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Highway Simplification Study : Policy Working Group, Initial Meeting, November 20, 2009

Maine Department of Transportation

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**Simplification Study
Policy Working Group
Initial Meeting
Friday, November 20, 2009
MaineDOT Room 216**

Attendees:

Policy Work Group Members:

Elwood Beal	Lisbon Public Works Director
Michelle Beal	Ellsworth City Manager
Bob Belz	Auburn Public Works Director
Dave Bernhardt	Director Maintenance and Operations, MaineDOT
David Cole	Gorham Town Manager
Clint Deschene	Hermon Town Manager
Greg Dore	Skowhegan Public Works Director
Richard Freethey	Brooklin Selectman (by phone)
Jim Hanley	Pike Industries
John Johnson	Jay Public Works Director
Rob Kenerson	BACTS
Galen Larrabee	Knox Selectman
Ryan Pelletier	St. Agatha Town Manager
John Sylvester	Alfred Selectman
Bruce Van Note	Deputy Commissioner, MaineDOT

MMA staff:

Kate Dufour	Legislative Advocate, Maine Municipal Association
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MaineDOT staff:

Dale Doughty	Regional Manager, Region 4 Bangor
Peter Coughlan	Director, Community Services Division
Fred Michaud	Public Service Coordinator
Nancy McKenney	Administrative Assistant

Other guests:

John Duncan	PACTS
Glen Ridley	Town of Litchfield
David A. Cole	Commissioner MaineDOT

Commissioner Cole gave the opening remarks and welcome to the group.

- **First order of business was the discussion of ground rules.**
- **Conclusions:**
 1. Don't be shy.
 2. Respect for each other and for any ideas brought to the table.
 3. Information will be posted on the web.
 4. Draft minutes will be posted on the web and voted on to accept or reject at the next meeting of the work group.
 - Kate Dufour, MMA and Peter Coughlan, MaineDOT will review the minutes before being posted.
 5. Kate Dufour will add a link to the MMA website for people to access the MaineDOT website where this information will "live".

Designation of Chairs:

Bruce Van Note, Deputy Commissioner will be one of the Co-Chairs and needs another chair. Clint Deschene was nominated and everyone agreed.

Comments/Questions:

- Need buy-in from other municipalities
- Can we "go on the road" with it? Will be an important component of the end results.
- MaineDOT will commit to assisting in this effort.
- Some members of the group raised a concern with how the group would react if the Legislature made changes to the group's final recommendation.
 - The concern is that once the group's final recommendations are presented to the Legislature that changes may be made and those changes may not be supported by some members of the group.
 - The concern is that since the group, as a whole, supported the recommendations, the Legislature would assume and claim that the municipality, for example, supports the legislatively amended document, when in fact they no longer support the recommendations.
 - The question posed to the group was whether or not they would stand by their original recommendations.
 - After a brief discussion it was concluded that while the group has no control over the changes that might be made to the final document, that the group would review the amended document and assess whether or not they could, as a group, continue to support the amended recommendations.
- Needs to be a strong statement from the work group. This is what we were charged with completing.
- Vote on entire package by all parties.
- Compromises will certainly need to be made by all involved.
- Is a minority report possible?
- Working Group must have an "end date".
- Bruce suggested that no more than 12 months with a target date to finish no later than Labor Day 2010.
- The sooner the better but if group feels they are moving along well and finding common ground and coming up with good solutions the Labor Day 2010 date will be extended.

- Open communication with all but the Working Group will make the decision about what goes out on the website.

Other Interested Parties:

- Will other interested parties have the ability to attend the work group meetings?
- Will they be given an opportunity to address the Working Group?
- Can the meetings be opened for others to address them for 10 minutes ± giving each party who wishes to speak a 2-3 minutes limit?
- Working Group can decide that at a later date.

Points:

- There is keen interest around the state about the outcome of this work group.
- The group will need to solicit public input from interested parties. Can this be part of the web site?
- If a lot of interest is verbalized the group can invite those parties to address the group at a working session.
- Will interested parties be given the ability to call in to listen to discussion?
- People will need to approach the co-chairs to be put on the agenda to address the Working Group.
- An important role for the group will be to educate the general public about funding and budget issues faced by state and municipalities with respect to their road budgets.
- Without education it will be difficult to move forward with a plan that addresses funding deficits.
- This Working Group needs to make a couple of strong statements at the very beginning of their report so the average Maine citizen realizes municipalities are working with the same level of funding from 5 years ago while prices have doubled and in some areas tripled.
- Need to address where other monies can come from thru new funding revenues. The gas tax is not the only solution to these problems.
- Will this Working Group offer possible solutions to the funding problem?
- This is a good opportunity for state/county and local government to work together to make it better for all citizens of this state.

Sub-Committees:

- Co-chairs Bruce Van Note and Clint Deschene will discuss the various sub-committees, make up, deadlines etc. and they will draft a charter for each committee.
- They will bring this draft to the next meeting.
- People on the Working Group will let Bruce or Clint know of their interest for a sub committee assignment.
- Kate Dufour will work on a list of municipal officials who may want to work on the sub-committees.
- Standards/costs will need technical people, engineers, and construction people to serve on these committees with people from the municipalities.
- A member of this Working Group will sit on each sub-committee and act as liaison to the Working Group as a whole.

- Will this Working Group approve all reports “as is” from the sub-committees or will changes be made by this group as a whole?
- The Working Group must have faith in the sub-committees.
- When subcommittees have completed their tasks will this go to the 50 people on the “Sounding Board”?
- The WCSH towns will be included in the Urban Issues sub committee.

Meeting Schedule:

- The next meeting of the Working Group has been scheduled for Friday December 11, 2009 at the MaineDOT, main conference room from 10:00 – 1:00.
- The average meeting length will be 3-4 hours
- The remaining dates will be confirmed at next meeting.
- The thought is the first and third Friday’s of each month; this will be discussed more at the December 11, 2009 meeting.
- A cancellation due to winter weather will be made on a case by case basis. All members will be contacted by e-mail and/or phone.
- MMA building will be done with renovations by January and will be available for meetings.
- The Co-chairs will decide if a scheduled meeting is necessary and will contact members if the decision is made to cancel a meeting,

Presentations:

Bruce Van Note MaineDOT gave two power point presentations the first entitled “Simplification Study Policy Working Group” Origin, Background & Contest “*Why are we here?*” and was presented in the morning session. The second power point presentation was given in the afternoon session and entitled “Simplification Study Policy Working Group” State Highway Fund, Production Impacts”. These presentations will be posted on the website.

Peter Coughlan, MaineDOT gave a power point presentation entitled “A Brief History of Maine Roads” and will be posted on the website.

Submitted by:

Nancy McKenney, Administrative Assistant to Bruce Van Note

November 24, 2009

Accepted by unanimous vote of the Policy Working Group on 12/11/09