

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Victoria F. Sheehan
Commissioner

William Cass, P.E.
Assistant Commissioner

Bureau of Rail & Transit
April 17, 2019

The Honorable John Cloutier, Chairman
Capital Budget Overview Committee
State House
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Request for Approval of the Department of Transportation, Turnpike Toll Credit Match
Federal funds for Franconia Notch Parkway Transit Feasibility Study

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to the provisions of RSA Chapter 228:12-a, Use of Toll Credits, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) requests the Capital Budget Overview Committee approve the Department's use of Turnpike Toll Credits to meet funding match requirements for a Franconia Notch Parkway Transit Feasibility Study that it anticipates funding with federal funds. The Department, in conjunction with the NH Division of Parks & Recreation (DNCR), is seeking federal funds to examine transit-based solutions for overflow parking on state-managed facilities in the White Mountain National Forest, with an emphasis on trailhead parking located in Franconia Notch State Park (FNSP). The total project costs shall not exceed \$165,000.00 in federal funds and the usage of up to \$41,250.00 in Turnpike Toll Credit match is requested.

EXPLANATION

This feasibility study will examine transit-based solutions for overflow parking on state-managed facilities in the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF), with an emphasis on trailhead parking located in Franconia Notch State Park (FNSP). FNSP provides proximate access to the WMNF via hiking trails to some of the highest-use destinations on the Forest, as well as access to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. In recent years, parking facilities at Lafayette Place Campground and Falling Waters/Old Bridle Path Trailheads (located directly off Interstate 93 in FNSP) have been overwhelmed by surging visitation. As a result, cars have been parking along the shoulders of Interstate 93 (known as the Franconia Notch Parkway) once parking facilities are full, with hundreds of cars parked on the highway on peak visitation weekends.

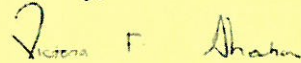
In response, and in order to provide safe and convenient access to popular trailheads, maintain a positive visitor experience, and discourage parking on the Interstate, the Department worked with a larger committee to develop and draft potential solutions. One such solution was the subject feasibility study whose goals are to (a) develop a series of transit service design alternatives for the Franconia Notch Parkway corridor; (b) develop operations plans (or service design models) for each service design alternative; (c) to develop a financial plan detailing the short-term and long-term capital and operating costs, as well as identifying possible funding sources, for the recommended service plan(s); and (d) provide a basis for examining transit service at other high-use trailheads and attractions in White Mountain National Forest where there are similar issues with overflow parking & access on non-federal facilities.

This study will also take into account impacts and benefits including economic development, accessibility and mobility, environmental quality, safety and preservation. The Department will partner with other stakeholders, as necessary, relative to the project delivery and management.

This project is eligible for several categories of programmatic funds. The Department is presently evaluating the available programmatic funds approved in the ten year plan. If there are insufficient funds remaining, then the project will not advance.

Your approval of this resolution is respectfully requested.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria F. Sheehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "V".

Victoria F. Sheehan
Commissioner