

## **Transportation Council**

### **Minutes from the Regular Meeting on Friday, September 20, 2019**

The Transportation Council met on Friday, September 20, 2019 in accordance with NH RSA 238-A.

Council Members Present: Vice Chair, Jim Jalbert, Representative George Sykes, NHDOT Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, DMV-DOS Director Elizabeth Bielecki, Michael Tardiff (NH Assoc. of Regional Planning Commissions), and Heidi Marshall (Transportation Service Industry).

Others in Attendance: Patrick Herlihy (NHDOT), Shelley Winters (NHDOT), Mike Dugas, (NHDOT), Sally Gunn (NHDOT), Kathleen Mulcahey-Hampson (NHDOT), and Kari Thurman, District Director for Congressman Chris Pappas.

Vice Chair Jalbert opened the meeting at 9:05. Mike Dugas of NHDOT provided an overview of the NH Statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan that is being developed with assistance from Alta Planning and Design. He reviewed the key tasks being undertaken, including (1) the assessment of existing conditions - specifically identifying gaps in connectivity for non-motorized users; (2) reviewing existing policies and programs; (3) the development of performance measures (Bicycle Level of Stress) in order to quantify the suitability of the network for bicycles and to be able to evaluate, score and rank potential improvements that can address the gaps in the network; (4) conducting an economic impact analysis; (5) the development of a video regarding biking and walking in New Hampshire; and (6) the preparation of the final report.

Mr. Dugas then provided an overview of the project's public involvement process that includes stakeholder meetings in each regional planning commission area that are both traditional format meetings as well as non-traditional formats such as booths at local farmers markets. He also noted that there have been over 1,000 responses received to date on the online survey and an available mapping tool can be accessed through the project website. He also described how the project consultant had developed a "meeting in a box" to allow the RPCs to conduct additional meetings on their own. Finally, he noted that the plan will describe the role of NHDOT and their partners, and the NHDOT anticipates that the plan will be used by a variety of stakeholders to help plan, construct and maintain a statewide transportation network that encourages and accommodates walking and bicycling. The plan will also include design guidelines.

Discussion then ensued regarding the level of public participation and use of social media to gain additional input into the process. It was noted that there was a broad mix of ages among the participants, and the non-traditional meeting format was working well. It was then further noted that the degree of use of bicycles for daily commutes would likely increase dramatically if shower facilities and other bicycling related facilities are more commonly available, and that it is getting more common as employers seek to attract and retain employees.

Heidi Marshall asked how the plan would address E-Bikes. It was noted that electric bicycles have been added to the state's bicycle definition. E-Bikes are classified as non-motorized, although this is a gray area as interpreted by FHWA.

Patrick Herlihy, NHDOT Director of Aeronautics, Rail and Transit then initiated the discussion of the upcoming New Hampshire Rail Trail Plan development process. The NH Rail Trail Plan was last produced in 2005, and related to the state-owned former rail corridors. Two legislative study committees were formed to determine how NHDOT and the state's bike/ped community could work closely to design, develop and maintain the rail trail network with associated available funding in New Hampshire. In the last legislative session SB185 included \$200,000 in funding to update the Rail Trail Plan. Shelley Winters, Administrator of the NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit then provided an overview of the scope of the plan update, noting that it is included in the text of SB185. The NHDOT plans to engage a consultant to assist in the process.

Ms. Winters provided some background on the types of rail trail agreements that NHDOT have entered into regarding rail trails, including agreements with the NH Bureau of Trails or with municipalities. Municipalities have been asking for better clarification of responsibilities and the clarification of agreements. The NHDOT hopes to assist municipalities to move forward when interested in developing a rail trail. She further noted that there are several hundred miles of potential rail trail available for development and it is planned that the project consultant will assist in the development of a tiered prioritization process to develop certain trails if funding is available in the future, and then described how the results of the plan process can be used to clarify what can and cannot be done on certain areas of former rail corridor throughout the state. The proposed membership of the project stakeholder committee was then reviewed. The next step is to engage the project manager/consultant and develop the stakeholder committee invitations.

Discussion then followed related to the protection status of the rail corridors. The development of rail trails along the corridors was described as an interim use, with the goal of protecting the corridors for potential future uses. Representative Sykes noted that the Legislature has recognized the need to protect the corridors, and further discussed the conflicts between active rail lines and rail trails. Mr. Herlihy described how the plan would include design standards that can address how to accommodate rail with trail, and would also include an economic analysis of rail trails.

The proposed topic of the next meeting is Transportation Network Companies (TNCs).

The meeting adjourned at 10:10am.