



CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION, ENERGY & UTILITIES COMMITTEE

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Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee of the City Council

Thursday, January 16, 2020 6:00 PM

Riverside Apartments – Community Room
669 Riverside Avenue – Burlington, VT

–MINUTES–

Meeting begins at 6:09PM
Introductions to Committee
Introduction to Interpreters and welcome anyone who needs their service
Introduction around the room

1. Agenda

JH moved to adopt
FP Seconds
Unanimous Aye

2. Minutes of 12/17/2019

FP motion to approve
JH seconds
Unanimous Aye

3. Public Forum

MT prompts public forum at 6:13PM

Cindi Turcot: Gardener Supply Representative

Not against the idea of the train. Here to talk about infrastructure around the area. This area (surrounding proposed McNeil overnighting location) should be a location where people want to go and the current condition of the road and tracks are dangerous for pedestrians to come down to the Interval. Those in charge of the train tracks and the City need to take care of this access road to encourage access to this area.

Alex Friend:

Excited to have an area to overnight the train that is not downtown on the waterfront. Avid train user. Looking forward to train being at the newly proposed location (McNeil).

Intervale representative:

Excited Amtrak is coming. Excited about the McNeil location. If we are investing in the Interval area then we need to think about access to the Interval and this road. If this location is chosen, Intervale road should be enhanced. This could be done as a coordinated effort with the train project and existing DPW study of this area. This could be a cost saving opportunity.

Close public forum at 6:18

4. Amtrak Servicing and Storage & Related Rail Improvements

a. VTrans presenting

VTrans is excited Amtrak will be back.

VTrans presentation – see attached.

QUESTIONS DURING PRESENTATION

Public Comment about timing: when will the train be coming?

VTrans – In the morning between 7 and 8AM. Come back between 6:30 PM-9 PM this is what we know today based on current negotiations.

Public Comment: how long will the train idle when it comes in at night?

VTrans: It will be here for 10 minutes on and idling. Then it will go off while they service.

PC: Hot start, how do we know this will happen?

VTrans: This is a requirement from VTrans to have the train come.

PC: Sound is this modeled or tested?

VTrans: Modeled

MT: We did a site visit to Rutland and did our own tests. Used phone decibel tester. We also witnessed servicing. When passengers aren't at capacity the train cars are not filled and they condense so only necessary cars are filled and need to be serviced. This was two cars in Rutland when we observed. We saw similar decibel readings that are modeled here. The shutdown time of 20 minutes was accurate. This was 85 decibels 10-20 ft away from the train.

PC: We will have better engines than those observed in Rutland

VTrans: Newer locomotives is the goal but hot start locomotives will be here definitely.

PC: What is hot start?

VTrans: Hot start is the technology and equipment added to the locomotive that allows you to plug the train in and keep it warm so it is warm when you start it the next day. This technology keeps the engine flowing and warm. It is required when the train comes to Burlington. People in Rutland said they don't even notice the train when it runs all night (without hot start). We don't want it to run all night here regardless.

VTrans: This will be hard wired to Burlington electric. In initial review shore power can come here.

PC: hot start is not in Rutland?

VTrans: No

PC: Will the train be fueled here?

VTrans: No it will be fueled in NY

PC: Regarding tracks and wood chip tracks

VTrans: Amtrak will switch off the main line so this shouldn't be effected as well as the timing. Wood Chip train follows timing with Vermonter. Wood Chip is back in St Albany by 4 o'clock. Timing is different. Amtrak will not come across the tracks on Intervale Rd

PC: What tier is the locomotive?

VTrans: Unsure. Could be 2 but that is a guess. It is the new one. There is currently tier 2 in Rutland. New ones would be tier 4.

MT: This air quality was modeled. Is there any way to bring a train here and actually test this?

VTrans: We could calculate this in Rutland. Amtrak can't run on tracks they don't know. If they were to come here there would be months so engineers could analyze the tracks and understand all of the features. It can be done but it would take months and show similar results to if it were run in Rutland or as we have it modeled.

VHB: Topography and wind and other things are going on here. This program is acceptable and represents actual situation. This doesn't mean no pollution just means it is within the national standards.

PC: Issues with vibrations and existing track considered?

VT: New siding and assuming some track upgrades between this site and Main St Landing sight. This will be minimal. New ties, etc. Passenger trains have different criteria than freight. There won't be passengers on the train from Main St Landing to this location so it should be fine.

Questions about Matrix:

FP: Have you had an opportunity to reach out to the owners of the railroad from college to McNeil?

VT: Yes we have talked to New England Central Rail Road. There are necessary updates such as ties and other small upgrades. Resurfacing. Nothing major. Adding a siding is needed.

FP: Have you thought about total cost?

VT: Yes this was part of the evaluation. We have a rough number.

FP: Is it a prohibitive cost?

VT: McNeil scored a 2 on the cost matrix

PC: In the study it said Union Station was 300k and McNeil was 1.5 million. Did you say there will be a new track? How is this cost so different?

VTrans: Operationally VT railway is saying second track needs to be built to have Amtrak regardless of where the train overnights. We know it will stop at Union Station. The second siding needs to go in regardless. It is not in this cost estimate because we need to know where the track goes when we design this platform. We looked at the design but we haven't added the construction cost. Potential for VT RR to put in this track at their own cost.

MT: Do we not know the cost comparison between Union Station and McNeil

VTrans: VRS will pay for Union Station siding. Not in our budget because we don't think it will be something we put in although it is necessary.

MT: VRS will pay for second track down on the waterfront.

VTrans: Bike path will be moved through another City project.

MT: The addition of the second track makes the bike path moving necessary. The second track will go in regardless of where the train is stored. We don't own where the bike path is currently. We have an easement with them to have the bike path there and we must move it if they provide notice which they have. Voters were in favor of this move. We need to figure out this cost and other complications including ferry operations.

VTrans: 1.5 is cost estimate for McNeil.

PC: is there an ongoing cost to access rail?

VTrans: Yes this is Amtrak pays NECRR but we pay Amtrak. This is a host RR charge. Amtrak will add wear and tear. This is paid across the country by all Amtrak trains. This would be seen and paid for by state fund that come from the transportation fund. This is currently done in Rutland.

PC: Is Burlington the last stop

VT: For this project yes. Long range there is talk about Essex or St Albans.

PC: This area is already congested

VT: This project is just for Burlington. We do have long range to bring it further north but that is separate project.

FP: What time would it leave Burlington?

VT: Between 7 and 8 AM

FP: So it would leave NY when?

VT: It is about an 8 hr trip to Burlington.

PC: Faire?

VTrans: Unsure. This is 4-5 steps from where the current project is.

QUESTIONS AFTER PRESENTATION

PC: Pollution and noise is only modeled. What about wood chip train?

VTrans: We did look at this. We believe this a tier 2 which we modeled worse tier. We haven't done any actual measurements only modeling. We modeled the worst case scenario and went above and beyond what we thought noise would be and it still wasn't bad. Low impact.

PC: Duration? This will be on top of current woodchip operations.

VTrans: It will only be 10 minutes of engine noise at night. Worst case it will be 40 minutes in the morning in below 20 weather. No change in McNeil operations. We did not study McNeil's current noise level.

PC: For the modeling is it averages or peaks and valleys?

VHB: Unsure but this was done by a specialist. We can get you this answer.

PC: The Air Force did an average over an entire year so they did not consider how loud it is in the extremes (takeoff and landing only happen for short periods of time but they are extremely loud).

FP: Their modeling was consistent with what we observed in Rutland.

PC: Noise often travels up. Was this considered?

VHB: This was considered for all sites.

FP: 1.5 for McNeil sight. VTrans is willing to pay for this?

VTrans: No decision yet. We don't know who will cover this and we are working on this.

FP: VT RR has agreed to pay for second track?

VTrans: We think they will based on the letter they sent saying they are moving forward with this. We are not sure of this. We want Amtrak to come back and VTRR is the host RR. If they have criteria to keep their operations working then we need to comply. If their criteria is a second track we need to make it happen and figure out who pays. They know their daily operations and what is necessary.

FP: It has been made clear we need to pay for the bike path. This is expensive.

VTrans: That is not news. It was in the original agreement.

FP: The timing is news and City is now scrambling.

VTrans: We have been talking to Amtrak since 2016.

PC: The other 5 sites are all within one point (in the matrix) of each other. Is there any chance to put it in the VT Rail yard at the edge?

VTrans: VTRR said no and they control their operations. As of now this is not possible.

PC: Is bike path moved because Amtrak is coming?

VTrans: It's a domino. Amtrak is coming making VTRR need a second rail making bike path need to moved. Amtrak also needs to block conflict points with bike path. Overnighting location and the second track are not related. Second track will be there regardless of where train is stored.

PC: Second track is not needed if Amtrak is not stored there overnight because it won't be there to conflict. They should pay if it's not there. Wasn't there also a city referendum to move track a few years ago. There was a desire to do this regardless

VTrans: I disagree, VRS said they need this.

PC: For three of the options, they all need a second track added?

VTrans: CM there is already a second track but VRS already uses this and the bigger concern is the Amtrak train would interfere with freight operations.

PC: Additional track needs to be added for a lot of sites. It seems like there is extra space in the rail yard.

VT: They are confined. No space to add on current site. They have already moved Salt operations to Shelburne. There is no capacity and no space to expand it easily.

PC: This evaluation matrix is a great framework but it is oversimplified. How will you weight categories? What are next steps?

VTrans: We don't have a weighted system. Meetings like this allow us to get input.

VTrans MB: VT rail advisory meets quarterly and provides input and they have weighed in with a vote on this.

TEUC, CC, and Mayor have advised and continue to advise as well.

JH: Cost difference between Union Station and McNeil option. Can you speak to this? Power upgrades?

VTrans MB: Major difference is that we have to build a brand new side track, add lighting, shore power, and track upgrades from college to McNeil, fence, and other factors that increase cost at McNeil. At Union Station we already have to build a platform.

JH: Upgrades to track are significant upgrades?

VT: Not as significant as siding.

JH: Those upgrades in theory would be helpful in terms of continuing service on to Essex.

VT: From here to McNeil there is no passengers so this doesn't have to be upgraded to full specs with passengers.

To go to Essex this would need more upgrades. Not a huge portion of cost.

JH: Would these upgrades address crossing of railroad and Intervale Rd as comments stated?

VT: Not part of this project because we aren't going that far. Only one sewer truck once a night will be added in terms of additional heavy vehicles.

JH: Is the City putting itself at risk for having to pay for cost of second track? Is there a greater risk at different locations?

VTrans MB: This is still being discussed. Very few differences in impacts. The cost may be worth benefits but we still need to understand this.

JH: When will you know this? We need to give you our input by mid-February.

VTrans MB: We would get back to you with more recommendations and cost consideration.

JH: Pollutant Matrix. It was a 3 for McNeil and a 0 for Union Station.

VTrans MB: Recommend that you look at the report that talks about modeled emissions for levels and how they disperse. These matrix ranking numbers are very gross. Further questions about modeling info can be asked via email. In a prior presentation specific numbers for air quality measures were discussed. Recommend everyone take a look at the reports and ask questions.

SO: Vibrations. When you redo the track do they minimize this? I can currently feel the train on Walnut St. I was told this is because of sandy soils. I support this location. Can they temper the vibrations?

VT: Amtrak train will not weigh as much as chip train. You likely will feel this train. It will likely vibrate less than chip train. It will be going slower than current chip train and freight. Lower impact than what is there today likely.

SO: Plant makes a lot of noise. There will be more noise than just the train.

PC: Compounding noise on top of plant should be considered.

VT: Low impact. This is a train coming to park at McNeil.

PC: Passenger trains don't allow slack between cars and less cars and it is done once it's at a full stop. Freight is louder and more abrasive. There will still be some noise. Horns, revving engines. Not car noise like freight trains. Freight is very heavy.

SO: I like this location but just something to consider with soil and possibility to remedy.

PC: Does not prefer McNeil location. Crime should be considered. Vandalism.

VT: We are discussing fencing and lighting here.

PC: There is homeless population.

VT: We are aware and considering this.

PC: Do you know what kind of lighting and what light pollution?

VT: This has been modeled. There is lighting when it's serviced and then dimmed and on a motion detector.

VHB: This is no different than lighting throughout the City. LED lights.

PC: Even if the lighting is on for a small amount of time if it is in middle of the night and wakes you up that is a considerable impact.

VT: There is currently lighting there but it will be increased with this.

PC: This decision is ultimately at VTrans?

VT: Secretary of Transportation ultimately makes this. We bring info back to Secretary from meetings like these.

MT: Secretary makes decision but funding is legislative. Because there is state appropriations this would need to be in the Governor's budget. Which it currently is approved and in the budget. They could rescind.

VTrans MB: They typically approve or disapprove. They have approved. They typically don't micromanage specific projects.

MT: If there is an additional cost would they need to add to the budget?

VTrans MB: They would potentially have to approve this if there is additional funds needed.

FP: What is the money you have for this project? What makes it so the state won't pay for it?

VTrans MB: Not a question I can answer tonight. It is a concern of ours. We have received input that train isn't wanted a Union Station and now hearing some don't want it at McNeil and some don't want it at other locations. We are taking in a lot of factors to consider. Should all of the tax payers in VT pay additional money to overnight it at McNeil to avoid the local concerns of people at Union Station? Should the City, vs all of state, decided McNeil is better location, based on City needs, pay this cost?

PC: Rail yard has a cost of 50M but no backup documentation like the other sites do.

VT: RR yard does all trail operations. They have told us we need additional tracks. There is no capacity to add on the waterfront. Moving this railyard somewhere else is extremely expensive.

VTrans MB: This number was provided by VTRR. They have a good idea of this.

PC: For clarification of document this info would be helpful.

5. Councilors' Update

FP: request an e bike update.

Unanimous Aye

6. Adjourn

Adjourn at 7:56PM