

DRAFT

Minutes of September 11, 2007 at the Raynham Dog Park at 4:00 PM

Present:

John Bullard, Vision 2020
Kristina Egan, South Coast Rail Project Mgr.
Dr. Susan Peterson, SRPEDD
Robert Overholtzer, OCPC
Kyla Bennett, PEER
Susan Jennings, UMass Dartmouth
Priscilla Chapman, Mass Audubon
Lisa Lowney, for Congressman Barney Frank
Lisa Nelson, for Congressman Jim McGovern
Mary Wasylyk, for Senator Marc Pacheco
Melissa Costa, for Rep. John F. Quinn
Tobias M. Paulo, for Rep. Robert M. Koczera
David Farmer, Jacobs, Edwards & Kelcey
Jennifer Carlino, Norton Conservation
Bill Kenney
Kevin Martinelli, New Bedford
James Martinelli, Fall River
Sue Weinstein, CNC News
Pat Ciaramella, OCPC
Stephen Smith, SRPEDD
Greg Guimond, SRPEDD
Louise Daley, SRPEDD

Mayor Kevin Dumas, Attleboro
Marc Rousseau, Easton
James Hartnett, Fall River
Lisa Pacheco, Freetown
Linda Grubb, Lakeville
Leonard Flynn, Mansfield
Heather Graf, Norton
Martin Newfield, Raynham
Tom Fitzgerald, Somerset
Lou Gitto, Stoughton
Kevin Shea, Taunton
Rachel Bain, EOT
Richard McCarthy, Raynham
George Dent, Mansfield
Jim Purcell, Norton
Steve Jacobs
Erin Conroy, Boston Globe
Marc Draisen, MAPC
Karen Winger, OCPC
Roland Hebert, SRPEDD
Nancy Durfee, SRPEDD

1. Call to Order

Chairman John Bullard called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM.

2. Acceptance of Minutes

It was unanimously voted to accept the minutes of June 20, 2007.

6. Review of Activities Since Last Task Force Meeting

Attendees of the *Greenbush Tour* on July 19, 2007 gave their observations. Dr. Susan Peterson noted how the rail line travels underground for long distances to avoid high traffic and historic areas. She was also surprised by the range of environmental areas on which the line borders and how the project dealt with them in permitting. Dick Shafer observed many people waving, who seemed excited by the train coming through. He was disappointed that some towns had elected to have their station outside of Town limits, rather than at the old station location in the Town center, where the station could have been important for economic development. Kyla Bennett was shocked at how close the line came to some houses. Regarding vernal pools, she said that the plan looks good, but the impacts on the ACEC will not be known for five years; monitoring will be crucial.

She was disappointed that for some environments, such as vernal pools, the mitigation was done acre for acre. Function and value of some environments warrant greater mitigation. She also noted that the turtle crossings were already being filled with ballast. Richard McCarthy observed how the Greenbush line goes under some roads with similar volumes to Route 138, where a rail tunnel is proposed. He noted that even at Weymouth Landing, there was a rail stop that had fostered economic development in the area around a stop as the rail went under a highway. He saw that the rails are welded together now to baffle the noise and learned that the MBTA has come back with rubber cushions under the tracks where there was still noise impacts. He thought there were some houses that were so close to the rail that they should have been taken. Bob Overholtzer noted there were not a lot of areas for smart growth around stops. Kristina Egan said there was no land use planning associated with the Greenbush line. John Bullard said these comments and other observations are important in planning the South Coast Rail. Members agreed there is more to be learned over time from Greenbush.

Nancy Durfee reported that 30-40 people attended an *Environmental Listening Session* on July 25, 2007. Residents and environmental groups such as TRWA, The Sierra Club and Audubon spoke with Kristina Egan and interested parties walked the Hockomock Swamp. Ms. Egan said she wanted to hear about major concerns prior to completing the scope for environmental review. She will post notes from the session on www.southcoastrail.com and distribute them through the Task Force. She said this session was the first of many.

At this point, Ms. Egan asked for and was granted the Chair's permission to switch the agenda order.

4. Review of Strategic Environmental Permitting Plan, Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Review for South Coast Rail

Since receiving the SEPP in early August, Ms. Egan reported that EOT has moved forward in finalizing the scope on the environmental review for the project. This review will be done using the highway methodology of the Army Corps of Engineers (COE), through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The federal review process will be coordinated with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review process. The Patrick Administration has decided to take a fresh look at all alternatives in order to satisfy all regulatory agencies. There will be an opportunity for all agencies and the public to participate in a civic engagement process throughout the environmental review.

Ms. Egan outlined two phases for the review. Phase I is a Tier I Alternatives Analysis to be done with an Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG). This phase should be done in approximately five months, with the Group meeting every four weeks. An exchange of information will take place between the ICG and participants in the civic engagement process, who will also meet every four weeks in between the ICG meetings. Phase II is the refined environmental review of the chosen alternative and it will start in March. The goal is to do the review in the right way, but quickly. Kyla Bennett reminded Ms. Egan

to look into the June 2000 rider on the Bond bill that has language requiring that the Stoughton route be chosen.

Leonard Flynn expressed concern over the time and money already invested in the 2002 EIR. He asked that the EIR be the starting point and that only what is necessary get updated. Ms. Egan acknowledged the level of frustration in the region. She stated that the federal government requires this type of review and that EOT will only update what is necessary, as identified in the SEPP. David Farmer asked if VHB would be doing the environmental review in Phase II. Ms. Egan said that scope is not finalized at all. Priscilla Chapman asked if the ICG meetings would be open to the public. Ms. Egan did not know yet. She said that all minutes will be posted and the consultant for Phase I will be at all ICG and public meetings.

Going back to the third part of Agenda Item #3, Ms. Egan discussed the *Request for Responses Issued for the South Coast Rail Economic Development and Land Use Corridor Plan*. Ms. Egan said that the train is seen as just one catalyst for reaching State and local goals. The corridor plan is an opportunity to be very intentional about where to guide development, where to protect, and how to develop a new model for financing a large public works project. It could even be a national model for smart growth. To accomplish these goals requires robust civic engagement in order to reach agreement on a vision for what the region becomes. The RFP for the Corridor Plan went out at the end of July and responses are due by September 17. The RFP can be seen online at the State's Procurement site, accessible via a link from www.southcoastrail.com. Ms. Egan stated that she is planning 18 growth impact and environmental meetings per year on the corridor plan, starting in October.

Ms. Egan stated that the Task Force has a key role in Task 3 of the Corridor Plan, identifying economic development and land use opportunities. This task identifies the economic development goals, environmental preservation priorities and land use goals for the overall south coast region and in individual communities. An important part of the Corridor Plan is to identify and quantify the potential to capture revenue generated by the South Coast Rail project in order to pay for the project. Ms. Egan said the State is unable to pay for this project with existing revenues. The 18-month process for the corridor plan will run parallel to the 5-month alternatives analysis. Ms. Bennett asked why the process should run concurrently if the outcome may be No Build or a non-rail alternative. Ms. Egan responded that this is a smart growth corridor study, but it has a transportation goal. The State wants zoning and land use plans in place before construction begins. This planning is good for creating a smart growth corridor, with or without rail. Ms. Egan referred to a handout that defines the corridor as the yellow and light gray communities depicted on a map and noted that the study corridor goes beyond the rail corridor.

John Bullard suggested that the corridor plan is a way to connect the goals of open space and growth planning in the region, with or without a train. He predicted that this project would be the largest open space protection project in 15 years. Roland Hebert noted that there are other options for the State to pay for this project, other than capturing local

revenues generated. Mr. Bullard added that Representative Cabral's bill ought to be considered.

Mayor Kevin Dumas asked if TOD must be accepted by every community prior to this project. Ms. Egan said that TOD would not work at every station. Some surface parking areas are needed. The State is contracting with SRPEDD to identify Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) and Priority Development Areas (PDAs), and to help get zoning ready—to prepare as much and as quickly as we can. Mayor Dumas remarked that it took four years to pass a TOD at the Attleboro commuter rail station. Ms. Egan commented that the State is trying to help towns to make these changes ahead of the project with yet another contract that will take place at the same time as the corridor plan.

5. Work Program

Greg Guimond outlined a new work program as part of a contract between SRPEDD and EOT to develop an implementation plan for desired land use changes in the corridor. Mr. Guimond explained that the light gray and yellow communities in the map handout are a part of all the contracts already discussed. SRPEDD will work with all of these communities as part of this Task Force and in providing data to the consultant for the environmental review and corridor plan efforts. Some communities have been added since the original Task Force formed to reflect the additional rail alternatives under consideration. The yellow communities on the map are those cities and towns within SRPEDD that are most directly affected by the project. SRPEDD will give 50 hours of technical assistance to the yellow communities for zoning changes, growth management tools, streamlined permitting, public processes and mapping. Requests will go through Ms. Egan. SRPEDD plans to work from the south up, since the preferred alternative is not yet known. Mr. Guimond noted that Taunton has passed a TOD bylaw and Freetown and Raynham are working on them. Dr. Edgar Adams' students at Roger Williams University are developing land use concepts for the Davol Street site in Fall River this fall.

Steve Smith referred to a handout that lists criteria for Targeted Protection Areas and Targeted Investment Areas that was adopted by Vision 2020 in 2002. He suggested that this method or a similar one be applied in identifying PPAs and PDAs in the corridor.

Susan Peterson questioned why Rochester is not shown as a yellow community on the map, signifying extra technical assistance. Ms. Bennett noted the omission of Stoughton and Easton and said that Easton is one of the most impacted towns. Ms. Egan said the two-year contract is evolving and more will be known after the Tier I alternatives analysis. For now, it makes sense to focus on the southern communities. More may be added or subtracted. Ms. Egan said that no community that will be impacted would be neglected. Marc Draisen said there are ways to provide services to other communities. He noted that it does make sense to pay the most attention to the southern part of the region, where the impacts will be most intense. He added that the economic development pressures are highest in those communities closest to Boston. Ms. Egan said that the issue of which communities get planning services will be revisited. Ms. Peterson asked

about the process to receive extra technical assistance. Ms. Egan suggested that she send a letter. No additional resources will be committed, however, before the work is started.

Lou Gitto asked about the Wareham commuter rail project. Ms. Egan said that is a separate project. A draft feasibility study was released earlier this year. It is not part of the TIP. The Administration's priority is the South Coast Rail project.

7. Future Meetings

The next scheduled meeting is October 17 at a location to be determined. Ms. Egan said that the first ICG meeting is scheduled before October 17 and there may be a public meeting the first week of October too. She would like the Task Force's input on the Corridor and Land Use Plan, in particular. She will aim to have the selected consultant present for the October 17 meeting. Subsequent meetings are scheduled for November 14, December 12 and January 16. Heather Graf asked members to consider an earlier meeting time, from 3-5:00PM. Mr. Bullard will bring it up for discussion at the next meeting.

8. Adjourn

Mr. Bullard adjourned the meeting at 6:00 PM.