

DRAFT

Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force

Minutes of July 9, 2008 at the Massachusetts Highway District 5 Office (Taunton) at 4:00 PM

Present:

John Bullard, Vision 2020	Mark Rousseau, Easton
Dr. Susan Peterson, SRPEDD	William Roth, Fairhaven
Robert Overholtzer, OCPC	Byron Holmes, Fall River
Lisa Lowney, for Congressman Barney Frank	Lisa Pacheco, Freetown
Kristina Egan, EOT	Linda Grubb, Lakeville
Bob Mitchell, EOHEd	Chris McGowan, Mansfield
Rachel Bain, EOT	Anna Nalevanko, Middleborough
George Spatcher, Esq., Attleboro Chamber	Mayor Scott Lang, New Bedford
Peter Kortright, Fall River Area Chamber	Jill Maclean, New Bedford
Roy Nascimento, New Bedford Area Chamber	Heather Graf, Norton
Christopher Cooney, Metrosouth Chamber	Thomas Fitzgerald, Somerset
Kerrie Babin, Taunton Area Chamber	Lou Gitto, Stoughton
Maria Gooch-Smith, SEED Corp.	Kevin Shea, Taunton
Jennifer Menard, SouthCoast Devt. Partnership	Steven Oulette, Westport
Richard Shafer, Taunton IDC	Mark Hess, New Bedford
Susan Jennings, UMD Office of Sustainability	Erika Ueberbacher, Raynham
Melinda Ailes, Mass. Small Business Devt. Ctr.	Karen Catrone, Westwood
Edward Lambert, UMD Urban Issues Initiative	Dr. Edgar Adams, RWU
Carolyn Lamarre, TRWA	Nancy Farrell, RVA
Kyla Bennett, New England PEER	Shundreka Givan, FHWA/SRPEDD
Robb Johnson, TNC	Stephen Smith, SRPEDD
Roland Hebert, for SRTA	Greg Guimond, SRPEDD
Leonard Flynn, NRT of Mansfield, Inc.	Lilia Cabral, SRPEDD
Robert Gregory, MHD Dist. 5	Louise Hardiman, SRPEDD
Joe Cohen, NBST	Charles Kilmer, OCPC
Chris Legere, BOSTON GLOBE	Bruce Hughes, OCPC
Sonya Wallgren, BOSTON GLOBE	Karen Winger, OCPC

1. Call to Order

Task Force Chair John Bullard called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM.

2. Minutes of Meeting, June 11, 2008

The minutes were accepted as written.

3. Updates from Kristina Egan, South Coast Rail Manager

Kristina Egan reported that Phase I of the environmental review was completed in April. Phase II will consist of operations modeling, environmental fieldwork and developing a ridership model. Vernal pool fieldwork is completed. A study is being done on the Blandings turtle in the Hockomock Swamp area. The State Environmental Notification Form and the Federal Notice of Intent will be done in October. A scoping meeting will take place as part of their preparation. A joint draft EIR/EIS that includes EOT's preferred alternative will be done in late spring of 2009 with the final EIR/S complete in spring 2010.

Kyla Bennett asked how the different purposes for the state and federal permits would be handled. One purpose includes smart growth. Ms. Egan acknowledged that the federal purpose is narrower and said she was not sure how that would be addressed but she will find an answer to that question.

4. Presentation of Analysis of Station Locations

Ms. Egan said that the Legislature received a briefing on the station identification process this morning. She referred to handouts that included one sheet of stations which are proposed to advance for more analysis. A larger handout shows all identified station locations with over 40 criteria that were evaluated. A third handout lists guiding principles for evaluating station sites. She is seeking Task Force input on the station locations through the end of July. A final decision about stations for each of the alternatives will be made in September as this information is needed for further environmental analysis as well as for modeling and economic analysis.

Ms. Egan reported that SRPEDD identified 55 potential rail stations and 30 bus stations with overlap between the corridor alternatives. Station sites include stations previously identified by the MBTA along the Stoughton route as well as sites identified by the Task Force and by talking with the communities. A review of potential sites was done in consultation with the full project team and SRPEDD.

Steve Smith said that the station locations are key to economic development and urban renewal. He walked through the screening criteria and list of stations. He noted that below Cotley Junction, all station sites are common to all of the rail alternatives. The analysis included 2003 and 2005 aerial photography, MassGIS data and site visits. John Bullard asked the Task Force to provide input on the analysis, asking if the right criteria were used and if the right stations were ruled out or kept in. Ms. Egan said that the maps and materials will be put on the website.

Ms. Bennett pointed out what she believes is an error in the station data and that the downtown Easton station is in a Zone 2. Ms. Egan will verify the information. Mark Rousseau noted that the Roche Bros. site is developed and permitted. Mr. Guimond said there is also land in Stoughton at that site. Mr. Bullard said it is possible that no stations are wanted in a community. Heather Graf noted that Norton will oppose a station at the South Worcester Street location. Robb Johnson asked if the decision to not locate a station in Lakeville or Berkley reflects the will of those towns. He said that having no stations limits growth impacts. He asked about the guiding principle about distance between stations. Mr. Guimond said that a minimum of 5 miles is preferred for

operations. Lou Gitto asked how station locations will be preserved. Mr. Bullard said that each municipality is free to lock up sites if they want a station. Linda Grubb expressed concern about the possible closing of the Lakeville station and asked for a footnote to be added to the list of potential stations to include the current Lakeville station. Lisa Pacheco said that Freetown is excited by the potential for smart growth and TOD. They have learned from the experience of other communities and they want to avoid sprawling development. Roland Hebert asked if it is still possible to build electrified train service, noting that to do so would allow more stations since the train doesn't lose as much speed with each stop. Ms. Egan said this mode saves 15-20 minutes on one alternative and also increases ridership. Mr. Hebert commented that the Taunton mini-golf site has terrible access and wetlands. The Staples Plaza site in Raynham, as a possible bus station, has a substandard interchange. He recommends the current interchange with a diamond one. He also suggested relocating the Burger King rest stops in order to widen the median at Routes 495 and 24 and putting a Park and Ride in the median there as this is the best site for commuter parking.

At the request of Anna Nalevanko, Ms. Egan agreed to meet with Middleborough to hear their ideas for economic development around stations. Charles Kilmer said that West Bridgewater is interested in getting a station and is seeking feasibility money to study the idea. He also asked for a meeting with Ms. Egan. Ms. Egan said she would post an online memo including specifics about the guidance used in evaluating station locations. Peter Kortright asked if the station analysis considers layovers. Ms. Egan said it did not at this point. Mr. Johnson asked if it is possible to provide GIS datalayers online. Nancy Farrell said there are constraints due to the website size. A CD could be made available upon request. Sue Peterson said it was refreshing to see criteria for station locations, as compared with past decisions for the Old Colony line. Mr. Bullard objected to the guiding principle that says there should be a balance of types of stations between the traditional "drive to" stations and "smart stations" to which customers can walk and bike. He said the State should invest its money where people live. He also said there ought not be an equidistant spread of stations. There may be two stations near each other where lots of people are. Ms. Nalevanko commented that high density can be created around stations. Leonard Flynn agreed with Mr. Bullard's second point, saying that one of the Task Force's purposes is to prevent sprawl and more weight should be given to that than the other criteria. Mr. Bullard reminded everyone that comments are due by the end of July. Ms. Egan asked that comments be sent via a hard copy or contain "Comments on Stations" in the subject line of emails.

5. Task Force Composition and Roles

Mr. Bullard noted that the Task Force has been an informal group and the State hears all comments from everyone. He said the mission is not to advocate for a particular route but to increase the understanding of the project impacts on the region and on each community, to identify negative impacts and mitigate them, and to maximize positive impacts. Some communities have designated a representative to the Task Force while others have not. All are welcome, and all voices have had the same weight. Mr. Bullard asked members to consider if the Task Force should be expanded to include a wider area, and if it should change the way it operates to a more formal membership. He said there is a possibility of taking a vote eventually. Ms. Egan said she does not anticipate a need for a formal vote in the future. Her understanding for the Task Force is to help develop a

Smart Growth Corridor Plan, to take a regional view and to give a blessing to the Plan, which should be out in draft form in the Spring. EOT will go back to every community to formally approve the Plan. Having individual members and regional groups bring the Plan back to their boards would help.

Kyla Bennett said the group ought to expand to include municipalities along all four routes with an official invitation to the new communities. She noted that the MEPA Certificate has expired and asked under what authority is the Task Force operating. Ms. Bennett said the Task Force is great and she appreciates the opportunity to speak. The idea of voting disturbs her as she sees the group as an advisory committee. She said a new mission statement would help. Ms. Egan said she sees the focus of the group to be growth management and smart growth and she appreciates the knowledge of the group. The environmental review is a separate process. Mr. Bullard said the area is growing with or without rail. The priority area identification exercise is valuable in making better rail or other public decisions. This process is providing money to help communities do that. Sue Peterson agrees that growth management is the focus of the group. Greenbush and Old Colony are not examples this region wants to follow. This process is to allow communities to prepare, zone for, and plan in advance of a major transportation project, based on broader criteria than in the past.

Referring to a discussion paper on the Task Force Role distributed at the meeting, Carolyn Lamarre objected to the comment that the interests of advocacy groups differ from the cities and towns and that they are working for different ends. She acknowledged that advocacy groups can advise, but the municipality has the responsibility and legal authority to take action. In discussing which cities and towns should participate on the Task Force, Ms. Egan said she is in contact with all communities up to South Station, which will have impacts other than growth. She suggested that the Task Force should include cities and towns that will be impacted by new growth. Ms. Graf suggested that the group be expanded and that it not be a voting body. Mr. Bullard said if communities and organizations are invited to participate, they will come if they think it will have a significant impact on them. He proposed that ideas for additions be forwarded to Steve. Lou Gitto said that if a station or line gets congested, those communities are impacted, which also has an economic development impact. He suggests that the group expand to include the South Shore and Cape Cod since they are impacted by the State's decision to build or not build a new line to remove a bottleneck on the Old Colony line.

Ms. Egan reiterated that a formal vote is not needed, but she would like support for the corridor plan, which is a regional smart growth plan. The draft Plan might have stations in it. EOT's recommended alternative will be announced later in the spring. This project is an opportunity for the region to think about growth. Ms. Nalevanko said it depends on which route is chosen. Ms. Egan said it should not matter. The land use plan should serve the region with or without the project. The Task Force maintains a regional view. Mayor Lang suggested that the Task Force get the authority from the Governor to continue. He said it is a great tool to hear from others and to learn what New Bedford has to do to do its part. If there is no rail, communities still need to figure out how to grow. He suggested that the Task Force continue for this reason. He does not support voting, which politicizes the group. The group is about sharing ideas, listening, getting great

information. Relationships have been built and they should be kept. Mayor Land recommended rewriting the mission of the Task Force, reauthorizing it, and inviting everyone to participate. Mr. Bullard summarized three areas of consensus: 1) there is no reason to vote; 2) be inclusive—if someone is affected, draw them in and let them decide if they want to come; and 3) the group's focus is on growth management, a regional view, PPAs, PDAs, and how they evolve into a corridor plan. Beyond that, the focus is to get the municipalities to implement the plan and get funding to implement it.

6. Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is Wednesday, September 10, 2008 at a place to be determined.

8. Adjournment

Chairman Bullard adjourned the meeting at 6:13 PM.