



Meeting Notes

Attendees: Sign-In Sheet Available
Upon Request

Date/Time: August 26, 2004 – 7:00PM

Project No.: 09023.00

Place: Ossipee Town Hall

Re: Ossipee Transportation Center Feasibility
Study – Public Meeting #2

Notes taken by: R. Swierk

Larry Dreihaup of the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) began the meeting by providing an overview of the Feasibility Study and the steps leading up to the study.

Mr. Dreihaup then introduced David Wilcock, the Project Manager for the VHB Consultant Team. Mr. Wilcock briefly ran through the agenda for the meeting and updated the attendees on the progress on the study to date. The meeting agenda is attached to these minutes for reference.

Study Team Presentation

David Wilcock introduced a presentation that covered the following topics:

- Existing Conditions Overview
- Draft Purpose and Need Statement
- Potential Site Evaluation Criteria
- Potential Building Program
- Potential Transportation Center Sites
- Next Meetings

Robert Swierk of VHB gave the presentation on the Existing Conditions Overview; David Wilcock presented the remainder of the topics. The slides from the presentation will be posted on the project website.

In discussing the Potential Building Program, David Wilcock noted that the Study Team has recently been talking with transportation providers (including Concord Trailways, C&J Trailways, and the Conway Scenic Railroad) and community agencies (including Ossipee Concerned Citizens, the Greater Ossipee Area Chamber of Commerce, and Tri-County CAP) to gather their input on potential uses of a Transportation Center in Ossipee. Mr. Wilcock noted that the two examples of buildings and sites provided in the presentation are simply generic examples. The first is an example of a facility that would probably have only a transit use; the second is an example of a facility that could accommodate other functions, such as a community or retail use.

Several questions were asked during the presentation:

- ❑ A question was asked about the findings of the Conway Branch Feasibility Study, which was recently completed by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Ken Hazeltine of NHDOT replied that the study found that restoration of the approximately 20 miles of inactive rail on the Conway Branch is feasible. However, it would cost several million dollars to restore the track to get freight service started, and about \$18 million to upgrade the track to allow passenger service.
- ❑ A question was asked about how many work trips are made by car by Ossipee residents on a daily basis. David Wilcock replied that the presentation gave the number of commuters by car as a percentage of the total population. The Study Team will try to locate an actual number for the next meeting.
- ❑ A question was asked about whether the proposed Transportation Center was needed, and who would pay to operate and maintain it if it were constructed. David Wilcock replied that these topics will be discussed later in the meeting.

Public Discussion

After concluding the presentation, David Wilcock invited attendees to offer comments and ask questions regarding the proposed sites for the Transportation Center, or other topics related to the study.

[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:

- ❑ Tom Dodge, a member of the Ossipee Planning Board, asked if there is any possibility of combining freight and passenger uses in the proposed Transportation Center. David Wilcock replied that this would be inconsistent with the funding source – the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). He also mentioned that in the ongoing study of improvements on the Spaulding Turnpike Corridor between Newington and Dover, the idea of diverting freight from truck to rail has been explored, but the study has found that this is generally not feasible due to the nature the businesses located along the Route 16 corridor.
- ❑ An attendee asked for confirmation that the proposed Transportation Center had to have a transit component and could not be only a highway rest stop. Ken Hazeltine and David Wilcock confirmed that this is the case since the funding is from the FTA and not the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- ❑ Harry Merrow, a member of the Board of Selectmen, stated that to his knowledge Sites 4A and 4B (east of the interchange of NH 16 and NH 25 East) are within the protection area for the town well, that Site 3 (on Old NH 16 near the end of NH 25 East) was under litigation due to a proposed housing development, and Site 1 (the former gravel pit on NH 16 north of Granite Road) is also under litigation regarding reclamation.
- ❑ A question was asked about who would own, operate and maintain the proposed facility. David Wilcock replied that these questions have not been addressed at this time, but the indications are that it is unlikely to be the private transportation providers. Mr. Wilcock pointed out that the FTA will expect to see a local sponsor or advocate for the project who can fulfill these roles, or the funding will not be approved.
- ❑ A question was asked about what input was received from the private bus operators. David Wilcock replied that both Concord Trailways and C&J Trailways had not shown any interest in expanding service in Ossipee even if a Transportation Center were constructed, because the route

does not generate enough revenue to justify the expansion. David Wilcock pointed out that these carriers operate on a for-profit basis. A local, community-type service could potentially be established by a public agency, since such services are generally subsidized to address community needs.

- An attendee remarked there may not be funding for a local, community-type transit service, and noted that similar services in Berlin and Gorham do not cover their operating costs and require subsidies.
- An attendee asked whether it is possible that this study could conclude that a Transportation Center is not feasible now because of limited demand, but could suggest some actions to build demand/support in the short run such as establishing a kiosk at the Ames/Hannaford Plaza that could be served by a local van. David Wilcock replied that the study could conclude something like that.
- Donna Sargent of Ossipee Concerned Citizens stated that there is a need for more transportation options and a Transportation Center in town. She stated that working in a human services agency you see the need every day – for people to get to doctor’s appointments, to get prescriptions, go shopping, and so forth. She also stated that there is funding available for local public transit if it is pursued.
- Marge Webster of Tri-County CAP stated that she agreed that there is a need for more local transportation options.
- Tom Dodge and another attendee asked if there is a possibility of coordinating local community transportation with school bus transportation. Ken Hazeltine said that some communities have tried this, but it is usually a struggle and there are often conflicts between the uses. In addition, Federal guidelines require a strict division of funding for the two uses which makes it more difficult.
- Harry Merrow stated that he agrees that a local, community-type service is needed, but that he would not support the use of town funds to provide it.
- Frank Wolfe, who was involved in the Route 16 Corridor Study, stated the Route 16 study participants and many in the town were expecting the Transportation Center to serve a broader function, including acting as a rest stop for drivers, and suggested for this reason that the study be put on hold while a FHWA grant is pursued. David Wilcock added that this could be an outcome of the current Feasibility Study.
- An attendee stated that there are two needs that have been identified in this meeting: the need for a fixed-route service to a location such as Tri-County CAP, and the need for a door-to-door Dial-a-Ride service such as The Ride in the Boston area.
- Joe Chromy, a member of the Board of Selectmen, pointed out that in the original Congressional appropriations bill that mention this project, the title included the term “Visitor Center” and asked where this concept has gone in the current study. Ken Hazeltine replied that the appropriations bill title did include the term; however, any facility that is built must meet FTA guidelines, which require a transit component.
- Bill Grover, of the Greater Ossipee Area Chamber of Commerce, asked what the split of transit versus other uses is in the Transportation Center in Amesbury, Massachusetts. He also asked whether there are written guidelines for what is allowed and is not allowed in a facility built with FTA funds. George Katsoufis of DHK, a member of the Study Team, replied that in the Amesbury facility, which is currently being designed, transit is the primary use and the senior center is more peripheral. David Wilcock replied that FTA does not have strict guidelines on the percentage of the facility that must be devoted to transit. Bill Grover requested that the Study Team provide a description of the Amesbury facility including size and breakdown of uses, as

well as for another similar facility if possible. David Wilcock stated that the Study Team would provide those materials.

- Ken Hazeltine stated that a rule of thumb regarding FTA funding of facilities such as the proposed Ossipee Transportation Center is that FTA will participate in funding anything that is transit-related. For instance, FTA would pay for a building if it contains a transit use, and would construct the shell of any space for non-transit uses; the non-transit user would need to pay to outfit the interior space. Mr. Hazeltine stated that the transportation facility in Portsmouth is a good example; it is served by a private operator (C&J Trailways) and a non-profit organization is contracted to provide staff for the facility and information about local attractions.
- Bill Grover asked if, hypothetically, a local group were to emerge as a “sponsor” to own, operate, and occupy a portion of the facility, there would be an up-front cost. Ken Hazeltine replied that the facility would have to be owned by a public agency or a group with non-profit status. Any secondary, for-profit tenants would be subject to local taxation. However, there would be no up-front cost for the purchase of the facility.
- Marge Webster stated that there is a need for vision and a plan for growth in the area with respect to transportation services. Ken Hazeltine added that there is a proven path for establishing local, community transit in rural areas and small towns. Traditionally, local transit starts with a focus on human services transportation (e.g., dial-a-ride service for the elderly and disabled) and then grows into a broader system with fixed routes serving the general public.
- Bill Grover asked if it would be possible for the Study Team to provide the group with the FTA guidelines on funding facilities such as the proposed Ossipee Transportation Center. David Wilcock replied that this is possible, but noted that the guidelines are vague. He also noted that FTA is looking favorable these days at creative funding plans, especially those that rely on little or no Federal funding.

George Katsoufis suggested that the group shift the discussion to the potential Transportation Center sites, recognizing that the program for the facility is not yet settled and will be discussed further at future meetings. The following is a summary of this discussion:

- Tom Dodge stated that the Transportation Center should be centrally located in town. David Wilcock asked Mr. Dodge to clarify his point, and Mr. Dodge replied that Site 2 (Ames/Hannaford Plaza) or Site 3 (Old NH 16 and Route 25 East) would be most suitable.
- Bill Grover asked if the Study Team could confirm that the private bus operators had indicated that they aren’t interested in serving other parts of Ossipee, and this limits the set of feasible sites to only those in West Ossipee. David Wilcock confirmed the portion of Mr. Grover’s statement about the private operators, but stated that the second half of his statement is not necessarily the case. If the community were to create a local transit service that operated around the town, the Transportation Center could be located elsewhere.
- A question was asked about whether consideration has been given to transportation for seniors, and to funding sources for senior transportation. Ken Hazeltine said it has been considered, and it is a possibility for Ossipee. Donna Sargent also noted that Ossipee Concerned Citizens has a van that provides rides to seniors, and that there is a Senior Center in town; what is needed is a Transportation Center to tie these together.
- Harry Merrow stated that if one of the criteria for selecting a site is proximity to rail, there are only two feasible sites in the initial set – the two sites in West Ossipee. Mr. Merrow also asked a hypothetical question about if it would be possible for the town to purchase a larger parcel of land and use just a portion of it for the Transportation Center. Ken Hazeltine replied that this would be possible.

- ❑ An attendee stated that he felt the facility should be located in or near Ossipee Center. He suggested that it be located on land at the intersection of Old NH 16 and Pine River Road.
- ❑ Joe Chromy asked if anyone has talked to Huggins Hospital in the study process, since they had been thinking of creating a satellite facility in Ossipee, possibly in the Ames/Hannaford Plaza, about a year ago. David Wilcock replied that the Study Team has not contacted Huggins Hospital yet, but the Team can if it is appropriate. Donna Sargent noted that Huggins Hospital is no longer looking at the Ames/Hannaford site or at creating a satellite facility in Ossipee, as of a week ago.
- ❑ Kristine Wickham of VHB stated that the Study Team plans on contacting the private bus companies again further in the study, once ideas for a site and a program have been narrowed down, to see if their level of interest in serving the facility has changed.
- ❑ David Wilcock stated that it appeared there was a growing consensus among the attendees in favor of locations in and around Center Ossipee, with the exception of removing Site 4A/4B, and asked if the group agreed. There was a general consensus with the approach.
- ❑ Harry Merrow stated that from a practical standpoint, it may not be possible to locate the facility in the village area of Center Ossipee, but that a location close to Center Ossipee and NH 16 would be desirable.
- ❑ Tom Dodge stated that there is another gravel pit, other than the Day pit on Route 16 north of Granite Road, which backs up to the railroad tracks and may be a possibility. David Wilcock added that the Study Team will look into this site.
- ❑ A question was asked about whether facility would primarily serve Ossipee residents, or whether it would serve the wider region. David Wilcock replied that it could serve either audience, or both, and that this will be further investigated as the study progresses.

Seeing that there were no further comments from the public, David Wilcock invited attendees to approach the display boards showing the initial set of sites and suggest any additional sites that they think should be considered. David Wilcock then briefly ran through the schedule of future meetings, which are posted on the project website and will be announced in the newspapers, at Town Hall, and other means. David Wilcock adjourned the formal portion of the meeting at approximately 8:50PM.

Following the conclusion of the formal presentation and public comment period, attendees identified three additional sites that should be considered in the study. These included (1) the State-owned land at the intersection of NH 16 and Pine River Road, (2) the Morse gravel pit on Route 28 east of the railroad tracks, and (3) a parcel across NH 28 from the Ames site, bounded by NH 28, NH 16 and Isaac Buswell Road.

Action Items

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

- ❑ The Study Team will try to determine the number of work trips made by car by Ossipee residents on a daily basis for the next study meeting.
- ❑ The Study Team will provide a description of the proposed Transportation Center in Amesbury, MA as well as another similar facility, if available, to the Project Advisory Committee.
- ❑ The Study Team will provide copies of the relevant FTA guidelines for funding of facilities such as the Ossipee Transportation Center to the Project Advisory Committee.
- ❑ Minutes from the meeting will be prepared and posted on the project website.
- ❑ The slides from the presentation will be posted on the project website.