

Northwoods Rail Transit Commission

Members: Ashland, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Oconto, Oneida, Price, Rusk and Vilas Counties of WI and Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Marquette, Menominee and Ontonagon Counties of MI

Meeting Summary

Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association - Rhinelander WI
10:00 am CST October 16, 2017

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

2. Introductions of Attendees and Public Comments

Commissioners in attendance were: Kelly Klein, Iron County WI; Joel Pinardi, Iron County WI; Mike Cassidy, Marinette County; Al Christensen, Marathon County; Ed Wenger, Florence County; Wendy Gehlhoff, Florence County; Bruce Jilka, Price County; Gerald Verhurlst, Vilas County; Roger Luce, Oneida County; Andy Albarado, Rusk County; Scott Erbisch, Marquette County; Dale Kupczyk, Ashland County

Others in attendance were: Bill Korrer, Wisconsin Counties Association; Ty Penca, Citizen; Kari Divine, Renewable Resource Solutions; Rick Bliese, Lincoln Wood Products; Jim Hoppe, PCA; Jim Rosenbeg, WEDC; John Duncan Varda, Wisconsin Central Group; Peter Van Steen, CUPPAD Regional Commission; Jerry Wuorenmaa, WUPPDR Regional Commission; Pasi Lautala, Michigan Technological University (MTU); Paul Chellevoid, SRF Consulting ; Darryl Landeau, North Central Regional Planning Commission; Sheldon Johnson, Northwest Regional Planning Commission; Jason Culotta, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce; Richard Kedzior, WDOT; Brian Bousley, Dickinson County; Wally Townsend, Citizen; Todd Persa, Citizen; Michael Sussman, Strategic Rail Finance

3. Approval of Meeting Notes from May 19, 2017

On a motion by G. Verhurst, seconded by K. Klein, the meeting notes of the May 19, 2017 meeting were approved with all in favor.

4. Considering establishing a formal position on proposed mining legislation

The draft NRTC letter was sent to Senator Tiffany's office as approved at the May 19, 2017 meeting and was met with positive feedback. No changes were suggested. A. Albarado shared a draft letter. On a motion by G. Verhurst, seconded by J. Pinardi, the letter as presented was approved with all in favor. Discussion was held on whether or not the letter was applicable only to WI counties.

5. Update on DOT study

P. Chellevoid provided an update on the DOT study. The survey is being finalized and will be sent out to 200 businesses, including 37 in the Upper Peninsula, with an option to complete it either online or by hardcopy by Thanksgiving. Business on or near spurs were targeted. All Economic Development Corporations were asked for businesses to include in the survey mailing and 50% of EDCs responded. There is still an opportunity to provide input on businesses that will be surveyed. WDOT met with

G&W and hope to meet with CN. A draft table of contents has been completed for the final report; they hope to complete the final report by the end of 2017, but are contracted by the end of March. If WDOT approves, NRTC will be able to have a copy of the final report. Survey questions were distributed to NRTC members who were working with WDOT to develop the survey. NRTC members who would like to see the questions can contact A. Albarado or W. Gehlhoff. A. Albarado will share the draft final report with NRTC when it's available.

6. Update on CN activities

a. Proposed Discontinuance of Rail Service, Bradley to Pembine Subdivision

Discussion included expressed concerns that WCL would be able to remove the infrastructure if it's listed as discontinued. An STB filing is expected.

b. Response from NRTC

It was suggested that NRTC draft a letter to STB that states NRTC is working with actionable shipper data and Wisconsin Central Group and may have potential for a TIGER grant to update log cars and infrastructure. A. Albarado and R. Luce will draft a letter and sent it out to commissioners for approval. K. Klein motioned that a letter to the STB be drafted and sent upon approval, G. Verhurlst, seconded and the it was unanimously approved.

7. Status of Collective Industry efforts WCG/NRTC

A Report and Comments to the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission was provided by J. Varda and is attached as a part of the meeting notes.

8. Share discussions with Northern Minnesota and Tri-County group

D. Kupczyk and A. Abarado met with APEX this past summer. They face some similar issues as NRTC; may partner on future communication of issues to the STB.

Clark, Taylor, and Marathon counties are forming a new tri-county group.

J. Varda will send A. Abarado contacts for the Michigan Forest Products Council & Wisconsin Paper Council to see what they are doing regarding CN.

9. Discussion on Contracting for Professional Services

Discussion was held around hiring a contractor. M. Sussman discussed his previous work with Class I railroads. He suggested that shipper data should be integrated into a business model for companies that would retain and/or develop them. M. Sussman is currently working with the non-profit OnTrack North America, MTU and Michigan State University.

W. Gehlhoff motioned that a request for proposal (RFP) for M. Sussman's services be drafted, G. Verlhurst seconded, and the motion was carried. A. Abarado, W. Gehlhoff and R. Luce will draft the

Northwoods Rail Transit Commission

Members: Ashland, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Oconto, Oneida, Price, Rusk and Vilas Counties of WI and Baraga, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Marquette, Menominee and Ontonagon Counties of MI RFP. A scope of services will be included in the RFP and will be provided to the NRTC for approval. J. Varda suggested that \$25,000 would be a good amount to start with. Grant options that match up with the RFP will be sought.

10. Possible grant(s) assistance for professional services

Potential grant options were discussed including, WEDC capacity grants, Rural Business Development Grants, WDOT planning grants, and Wood Innovations grants. In addition, the option of having industry support it through a non-profit was discussed. J. Rosenbeg will provide information on WEDC grants that may be applicable.

11. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be set at the discretion of the Chair, as information becomes available and as action items arise.

12. Adjourn

NRTC Meetings are open to the public.
For more information, contact: Kari Divine at 906-875-3720
or kari@renewableresourcesolutions.com