

BARRINGTON
BROOKFIELD
DOVER
DURHAM
FARMINGTON
LEE
MADBURY
MIDDLETON
MILTON



NEW DURHAM
NEWMARKET
NORTHWOOD
NOTTINGHAM
ROCHESTER
ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

March 12th 2020

P3 Commission
c/o Kathleen Mulcahey-Hampson
NHDOT
7 Hazen Drive, P.O. Box 483
Concord, NH 03302

P3 Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Long-Term Lease/Concession Agreement for the Dover and Portsmouth Bus Terminals/Park & Ride Facilities. Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) supports the Public-Private Partnership Infrastructure Oversight Commission's (P3 Commission) consideration of a new approach to managing, maintaining, and operating the Park & Ride bus terminals facilities (the facilities) at Dover and Portsmouth. Here are the two core points of my comments: a new management approach using fee-based parking is essential for the continued operation the facilities; and the RFP should emphasize the importance of building the relationship between the facilities and public transit services that are federally and locally funded.

The facilities, paired with local public transit and intercity bus service, provide a critical regional service for daily commuting, long-term travel, and local tourism. Their use constitutes a major reduction in congestion and air quality impacts. The facilities are constantly at capacity and often over capacity – a testament to their popularity and effectiveness. Unfortunately, some abuse of the purpose and intent of the facilities is also evident. Giving operators the ability of charge a parking fee will enable them to more effectively manage and operate the facilities. It also affords an opportunity to develop the existing relationship with public transit.

The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) currently serves the facilities with scheduled fixed route public transit and advance reservation ADA paratransit services. COAST has a strong relationship with C&J Buslines which currently operates out of the facilities. At the end of June 2020, COAST will be implementing an improved network that will increase the efficiency of their fixed route service. Successful operation of the facilities will depend on strengthening the connection and collaboration with local public transit.

Specific Comments

The RFP places responsibility on the Operator to "provide its proposed fee structure for transit-related fees, to include, but not be limited to, parking, docking, and ticket commission fees, throughout the term of the Ground Lease Contract." It also notes that "existing operators at each facility will be allowed to continue providing service but may be subject to terms and conditions, e.g., fees, as implemented by the Operator." Local public transit service is an effective way to manage escalating capacity challenges at park & rides. It would be detrimental to the purpose of this RFP for COAST to be charged additional fees to access the facilities. Any additional fees for public transit operators to park, dock, or load/drop

off passengers would effectively downshift the costs of maintaining a State-owned facility through a third-party to the municipalities which financially support local public transportation services.

I strongly encourage the P3 Commission to incorporate language into the draft RFP that specifically exempts/protects locally-funded public transportation providers from any docking, departure, per passenger, or other fees that may be charged by the third-party Operator to access and provide transit service to these State-owned facilities.

The revenues generated from fee-based parking are an important potential source of non-federal match for COAST service to the facilities. This is supported by Section 1C of the NHDOT-FHWA Early Development Agreement (EDA). Sustainability of COAST's service will require new and diverse revenue streams now and in the future. Please ensure that public transit services funded through federal and local dollars are specifically eligible to receive funding support through any new revenue streams resulting from the RFP.

The need for improved management at the park & ride bus terminal facilities at Dover and Portsmouth is due in part to their incredible success and increasing demand for such service. The seacoast region is growing and has the framework for a truly multimodal transportation system which will be essential for managing the traffic that comes with that growth. If effective, the new relationship resulting from the RFP will serve as a model for enhancing that multimodal system in the seacoast and the rest of New Hampshire. SRPC strongly supports the P3 Commission's efforts to achieve the goals of the RFP.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Czysz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer Czysz, Executive Director
Strafford Regional Planning Commission