



## Meeting Notes

Attendees: Sign-In Sheet Available  
Upon Request

Date/Time: June 24, 2004 – 7:00PM

Project No.: 09023.00

Place: Ossipee Town Hall

Re: Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility  
Study – Public Meeting #1

Notes taken by: R. Swierk

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Greg Tansley of the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) began the meeting by providing an overview of prior planning efforts and steps leading to the current Feasibility Study. He highlighted the following points:

- One of the efforts leading to this study was the Route 16 Corridor Study, which began in the early 1990s. It was an open, public process that has become a nationally recognized example for such studies. The Route 16 study recommended that several pilot studies be conducted regarding specific portions or aspects of the Route 16 corridor. One conclusion of the Route 16 Corridor Study was that there was a need for a transportation center along the corridor, and that Ossipee would be a good location for that transportation center.
- After the conclusion of the Route 16 Corridor Study, a Federal grant was secured for a Feasibility Study of a transportation center in Ossipee. These funds were designated through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), part of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The LRPC was asked by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to act as contract administrator due to its ongoing relationship with its communities, specifically Ossipee, and LRPC agreed. Earlier this year, LRPC solicited proposals from firms interested in conducting the Feasibility Study through a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Through this competitive process, a team led by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) was selected.

After discussing the steps leading to the current Feasibility Study, Greg briefly ran through the agenda for the meeting. The meeting agenda is attached to these minutes for reference.

Greg then introduced David Wilcock, the Project Manager for the VHB Consultant Team.

### Study Team Presentation

David Wilcock 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. The slides from this presentation will be made available on the project Website.

The following briefly summarizes key points made during the presentation:

- FTA Planning Process: David Wilcock stated that any project of this type that is seeking Federal funds must go through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. In the case of the proposed Ossipee transportation center, if this study finds that a transportation center is feasible in Ossipee, an Environmental Assessment (EA) would likely be prepared to meet NEPA requirements.
- Purpose and Need: In discussing the characteristics of the Purpose and Need statement, which is an important component of the FTA project planning process, David Wilcock pointed out that the Purpose and Need statement must be specific enough to narrow the full range of alternatives to one Preferred Alternative. FTA will be careful when it reviews the study; if the study has not shown that the Preferred Alternatives addresses the Purpose and Need better than any of the other alternatives, FTA will require the project sponsors to go back and study the other alternatives. Fortunately, the Purpose and Need statement is a living document, and can be made more specific as more information becomes available.
- Next Meetings: David Wilcock noted that the dates for the upcoming meetings listed in the slide are tentative; they generally represent the weeks in which the Project Team expects the meetings to be held. The dates of future meetings will be posted on the project Website and announced in newspapers once they are settled.

## Public Discussion on Issues and Needs

After concluding the overview presentation, David Wilcock invited attendees to offer comments and ask questions regarding issues and needs related to the proposed transportation center. David suggested that speakers identify themselves if they are comfortable doing so, so that their names could be added to the meeting record. *[Note: The Project Team has noted the names and affiliations of speakers to the greatest extent possible, but some omissions remain, including cases where speakers did not identify themselves.]*

The following is a summary of the public discussion on issues and needs related to the proposed Ossipee transportation center:

- Ed Patterson, an Ossipee resident, stated that he would vote against the proposed transportation center if it were put up for a vote. He feels that the transportation center would be a waste of taxpayer money, and that there is no need for it. He stated that he believes such a transportation center would be out of character for the town, and that he would like to keep Ossipee as it is.
- David Bowles stated that he was on the Route 16 Corridor Study committee, and that the idea for a transportation center in Ossipee came from the study committee and not from outside parties. He stated that one of the motivations behind the transportation center was the distance between the last rest stop in Massachusetts and the next public rest area in North Conway. He noted that there is a bike path currently being developed in Ossipee, and that park-and-rides are becoming popular in New Hampshire. He stated that a wide spectrum of people was involved in the Route 16 Corridor Study process and in developing its recommendations.
- John Swanson, an Ossipee resident, stated that he was also on the Route 16 Corridor Study committee. He pointed out that the Ossipee area has become a snowmobile destination and that snowmobilers help the local economy. He stated that the area needs to bring in money, and suggested that the transportation center could tie in to the snowmobile base.
- Joe Kenney, a State Senator, wondered if the transportation center as envisioned in today's meeting could include a rest stop. He stated that the availability of public restrooms for travelers is a big issue in the area.
- George Earnshaw, an Ossipee resident who has previously served on the Planning Board, asked if there are other locations in New Hampshire in which transportation centers have been

established. Ken Hazeltine of the NHDOT stated that transportation centers have been created in Concord, Portsmouth and Manchester. It was pointed out that these other transportation centers are primarily bus stations or park-and-ride facilities. Mr. Earnshaw continued by stating that he felt the town already has a couple of known rest stops, places like the Dunkin Donuts near the Routes 16/28 intersection. He said it was hard for him to envision spending close to \$2 million on this kind of facility, but he could see something smaller being created here.

- Nancy Carlson asked if there is state-owned property in Ossipee that may be used for the proposed transportation center. It was requested that any such land be identified. Ms. Carlson then asked who would operate the proposed transportation center – a private bus company, or someone else. David Wilcock stated that this has not been decided yet, and will be one of the topics addressed in this study.
- Dick Ziegler, an Ossipee resident, said that he has seen a number of things done in the past to speed traffic along Route 16 rather than encourage travelers to stop. He asked if evidence exists that proves a transportation center of this type would succeed in attracting people. David Wilcock replied that the Project Team can gather information about other transportation center, but how well it would work in Ossipee is a question to be answered in this study. Ken Hazeltine pointed out that, in addition to transportation uses, such a facility could include other uses that would benefit the community. Mr. Ziegler then asked whether this study is related to the proposed West Ossipee roundabout. David Wilcock replied that it is not.
- An attendee said that he has a copy of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress appropriations bill that included the Ossipee transportation center funding. This bill includes a figure of \$1.6 million dollars for the transportation center. The attendee said that there is also a guarantee of \$300,000 from the State, to make \$1.9 million total. He asked how likely it is that the proposed transportation center will get this funding, given the condition of national and State finances. Ken Hazeltine stated that the transportation center project is in the State's Long-Range Transportation Plan. Later funding, for possible design and construction of the transportation center, would come from the Federal government, with State dollars providing 20% matching funds. The attendee also stated that in his opinion, if the proposed transportation center would be accessible to rail, on a site of at least 30 acres, and in the south end of town, it would be the most practical.
- Jim Curran asked if any of the funding for the proposed transportation center was tied to restoration of the rail line through the town. David Wilcock replied that the funding is not tied to restoration of rail; however, looking 25 to 30 years down the road, it makes sense to consider the possibility of restoring passenger rail service to the area. Jim Curran then asked whether any consideration has been given to potential impacts on existing businesses – for instance, if the proposed facility included a gift shop. David Wilcock replied that no specific site or set of uses has been determined for the proposed transportation center yet, but that consideration will be given to impacts on existing businesses.
- Tom Dodge, a member of the Ossipee Planning Board, said that considering the possibility of rail access to the transportation center is a good thing, because in the coming years oil for motor vehicles will become increasingly scarce. Mr. Dodge asked what role trucks might have in the proposed transportation center, given that tractor-trailers take up a lot of room and might not fit into a smaller passenger facility. David Wilcock replied that whether trucks are included or excluded from the facility will be up to the community. Ken Hazeltine of NHDOT stated that most similar transportation centers do not include a truck stop function, and that New Hampshire law does not permit park-and-ride facilities to be used by tractor-trailers.
- Harry Merrow, a member of the Board of Selectmen, asked whether the FTA funds would pay for the facility if a private tenant were included. David Wilcock replied that if a private tenant were included, the FTA funding could likely be used to construct the shell of the building. The private tenant would then pay the rest of the cost to outfit the interior space.

- Bruce Boutin, a member of the Ossipee Planning Board, stated that the transportation center is promising and should be looked at carefully. He said that the idea of it being a multi-modal facility sounds like a good one. He suggested that the study consider the possibility of including space for taxis because of the distances between destinations in the town. He would also like to see the study consider ways of using the transportation center to create jobs. Mr. Boutin asked if the transportation center were to be found not feasible or not desirable in Ossipee, how the funding would be used. David Wilcock stated that the appropriation is specifically for a transportation center in Ossipee. Therefore, if the funding were not used for a facility in Ossipee, it would be released and reallocated for another use by the FTA, potentially somewhere else in the country.
- A question was raised about whether the creation of a transportation center in Ossipee is definitely going to happen. David Wilcock replied that it is not definitely going to happen. A follow-up question was raised about whether there has been a referendum on the proposed transportation center. Harry Merrow stated that the Board of Selectmen had an article on the warrant for the last town meeting, and the Board chose to table the item because they knew this study was happening. An attendee stated that he would like to see the proposed transportation center put before residents in a referendum, to allow them to vote "yes" or no" on building it. Joe Chromy, a member of the Board of Selectmen, stated that he wanted to clarify how the article came up on the town meeting warrant. Mr. Chromy said that a public hearing was held on a combination of the West Ossipee roundabout and the transportation center, and the combination was defeated in a vote by the general public before the town meeting. A warrant article was then put on the town meeting to discuss the combination, and the warrant article was tabled based on public input at the meeting. After this the LRPC approached the Board of Selectmen and said that they would like to put together another group to study the feasibility of the transportation center. Harry Merrow stated in response that he believed the main objection to the proposals in the past was to the idea of the roundabout and not the transportation center.
- An attendee noted that the Town of Ossipee has been growing quickly recently. He believes that automobiles are the principal mode of transportation and will be for a long time. The attendee said he feels that a rest stop or a park-and-ride could work in Ossipee, and possibly a bus stop, but probably not a full-scale transportation center. He stated that he also feels there should be a town warrant article when this study moves farther along and particularly when a specific site has been identified. The attendee said he has an open mind about a transportation center.
- Emilie Riss, a Madison resident, pointed out that the stretch of Route 16 from Portsmouth to Conway is a long one, and suggested that driver fatigue may be the cause of many accidents in the corridor. Ken Hazeltine replied that this may be the case, but that the transportation center cannot serve as only a rest stop due to the funding source. FTA will want to see a transit-related element for the project to be funded with FTA dollars.
- A question was raised about whether the whole key to this project is the expected ridership at the facility. David Wilcock replied that ridership will need to be looked at, but it will be one factor of many in the evaluation process. Ken Hazeltine pointed out that creating a facility such as this one is part of a building-block process, with ridership being built over time; he also noted that potential ridership needs to be considered over a longer time frame to put it in perspective.
- Marilyn Tillinghast said that she had walked to the meeting, and pointed out that there are a lot of seniors in Ossipee. She said that she would like to see a bus that comes through Ossipee on Route 16, perhaps going to Pease or Logan Airport.
- An attendee stated that Ossipee already has a transportation center, in the form of the private restaurants and gas stations that drivers currently use for restroom breaks. He asked if consideration will be given in the study to any plans NHDOT might have for the stretch of Route

16 through Ossipee – for instance, any long-term plans for a bypass. David Wilcock replied that NHDOT will be a partner in this study and will be represented on the Advisory Committee.

- Harry Merrow stated that it would be a mistake for the community not to explore the possibility of creating a transportation center. He stated that you cannot stop people from coming to Ossipee, and if a transportation center is not created in Ossipee someone else will probably build one somewhere else.
- An attendee stated that the McDonald's should not be considered an acceptable rest stop for the area, and that Ossipee deserves something better. He pointed out that many states have more rest stops than just at state lines, so Route 16 can support one between the Seacoast and Intervale. The attendee also suggested that this study look at a possible extension of the Conway Scenic Railroad into Ossipee to bring in tourism. It was also noted that an active rail line does currently go to Ossipee, on the southern end of town.
- State Senator Joe Kenney said that intermodal connections and rail are important considerations. He stated that NHDOT has been studying the restoration of the inactive rail line through Ossipee, and the report should be released this week. Senator Kenney said that Carroll County generates \$12.5 million in rooms & meals taxes, the third highest county in the State, and snowmobile traffic is an important contributor to this figure. He said that snowmobiles and rails can coexist, at least for a time, but we need to make sure to preserve access for snowmobilers as much as possible.
- Frank Wolfe, Co-Chair of the Route 16 Corridor Advisory Committee, said that he and his wife were both active participants in the Route 16 Committee. During that study process, the committee looked along the Route 16 corridor at possible locations for a transportation center, and recommended Ossipee because of its central location. Within Ossipee, the committee looked at three general locations, and recommended West Ossipee because the traffic counts there were higher than at the other two locations.
- Chuck Depew, a Freedom resident, stated that he rides the Downeaster and C&J Trailways buses fairly often. He said he has been amazed at how successful the C&J service is, and thinks that people, including his kids, would use a similar service from Ossipee if the level of service was good. He pointed out that parking at Logan Airport is expensive and is a hassle, and that the bus gets you there as quickly as by car.
- Emilie Riss asked if private bus operators can be brought into the study process. Ken Hazeltine stated that he is in frequent communication with the two private operators that serve Route 16, Concord Trailways and C&J Trailways, and will continue to talk with them about their plans. He pointed out that these operators look at service from a profit/loss perspective, and the State cannot force them to operate a service if they don't want to. Mr. Hazeltine stated however that the goal is to maintain the current service all the way up to Berlin and also establish new service along Route 16 through Ossipee.
- Further discussion on intercity bus services took place. An attendee stated that an airport service from Ossipee to Logan would be successful, if there was a protected place to store your car in Ossipee. It was also pointed out that the private bus companies sometimes survey passengers about possible new services, and that this might be useful information for the Feasibility Study. David Wilcock stated that he agreed, but that the private operator may or may not be willing to share that information.
- A discussion took place on roadway safety on Route 16. A question was raised about how many buses would operate through the transportation center. David Wilcock replied that this has not yet been determined. Concerns were expressed about roadway safety with the introduction of more buses on Route 16, especially where the road is narrow. Another attendee stated that all primary roads, regardless of location, have standard 12-foot wide lanes. He said that Route 16 in Ossipee is actually wider than some city streets that buses travel on.

- A question was raised about how much information will be available by the next public meeting, and how many of the questions that were raised today will be answered by then. David Wilcock replied that the next public meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004, and that the Project Team will have information gathered in some areas by then, but that more input will be needed before other questions can be answered. At the next meeting, the draft Purpose and Need statement will be presented and possible sites for the transportation center will begin to be discussed. David Wilcock also reminded the attendees that there are a number of ways to stay up-to-date on the study and provide input, including the project Website, the email forum, and letters, emails or calls to LRPC.
- Tom Fraser asked what process will be followed in selecting a site for the transportation center, and what will be done to ensure that the process is fair and open. David Wilcock replied that two things would help ensure a fair process. First, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) will ensure that there are a number of different community interests involved in selecting the evaluation criteria and ranking the sites. Second, documentation of the selection process, including the technical analysis of the sites, the evaluation matrix, and the results of the rankings will be posted on the Website for public review.
- A question was raised about whether roadway improvements will occur on Route 16 with the construction of a transportation center, and if any planned improvements can be fast-tracked. David Wilcock stated that the FTA funding is specifically for the transportation center, not for general Route 16 roadway improvements. Ken Hazeltine said that roadway improvements along Route 16 are included in the State's 10-year roadway improvement plan. Greg Tansley added that the 10-year plan process is starting again this fall, and will include receiving input from all the communities on the priority of improvements.
- Emilie Riss asked who is on the Project Advisory Committee and whether it includes residents of Ossipee. David Wilcock replied that almost the entire committee is made up of Ossipee residents and interest groups. In addition to Ossipee interests, the committee includes two representatives from NHDOT and a LRPC staff member. David Wilcock said that the Project Team will post the names of the PAC members on the project Website. Ms. Riss asked whether conservation groups are represented on the PAC, and Kristine Wickham of VHB replied that Blair Folts of the Green Mountain Conservation Group is on the committee. David Wilcock added that the Ossipee Planning Board is also represented on the PAC.

David Wilcock adjourned the meeting at 9:00PM.

## 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.
- The slides from the presentation will be posted on the project Website as soon as possible.
- A list of the members of the Project Advisory Committee will be posted on the project Website as soon as possible.
- The Project Team will gather information about existing conditions, such as traffic volumes and highway accident data.
- Members of the public are asked to forward any additional comments or questions they have regarding the Purpose and Need for the project through the project email forum or by emailing, writing or calling Greg Tansley at LRPC.

# ***Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility Study***

## **Public Meeting #1**

**June 24, 2004 – 7 PM to 9 PM**

*Purpose: To initiate the public involvement process for project*

### **Agenda**

- Introductions
- Project Team
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Process
- Project Overview
- Issues/ Needs
- Next Meeting