PART I: OVERVIEW OF HISTORY OF PLAISTOW RAIL & RECENT EFFORTS

1) Q. What is the history of passenger rail in Plaistow?

A. Plaistow has almost 100 years of passenger rail service to Boston from 1868-1968. Additionally, from 1901-1930, there was trolley service from Plaistow to Haverhill and Hampton Beach.

2) Q. How long has Plaistow been working to bring a MBTA station to Town?

A. Plaistow established the Plaistow Area Transit Advisory Committee (PATAC) in 1990—with the goal of establishing a 3 phased plan—1) commuter bus service; 2) Plaistow Park & Ride Lot; 3) Plaistow MBTA Commuter Rail Service

Q: Within the last 10 years, Plaistow and surrounding Towns had a non-binding referendum at town meeting requesting support for a Plaistow train station. What year and what were the results?

A: The year of the vote was 2004 and the results were:

- Plaistow- 60% Favorable
- Atkinson- 60% Favorable
- Danville- 40% Favorable
- Kingston-40% Favorable

It is important to note that the non-binding referendum asked residents if they would support a share in the cost of a train station and park and ride lot for a Plaistow station.

PART II: OVERVIEW OF GRANTS

Q. What is the scope of NHDOT's recent TIGER II Grant?

A. The State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and Town of Plaistow, New Hampshire, are entering into a landmark partnership with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to extend MBTA Boston commuter rail service into Southern New Hampshire. This proposal, submitted by NHDOT as lead proponent, specifically requests $19 million in TIGER II funding as part of an overall $29.5 million project to construct a commuter rail station, layover facility, and track improvements in Plaistow, New Hampshire, allowing extension of commuter rail service from its current terminus in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

The project is designed to respond to multiple needs and opportunities, including improving mobility, improving operating efficiency of the commuter, intercity and freight rail service using this major rail line, reducing highway congestion, stimulating transit-oriented redevelopment in the proposed station area, and broader economic development and job creation in Plaistow and surrounding communities.

Q. What are the Elements of the Grant?

This project consists of four main capital components:

1) Construction of a passenger station and siding located at an existing NHDOT Park and Ride facility on Westville Road in Plaistow, adjacent to Route 125;

2) Construction of a new layover facility holding up to six MBTA train sets, approximately 2000 feet southwest of the proposed station, on a former industrial site (the Westville Homes site);

3) Purchase of three bi-level passenger coaches to support increased ridership from the Plaistow service extension; and

4) Installation of a crossover switch that will support efficient movement of trains from the layover facility to the station and improve capacity on the main line.

PART III: OVERVIEW OF PROJECT BENEFITS

Q: Why is the project being built - what is it intended to accomplish?

A: The Plaistow/MBTA project is being built as mitigation for motor vehicle transit along RT 125 and major highways. The basic purpose of the project is to reduce automobile traffic on the congested highways leading into downtown Boston by diverting commuter traffic from automobiles to transit. The Project is also intended to meet other needs of the area including:

- Encouraging transit-oriented development patterns;
- Provide transit service to Plaistow, which is currently underserved;
- Increase transit capacity to the Southern New Hampshire area
- Reduce fuel consumption and air pollution from automobiles.

Q. What are the project benefits?

A. The proposed new facilities will support an estimated 737 commuter rail trips per day in 2013; divert an estimated 670 daily automobile trips from congested segments of Route 125 in both Plaistow and Haverhill; and allow for improved

operational efficiencies for both the MBTA and freight rail service. The project will also allow relocation of a layover facility from a densely populated residential area in Haverhill to an underutilized industrial brownfield site in Plaistow; create an estimated 230 construction jobs in the short term; and serve as locus for transit-oriented residential and commercial development in the new Plaistow/MBTA station area. Passenger rail service to Plaistow will provide important additional benefits to the State and the region in terms of congestion relief, safety, air quality improvement, and energy conservation. Over a 30 year time horizon, the project is projected to produce benefits with a net present value of $48.1 million, with a strong benefit-cost ratio of 2.3 to 1 exclusive of employment benefits.

PART IV: OVERVIEW OF PROJECT COSTS

Q: What are the components of the Plaistow Project and how much will they cost?

A: The Project is currently estimated to cost $30 million including planning, engineering, land, and permitting costs along with the cost of construction and new trains.

Q: What are the one-time and on-going costs to Plaistow?

A: The most significant impact is the loss of tax revenue from Westville Home Site--$24,000 annually. As currently proposed, Plaistow would own and operate the train station. This allows the Town to rent space to help offset the loss of tax revenue. The Town is investigating the idea of having solar panels on the station roof to see if they can generate sufficient revenue to offset the tax loss. There is also consideration being given to charging parking fees. No final decisions have been made on any of these issues. The station will be designed to have very low summer and winter maintenance costs.

The one-time costs of approximately 200 hours of staff time equate to approximately $7,000. There is also a $6,000 Match (20%) on the $30,000 RPC technical assistance grant. ($2K in 2010 and $4K in 2011).

All construction costs, property purchase costs, and easement costs will be paid for with the federal grant monies and with the MBTA 20% local match funds, which amount to approximately $6 Million.

Q: Does this proposal include any costs related to de-commissioning of Bradford layover?

A: No— the funding will be used to build a Plaistow station and a layover facility in Plaistow. The MBTA has discussed the possibility of using some of the switching equipment in use at Bradford at the new location in Plaistow, but no final decisions have been made.

Q: According to Eagle Tribune editorial, the MBTA has Town Assessment authority? If true, what will the cost be?

A: No- While the MBTA does assess its member communities in Massachusetts, it does not have the legal authority to assess NH municipalities.

Q: Where will the station be? How long will the train trip take?

A: The Plaistow station will be located at the Park & Ride lot on Westville Road. A one-way trip from Plaistow to Boston North Station will take about an hour and fifteen minutes.

Q: What are the other stops on the line?

A: The Plaistow schedule will be similar to the current Haverhill Commuter Rail line stops. There will be 13 trips each way on weekdays and 6 round trips on Saturdays and Sundays. Train schedules will be compatible with the Haverhill/MBTA train schedule. It is expected that Plaistow trains will begin service at approximately 4:45 am and conclude service after midnight at approximately 1:30 am.

All Plaistow trains will terminate at Boston North Station located. Riders will be able to transfer at North Station for other commuter rail services, Amtrak intercity trains, intercity bus services, MBTA Silver Line buses to the South Boston Waterfront and Logan Airport, Red Line trains to Cambridge and Somerville, local bus services, and taxis.

The Haverhill line stops currently include:

- Haverhill
- Bradford
- Lawrence
- Andover
- Ballardvale (Andover)
- Wilmington: Anderson/ Woburn (5 of 13 trains go through Wilmington stopping at the Anderson Transportation Center where connections to Logan Airport are possible). These 5 trains cross over from the Haverhill line to the Lowell Line via the Wildcat route – the same route used by the Downeaster trains. After the Anderson stop, the trains are then express to North Station. It is a faster run since none of the remaining Haverhill Line stops are made.
- North Wilmington (8 of 13 trains continue on the Haverhill Line and make the stops below).
- Reading
- Wakefield
- Greenwood

- Melrose Highlands
- Melrose Cedar Park
- Wyoming Hill
- Malden Center (connection to Orange Line)
- North Station

Q: How might the Downeaster be affected?

A: The Downeaster trains use the same tracks that the Haverhill Line trains use, so when extending to Plaistow, scheduling conflicts need to be avoided. The proposed rail siding for the Plaistow station will help resolve possible future conflicts. At this time it does not appear that the current service extension to Plaistow would cause any conflicts and in fact, will help avoid conflicts in the early AM. Other than schedule conflict avoidance, the Downeater service really does not play into the Plaistow MBTA project. The closest Downeaster stops to Plaistow are in Exeter, NH and Haverhill, MA. The Downeaster service is a strategic service for Haverhill and the Mayor has expressed concern that a Plaistow stop would hurt Haverhill.

Q: Has Westville Homes been designated as Brownfield site? If so, by whom? What does it mean?

A: It has NOT been designated as a Brownfield site. It has been identified through a drive by assessment as a potential Brownfield site due to its probable past use of chemicals such as paints, solvents, and cleaning fluids in the manufacturing of homes. The Town has already received a commitment from RPC that we will receive a $100,000 grant for a phase one assessment of potential contaminants. Future Brownfield monies could be available to remediate or remove the contaminants from the site— a positive remedial action that will result from the Plaistow/MBTA project. This will help protect the long term environmental sustainability of the neighborhood.

Q: What is the size of the Westville Homes parcel?

A: The tax map lists the parcel as 25.72 acres.

Q: Can we get a memo from Wil Cocoran, Town Assessor, regarding affect on property values? Any other examples from NH?

A: Yes—I have asked Wil for his opinion on valuations and he has reported that there will be benefits from living near the commuter rail station. He has also opinioned that properties located near the layover may be negatively impacted—no official study or report has been completed.

Q: Is there a similar facility elsewhere in NH? Problems/issues with it?

A: Not in New Hampshire—there is one in Newburyport and Bradford. I hope to be visiting the Newburyport layover before the scheduled Public Information meeting.

Q: Can we get a copy of the "pilgrim partnership"?

A: Yes. A copy is available on the Town's Web site at www.plaistow.com. Please note that this is an agreement between the RI DOT and the MBTA. In general the agreement states that RI will provide capital equipment for the MBTA in exchange for some level of service to RI communities. A similar agreement between the NH DOT and the MBTA (capital equipment for service) will also be drafted for the Plaistow service. Tenets of the agreement will state that the capital purchases must be made to cover the costs of service and that rail car will need to be purchased to handle the additional passengers boarding at Plaistow. Discussions with MassDOT have already begun and the current expectation is that this agreement will be finalized by November of this year.

Q: Were any other transportation grants submitted involving Plaistow?

A: Yes, a TIGER II planning grant was submitted jointly by 3 planning commissions – Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), and the Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC). The Plaistow piece of this grant is to study the potential for mixed-use, transit-oriented development at the former Process Engineering/Chart site.

PART V: OVERVIEW OF PLAISTOW/MBTA STATION SERVICE

Q: When will the proposed Plaistow/MBTA service start?

A: Service is currently not anticipated to start until late 2012 or possibly early 2013.

Q: What will fares be?

A: The proposed Plaistow fares will be charged based on the MBTA's zone fare system in use system-wide. Reduced fares are charged for children and senior citizens. Monthly passes permit unlimited local bus and rapid transit use as well as commuter rail use up to the zone listed. Plaistow is expected to be in Zone 8 where a 1-way ticket is $7.75 and a monthly pass is $250. There may be a small additional surcharge to cover the administration of this service.

Q: Will there be a charge for parking at the Plaistow station?

A: Yes. The current charge for parking in MBTA commuter rail lots is $4.00 per day. Some of the MBTA parking lots are operated by the local municipality. Charges for parking in municipally operated lots may be different. The cost of parking at the Park & Ride lot has not yet been determined, but is likely to be less than $4.00 per day.

Q: Where will tickets be sold?

A: Tickets and passes will be available at the North Station ticket office and from commerce.mbta.com. One-way and round trip tickets will also be available from the conductors on the trains

Q: Will there be a waiting room at the stations?

A: The proposed Plaistow station will have an enclosed waiting room with benches and passenger information displays for passengers waiting for trains or waiting to be picked up.

Q: Are trains and stations handicapped accessible?

A: Yes. The Plaistow Station will be fully handicapped accessible. Accessible parking spaces will be provided at the Plaistow station, and the station floor and platform will match the floor level of the coaches over their entire length for easy boarding.

Q: Are there accommodations for bicycles at the stations?

A: Yes, the proposed Plaistow station will have a bike rack. Bicycles are allowed on the trains subject certain restrictions — refer to the MBTA's website (Bikes on the T) for more information.

Q: What is the expected ridership on the Plaistow/Haverhill Station?

A: At service start up we expect approximately 350 passengers, most of whom will use the Park & Ride lot, but it is anticipated that many will be dropped off in the morning and then picked up later in the day.

Q: Will there be train whistles?

A: Yes. Trains must test their whistles when leaving the layover facility on the first trip each morning. There will not be additional whistle soundings for intersections. Freight train and Amtrak whistles will still blow at the Main St. crossing.

Q: How will commuters be kept from parking on side streets or in business parking lots?

A: The Plaistow police will enforce parking restrictions around commuter parking lots as required.

Q: How fast will the trains travel?

A: The trains coming into the Plaistow station will be reducing speeds to approximately 30/40 mph by the layover facility and then of course slowing to a stop at the rail station. Trains leaving the station will gradually pick up speed but again would be no more than 30/40 mph as they pass the layover facility. Trains entering and leaving the layover facility will not exceed speeds of 20 mph.

Q: How many cars will trains have?

A: The trains will typically have 5 or 6 coaches using a mix of single and bi-level cars. The line is designed to accommodate trains with up to 9 cars.

PART VI: OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PENTUCKET LAYOVER FACILITY

Q: What is the history of the Bradford Layover station:

A: Before 1987, the MBTA parked its commuter trains overnight in an isolated layover station between Haverhill's Little River and an industrial property at the edge of Hale Street. The layover station was then moved to Bradford, just up from the Bradford train station. Additionally, the MBTA has recently done a site selection review for a new layover location is North Haverhill on the Haverhill/Atkinson State Line.

Q: Will trains at the layover facility in Plaistow idle all night long?

A: No. Even in unusual circumstances such as a power failure or unusually cold weather (below 10°F) the engines will be equipped with smaller auxiliary engines that will run to keep the larger diesel engines warm. The layover facility will be equipped an electrical heating system that the trains will be plugged into to allow the locomotives to be turned off overnight. The engines do require a warm up period of approximately 50 minutes before the train leaves the layover facility in the morning.

Q: Will lights at the stations be on all night long?

A: Most of the station lights will be timed to shut off after the last train of the evening (about midnight). Both station lights

and layover facility lights will comply with Plaistow's lighting ordinance that requires full cut-off lighting.

Q: Will herbicides be sprayed on the tracks?

A: Herbicides are sprayed along the railroad as required to control vegetation growth on the tracks. Spraying is generally done annually in the summer and uses only herbicides and applicators approved by the NHDES & Pesticide Bureau of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. Spraying is restricted in wetland areas, around drinking water wells and reservoirs, and in windy conditions.

Q: When will maintenance work be done?

A: The MBTA inspects, services, and repairs its rail lines on a regular basis so that they can continue to provide safe, reliable, and efficient transit service. Much of this work will be done during normal business hours, however, it will be necessary on occasion to perform certain maintenance work at night or on weekends to avoid disruptions to train service.

Q: How noisy will the trains really be?

A: Every individual has different expectations and reactions to noise and the way a person perceives a noise is dependent upon many factors. The easiest way to get a feeling for how noisy the trains will actually be is to visit one of the other commuter rail lines, stand at approximately the same distance from the track as your house, and judge for yourself. Remember that noise levels outside will be louder than inside your home. A typical MBTA commuter rail locomotive passes by at a distance of 50 feet and traveling at a speed of 50 mph generates a maximum noise level ("Lmax") of 88 decibels (88 dBA).

Q: I will be able to hear the trains, why am I not receiving noise mitigation?

A: Being able to hear the trains is not, in and of itself, an "Impact". "Impacted" means that the level of the noise from the trains is such that it is likely to interfere with important activities that occur within the building; for example, in a residence it is a noise level is high enough so as to interfere with sleep. It is likely that you hear many noises from outside your house today, but they do not actually interfere with the day-to-day activities in your house. The same is true for the train — just being able to hear the trains does not result in an "Impact" condition.

Q: How is noise "Impact" determined?

A: The Federal Transit Administration, (FTA) which is the federal agency that monitors and regulates public transit systems, developed a series of guidelines that transit systems use to measure, evaluate and predict noise levels from trains, and also provide guidance on how and when to mitigate those impacts. These guidelines were developed over a ten-year period through an expert peer review system that included the FTA, the EPA, the National Academy of Sciences and many acoustical engineers, social scientists and health care professionals, and are now used by most major transit systems.

Q: What if the noise mitigation doesn't work?

A: There is no guarantee that the mitigation will work or that the actual impacts will be as projected. However, the MBTA will perform follow up testing after service starts to determine the actual noise levels caused by the trains. If the actual levels are found to be higher than the projections, the MBTA will investigate the cause and take appropriate corrective action. This circumstance is considered unlikely because the projections are based on measurements of actual MBTA commuter rail trains on the other lines. As described above, the MBTA's experience is that this type of mitigation program is very successful and homeowners find that it provides a significant amount of noise reduction.

Q: How is vibration different from noise?

A: Vibration is movement of the ground due to the passage of a train that is felt, while noise is air borne and is heard.

Q: How was vibration impact determined?

A: Vibration, like noise, was determined using the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines.

Q: How is the vibration impact determination different from noise impact determination?

A: Like noise, vibration levels vary with train speed and distance from the track. Unlike noise however, vibration is evaluated against a fixed impact level for a single train pass-by: 80 VdB (vibration velocity level in decibels). A level above 80 VdB constitutes impact based on causing human annoyance. A vibration level of 80 VdB is, however, well below the level that would cause damage to buildings. Further, vibration levels vary depending on ground conditions under the track — solid rock transmits vibration better than soft soil.

Q: Why is the number of trains not a factor in determining vibration impact?

A: Human response to vibration is more closely related to the maximum vibration level than to the number of vibration causing events. The FTA guidelines do however have different standards for "frequent" vs. "infrequent" events. The proposed Plaistow/Haverhill Line trains are in the "infrequent" category — less than 70 trains per day.

Q: Are vibration levels comparable to noise levels?

A: No. Noise and vibration are both measured in "decibels", but on different scales — 80 vibration decibels is not the same as 80 noise decibels.

Q: What do the vibration values mean? Will my house shake and be damaged?

A: People cannot feel vibrations below 65 VdB. A typical diesel locomotive at a distance of 50 feet and traveling at a speed of 50 mph will generate a vibration level of 85 VdB. A level of 90 VdB is roughly the level caused by slamming a heavy door in a house. Damage to buildings may occur at levels above 100 VdB, although damage to old, fragile or historic buildings may occur at levels above 95 VdB. There are no projected levels on the Plaistow/Haverhill line that exceed 100 VdB and most are much lower. Trains entering or leaving the Plaistow layover will be traveling at speeds no greater than 20mph.

Q: What is the mitigation for vibration impact?

A: MBTA has installed rubber "ballast mats" under the track to dampen vibrations at most locations where vibration impacts occur. The mats can reduce vibration levels by up to 5 VdB, but actual performance depends on soil conditions — the mats work best over hard rock and are less effective over soft soils.

Q: What if the vibration mitigation doesn't work?

A: The MBTA will perform follow up testing after service starts to determine the actual vibration levels caused by the trains. If the actual levels are found to be higher than the projections, MBTA will investigate the cause and take appropriate corrective action. That circumstance is considered unlikely because the projections are:

- Based on measurements of actual MBTA trains on the other Lines;
- Based on measurements of actual ballast mat performance;
- Based on soil conditions determined from numerous soil borings along the line; and
- Intentionally conservative to avoid understating impacts.

Ballast mats were used on the other branches of the Old Colony Lines and follow up testing demonstrated a high level of success in the places where mats were found to be appropriate.

Q: Why will the trains be diesel powered rather than electric?

A: The entire MBTA commuter rail system, virtually all freight railroads, and most of the commuter rail systems in the United States, are powered by diesel locomotives. The use of electric trains on the other lines was considered early in the planning process, but was found to be impractical and not prudent. The substantial additional cost required to construct the overhead power lines and to purchase electric locomotives could not be justified as it would not have resulted in significant additional ridership. Additionally, while noise impacts would be reduced somewhat, there would be additional visual and aesthetic impacts from the overhead power lines and their support structures. However, all of the bridges and tunnels over the Haverhill/Plaistow Line have been built with enough height over the tracks for the overhead power lines so that the line could in the future be converted to electric operation.

Q: Will the diesel trains create more pollution?

A: The exhaust emissions from the trains will be more than offset by the reduction in emissions from the automobiles that the train service will remove from the roads. Once the Plaistow Rail station is in place, the project will result in significant reductions in automobile usage. Over a 30-year period, 300,000,000 vehicle miles traveled (VMT) will be eliminated.

As part of the initial environmental review, the Town, NHDOT performed an extensive air quality analysis for the project for the 2010 CMAQ grant. This analysis demonstrated significant daily reductions in the pollutants that cause smog as well as those which contribute to climate change (or global warming.) When looking at the overall air quality issues associated with the project, and not just the results of one of several pollutants, the Plaistow/MBTA project provides a significant air quality as well as transportation benefit to the region, a point of view that has been reinforced by the environmental agencies as well as environmental advocacy groups. The Plaistow Project is one of the transit improvements that the New Hampshire has committed to making as part of its plan to comply with federal air quality standards under the Clean Air Act as well as to offset the transportation impacts in Southern New Hampshire.

Q: What will the MBTA do to limit diesel locomotive emissions?

A: All MBTA diesel locomotives system wide will be modified as required to comply with new EPA regulations limiting

locomotive emissions. These regulations took effect in 2007 and when fully phased in by 2010 will reduce nationwide locomotive emissions of NOx by two-thirds and emissions of hydrocarbons and particulates by half. In fact, the MBTA has already begun to implement these new measures nearly a decade ahead of the deadline. In addition, the MBTA is now using Low Sulfur Diesel on all of its trains, nearly four years ahead of the deadline switching to that fuel type.

Q: Are there other environmental concerns that will be addressed?

A: The NH Department of Transportation's Bureau of Environment will prepare an Environmental Assessment for the combined project – layover facility and rail station. The total list of items to be addressed by the assessment includes the following:

A)SOCIAL/ECONOMIC AREAS OF CONCERN
Safety, transportation patterns, air quality, noise, displacements, hazardous materials, neighborhoods, business impacts, land acquisitions, land use, tax base, recreation, public lands, construction impacts, farmlands, community services, energy needs, utilities, and environmental justice.
Natural Environment Areas of Concern

Water quality, stormwater management, wetlands, surface waters, groundwater, floodplains, wildlife, fisheries, endangered species, natural communities, wild & scenic rivers, storm re-channelization, NH designated rivers, forest lands, and coastal zone.

B) CULTURAL AREAS OF CONCERN
Historical, archaeological, stonewalls and aesthetics.

Q: Will the public be able to review the findings of the Environmental Assessment?

A: Yes, the Bureau of Environment will schedule a Public Hearing to obtain comments from the public as well as other state and local officials. The Public Hearing is tentatively scheduled for March, 2011.

Q: How will MBTA educate children and the public about railroad safety?

A: The MBTA participates in the Operation Lifesaver railroad safety education program. This national program provides railroad safety education programs to schools and community groups through municipal police departments. Safety training in the towns along MBTA Line started in 2006.

Q: How many grade crossings are there?

A: There are a no crossings proposed for the Plaistow project.

Q: Will there be fencing around the layover facility?

A: The final plans for the layover facility have not yet been prepared, but it is likely that fencing will surround the working area of the facility in areas where other structures currently stand.

Q: Who do I contact if I see an emergency situation such as children playing on the tracks or to report vandalism?

A: Call 911. Your local police and fire departments will contact the MBTA as required. The MBTA Police can be contacted in an emergency at 617-222-1212.