WRC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 12, 2011
WRC Brattleboro

The Chair called the meeting to order at ~4:35 PM.

ATTENDANCE
Jack Cunningham  Susan Clark (via phone)  Kendall Gifford (staff)
Fred Bullock   Jodi French (Chair)    Matt Mann (staff)
Tim Cullehen   Alice Maes    Dora Bouboulis
Christopher Parker  Mary Habig    Paul Cameron

Regrets: Lew Sorenson

MINUTES APPROVAL
Motion to approve the November 14 meeting minutes as written passed without dissent.

BUSINESS

Hinsdale Bridge Follow up
Discussion postponed to January meeting

VT Energy and Climate Action Network (VECAN) Conference recap
Paul Cameron and Matt Mann provided a general recap of the sessions. Paul briefly discussed the 2011 Brattleboro Way2Go Challenge.

Railroad Infrastructure Improvements.
Chris Parker of VT Rail Action Network provided a summary with additional input from Sue Clark. Topics covered included:

- Knowledge Corridor. Massachusetts grant improves and creates infrastructure in the I-91 corridor. Connecticut grant will speed rail to 110 mph.
- DMUs: There appears to be money on the table but no supplier at affordable cost.
- TIGER3 Grant. This is mostly for freight
- Infrastructure improvements in VT could take 27 minutes off the trip the length of the state.

Other topics discussed during the presentation and interaction with the committee included:

- Primary competition for passenger rail in Vermont is not air or bus, but private passenger cars. Trains must match or beat driving time in order to compete.
- Fixing slow zones is more effective at reducing time than is increasing top speeds.
• Typically, adding trains to a route will increase ridership by as much as double — until you reach corridor capacity, which we have clearly not.
• Sue Clark reported that VTrans upgrades and expansion is focused right now on connections to Canada. Border security is the primary challenge at this point, but she was relatively optimistic. Montreal connection could come in as little as three years.
• Chris pointed out that the two keys for increasing rider-ship are reducing trip time and improving marketing. These call for distinctly different skill sets. In Vermont we are getting better at marketing, but there is room for further improvement.
• Chris pointed out that currently trains are spending the night in Springfield and traveling to White River in time to make the run south. If they went up to White River instead, they could start the south run from there and pick up in Springfield at the current time, thereby increasing travel options without increasing equipment.

Asked what the Committee could do to help, Chris responded: continue to be involved and spread information. In particular, keep both politicians and VTrans staff informed that there is need, and return value, from increasing frequency of passenger rail trips.

Next meeting: January 9th

Meeting Adjourned at 6:01