



NH Railroad Revitalization Association

September 24, 2007

Tonight's meeting was called to order by President Griffin @ 7:00 PM at the Health and Safety Council in Concord.

Attendees:

Name	Town
Peter Griffin	Windham, NH
Tom Noel	New Boston, NH
Bill Remington	Concord, NH
Stephen Piper	Dover, NH
Gary Kerr	Chichester, NH

Name	Town
Gus Sheedy	Derry, NH
Lenny McGee	Manchester, NH
Winthrop Buswell	Loudon, NH
George Katsakiores	Derry, NH
Sam Langley	Boscawen, NH

August Minutes

The August 27 meeting minutes were accepted as written.

Treasurer's Report

Steve Flanders was not present, therefore no treasurer's report was available.

NH Rail Authority

The first meeting of the NH Rail Authority is scheduled for Thursday, September 27 at 3 PM in rooms 305-307 of the Legislative Office Building in Concord. Tom is planning to attend.

Steve Piper reported that the members who have been accepted to represent the three seacoast communities of the Downeaster are Bob Hall (Exeter), Steve Pesci (Durham) and Bruce Woodruff (Dover). All are strong advocates for rail.

NHRA Legislative Committee

Tom submitted his report on the September 6 gathering of the Legislative Committee (attached).

Other Business

Bill has set up a meeting with Executive Councilors Burton and Shay and Representative Ryan to discuss the Boston-Montreal High Speed Rail initiative and other rail issues.

Tom submitted a Coos County Democrat article on Presby Plastics, who has begun taking shipments by rail on the newly renovated branch of the NH Central.

Steve submitted two Union Leader articles (Sept 20, 2007) that are positive with regards to rail. The first highlights the Downeaster and the correspondent's investigative attendance at the most recent Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) operations meeting. The second highlights a report issued by two environmental groups, Environment New Hampshire and Clean Water Action, that emphasizes the need for increased rail and mass transit in NH.

Steve also reported on the Downeaster's NH ridership and the fact that the Exeter station broke another ridership record with 6736 passengers crossing their platform in August. There are 60-70 commuters on the first train heading into Boston each workday at Exeter.

Guest Speaker - Peter Leishman

Peter Leishman has owned and operated the Milford & Bennington Railroad since 1987. The Milford-Bennington RR operates 24 miles of ex-B&M trackage in southern New Hampshire, a portion of which is via trackage rights over Pan-Am Railway and the remainder via long-term lease on the segment now owned by the State of NH. The railroad operates daily trains from a quarry in Bennington to supply aggregates to Granite State Concrete in Milford. The tracks on this corridor are kept to a Class 2 standard, which allows for freight movements up to 25 MPH. User fees paid to the State of NH generally come back as a funding source for rehabilitation and there is one such rehabilitation project coming up for track surfacing.

As a NH Representative [Hillsborough-Dist 06], Peter also serves as a member of the House Finance Committee. He sponsored HB311 to establish a committee to review liability issues for commuter rail operations [which was passed by both the House and Senate and signed by the Governor]. Peter now chairs this committee and they have held two meetings to date to discuss the issues and obstacles of reducing liability caps. Twenty years ago, the NH Supreme Court ruled that liability caps on public entities are not constitutional. Peter submitted a bill last week with language that would seek to limit the liability on public entities to \$75m. It's important to note that this legislation would affect only public agencies, as a similar limit on private corporations could not possibly be limited to railroads.

MBTA sent a deputy council to attend the second meeting and this was very helpful. MBTA would like to operate an extension from Lowell to Manchester themselves, offering a one-seat ride into Boston. Peter reported that it was mutually agreed that any other option would not be attractive enough to generate significant ridership. MBTA maintains a self-retained liability limit of \$7.5m for all of their operations in Massachusetts. MBTA would not sign any contract [to operate service] that did not include some kind of owner negligence clause – something Pan-Am is presently unwilling to entertain.

Peter suggested that the ideal outcome would be to have the State of NH buy the corridor from Pan-Am. The liability issues would go away [pending passage of the bill]. The state could then maintain the infrastructure, contract MBTA to operate the passenger services and provide trackage rights to Pan-Am for freight operations just as it is done in Massachusetts.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM

Next meeting: Monday, October 22, 2007 at 7 PM
Safety & Health Council
163 Manchester Street, Concord

Minutes by: Stephen R. Piper, Secretary