

**THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**



**GEORGE N. CAMPBELL, JR.
COMMISSIONER**

RECEIVED

**JEFF BRILLHART, P.E.
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER**

July 27, 2011

AUG - 1 2011

Atkinson Board of Selectmen
21 Academy Avenue
Atkinson, NH 03811

SELECTMENS OFFICE

Dear Atkinson Board of Selectmen:

In response to your July 11, 2011 letter, I would like to provide you with an update on the proposed commuter rail extension project to Plaistow.

Although the extension of Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) rail service to Plaistow has been discussed for many years, the project is still in the very early stages of the process. As we progress with our analysis, there will be ample opportunity for the residents of Atkinson and the public to express their opinions on the project and to become informed about the proposed commuter rail extension.

As you are aware, the Town of Plaistow was awarded funding through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) for the study phase of this project. If implemented, this project will have a regional impact and negotiations will involve state agencies in Massachusetts including the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the MBTA. In addition, New Hampshire statute requires the Department obtain the approval of the NH General Court prior to expending any state or federal funds for the capital or operational costs of any passenger rail project. Also, all agreements and contracts for this project will require the approval of the Governor's Executive Council. It was for these reasons that NHDOT and the Town of Plaistow through discussions determined that the Department was better positioned to manage this project moving forward.

The first step toward that end was the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department and the Town of Plaistow. This MOU acknowledges the Department's responsibility to manage the project, execute a grant agreement with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and select a consultant to carry out a study assessing the cost and potential impacts of this project. This MOU has been submitted to the Governor and Executive Council for approval.

The Department will next define the scope of work to be undertaken for approval by the FTA and employ a firm in accordance with our consultant selection process to prepare an alternative analysis study. The scope is currently being drafted and will include, among other tasks, a thorough review of possible sites for a layover facility and a public participation component. This review will also encompass environmental impacts and the concerns expressed by Atkinson residents about the Westville Homes site.

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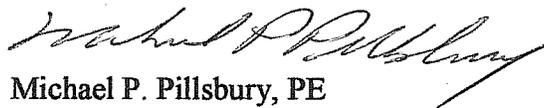
Atkinson Board of Selectmen
July 27, 2011
Page -2-

In addition to the preliminary engineering and a review of environmental impacts, the alternative analysis study will also include estimated costs for the project and projected ridership figures. At this time, funding has only been approved for the study. Additional funding and work on any site cannot move forward until this review (which will include public involvement) is completed and has been accepted by the FTA.

The Department's Administrator for the Bureau of Rail and Transit met with the Atkinson Commuter Rail Investigatory Committee in February 2011 and our staff has also attended other meetings with Atkinson residents and the Board of Selectmen. I assure you that this level of consultation will continue and increase as the project moves forward.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information on this project, the steps taken to date, or the process moving forward. The Department appreciates the concerns of the Town of Atkinson related to this project and we look forward to working together as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Michael P. Pillsbury, PE
Deputy Commissioner

cc: Governor John Lynch
U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator Kelly Ayotte
Congressman Charlie Bass
Congressman Frank Guinta
Executive Councilor Chris Sununu
State Senator Chuck Morse
State Representative Norm Major
State Representative Ken Weyler
State Representative James Garrity
State Representative Deborah DeSimone
Peter Butler, Deputy Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration
Cliff Sinnott, Executive Director, Rockingham Planning Commission
Daniel Poliquin, Chair, Plaistow Board of Selectmen
Michelle Curran, Vice Chair, Plaistow Board of Selectmen
Robert Gray, Plaistow Board of Selectmen
Charles Blinn, Jr., Plaistow Board of Selectmen
John Sherman, Plaistow Board of Selectmen
Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager, Town of Plaistow
Leigh Komornick, Town Planner, Town of Plaistow

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