

**Exeter Local Transportation Committee**

**Wheelwright Room of Town Office Building**

**May 04, 2015**

Chairman Don Woodward convened the meeting at 4:12 pm in the Wheelwright Room of the Town Office building. Members present: Sherry Anne Mastromarino, BOS representative Julie Gilman, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock. Also present COAST Executive Director Rad Nichols. Selectboard representative Anne Surman was not present.

1. Review of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter motor vehicle registration data, ridership data

Mr. Woodward reported there is an increase in the motor vehicle registration and anticipates it will be higher than in previous years; already seeing a 26% increase in town funds.

2. New Coastalbus once-a week local route

Since the last public hearing, Mr. Rad Nichols and the managerial staff of COAST met with Exeter's Town Manager and Newmarket's Administrator. COAST leaders were asked to prepare a proposal for service between Exeter, Stratham and Newmarket using those funds the towns are currently providing,

Each Town has different goals: Newmarket riders need it for shopping and medical services and Exeter needs to maintain a connection to a regional transportation network through Wildcat Transit to access schooling opportunities. And both communities wish to provide services for those with disabilities.

Right now they are prioritizing a connection with Route 5 of the Wildcat bus in downtown Newmarket; a regional network connection.

Basically COAST is servicing 4 groups; commuters, students, shoppers and transportation to medical appointments. This last group tends to be more in the daytime. The challenge is to meet all the needs, do so effectively and in a way that is useable. Working with the \$55,000 funding between the towns, the ridership is not there to support a 5-day a week schedule. With a 3-day a week service, more runs could be offered during the day.

Mr. Woodward asked if it possible to offer a 5 day a week early AM service with a late return run and then offer the 3 day a week service midday; a blended approach.

Mr. Nichols stated they are also looking at ways to reduce costs; one being to house the vehicle locally depending where the start/end point is.

Mr. Nichols added that Wildcat is going through assessment too and that may lead to runs being cut; having conversations on their intent so informed decisions can be made. But it

is safe to say by the end of June, Route 7 as it stands today will be ended and what results will have a different look.

COAST leaders heard what residents had to say in Exeter and Newmarket at the public hearings and are committed to seeing what can be done to preserve a level of meaningful service; was impressed with the number of residents who came out to the public meetings.

But the route in Exeter may need to be streamlined. Ms. Von Aulock stated she wanted it to be expanded to include a stop on Epping Road in the vicinity of the Meeting Place housing complex. Mr. Nichols replied it can be looked at in the future, but if expanded the time factor is altered for those making a connection to Wildcat.

There is funding from the Great Bay Community College student activity fee which allows any GB student to ride a \$1.50 COAST ride free; does not apply to Wildcat. You can still access the college with two COAST routes for free and then change to the trolley for a fee.

In talking funding, Mr. Nichols agreed if COAST received \$15,000 more dollars it could do the “blended program”; 5 days a week for commuters, 3 days for shopping and medical appointments. Ms. von Aulock tried to do the math to make up the needed amount for this level of service; increase in car registrations, maybe revisiting Stratham. Mr. Nichols does not feel there is the possibility of them renewing Statham’s contribution of \$5000.00. Ms. von Aulock thought with increased awareness of the service there might be some interest in participating; Ms. Gilman was not that optimistic.

Mr. Nichols was pleased with the involvement of the Town administrators in Exeter and Newmarket and their goal to see the service retained in some fashion. He did say he has been invited to come and speak to the Economic Development Commission May 19, 2015 meeting.

3. Complete Street 2016 Town (annual maintenance budget & future Capital Improvement Plans)

Mr. Woodward stated the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) has started to look at the Complete Street concept (the design and operation of to enable safe access for all) and how Exeter handles other means of transportation, sidewalks, and bike paths and signals as examples.

Ms. Gilman stated the BOS is aware of the program but hasn’t been discussed yet at their meetings; Mr. Clement is researching more of the details at this time. Ms. von Aulock felt the RPC is very well versed in the program and can provide examples of what other NH communities are doing. The Planning Department is excited about the program and Public Works is also aware of the program.

Ms. Gilman and other board members did receive Ms. von Aulock’s email on the program but have not decided what level they want to have it be. Ms. von Aulock stated

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she has seen it appear in site and sub regs and can even be a requirement of a development approval.

Returning to Mr. Woodward's question on funding for other transportation items, he referenced DPW's submitting line items in their budget for culverts, sidewalks, but often doesn't get funded (except paving). Could they not do something for bike paths or crosswalks? Ms. von Aulock explained you don't often fund a policy but a project could receive funding; could fund reviewing design details for improvements to perhaps road widths, cross walks etc.

Mr. Woodward will wait for further discussion until we hear from Mr. Clement on the Complete Street program and his findings.

Ms. von Aulock asked Mr. Nichols what is next for COAST. He replied if changes are to happen by the end of June, they must be presented at May 27 COAST Board Meeting. In the interim, he will be meeting with Mr. Dean and Mr. Fournier (Newmarket) to narrow down what is to be presented at that May 27 meeting, For any type of decision from Exeter, there would be the need to make a decision at the May 18 BOS meeting; the alternatives (for a vote) should be spelled out for any decision. Ms. Gilman agreed to place COAST on their May 18<sup>th</sup> agenda.

With no further business meeting was adjourned at 5:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ginny Raub

Recording secretary