve a transportation center beforehand. Ken Hazeltine said that a bus operator could start up service any time, since the market is deregulated. Tom Dodge said he thought having someone involved in the restoration of the rail corridor would be useful. Kristine Wickham said that New Hampshire North Coast was invited to send a representative to the PAC, and had indicated they would send someone to today's meeting. Frank Wolfe said that he will check with Conway Scenic Railroad to see if they have any interest in extending service down to Ossipee. Kristine Wickham suggested that the Project Team or the PAC will have conversations with private operators, where appropriate, to obtain information during this process.
- Blair Folts said that there are two distinct goals/needs that have been identified. One is mainly a transportation function, both local and regional, which most people seem to agree on. The second is more of a community development, or "Main Street" goal. Some general discussion followed on the topic in which members generally agreed that the second goal needs to be thought about further.
- John Swanson said that if the group is thinking about community development we should think about addressing needs for improvements to community buildings or blighted and abandoned buildings in the town, which are a problem. He said he thinks that the transportation center project could be used to help address this need. Tom Dodge said that he agreed, and that the transportation center could help tie the separate parts of Ossipee together. Blair Folts said that those needs are more of a "Main Street" project than a transportation center project.
- Harry Merrow asked whether it makes a difference if the transportation center is in the village center versus on the highway in terms of funding. David Wilcock replied that it will not make a difference in terms of finances, as long as it addresses the need for the project. David suggested

that the community needs to think about whether the development aspect will be identified as a need in the Purpose and Need statement or not. This will tie in to whether the community finds it appropriate to bring buses and vehicles into the village center, or to focus activity at another location.

- Harry Merrow asked whether the project sponsors will need to show how many people would likely use the facility. David Wilcock replied that this does not need to be identified specifically at the feasibility stage, and when the project advances to NEPA environmental process, the sponsors will need to evaluate the needs and benefits for the project, including estimating usage.
- Tom Dodge asked what environmental aspects of the will be considered in the study, citing the example of the large aquifer beneath Ossipee. David Wilcock replied that environmental impacts will be considered carefully in the NEPA process, but that these aspects should be factored into the Feasibility Study process as well. Tom noted that the Planning Board faces this issue often in considering potential commercial development along Route 16. Blair Folts asked whether this project would need to comply with the Drinking Water Protection Zone rules. David Wilcock replied that this would be a consideration, and noted that FTA would look at whether or not the recommended site can be permitted. Blair stated that an overlay of the Drinking Water Protection Zone map and the potential sites needs to be done during the process.
- Mark McConkey said that the community should avoid constructing a facility that won't be used, like the facility in Nashua that is difficult to reach off the highway. Based on this, Mark identified several factors that should be considered in evaluating potential sites. These include:
 - Proximity to existing or possible restored rail lines
 - Proximity to bus routes
 - Proximity to Route 16 or another major roadway with substantial traffic volumes
 - Pedestrian accessibility, proximity to established trails and paths
 - Proximity to a population center
 - Close to a designated snowmobile corridor

David Wilcock stated that these are good examples of the types of needs and factors that the community may want to include in the Purpose and Need statement and later use for site screening.

Public Comment Period/Open Discussion

David Wilcock concluded the Committee discussion at about 11:50AM and invited members of the public present at the meeting to offer input, and invited any last comments by anyone present. The following is a summary of the key points of discussion:

- Joe Chromy said that environmentally any site in town will have some concerns. He pointed out that there is another airport to consider, the Jetport in Portland, and suggested that access to this be considered. He said that the intersection of Route 16 and Route 25 East is a good possibility to consider. Joe suggested that the land adjacent to the New Hampshire North Coast/Sand and Gravel site should be considered as well.
- Frank Wolfe said he would like to see the traffic counts for all the key locations being considered for the transportation center, since they proved important in the Route 16 Corridor planning process. It was pointed out that these should be available on the NHDOT Website. David Wilcock said that VHB will assemble these and bring them to the next PAC meeting to the extent that they are available.
- Blair Folts asked if any thought has been given to sites near the intersection of Route 16 and Route 28, in proximity of the County offices, nursing home, and jail. David Wilcock replied by highlighting the items that the Project Team is looking for input on. These included:

- Member of the PAC and the public should send any additional input they have on the Purpose and Need statement by July 8th or July 9th, in advance of the next PAC meeting on July 23rd.
- On July 23rd, the group will start identifying possible sites. The goal will be identify a large pool of potential sites, then narrow it down to five or six to evaluate more closely. PAC members and the public can email the Project Team with suggestions for sites by July 23rd in advance of that meeting.
- Greg Tansley of LRPC asked the group if the Meeting space was acceptable. The group consensus was that the room at Town Hall is an acceptable location for upcoming meetings.
- John Swanson said that he had located a newsclipping from 2002 about traffic accidents in the State and in Carroll County. It stated that there had been 13 deaths in Carroll County over the previous year, out of about 120 statewide. He said that this indicated that safety is a big issue on Route 16, particularly for left-turn movements. John also said that he is concerned about the safety impacts of additional buses on Route 16. David Wilcock said that safety would have to be considered in providing access to and from the transportation center.

David Wilcock adjourned the meeting at 12:00PM.

Action Items

The following is a summary of key Action Items that came up during this meeting:

- Minutes from the meeting will be prepared and posted on the project Website when available.
- A list of the members of the Project Advisory Committee along with their contact information will be posted on the project Website as soon as possible.
- The Project Team will gather information about existing conditions, such as traffic volumes, highway accident data, demographics, existing bus service and usage, and environmental aspects such as Drinking Water Protection Zones, over the coming weeks.
- The Project Team will provide Blair Folts with information to contact the MVRTA regarding the Amesbury Transportation Center project.
- Members of the PAC are asked to review the Guidelines and Procedures handout in preparation for discussion/approval at the next PAC meeting.
- Members of the PAC are asked to forward any additional comments or questions they have regarding the Purpose and Need for the project by July 8th or July 9th. Comments can be forwarded through the project email forum or by emailing, writing or calling Greg Tansley at LRPC.
- Members of the PAC are also asked to send any initial suggestions they have on potential sites for the transportation center in advance of the next PAC meeting on July 23rd.

Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

Kick-Off Meeting

June 25, 2004 - 10 AM to 12 PM

Purpose: To initiate the PAC and discuss the Project's Purpose and Need

Agenda

- Introductions
- The Role of the Project Advisory Committee
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Process
- Project Overview
- Public Involvement Plan
- Discussion of Issues/ Needs
- Public Comment Period
- Next Meeting

Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility Study

Project Advisory Committee

Sign-In Sheet

June 25, 2004
10 AM to 12 PM

Name	Agency/Firm	Mailing Address	Email	Phone
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Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility Study

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David Wilcock	VHB			
Kristine Wickham	VHB			
Robert Swierk	VHB			
Mickey Krockmalnic	DHK			
George Katsouris	DHK			