

Route 113 Corridor Committee

Corridor Committee Meeting

April 8, 2009

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Fire Barn, East Hiram

Meeting Notes

Attendance: Steve Estes (Baldwin); Bob Jewett (Standish); Dave Knapp (Fryeburg); Marlene Livonia (Hiram); Edward Pierce (Hiram); Phil Pomerleau (Standish); Glen Reynolds (Baldwin); Bob Rodman (Trainriders Northeast); Richard Rudolph (Standish); Larry Seidl (Baldwin); Mike Shaw (Standish); Lou Stack (Standish); Marlee Turner (Brownfield); Steve Wood (Baldwin).

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

I. Welcome and Introductions

Julia offered thanks to Hiram for the meeting room and refreshments.

A. Minutes of 03/18/09

The following changes were offered for the minutes of 03/18/09:

Page 1: Brownfield is NOT working on a land use plan.

Page 2: Standish has not yet appointed members to the Route 113 Corridor Committee.

Page 3: A passenger rail line must demonstrate that it can support operating costs over 20 years, but it does not have to be self-sustaining (i.e., operate without subsidy).

B. Town News

Brownfield: Hosting a supper fundraiser for the library on Saturday from 5-6:30 PM at the Brownfield School.

Rippling Waters Organic Farm is hosting a fundraiser for a solar greenhouse at Bonney Eagle Middle School on April 14 at 6:00PM.

Representative Mike Shaw gave a legislative update on the State Bond proposal for rails and ports, which is still in development. The current version of the proposal cites the Mountain Division as an important rail corridor and mentions a \$13 million freight track upgrade; however, the projects named for funding on the first page of the proposal do not include the Mountain Division. Mike will seek to clarify.

Baldwin: The Legislative Committee considering the Pine Tree Zone amendment for Baldwin has tabled the proposal in favor of a separate proposal to make all of Cumberland County a Pine Tree Zone.

Hiram: The Town has appointed Marlene, Ed, and Eric to the Route 113 Corridor Committee. The bridge connecting South Hiram to Kezar Falls on Route 160 will be closed for repairs during July and August.

Fryeburg: There is a new Farmer's Market starting in Fryeburg. MaineDOT is proposing work on two bridges that follow the old course of the Saco River and connect to Route 113. The plan to remove one and/or let it deteriorate was met with protest.

C. Gorham-Portland East-West Study

Action: Committee endorsement

The Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) has invited the Route 113 Corridor Committee to appoint a representative to a 40-member study group looking at the feasibility of alternatives, including rail, to relieve traffic congestion in the Portland-Gorham Corridor. Requires participation in eight meetings over 15 months; first meeting is April 30 in Westbrook. Other invitees include the Town of Standish, GrowSmart Maine, and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority. According to Dave Knapp, the MTA said that the "old stuff", e.g., a turnpike spur to Gorham, has not been definitively decided.

Marlee Turner made a motion, seconded by Lou Stack, to nominate Dave Knapp as the Route 113 Corridor's official representative to the Gorham-Portland East-West Study Group. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Appointments and Bylaws to the Route 113 Corridor Committee

Action: Endorsement of governing body needed.

All of the Towns, except Brownfield, have appointed members to the Route 113 Corridor Committee. Whether each Town also passed bylaws at the same time is unknown.

E. Scenic Byway

Action: Final Committee approval of brochure for printing.

Julia passed around the latest mock-up of the Pequawket Trail Scenic Byway brochure. Originally we had asked Florida Power and Light, now Next Era Energy, for \$5,000 to cover the production of the light box and brochure. This proposal was rejected. Julia rewrote the proposal for \$1,000 to promote outdoor recreation during the 2009 season throughout the corridor via the brochure. This request was funded and the check has been received. Bids have been obtained from Cardinal Press in Denmark and Lincoln Press in Sanford. The lowest bid, about \$1,400, will fund 3,000 copies of the brochure.

The following motion, made by Lou and seconded by Larry, was passed unanimously.

- Staff is authorized to obtain bids from the Wright Stuff in Fryeburg and Tower Publishing in Standish. Then staff is authorized to go with the lowest bid and proceed with printing 3,000 copies of the brochure, as long as it is not more than \$1,400.
- The first town or business that comes up with \$400 to sponsor the production of the light box will get their name on the box.

The Town of Standish and the Baldwin Business Association will kick in the extra \$400 for the brochure. The Town of Standish will also seek to raise \$400 for the light box at their next Council meeting.

The Committee also decided to host the second annual clean-up of the Byway on Saturday, May 16. The Baldwin Business Association offered to host a BBQ at Larry's place to thank volunteers.

II. Business Plan for the Mountain Division Rail Line

Action: Committee vote requested based on input from the governing bodies of participating municipalities.

Background: In 2008, HNTB completed a feasibility study on the Mountain Division rail line. Estimates for restoration range from \$20 to \$40 million. The major difference is that a \$20 million restoration would bring the track up to Class 2 standards, reusing the existing 85 lb rail. This upgrade would support freight and possibly excursion use. A \$40 million restoration would bring the track up to Class 3 standards by replacing the 85lb rail with 115 lb rail. This upgrade would support freight and excursion use as well as commuter service up to 60 mph. The line can be rebuilt to one standard or a combination, e.g., Class 3 from Portland to Steep Falls; Class 2 from Steep Falls to Fryeburg. Discussion ensued around the following:

- Are we ahead of the curve? Is a vote premature? Would we not accept \$10 million to rebuild the track if it were offered?
- There is no track now from Westbrook to Windham. This should be rebuilt to Class III standards. But do we need Class III all the way to Fryeburg?
- Do we settle for less? Should we ask for \$49 million for a Class III upgrade, get turned down, and go back and ask for \$20 million for a Class II upgrade?
- Is it worth even trying to run commuter service at 25 mph? Who would ride?
- Are towns ready to step up and pay for a station? The liability insurance alone costs around \$40,000 a month. But then again, towns already pay liability for other properties, such as ballfields. How is this different?
- What is the impetus behind this vote? Gearing up for stimulus funding or demonstrating unity to MaineDOT or both?
- The Rockland Branch has now been rebuilt to Class III standards.
- There are freight users interested in using the line. Maine Renewable Energy is proposing a biomass facility and is interested in shipping wood chips on the line. Don Johnson with Phoenix Welding is the contact.

A motion was made by Dave Knapp to recommend to MaineDOT that the Mountain Division be built to Class III standards at the earliest opportunity. The motion was tabled due to confusion about whether there were enough appointed members at the table and whether members had presented the proposal to their governing bodies for consideration and feedback.

III. New Business

The next meeting will be in Fryeburg on May 13 from 2:30-5PM.