



# NH Railroad Revitalization Association

February 23, 2004

Tonight's meeting was called to order by Peter Griffin at 7:05 PM at the Safety & Health Council of NH in Concord.

## Attendees:

Name	E-Mail	Phone
Peter Griffin	<a href="mailto:peter.griffin@fmr.com">peter.griffin@fmr.com</a>	(603) 898-2940
Stephen R. Piper	<a href="mailto:TwoXSP@aol.com">TwoXSP@aol.com</a>	(603) 692-7025
Thomas Noel		(603) 487-2493
Ken Milender	<a href="mailto:kmilender@MCTTelecom.com">kmilender@MCTTelecom.com</a>	(603) 456-2595
George Katsakiores		(603) 434-9587
Gus Sheedy		(603) 432-3183
John Palmer	<a href="mailto:WNPRR@juno.com">WNPRR@juno.com</a>	(603) 432-5216
Stephen Flanders		(603) 529-7427

- The January minutes were distributed, reviewed and accepted as written.
- Steve Flanders gave the Treasurer's Report stating that the NHRRA currently has a \$1,549.90 account balance.
- President Peter Griffin gave a review of the ongoing court case between the NHDOT and the Motor Transport Association. Oral arguments were heard by the NH Supreme Court on February 11, but no decision is expected right away. According to the Nashua Telegram, the question raised by the State Senators is why New Hampshire is expected to fully pay for track upgrades for the proposed Lowell-Nashua service when all but about ½ mile is in Massachusetts. Tom Noel spoke with Bureau of Rail & Transit Administrator Kit Morgan about the justices' positions and he said the breakdown was 1 for, 1 against and two who were very difficult to read. One justice position of the five has not been filled.
- According to the Phase 1 study of the proposed Boston-Montreal High Speed Rail service, projected ridership is around 700,000 per year. Phase 2 of the study is currently on hold due to New Hampshire's inability to fund the last \$16,000 of their share of the study. State Senator Flanders has introduced a bill to amend SB 518 with language that would "establish a commission to study innovative ways to fund railroad construction" and "authorize the commissioner of transportation to spend money in the special railroad fund for the [Boston-Montreal] feasibility study".  
It is believed the governor does not like task forces and consequently will not appoint anyone from the state to sit on one regarding rail transportation. Originally, a task force was to be made up of the governor along with members from the House, Senate, NHRRA and NHDOT to study funding initiatives. Currently, rail projects around the state are administered through the Bureau of Rail & Transit and funding comes from the railroad tax RSA 82:31. George Katsakiores said many rail projects such as grade crossing reconstructions are in the 10 year

transportation plan. Commissioner Carol Murray utilizes qualifying CMAQ money when projects are multimodal.

- NHRRA officer elections are coming up this year and anyone interested should contact George Katsakiores. Steve Piper is requesting names of those interested in holding elected positions and will follow up with a ballot (if needed) such that the elections can be held on the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. Those allowed to vote must be members in good standing with dues up to date.

#### **Other Business:**

- Carol Murray has been renominated to be the Commissioner of NHDOT for another 4 year term. Her appointment will likely be voted upon on February 25.
- Tom Noel noted that at our last meeting, Carol alluded that the CMAQ funding for the Downeaster was running out. Steve Piper noted that Maine Senator Olympia Snow has fought for and received two more years of CMAQ money to help with the Downeaster's operating costs.
- Peter has been in contact with the Rockingham Planning Commission about the possibility of supplying wood chips by rail to the power plant in Portsmouth. Apparently, talks are already ongoing with Guilford Rail System.
- As a reminder, there will be a meeting on the possible reactivation of the Conway Branch north of Ossipee on March 4. NHDOT currently owns this 15 mile section of the corridor. George was on the fact finding train last fall and mentioned that New Hampshire Northcoast has offered to pay for the costs of the feasibility study.
- Steve Piper asked if it would be possible to fund rail initiatives through the county portion of the property tax. George responded that the county is not a taxing authority. They simply take moneys received locally from the towns and allocate them towards social services such as jails, nursing homes and the Conservation Commission.
- Tom asked what happened to the bill requiring Right Of Way dedication on the I-93 corridor for light rail use. Peter responded that it has been tabled. There is a 2-year study with Massachusetts that has resulted from the Alternatives Analysis phase of the project. Ken asked when this study is expected to be complete and Peter responded that the agreement between NH and MA has not been signed. When it is signed the alternatives analysis will take approximately two years. It was determined that the Lowell-Nashua corridor would not be a reasonable alternative to I-93, but the Manchester-Lawrence corridor would, especially from Salem, NH. The population increase in southern NH due to the widening of I-93 is expected to be about 40,000.
- MBTA is evaluating plans to double track from Lawrence to the Wildcat Branch as part of plans to widen Route 93 from the NH border to Wilmington. These plans were unveiled at a public hearing in December held in Methuen. The MBTA is also constructing a new station in Lawrence.

- According to the Worcester Telegraph newspaper, new stations on the Boston-Worcester corridor are already over capacity, there are not enough trains and there is talk of constructing a third track.
- George met with Carol Murray and Wallace Stickney to ask about a gas tax increase to fund things other than highways and they both said no. Every 1¢ of gas tax returns \$6 million annually.
- Steve Flanders distributed a brochure for an upcoming model railroad show in Hooksett. It is sponsored by the Hooksett Lions Club and will be held Sunday, April 25 from 10 AM to 4 PM at the Cawley Middle School, Rte 27 (Whitehall Road) off of Rte 3 approximately 3 miles north of I-93. For more information contact Wayne Gehris or Bob Schroeder at [hooksettrrshow@aol.com](mailto:hooksettrrshow@aol.com).
- Steve Piper requested that from this point forward, mailed copies of the meeting minutes be sent only to members who are current with their dues. It is not fair to paid members to have others receive the same benefits without paying dues. Members with e-mail will continue to receive electronic distribution as it is free and meeting minutes are posted on the web site for free viewing anyway. As a compromise, the database of all names will be kept intact and one annual summary "NHRRA Year in Review" distribution can be mailed out to all. All present favored this change in policy.

Next meeting: Monday, March 22, 2004 at 7 PM  
 Northfield Freight House  
 5 park Street  
 Tilton, NH

Minutes by: Stephen R. Piper - Secretary