

NH Parks & Recreation // Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway & Ski Area

Public Information / Input Meeting

Notes and Follow Up Responses

Friday, February 18, 2022 / Peabody Lodge / 6:00 PM

Total number of attendees was 63; presentation was given by NH Parks & Recreation Director Philip Bryce and Cannon Mountain General Manager John DeVivo.

NH Senators Jeb Bradley and Erin Hennessey were in attendance, as was NH Representative Joyce Weston. Senator Hennessey and Representative Weston are also members of the Cannon Mountain Advisory Commission (CMAC).

A PowerPoint presentation was given which will also be posted on the NH State Parks website.

Questions (Q) were fielded and answered (A) in full or in part by Bryce and DeVivo. Comments (C) were also fielded.

Q – Cost of overhaul versus replacement and duration on each / both?

A – Overhaul estimated at \$15M and 1 summer / 1 winter.

A – Replacement estimated at \$25-30M and 2 summers / 1 winter.

Q – How long would an overhaul last / new tram lifespan?

A – overhaul hits a “reset” button only on those systems overhauled.

A – New tram lifespan of course estimated at 40-80 years, as were Tram I and Tram II.

Q – Where does revenue divide out? Summer / Winter?

A – The Aerial Tram is a primary summer attraction and an asset within the NH Park System, and the revenue rolls up into Cannon’s annual total revenue line.

A – The winter ticket revenue (whether an all-access ticket or a Tram-only ticket) rolls up into Cannon’s annual total revenue line.

Q – Will there be an Environmental Impact Study done, and at what cost?

A – If NH DES requires an EIS, then it’ll be performed as a part of the (TBD project).

Q – Price tag on a Gondola system?

A – Unknown, as Cannon and NH Parks haven’t requested that information from any prospective builder

A – Expected to be higher, as there’s more infrastructure involved, more gondola cabins than Tramway cars, and much more maintenance expected. A gondola system would also require a major overhaul of the base station and summit station to accommodate the cars.

Q – Has there been an exact study on the higher number of people unloading at the summit if the capacity is increased to 100 (from 80)?

A – The capacity increase is 25%, so the increase would be 25%

Q – Can the existing system be sped up and/or can the new system be run faster or more efficiently?

A – Yes on both. The current system loads every 10-15 minutes depending upon demand, and the speed is certainly variable. The new system would offer the same features. Adding capacity to the tram does increase loading time which offsets shorter travel time.

Q – Would a new Tram be built in the existing footprint?

A – We firmly believe so, yes.

Q – Would the existing summit and base building envelopes support a 100-passenger system?

A – We believe so based upon our discussions with Doppelmayr. The 100 passenger Tram is heavier. The towers and bases would have to be replaced and the summit and base station structures would need to be assessed to determine if they could handle the additional weight.

Q – Timeframe of entire project (best case scenario), and can Cannon skiers and riders do anything to help expedite the process?

A – We've been advised that we'd be looking at the 2023/24 season and fiscal years 23/24 as a best-case scenario. ARPA funding must be used by 2026. ARPA funding project requests are being fielded and approved by GOEFFER in the Department of Business & Economic Affairs and the NH Legislative Fiscal Committee.

Q – Projected income?

A – The current Aerial Tramway sees roughly \$1.5M annually in direct (summer) ticket revenue, though prices are increasing and that is expected to increase as a result. This number does not include associated retail or F&B commissions revenue. The total is closer to \$2M annually, and will project higher with a new Aerial Tramway.

Q – Are there any Senators here that we can speak to and/or hear from?

A – Senators Bradley and Hennessey are here, and they actually requested that we hold this meeting.

C – Let's do things right the first time, let's look at the big picture, the Tram is what is so historic about Cannon, we're now rated so highly in the Northeast and nationally, Cannon is an amazing gem of the Northeast, the snowmaking has come miles ahead, and I'm in favor of a new Tram

Q – How can local second homeowners (whose full time residence is outside of NH) get involved and voice their opinion?

A – They may comment at TramComments@dncr.nh.gov between now and March 1st.

Q – What would a Gondola's impact be on the experience and safety?

A – Dramatic increase in capacity; can the summit handle it (trails / infrastructure)?... not currently.

A – Increased downtime expected (during winter and summer months) due to winds and weather.

C – Monetize the Tram iconography versus doing a gondola, not in favor of a gondola.

Q – Are there funds available to also address building issues?

A – Our primary concern is the Tram itself; there is not \$30-40-50M available in funding.

Q – Down time associated with overhaul versus new?

A – Overhaul estimated at 1 summer + 1 winter // Replacement estimated at 2 summers + 1 winter.

C – Prefers 80 passenger versus 100 passenger; more wear and tear and maintenance costs associated with a 100-passenger system, and there's historic value with the 80-passenger system

Q – Is there a way to change interval times to speed up the Tram?

A – Yes, we do that now, we can do 6-7 x per hour instead of 4-5 x per hour depending upon loading times and the adjustable speed. However loading time increases.

Q – Does either of the Senators in attendance have an opinion on this?

A – Senators Bradley and Hennessey both spoke in favor of a new Tram, and of the iconography of having the Tram, and indicated that the new Tram is the way to go in order to get this right and that this is a one-time opportunity to gain (ARPA) funding to do it.

A – Senator Bradley followed up by discussing the positive nature of this spending, and that it certainly fits within the “pandemic related usage to stimulate and foster interest in outdoor recreation,” and must be completed by 25/26 at the latest to both utilize ARPA funding and combat rising building costs.

Q – If it’s a new Tram, then will it be in the same Tram footprint?

A – All indications are that it’ll be in the same footprint as an 80-100 passenger system. The earlier system was a 28-passenger system, so it was a much narrower passage.

Q – How much will Cannon lose if down for two summers?

A – Cannon plans to remain active, potentially by shifting base operations to Peabody Lodge and utilizing the Peabody Quad and/or the Cannonball Quad to access the mid-mtn area and/or summit.

C – The extra weight of a 100-passenger system shouldn’t be a concern because of the use of modern materials and technology

Q – Will this money spent toward the Tram have an adverse impact on the TLC shown toward other lifts?

A – IARPA funding isn’t used to support “regular” capital and maintenance projects. The Tram is the current focus putting the ski area in the position to generate revenue to support other investments.

Q – What’s the explanation of “bid process” versus “sole source?”

A – Most contracts and major purchases go through a state bid process, though occasionally there are contract items that warrant sole source consideration based upon a multitude of factors. All contracts over a certain dollar figure go through the Governor and Executive Council for approval, and all major purchases over a certain dollar figure go through the Division of Purchase & Property.

Q – What does the Governor want?

A – This meeting is an important step in receiving public feedback for those determining its future.

C – Senators Bradley and Hennessey, and Director Bryce, stressed the importance of info / input sessions like this one in the public process, and again stressed the importance for people to comment at TramComments@dncr.nh.gov.

Q – Will there be a heated booth for operators if a new Tram is the result?

A – That’s unknown at this time.

Q – How about a bank of solar panels to offset Tram operating costs?

A – We haven’t put that into consideration at this point but will of course be seeking energy efficiency.

Q – Uphill capacity during the summer, and how would that be impacted by using two lifts instead?

A – The Tram capacity is 80 people, and at max speed and loading we’d run 6-7 trips per hour. The capacity of the Peabody Detachable Quad (at foot traffic speed and downloading speed) would be roughly half of 2400 people per hour. The capacity of the Cannonball Quad (at foot traffic speed and downloading speed) would be roughly a quarter of 1400 people per hour.

Q – Would we keep the yellow and red (mustard and ketchup) color scheme, and what would happen to the retired Tram cars?

A – Yes, we have every desire to maintain that iconic color scheme... “Ketchup and Mustard and we relish the views.” Retired cars would be paid their due respect, but the usage remains to be seen.

C – Ski-Thru idea of a F&B opportunity... “Miso Hungry.”

Q – Handicap accessibility?

A – Yes, the current Tram is accessible to adaptive clientele, and a new Tram would be, as well.

Q – What terrain would be impacted and/or inaccessible during the construction phase?

A – We believe that only “DJ’s Tramline” would be inaccessible.

Q – Summit building revenue opportunity? Dinner tours, etc.?

A – We’ve tried this a few times and haven’t seen nearly as robust a demand as you’d expect, but if and when a new Tram is in place, we expect to try many different revenue generating ideas.

C – There’s a concern over requesting too much ARPA funding (to do a new Tram, a new set of buildings, and expanded infrastructure), lest we be overlooked for “easier” projects that would be done sooner and cost less. Our primary concern is the Tram itself right now. Bryce commented that over the last 15 years the funding has always been geared toward the skiing itself, which has paid dividends in that Cannon has recently been ranked #1 in NH, #8 in the Eastern US, and #14 in the US by the readers of SKI Magazine.

C – The new Tram is estimated at \$25M - \$30M... and comparison was drawn by DeVivo to the “... painting of the Piscataqua River Bridge in Portsmouth, which cost \$28M... the Tram would pay itself off in an estimated 10-15 years, while that bridge won’t, so this is a pretty fair expenditure of federally allocated dollars to support tourism and the enjoyment of the outdoors.”

C – FNSP the best state park in the State, and the Park HQ building doesn’t do it justice, so the Notchview building should be replaced by a fantastic visitors’ center that doubles as Park HQ and gives a great first impression.

A – Our primary focus at Cannon is on the skiing experience. When we got ranked 14 out of 490 ski areas in the US, it was not on the condition of our buildings.

C – All true, but we also don’t want to lose the character of Cannon, which isn’t all about flash and dash.

Result of a simple “show of hands” vote as requested / inquired about by NH District 1 Senator Erin Hennessey *at the end of the meeting* was as follows:

- Gondola – 0
- Overhaul of current Tramway primary systems – 1
- Replace current Aerial Tramway – 62

C – Senator Hennessey thanked the crowd again for its overwhelming support of Cannon, and urged supporters to send support via the comments email address, and to go onto social media (or utilize any other medium) to urge others to show their support.