

Route 113 Corridor Committee

October 21, 2009

2:30 – 5:00 PM

Brownfield Town Office

Meeting Notes

Committee Members: Steve Gourley (Brownfield); Dave Knapp, Chair (Fryeburg); Marlene Livonia (Hiram); Ed Pierce (Hiram); Mike Shaw (Standish); Marlee Turner (Brownfield).

Guests: Rep. Ralph Sarty; Dick Norcross (Brownfield); Steve Wood (Baldwin).

Staff: Julia Dawson (SMRPC); Caroline Paras (GPCOG).

I. Welcome and Introductions

A. Meeting Minutes of 08/19/09

This item was tabled pending a quorum.

II. Updates

A. News

Hiram: The Village of East Hiram is deteriorating: the Four Corners store is for sale, the school is closed, the Cotton Store is boarded up.

The Route 160 Bridge is finally under construction.

Brownfield: The Brownfield School, which closed a few years ago, is now doing brisk business as a community center. Rooms are available at the friendly rate of \$6 per hour; the kitchen and gym are available at \$75 per day.

Marlee has moved from Brownfield to Raymond but would still like to attend meetings. It was suggested that the Board of Selectmen appoint Dick Norcross to the Route 113 Corridor Committee.

Fryeburg: The Mountain Division trail is still under design/engineering. There are no funds to bring the trail to Brownfield yet. Brownfield should apply for Transportation Enhancement funding in 2010.

Baldwin: No representative in attendance.

Standish: No representative in attendance.

Legislative Update: Rep. Sarty shared news from Augusta. With the passage of a new bill to make the entire state a Pine Tree Zone, there is a lot of property adjacent to the Mountain Division rail line that could benefit.

Routing the Mountain Division trail next to the rail line between Brownfield and Fryeburg will be a challenge. As the proposed route passes through the Brownfield Bog Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Pequawket Pond, there is very little room to have a trail and rail side by side. Currently the tracks go through the Brownfield WMA but not through the Bog itself. There is no boardwalk through the Bog only a dirt road. Rep. Sarty urged the group to start working now with Judy Camuso at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to get the discussion going.

- B. Gorham East West Study Committee: The new scope of work now mentions connecting to the Portland Transportation Center, where the Mountain Division (and the Downeaster) originates.

III. Scenic Byway

A. Scenic Byway Corridor Advisory Committee

Each town has been tasked with coming up with four candidates to serve on the committee. At least one should be a currently appointed member of the Route 113 Corridor Committee. Suggestions for reps from Brownfield included Woodland Acres, Frost Mountain Yurts, Burnt Meadow Snowmobile Club, and the Stone Mountain Arts Center.

A tangential discussion ensued on fixing up the Hiram Falls rest area: Do we need a Corridor Management Plan first or can we just call up Next Era Energy to see whether the brush can be cleared to restore the scenic view of the dam? When this was discussed last summer, it was felt that the Route 113 Corridor Committee did not yet have any standing to make an official request of Next Era Energy. Another issue was that since the parcel lies in the town of Baldwin, we should get an official “read” from the Selectmen to see if this is something they would support. Steve Wood offered to talk to the Selectmen.

IV. Mountain Division Rail Line

- A. TIGER Grant Application: The MaineDOT has submitted a \$28.5 million application to restore the rail line to Class II track for freight and excursion service. We should find out in November whether the application made the first cut. The Downeaster now has the benefit of a Continuing Resolution that plugs the funding gap for this fiscal year.
- B. Public Outreach: Lou Stack attended a meeting of the Cumberland County delegation, where he sought letters of support for the Mountain Division. Letters from the Committee to each municipality will be drafted and tailored for each community.
- C. Surveys and Traffic Counts: Julia put out a traffic counter during the Fryeburg Fair: at the State Line on Route 302, 12,000-14,000 vehicles were counted. On Route 113 by the airport access road, 4,000-9,000 vehicles were counted. About 400 postcards were also distributed to fair goers to encourage them to participate in a survey on whether they would ride a train and/or a bicycle to the fair. Not enough surveys were completed online to report results.
- D. Maine and New Hampshire Rail Plans: The Mountain Division received a lot of attention at the State Rail Plan forums. It was felt some folks who are not on the Route 113 Committee are articulating a position on the Mountain Division that is

at odds with what the Committee has adopted on the record. It was determined that the Committee should submit its own comments. Caroline will prepare a draft for the next meeting. Some themes that should be included: safety, commuting, importance of transportation alternatives in rural areas.

V. New business

A. Community College in Western Maine?

Examining the feasibility of this idea is one of the strategies in our regional plan. Right now, residents must drive to South Paris or Portland to pursue higher education or go across state lines. Ideas discussed:

- A community college would make a great anchor tenant for the Hiram Elementary School, which is located at the halfway point of the corridor.
- Niche industries for the region include nursing, wood products manufacturing, precision manufacturing, and specialty foods processing.

David will send a letter to Mr. Fitzsimmons to recruit a speaker on this topic for a future meeting.

B. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants

The ten largest cities and the ten largest counties in each state are receiving block grants from the U.S. Department of Energy. The State also has a pot of funds that towns may apply for on an individual or collective basis. Although the funds can be used to develop and market mass transit programs and facilities, most towns and counties have already decided to use these funds only for energy efficiency improvements to buildings. The group agreed that it was too late to influence this funding process to encourage funds to be used for projects related to the Mountain Division. If the TIGER grant is funded, however, that could be a game changer.

C. Next meeting date

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 16 at the Hiram Rail Museum.

D. Agenda items

Agenda items may include the following: plan for improvements to the Hiram Falls Rest Area, Comments for the State Rail Plan, and Community College in Western Maine.