

Upper Valley Intermodal Facility  
Project Advisory Committee Meeting Notes  
May 12, 2010

Present: Steve Schneider, Peter Gregory, Christine Walker(UVLSRPC), Paul Boucher Nate Miller (UVLSRPC), Lynn Bohi, Matt Osborn, Phil Dechert, Nicole Cormen, Gabe Zoerheide (TMA), Dan Brand, David Saladino (RSG), Rick Dymment, Joanna Whitcomb, David Palmer, Roberta Berner, Aaron Brown (TMA), Brett Kiser (RSG), Scott Knowland, and Chris Haidari

(1) Public Comments

Scott Knowland, a resident of Summer Street, said he is concerned about the site, not the type of facility. He asked if all sites were weighted equally. For example, he asked whether the criteria consider if a site was near a neighborhood or school. Dave Saladino responded that the Carter Country Club, for example, lost points for its proximity to a neighborhood.

(2) Welcome and Introductions

Members of the PAC and public introduced themselves.

(3) Summary of Developments

Christine Walker explained the course of the project and how public feedback has been included. Public comments focusing on the screening criteria have been most helpful. At the City's request, recent meetings with City of Lebanon staff examined the screening criteria. City staff came up with a series of questions, and the project consultants answered those questions. They met a second time to go over the scoring of the five final sites. City staff scored the sites themselves with the help of consultants. The scores were similar and the rankings identical to what the project consultants found. Christine Walker explained the course of the project and how public feedback has been included.

A neighborhood forum regarding the Densmore site was held on April 30 and May 1 at the request of public input. The first day of the event had the public provide input and describe issues and concerns. The following morning, project consultants created sketches and concepts based on public feedback. Day two of the forum provided the public with an opportunity to view the concepts that attempted to address the concerns and provide feedback.

The neighborhood forum came up with a design concept that removed the intercity component of the project in order to address concerns. The concept demonstrated how the Hanover Street bridge could accommodate bus, pedestrian, and emergency vehicle traffic only – no single-occupancy vehicles would impact the neighborhoods on either side of I-89. The covered bridge walkway would completely segregate pedestrians from the bus and emergency vehicles and replace the current chain link fence walkway. A small parking lot could be created with access off I-89 only and have access to the transfer facility only via a pedestrian walkway. No vehicles would be able to get from the parking lot to the bus transfer location. Lynn Bohi added that CATV is airing a recording of the forum on its station.

Public comments at the forum included: concern over increased traffic, ped-bike safety, proximity to schools, the regional context (e.g., does it fit into the current scale), public funding going to a private business, whether Saturday morning's design addressed fundamental site issues, and the concept of creating a network of smaller-scale facilities around the region instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.

The Lebanon City Council recently passed a motion to request the RPC and DOT to extend the project and rescope the project and continue to look at other sites around the region. Mayor George Tuttle wrote jointly to DOT and UVLSRPC on behalf of the Council requesting the RPC to seek more time for the project. The PAC received a copy of this letter.

Christine Walker had spoken with DOT and Congressman Hodes' office to discuss next steps. While supportive of the idea of continued study, a number of things must happen from DOT's perspective to continue. The intercity piece needed to continue to be the focus of any study, there would be match associated with any additional funding received that would need to come from the communities and there needed to be support from the City of Lebanon. After reviewing the Mayor's letter there did not appear to be support for the project from the City. DOT said that the original scope needed to be completed as outlined before any further study would be conducted.

#### (4) Next Steps

Steve Schneider asked if everyone understood what has happened thus far— meetings with City staff, the forum, and the city council's actions. Gabe Zoerheide emphasized that the public comments received at the charrette were negative. Nicole Cormen asked Christine to elaborate on DOT's reaction to the extension request. Christine said that Kit Morgan at DOT did not see support for moving this project to the next stages. She added that there is a great opportunity to examine regional needs, but the funding for the intermodal project was intended to address specific issues and that the municipalities may want to discuss other funding mechanisms to create a more holistic approach to regional transportation systems, as the scope of this project doesn't appear to meet the needs expressed. Cormen added that on the May 5<sup>th</sup> council meeting she asked for the vote on the additional time. She assisted drafting the aforementioned letter, but the Mayor made the final edits. She said cooperation with the City is unlikely if Densmore stays on the table.

Dan Brand asked Christine to clarify that the state will not provide the local match to pair with the remaining funds from the appropriation. \$252,000 is still available at DOT, but it's not clear how to use that, and it would require the communities to provide local match to access it. She reiterated that a project examining a multitude of sites addressing various needs – and how that fits into a larger regional transportation plan – is beyond the scope of this project.

Peter Gregory commended staff on good analysis and extensive public outreach. He said that the project has examined a regional issue – and has been true to the original scope of finding a site. He added that the letter from the Mayor appeared to address only Lebanon concerns when the scope is to find a site within the region. He said that it is up to DOT to decide what to do with the intermodal, but it's exciting to have so many people involved in transportation issues.

Gabe said that although many comments about the site have been negative, the public has shown clear support for creating more commuting options in the region. He asked Christine if it's possible to use remaining funds for a project to examine multiple sites. Christine said as previously stated that DOT has requested that the scope be completed as outlined. The results will be delivered with a preferred alternative, and all the public feedback, input, and suggestions will be part of the report to DOT. The concept of creating smaller scale facilities around the region as part of a transportation network will be relayed as well. To change the intercity piece of the project, DOT would have to go back to the Federal Transit Administration to change the scope of services.

Dan Brand said he would support Peter's idea of doing more regional assessments of transportation strategies.

Chris Haidari, a member of the Lebanon School Board speaking on her own behalf, said that public comments have focused on safety and deterioration of quality of life. The City of Lebanon has had to devote a lot of resources for the benefit of the rest of the Upper Valley. She said that the facility does not add to the beauty, safety, or livability of Lebanon.

Nicole Cormen added that the same negative comments would have resulted as long as the site was in a residential neighborhood. She asked if the PAC is prepared to recommend a site that works by the numbers, but is otherwise a political fantasy.

Steve Schneider said that it will likely submit the best available data and ensure that the public comments and reactions are included.

Lynn Bohi said that she was struck most by the suggestion to put the intermodal on the periphery. She said that this is as much of a tax issue as anything – land outside the town is less expensive and it's preferable to keep more valuable, in-town land on the tax rolls.

A representative of the owner of the Densmore site suggested educating the city and public officials about the negative results of a no-build scenario and engaging the public in designing something that will work.

Gabe asked if there is an alternative to suggesting the Densmore and providing the caveat – for example, to adjust the contract and spend time to find an agreeable site.

Paul Boucher agreed that the PAC should fulfill its contract and let DOT handle the rest of the project.

Phil Dechert added that he has worked with RSG before, come up with a politically unfavorable plan, and then implemented the plan with great success and made the community happy.

Gabe asked if it's possible to do a public meeting on the top-ranked Hartford site. Lynn Bohi warned that she had previously informed the PAC that the leadership in Hartford was not interested in hosting a facility that would remove land from the tax rolls and did not think that holding that meeting was a good idea.

Dan Brand added that only one site passed the cost-benefit analysis. He said that the state has previously discussed the Hanover Street bridge as a way to mitigate congestion at Exit 18. And some sort of bridge project could happen regardless of the Intermodal facility.

**Motion:** Dan Brand motioned that the PAC finish the study under its current scope and come up with a product that satisfies the contract, ensuring that both public input and all that has been learned through this process are part of the full report. Paul Boucher seconded.

Steve Schneider asked for discussion of the motion. Peter Gregory stated that it will be important to include all public comment in the report. Joanna Whitcomb said there's enough concern about submitting this site that perhaps a minority report could be written and submitted by those who oppose suggesting the site. Christine said that she thought that was a good idea and would help. Peter Gregory commented that staff will be burdened with significant time if that plan is added to the report.

Lynn Bohi compared this idea to how VT legislators can move a bill to a floor under the heading "not recommended."

Steve added that Kit Morgan has been present at many of the meetings and is certainly aware of the political reality.

Nicole warned that she is concerned about recommending the site to DOT and will not support the motion.

Gabe asked if the no-build can be recommended, and several PAC members said that the PAC is charged with recommending a site.

Dave Saladino added that the PAC will see the report before it is submitted to DOT.

Nicole asked why the PAC couldn't recommend suggestions that came out of the forum (e.g. peripheral park-and-rides). Christine stated that those will certainly be part of the report but it cannot recommend the site based on those concepts, because they have not been vetted or validated and the same concept applied to other sites could potentially work and that it removes the intercity component of the project – all of which make it not consistent with the scope of services

David Palmer said that he sees a loss of excitement among some earlier participant transportation providers – Greyhound, e.g. – in this project, but that local transit providers are still interested in figuring out how to link their routes under a smaller configuration even if the large vision that excited us all in the beginning is being diluted.

Steve Schneider called for a vote on the motion. **Motioned passed 11 to 1.**

Steve asked for additional comments.

Gabe Zoerheide reminded the group that another public meeting will be held in June. He suggested that this meeting could occur in the context of a PAC meeting rather than holding a large public event.

The Densmore owner's representative said nobody has spoken about opportunities, such as mixed use, that could mitigate the City's concerns about increased expenses to the City. These activities could be in other places on the property given the Intermodal facility would take up only a small portion of the property. Other mitigations could also occur. He asked that the report acknowledge this opportunity.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:45.**