

**VERMONT RAIL COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
NATIONAL LIFE BUILDING
6th FLOOR, ACCD
CALVIN COOLIDGE ROOM
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
December 19, 2012**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Searles (Chairman)
Dave Allaire Charlie Moore
Joann Erenhouse Carl Fowler
Chris Andreasson Alan Cook
Arthur Whitman Michele Boomhower
Dave Wulfson

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Cole, VTrans
Dan Delabruere, VTrans
Karen Songhurst, VTrans
Scott Bascom, VTrans
Bob Atchinson, VTrans
Mladen Gagulic, VTrans
Costa Pappis, VTrans
Mike Fessel, VTrans
Kyle Daniels, VTrans
Mark Fitzgerald, VTrans
Akhil Agrawal, VTrans
Stephen Smith, VTrans
Larry Donna, VTrans
Guy Tapper, VTrans
Erin Charbonneau, VTrans
Erik Filkorn, VTrans
Mary Ann Michaels, VRS
Daniel Stein, VHB Engineering
Scott Burbank, VHB Engineering
Chris Parker, VRAN
Matt Levin, Vermonters for a Clean Environment
J. Jeff Munger, Sen. Sander's Office
Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak
Bill Hollister, Amtrak
Wendy Rae Woods, SWRCC
Rob Sikora, FHWA
Jerry Vest, Genesee & Wyoming, Inc.
Ray Goss, Genesee & Wyoming, Inc.
Allison DeMag, RRAV

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Brian Searles called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. Introductions were made.

2. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public at this time.

3. Approval of Minutes

June 27, 2012

MOTION by Carl Fowler, SECOND by David Allaire, to approve the 6/27/12 minutes as written.

DISCUSSION: Carl Fowler requested staff email the minutes and ask for agenda items well in advance of the next meeting.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

4. Rail Personnel Update

Dan Delabruere reviewed the current organizational chart for the Rail Section and introduced new staff members. Mr. Delabruere noted increased efficiencies in the Rail Section are anticipated. Questions on passenger rail issues should be directed to the Program Director (Dan Delabruere). Interacting with the public is part of the job as well.

5. Passenger Rail Topics

Amtrak – Ridership & Revenue Report

Bob Atchinson reported the Vermonter and Ethan Allen Express trains according to the September revenue report ended in the positive compared to the same time the previous year. Ridership was impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

Carl Fowler asked about ridership at the Castleton Station and indoor access to passengers at the Windsor station if the restaurant is closed. Bill Hollister stated in FY12 there were a total of 3,650 riders at Castleton and in FY11 there were 3,144 riders. Windsor station had 962 riders in FY12 and 687 riders in FY11. Randolph had 2004 riders in FY12 and 1897 riders in FY11. To save fuel a flag stop is made at the station if there are no passengers. Amtrak tries to improve use of the station before implementing a flag stop. Kevin Chittenden stated if the restaurant at the Windsor station is closed then there is no access for the public. Mr. Fowler commented in Vermont a covered out-of-the-weather waiting area is expected.

Vergennes Train Station

Dan Delabruere reported the historic train station in Vergennes was not being used and the building was deteriorating so the station was moved and will be combined with a park-and-ride facility. Photographs of the building relocation were shown. The building was constructed in 1849 and is the oldest station in the state. The platform remains in place, but is in poor condition (unsafe). Platforms at the train stops in Charlotte and Shelburne are still in good condition.

Jeff Munger discouraged making Vergennes an Amtrak railroad stop.

Carl Fowler asked if the speed of the Vermonter train is increased with completion of the track project. Bill Hollister stated Amtrak is complying with what is in the service

outcome agreement. Time has been decreased by 27 minutes on both sides. The time will come out of the departure and arrival from St. Albans. Carl Fowler observed minutes of layover time will be gained in consideration of crew changes and this will help with scheduling to Montreal.

6. Freight Rail Topics

Freight Outlook – NECR and VRS

Dave Wulfson highlighted the following relative to freight activity by VRS:

- Freight movement is up in places and down in others.
- VRS continues to add new sidings, grow the existing customer base and locate new customers.
- The company took advantage of the 3-way match program (customer, railroad, state) for new siding construction.
- Some growth is anticipated in 2013.
- VRS handled some trains impacted by Hurricane Sandy and expects the ethanol train to return to the line though the route is competitive.
- Lumber shipments are starting to increase due to reconstruction related to Hurricane Sandy.
- Acquisition by Genesee & Wyoming of Rail America will open opportunities for all railroads and make the system more efficient.
- Repair work by VRS includes 50,000 ties over the entire system and 80 miles of track surfaced. Three and a half miles of rail changed. Stick rail on Green Mountain Railroad and bridge work with the state.
- New York DOT project (Whitehall to Fair Haven) will improve Amtrak speed.
- FEMA work from Tropical Storm Irene is complete.

Genesee & Wyoming, Inc. Report

Jerry Vest and Ray Goss with G&W updated the Rail Council on the acquisition of Rail America and the focus on growth opportunities. Thanks were extended to VTrans for the letter of support for the TIGER IV grant to upgrade the St. Lawrence & Atlantic and open the corridor from Montreal to Auburn, Maine. Statistics on G&W were mentioned including:

- Publically traded company
- Comprised of 66 railroads (will remain as separate entities)
- 2,600 employees
- 9,000 miles of track
- 600 locomotives
- Acquired Rail America (in voted trust until confirmation by Surface Transportation Board which is anticipated by January 4, 2013)
- Leader in safety performance based on employee injury in the entire U.S. rail industry (received multiple prestigious safety awards)
- Safety protocols will be used to improve Rail America's safety record (good results are anticipated in six months)

- Customer satisfaction with G&W exceeds satisfaction with trucking industry and other rail companies (customers note G&W's commitment to safety and professionalism)
- Pro Forma for G&W is two times North American presence and retaining exposure to Asia industrialization via Australian operations
- Has a balanced portfolio in commodities and the ag market place
- There are nine North American regions for increased efficiency (Northeast, Midwest, Ohio Valley, Southern, Central, Mountain West, Pacific, Canada, Rail Link, St. L&A (Canada) and NECR (New England region))
- Regions are still being formulated at the railroad level
- Presence in Vermont will be similar to Rail America (General Manager in St. Albans, fleet and workers will be maintained locally)
- G&W is experienced with Amtrak service
- Heavy track maintenance work will be contracted out

Brian Searles offered Vermont's support in helping G&W with continued growth and success in the state.

Lowell Wind Tower Transport

Wind tower parts were shipped by rail to Island Pond for the Lowell project. Photographs of the shipments were shown.

7. Grant Updates

State Rail Plan Update

Costa Pappis reported bids for update of the state rail plan are under review. Selection will be made by the end of January, 2013.

Track III Update

Michele Boomhower requested the Rail Council receive the unadulterated report from the consultant along with feedback from VTrans for the balance of the study. Costa Pappis noted Bennington wanted the reports from the consultant without prior review by VTrans. Public meetings on the project were held and the comments indicated exhausting all possibility of cost sharing (with New York) before choosing an option. The presentation and information is on the website. Preliminary engineering for the project is complete regardless of the alignment chosen. The NEPA document will be complete once there is a preferred alternative. The design shifts the siding without impact on freight service, but accommodates the platform. The station in Bennington will be used according to the village trustees. Private partnership development in Manchester is important. Bus service in conjunction with the train was mentioned, but not supported. There is a study from the region on shuttle bus service. Regarding cost, there was not provision for welded rail which the state felt was a critical component. The cost is expected to exceed \$90 million. Cost sharing with New York makes the project cost more manageable. Preliminary engineering materials include initial cost estimates. Next steps include revising the Phase II report. Discussions will continue with New York on the preferred alternative and cost sharing. Another option is for Vermont to pay for one train

and New York to pay for one train. An agreement must be in place with New York by October 1, 2013.

Chris Cole noted the intercity bus service needs analysis report is done. Routes include White River Jct. to Springfield, MA, Route 7 from Burlington to Albany, Rutland to White River Jct. (Route 4) and Albany to Manchester, NH (Route 9) so there will be intercity bus service connecting to Albany, but this service is unlikely to impact the train. MegaBus runs from Burlington to Albany through Saratoga or down through White River Jct. to New York City, but the service is express with only one or two stops along the way. Carl Fowler suggested making a Bennington to Albany bus service of sorts by extending the existing service and running bus services at different times to the train to avoid competition between the services.

Wendy Rae Woods, Southwestern Rail Corridor Committee, said conversations with Manchester and the property owner next to the historic rail station in Bennington indicated both parties are interested and will proceed with discussions on private development. The platform is needed and some buildings in the lumber yard must be moved. The state will not get involved in discussion of town level facilities.

There was discussion of the ridership projection for the alternatives and that the numbers are too low. The ridership projection does not support the cost of the work. The proposal is not a reasonable projection of patronage. Costa Pappis confirmed the numbers are in sync with typical ridership at a station in Vermont. Carl Fowler stated existing patronage on the Ethan Allen Express is 80,000 riders per year. Per the report total projected loadings are 78,000. Ethan Allen Express last year had 54,000 loadings. Carl Fowler submitted points for consideration on the Phase II study.

8. Rail Construction Program Updates for SFY2013 Budget

Mladen Gagulic reviewed the following from a printout of state rail projects:

- List of 12 design/build projects completed in 2012
- Tropical Storm Irene related projects completed (three projects) and still under construction (stabilization of embankment WACR Montpelier & Barre)
- Scope defined on 14 regular projects to be bid 2012/13 (315,000 pound capacity for bridges; crossing work for safety)
- List of 12 projects from Tropical Storm Irene and May 2011 Flood to be bid 2012/13
- List of 13 completed preventative maintenance projects on public crossings
- Maps showing 2013 project locations, FEMA project worksheet for Tropical Storm Irene, FEMA project worksheet for May 2011 flooding (21 of 27 large projects from the storms as defined by FEMA are complete)

Michele Boomhower suggested adding cost figures to the project information so the investment can be emphasized.

Jeff Munger asked for an update on Bridge 219. Dan Delabruere said the project grew in scope and the state is now looking at the entire area. The project is not in this year's construction budget.

The GIS tool and FHWA involvement on rail projects were briefly reviewed. Bridge inspection data will be entered into the GIS for future reference. All data is accessible to the GIS mobile mapping tool.

Dave Wulfson stressed the urgency to bring track up to 286,000 pound capacity. Freight traffic is being turned away because the rail is not to capacity Vermont becomes an island with traffic going around all sides. Bridge 219 is the last link to connect OMYA to 286,000 pound rail. Money may have been saved on the project, but more is being lost in business every day. Chris Cole stated by the end of 2013 all bridges will be load rated and what is needed to deal with both from a load rating standpoint and inspection standpoint will be known. Mladen Gagulic assured Bridge 219 will be 286,000 pound capacity at least.

Brian Searles recalled the legislature order two studies on funding relative to the Transportation Fund, including vehicles on highways that do not support the T-Fund by traditional means (i.e. paying gas tax) such as electric cars, and use of the entire transportation system and identifying gaps over the next five years between system functionality and funding sources. The state will need \$250 million per year over five years or \$1 billion. With no new revenue sources the agenda will be impacted acutely by those systems funded mainly by state funds, such as rail. Discussion with the legislature about funding must be held. All transportation systems need to be part of the conversation. Chris Cole added rail is impacted by the T-Fund because state funds support the rail system and there is not a robust federal funding program. Reauthorization of PRIIA (passenger rail) will give a good indication of where the Federal Government stands on rail.

Charlie Moore asked about the state selling rail lines to private rail operators. Brian Searles stated all options are under consideration.

9. Operation Lifesaver

Dan Delabruere reported with traffic speeds increasing throughout the state safety on the track needs to be looked at and Operation Lifesaver has been revamped. Communities, schools, bus drivers, and other parties will be contacted. Annual budget for the program is \$30,000. Send ideas and suggestions to Dan Delabruere.

Ray Goss stated G&W has three to four people in each region assigned to Operation Lifesaver activities - visiting schools, truck drivers, bus drivers, and others. Jerry Vest noted there has been a decline in grade crossing fatalities, but Operation Lifesaver is still needed because there are new drivers all the time. SCORT and AASHTO as well as Map 21 are all up for reauthorization so there is opportunity for Operation Lifesaver.

Karen Songhurst noted at the national level the Operation Lifesaver manager, Joyce Rose, is a champion of rail safety and has connections in the FRA. Safety is on the agenda of PRIIA. Karen Songhurst will co-chair the AASHTO SCORT Committee.

10. Other Business/Next Meeting

Next Meeting: February 27, 2013 at 1 PM.

Agenda Items:

- Legislative Update
- SCORT Update
- Operation Lifesaver Update
- Burlington-Rutland Update

Please forward additional agenda items to Bob Atchinson.

11. Adjournment

MOTION by Dave Wulfson, SECOND by Michele Boomhower, to adjourn the meeting. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.

RScty: M.E.Riordan