

**Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission**  
**Meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**  
February 10, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Van Chesnut, Chair, Advance Transit  
Dick Jones, Vice Chair, Lyme  
Dave Edkins, Charlestown  
Bruce Temple, Claremont  
Ken Daniels, Enfield  
Barbara Brill, CATS  
Richard Lee, New London  
Dennis Pavlicek, Newbury

Dean Eastman, NHDOT  
Bill Watson, NHDOT  
Christina Hall, Lebanon  
Ray Burton, NH Executive Council  
Tony Bergeron, Sunapee  
Nathan Miller, UVLSRPC  
Christine Walker, UVLSRPC

The meeting began at 5:00 PM.

**Review and Approval of January 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes:**

Following introductions, Dick Jones moved that the minutes of January 13<sup>th</sup> be accepted. Richard Lee seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Review of Proposed NHDOT Economic Stimulus Program**

Nate Miller introduced Bill Watson of the NHDOT Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance to provide an overview of the proposed NHDOT Economic Stimulus program. Nate Miller noted that communities have been asking him two primary questions about the program:

- 1) How was the program developed?
- 2) How can communities have input in the development of the program?

Bill Watson started by providing an overview of the Federal Economic Stimulus legislation, noting that \$30 Billion has been allocated nationwide for roads and bridges. Generally speaking, this will translate into a doubling of what the state would normally receive for a typical fiscal year. The State of New Hampshire expects to receive approximately \$140 Million for roads and bridges, \$11 Million for public transit, \$5 Million in the aeronautics program, and an unknown amount for rail infrastructure.

Bill Watson continued, noting that this funding will be coming through existing programs including the Transportation Enhancement program and other surface transportation programs. FTA funding for public transit support will come from existing capital programs, including the Section 5311 program. Additionally, NHDOT anticipates targeting rail related funding to the St. Lawrence/Atlantic and Capital Corridors. Bill Watson noted the timeline for implementation of the stimulus program. From the date the President signs the bill, state agencies will have 90 days to commit, by contract, 50% of the total funding. The remaining 50% of the funding will need to be committed by August 10<sup>th</sup>.

Bill Watson described the process to develop the list of projects identified to receive stimulus funding. NHDOT conducted a complete review of the Ten-Year Plan to identify which projects would be ready to move forward by May 15<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, projects were identified in the State Aid Highway and State Aid Bridge programs. Bill Watson noted that, to encourage communities to move forward with these projects quickly, stimulus funding may cover part (or all) of the local match requirement. Dick Jones asked how agencies, like NHDES, plan to permit these projects in such a tight timeframe. Bill Watson advised that NHDES has committed to processing the permits within the required timeframe.

Ray Burton provided his perspective on the Economic Stimulus program, noting that the State of New Hampshire currently has more than 70,000 unemployed residents. Executive Council District 1 has more than 16,000 unemployed residents. Ray Burton advised that the Governor and Council must not be a stumbling block for approving Economic Stimulus projects, and will make every effort to expedite the approval process and get people back to work. Ray Burton noted that Bud Fitch has been appointed to lead the Governor's Economic Stimulus office. When funding requests come to that office, they are immediately forwarded to the appropriate state agency for consideration. Bill Watson noted that this is an especially important consideration. If the State of New Hampshire does not allocate their Economic Stimulus funding within the designated timeframe, the remaining funds will be reallocated to another state.

Christine Walker asked how communities and the Regional Planning Commission can help NHDOT in this process. Bill Watson advised that Nancy Maville is trying to develop a list of State Aid Bridge and State Aid Highway projects that are ready for construction. Communities that have such projects should contact Nancy as soon as possible. Van Chesnut noted that inter-program funding transfers may help to expedite this process. Bill Watson advised that the proposed Economic Stimulus program is already overburdened with projects, and NHDOT doesn't project any issues with allocating the funding within the specified timeframe. Thus, NHDOT hasn't given serious consideration to inter-program funding transfers.

Van Chesnut asked about the \$300 Million programmed for the Nashua-Lowell passenger rail project, noting that many people are wondering if that project is actually "shovel ready." Bill Watson advised that NHDOT Commissioner Campbell is an avid proponent of passenger rail projects in the state. Pan-Am railways, the company that owns the rail line, will upgrade the existing rail infrastructure and operate the service under a contract with the State of New Hampshire. This funding for this project will come from the Federal Railroad Administration, and will not impact or delay other highway and bridge projects.

Dick Jones noted that small communities often struggle with the paperwork required on small-scale projects. Without local staff, how can small communities move their projects forward? Bill Watson noted that either Regional Planning Commissions or private consultants can assist in completing this work.

Bruce Temple noted that the City of Claremont has a number of projects designed and simply sitting on the shelf waiting for funding. Claremont has projects on Route 11/103 and Charlestown Rd. (Route 112) ready to move forward, and the City of Claremont has already invested \$120,000 in the Charlestown Road project. Bruce Temple continued, noting that many communities in the state have crumbling local infrastructure. The City of Claremont

had hoped that a significant portion of the Economic Stimulus program funding would be directed to municipalities. Bruce noted that Sullivan County, for instance, has only one small paving project in the program. At the same time, NHDES is actively soliciting water and sewer projects. Often the roads that need water and sewer infrastructure upgrades also need pavement rehabilitation, and Bruce recommended that economies of scale could be realized if NHDES and NHDOT exercised better coordination.

Bill Watson noted that NHDOT has a very public process for prioritizing Ten-Year Plan, Transportation Enhancement, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, Scenic Byways, and Safe Routes to School projects. NHDOT has been asked to use the previously developed and documented priorities in each of these programs to develop its Economic Stimulus package. Bill Watson concurred with Bruce Temple's concern that NHDES and NHDOT need to develop better project coordination, and the two agencies will be working together toward that end in the coming months.

### **Review of Ten-Year Transportation Improvement Plan**

Nate Miller gave an overview of NHDOT's requirements for the TAC's upcoming update of regional Ten-Year Plan project priorities, and distributed a draft list of all projects in the region with their associated scores under the recently approved project prioritization criteria. Van Chesnut recommended that projects that have substantially advanced toward construction be removed from consideration, and the TAC concurred. Due to time constraints, further discussion of this agenda item was tabled until the TAC's March meeting.

### **Other Business/Updates**

Because Town Meeting Day falls on the second Tuesday of March, the TAC scheduled their next meeting for March 17<sup>th</sup>, 5:00-6:30 PM at the UVLSRPC offices.

Dick Jones made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:30. Dave Edkins seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.