

In attendance:

Appointer	Member	In Attendance (Y/N)
Tamworth (2)	Jeremy Phillips/TBA	Y/N/A
Madison (2)	Rick Judkins/Tia Gagnon	Y/Y
Ossipee (2)	Kyle Copeland/Chris Elliot	Y/Y
Albany (2)	TBA/TBA	N/A
Recreational/Tourism	Bob Boose	Y
NH Horse Council	Debbie Briscoe	Y
NH Snowmobile Assn (NHSA)	Sean Pinard	Y
NH Off-Highway Vehicle Association (NHOHVA)	Steve Wilkie	Y (teams)
NH Rail Trail Coalition (NHRTC)	Marianne Borowski	Y
Friends of Ossipee Rail Trail (FORT)	Philip Villari	Y
Cotton Valley Rail Trail Coalition (CVRTC)	Bruce Stewart (accompanied by Noreen McDonald)	Y
DPR Planning	Johanna Lyons	Y
DPR Trails Bureau Chief	Craig Rennie (accompanied by Alexis Rudko)	Y
DPR Trails Bureau District Supervisor	Mike Weeks	Y

Agenda

- Welcome & introductions
 - o Several audience members. Not all names were recorded.
 - Executive Councilor Joe Kenney
 - Senator Mark McConkey
 - o 2 people on teams (Steve Wilkie from NHOHVA & Patrick Herlihy for rail bikes)
- Outstanding Appointments: Will elect a committee chair after presentations

Presentation by DNCR

- Purpose of committee: to provide advice to DNCR on future operations and uses for this rail corridor.
 - o DNCR has a DRAFT RFQ and will ask committee for recommendations before posting.
- Review of proposed schedule: orange is before consultant is hired and green is after the consultant is hired.
 - o July meeting is to dig into RFQ = seeking to finalize the RFQ in July to be posted soon after.
 - o Can have field trips before consultant interviews in October, committee members come to July meeting with proposed locations.
 - o Senator McConkey is confused on what's going on with the outlined schedule. Wanted to give the town of Ossipee the right to put the public on the trails immediately. Legislation was to allow town of Ossipee to have access to the trail. Is the town going to have access ahead of that?
 - Since 1468 study committee, the Bureau has been hearing from a lot of user groups. Different users want to do different things on the trail. We are meeting to get public scoping and input to allow for everyone to comment. We also don't have an engineer on DNCR staff, so we need a consultant to assess the structures. This is a planning session like we have done with other state parks to decide as a group/committee on what to do with each section of the trail.
 - Town understands the bigger vision of the entire trail and will cohabitate as best as possible to allow other uses. Town of Ossipee is willing to put money forth to get this going.
 - From the 1468 study, many conversations about the Ossipee section being top priority and it's up to committee to make this happen. The Bureau is impartial to one group or one town over any other.

- This is not an Ossipee project is a state project. Still need to determine (as recommendations for DNCR) for types of users on this (future) trail.
 - In 2004, a feasibility study was performed by DOT for this line and if the committee hires a consultant, they would be creating (or updating) a similar study. DNCR need funds as it will take a lot of engineering for the entire 21 miles. (Note: 2004 study is on website for this committee)
 - When DOT transferred management of this line to DNCR, it did not come with any funding. The Division of State Parks has offered to fund a consultant to provide this study with a direct on the ground assessment to guide this committee's advisement to DNCR. The study can show which areas are a priority to work on first. This assessment will be needed when determining where to use construction funds first.
 - The 2004 study laid out all the cost assessments and this can be updated with a new study.
 - The goal of the assessment (through the RFQ) is to get cost estimates so the committee can prioritize the priority areas for upcoming years. Once these estimates are complete, funding can be sought from various sources for each project.
 - There will be partners (like at this table) with ideas for funding opportunities. At the 1468 study, the committee was brainstorming the cost per mile at 50-70K just to add gravel and that doesn't include removing rail (if the rail even gets removed).
 - The Cotton Valley Rail Trail Club (CVRTC) trail master has been volunteering for 30 years on CVRTC and it took about two decades to build the 12 miles of the Cotton Valley Rail Trail using Recreational Trail Program (RTP) funds for each section. What happened over those two decades is the community became vested through volunteers in the maintenance of the trail, which would not have happened if the trail was built all at once without community involvement. It takes thousands of hours of people to volunteer to write grants as well as maintenance.
 - The Bureau depends on all our volunteers to help our trails. Snowmobile clubs are also applying for grants.
 - Comment from audience: As he has been approached by public and asked how much money he gets to maintain trails, and he explained it's all volunteer as that's normal for NH people to volunteer and asked them to respect the trail.
 - There is currently a lot of enthusiasm with FORT volunteers and the Bureau is working on a maintenance agreement with FORT to allow for basic volunteer work.
 - If it's found that Ossipee (section) can start sooner would DNCR be open to allow that to progress?
 - That can be a topic to talk about next meeting
 - There are two grants in the works: a RTP grant for the CVRTC (which was awarded but waiting for FHWA approval) and a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) *application* through the Lakes Regional Planning Commission which has yet to be awarded.
- Presentation by Trails Bureau: Conway Branch Rail Trail Presentation
 - 21 miles of trail "gifted" to DNCR by DOT. Has 3 distinct sections. With one parcel that is privately owned.
 - This entire corridor is a major snowmobile corridor 19. This is a critical snowmobile corridor connecting various towns. The privately owned segment is a critical piece to maintain. DNCR is working on getting an agreement with private section owner.
 - Section 1: from 28 to rt 16.
 - CVRTC recreates on this corridor since 2002. Under the Cooperative Agreement with DOT.
 - Section 2: through the Ossipee segment within downtown area.
 - Section 3: from Silver Lake to Albany town line.
 - Since this section ends at Albany/Conway line, should we have reps from Conway on this committee?
 - DNCR can invite the Town of Conway to this committee.

- The Conway Scenic RR picks up where we left off. It's where the active line starts. DNCR is working with DOT to obtain an easement through the Conway bypass to skirt around east Conway.
- What's the rough amount of revenue trails gets?
 - The Bureau's budget is dependent on snowmobile and OHRV registrations. Roughly ~4-5 million, but this fluctuates. Most of the money goes to clubs as GIA grants. Our budget has been down a few years from low registrations but were up this past year to regular numbers.
- What happens when you encounter wetlands? What about railbikes going over them and pedestrians need to go around the railbikes?
 - The Bureau has a Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for erosion control. This is co-authored with Dept. of Environmental Services. When this trail gets built, it will need to have proper erosion controls and DES permits as we are not exempt.
 - Will this trail need to be built to railroad standards or to recreational use?
 - It does not need to be built to train standards now that DNCR has management, but it will need to be built for some heavy equipment that may cross it.
 - Can we assume that the state has zero interest in returning to trains?
 - DOT has that right with any of the rail trails to return to train use, but this line is formally abandoned (by FHWA), so that is unlikely.
- Is there any opportunity to break up this committee into 2 sections and look at first seven miles and have another look at whole 21 miles wholistically?
 - Topic for next meeting to form sub-committees.
 - On behalf on Ossipee, there is a lot of support in this town and would be supportive to break out and look at this 7-mile section first. It is understood this entire trail should be developed thoughtfully but there is desire to use this trail now and keep momentum.
 - If the focus of this committee is on the Ossipee section, and it is understood there is an urgency by the town, how will the state develop a plan on what uses will be allowed by since this is a state trail not an Ossipee trail?
 - Could ask the consultant to assess the Ossipee section first.
- Next meeting should have a presentation about the TAP grant application.
 - FORT is waiting to be notified if they were awarded.
- For the 1468 committee: testified on the bill – thought that was the scope of this bill was just for the Ossipee?
- If something is brought up does the committee vote on this?
 - There can be a committee vote if there is mixed opinions, but this is an advisory committee. DNCR may ask for a vote to help DNCR decide.
 - This is why a chair needs to be elected for this committee and the committee can have as many sub-committees as needed. This committee is for members to talk about each section or user group. While members are part of their community, they all touch other communities.
 - What if the committee wants to accelerate this timeline as a committee? (have more meetings per month to speed this up).
 - Hiring the consultant cannot speed up as that is a state contract process.
- This is the Conway branch trail; can the name of this trail be changed?
 - Line was named because of the connection to Conway (via railroad). Typically, DNCR keeps the historic names.
- Town of Ossipee has already committed 25K towards this trail.
 - Is the ~~2.3~~ **Correction: 2.7** miles that the Town of Ossipee is concerned with within the 7-mile section used by rail cars? Yes.
- Where does this end on Albany town line?
 - Line end at west Main Street in Conway.
- Can pedestrians access this from Conway?

- This line isn't accessible from Conway because of the active railroad line (Conway Scenic). At west Main Street in Conway, it is gated in the winter as that's where the railroad parks their trains.
 - It is clear where the Conway Scenic takes over as there are trees down.
 - Brushing and trees down is to keep snowmobiles off that active line.
 - Could Conway have some idea of parking at the end? Can Conway have input if the town wants a connector route for the residential area?
 - Any decision off the state property is handled on the local level. This committee is looking at the state corridor only.
- Election of Chair: Phil Villari self-nominated. Seconded by Chris Elliot. (3rd, 4th).
- Review of DRAFT RFQ
 - A draft of the RFQ was distributed to committee members for review & comment.
 - Comments:
 - Start with Ossipee section
 - Need to check milage numbers: instead of 4.84 start with 7.89. Need to reflect milage of Ossipee section.
 - Parking locations are important. Please consider horse trail and snowmobile trailer parking.
 - (DNCR): Division of Historic Resources (DHR) commented they would like a historic district survey as DOT did not provide one with the transfer. When DNCR does management plans, if a historic resource inventory is completed at the start, it doesn't have to be done project by project as the trail gets built, however, the budget for the RFQ is already tight.
 - If someone qualified would be willing to do this survey would that be accepted?
 - If they are qualified they can. Understand this historic survey is not just an accounting, it's a wholistic narration of corridor and quite involved. DHR has a list of qualified consultants.
 - If the DHR study is included would that make the RTP apps easier?
 - Yes, since that would be used in the RTP application for every project on the line.
 - When corridor was transferred from DOT was the rights to the rails also transferred?
 - Yes, it was agreed that DNCR would obtain the steel with the transfer. If it's decided to remove the rails.
 - The 2004 study included maps (Note: study is on this committee's website)
 - As rail cars would like to use sections (as well as potential rail bikes) please consider rail with trail.
 - Rail car club is not seeking to expand use, only to preserve what they have been historically recreating on (which is from rt 28-rt. 16).
 - Crossings of state highways (like Rt 16) will be very challenging, which is part of the evaluation with the engineer for an appropriate crossing to make it safe.
- Public Comments:
 - What was the plan for parking for trail here? (at the fright house)
 - There has always been a problem with parking in this area. When this bill was presented (for 1468 study) there is a gazebo ~100 yards up ~~that the town will tear down and add additional parking at some point.~~ **Correction: @15 main street, which is adjacent to gazebo, is considered by town for future parking.**
 - Encroachment by Coleman Concrete will need to be addressed.
 - Has the Railroad in Ossipee been invited to this Committee?
 - As they are not on this line; no, but this meeting is public and they can attend if they choose. North coast Railroad did sit on 1468 study committee meeting.

- There is a rail bike interest in this line which seems time sensitive.
 - Two groups of rail bike companies have expressed interest. Joy rails is interested in operating a commercial business for rail bikes on the southern section from this freight house down to 28, which is now DNCR managed property. Not competing for same track as Hank's company.
 - Audience member Hank Walter: has been a local since 2021 with a love of trains. Approached the private landowner of a section of this line (Silver Lake RR) to use private property to stage a commercial business for rail bikes (Rail Ventures LLC, which owns Silver Lake Railriders). Spent his own money for advertising and to buy rail bikes with a lease to private landowner and is seeking use of DNCR property as soon as possible.
 - DNCR is working to secure access through the private property segment by working directly with the landowner.
- An intent of 1468 study was to get the public (for foot traffic) on this section from here (at freight house) north to Rt 16. What can we do to accelerate that portion?
 - A future meeting could present the section in question for DNCR to consider (what do you propose? Are there structures? What uses are you seeking?).
- Next meeting: **Thursday July 10th. Time: 10:00am at Freight House** (same location).
 - Time for August meeting can be decided at July meeting so room can be booked accordingly.
 - The August meeting date may need to move if there is a field trip.
 - July meeting can determine when August date will be and establish sub-committees for various sections.
 - Some agenda topics for July Meeting:
 - Finalize RFQ for consultant
 - FORT to present about the TAP grant they received and any updates.
 - Town of Ossipee has 25K warrant article
 - 1.2 million was requested for TAP grant, but they do not know if that is what they will receive as there has been no announcement for who was funded.
 - Can the committee send a letter forming a strong opinion of support for scoring?
 - TAP grant is competitive as there are more requests than money available. There were ~30 applications this round and DOT feels they will fund about half. The 10-year highway plan is coming as well.
 - Can volunteer hours be used for match? Not for TAP.
 - Subcommittee formation
- Motion to adjourn, seconded. All in favor. At 12:00pm.

Meeting minutes taken by:

Name: Alexis Rudko

Title: Deputy Chief of NH Bureau of Trails

Signature: