

Passenger Rail Station Location and Design Analysis Scope of Work

PURPOSE

The Passenger Rail Station Location and Design Analysis is a comprehensive planning study to evaluate the most feasible and viable locations for 6 passenger rail stations in support of the Housatonic Railroad Company's effort to establish passenger rail service in western Massachusetts (Berkshire County). The locations in which rail facilities are contemplated are located within the communities of Sheffield, Great Barrington, Stockbridge, Lee, Lenox and Pittsfield. This planning effort is part of a larger effort focused on passenger rail and will include conducting an in-depth needs assessment of stations focusing on siting and physical design and will compliment other work efforts currently being undertaken by the Housatonic Rail Road. Because of this study, the most viable locations for rail stations along the rail segment will be identified including land use, zoning and environmental compatibility, localized transportation impacts, space requirements, facility amenities and additional facility design elements. Also include as part of this study is recommendations for facility upgrades to the existing downtown Pittsfield intermodal facility and to maximize opportunities for the directly impacted communities and the entire Berkshire region to benefit from station locations through increased economic, job and housing opportunities as well as tax revenues.

Funding for this study is through the federal Transportation, Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP). TCSP goals which will be achieved through this project include:

- Improving the efficiency of the transportation system of the United States.
- Reducing environmental impacts of transportation.
- Reducing the need for costly future public infrastructure investments.
- Ensuring efficient access to jobs, services, and centers of trade.
- Examining community development patterns and identifying strategies to encourage private sector development patterns and investments that support these goals.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Conduct a needs assessment as it relates to a rail facility location, building/site characteristics and design elements
- Evaluate and refine the preliminary railroad operational analysis incorporating findings and recommendations into all applicable elements of this study.
- Conduct research on current design elements of transit/rail facilities ; identify facility amenities and design elements for consideration
- Assess Land Use and Zoning Issues; Identify development impacts
- Establish siting criteria, develop recommendations.

STUDY TASKS

The proposed study would follow a multi-task planning work program and be directed by the BRPC project manager. Work on the study tasks will be performed by staff from the BRPC and the Housatonic Railroad, as well as staff and officials from each of the directly affected municipalities. The follow section provides specific detailed information on the work associated with each of this project's tasks.

TASK 1: Project Management

BRPC will provide ongoing project management under this over-arching task and will coordinate closely with Housatonic Railroad staff. Key staff from the BRPC and Housatonic Railroad will constitute the Project Study Team. Meetings with leadership from the communities of Sheffield, Great Barrington, Stockbridge, Lee, Lenox and Pittsfield will occur regularly on an as needed basis. The public involvement process will utilize a combination of public involvement techniques to engage the public and interested groups in the project including public meetings, newsletters, web page development, press releases, etc. BRPC will be responsible for scheduling and facilitating public input meetings in conjunction with this project. Also included as part of this task is scheduling and facilitation of Project Team meetings, meetings with communities, meeting notes and technical memorandums. The preparation of technical memorandums is intended to summarize the individual study task and to make the information available prior to preparation of the draft/final study document.

Deliverables

Stakeholder meetings

Public meeting scheduling and facilitation

Summary notes from meetings

Informational Presentations

- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Berkshire MPO
- Select Boards, City Council, Planning/Community Development Boards

Technical memorandums

Draft and Final Study Documentation

TASK 2: Station Location Alternatives

The Project Study Team will evaluate potential station sites within the study area, including an evaluation of existing train station sites, to determine an optimum number and preferred locations for the stations. In making this recommendation, the Project Study Team will look at: rider accessibility, street access, size of site, potential transit interface, infrastructure availability, topography, parking, fit within the community and neighborhood, planned uses for the adjacent area, development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse opportunities; pedestrian and bicycle access; nearby grade crossings; impacts on railroad operations; proximity to other transportation modes and other relevant circumstances. All potential station sites evaluated will be ranked by the Project Team with input from representatives/officials of the communities in which the site is located.

Deliverables

Meetings with communities
Technical memorandum
Mapping of potential sites

TASK 3: Railroad Operations Analysis

Project Team will coordinate with Housatonic Rail regarding the effect which stops will have on existing and projected passenger and freight service on the line. The preliminary service plan will developed/refined as part of this task. Project Team with assistance of Housatonic Railroad will prepare a description on the existing track condition, any proposed track infrastructure improvements or required signal improvements that will be necessary for the proposed station locations. Included as part of this task is ridership forecasting. The Project Team with input from Housatonic Railroad will develop/refine ridership projections to ascertain travel demand by station location. These projections and forecasts will be used to support activities in the Station Facility Design Task and quantifying space needs of design elements.

Deliverables

Technical memorandum

TASK 4: Environment and Community Impacts

For the potential station locations, the Project Team will investigate environmental clearance requirements and the related environmental and community impacts of the project, including: wetlands, contamination issues, impacted community facilities, noise and vibration impacts, traffic impacts, multi-modal linkages, private property acquisitions (if any), effect on property values and other relevant factors identified. With respect to community impacts, BRPC staff will work with each of the communities to review the proposed station locations for conformance with their respective Land Use, Community Plans and Zoning; the findings will be documented. Opportunities for economic development will be assessed including the potential for increased revenue to communities due to increased property values and private sector investment and development opportunities attributed to passenger rail facilities. Community impacts analysis will also evaluate and provide recommendations for transit oriented design and smart growth.

Deliverables

Technical memorandum
Meetings with Communities

TASK 5: Station Facility Design

With consideration of outcomes ascertained from the above tasks and public input the Project Team will prepare recommendations on the design elements, components and facilities to be included in conceptual station designs. Sketches of design elements will be prepared along with a narrative to provide a fuller understanding of the design concept. Preliminary site plans (i.e. sketch type plans that are not architectural grade) may also be developed for select station sites which incorporate the required space and facilities in earlier study tasks. The station facility design will address such as those identified below:

Waiting Facility

Platform – height and design standards

Platform - accommodations, access and canopy

Auto pick-up/drop-off areas

Parking areas

ADA requirements

Transit and taxi stop

On-site circulation

Station signage

Way finding signage

Supportive uses (internal/on-site)

Electronic ticketing and kiosks

Security measures

Bicycle racks

Fencing and/or sound walls

LEED Certification

Other facilities and design elements

Also included as a work element of the Station Facility Design Task is an evaluation of options pertaining to station ownership and examining community development patterns to identify strategies which will encourage private sector development and investment.

Deliverables

Technical memorandum

Conceptual design sketch drawings

Preliminary site plans

TASK 6: Preparation of Draft Document and Presentation of Preliminary Recommendations

Based upon input obtained and the information ascertained from the above tasks, a draft study document will be prepared. This document will undergo a public comment period during which a second public meeting will be held to present the findings and preliminary recommendations as well as to gather public comment. Included as part of this task are briefings with Selectboard, City Council, and Planning/Community Development Board members.

Deliverables

Draft Study Documentation
Maps and Graphics
Public Meeting

TASK 7: Preparation of Final Document

This last task consists of finalizing the study documentation, the recommendations that identify the key elements to be included in the passenger rail station design and the optimal locations on which to locate passenger rail facilities. Recommendations will also be included outlining the next steps by which to further this initiative and to re-establish passenger rail service including options related to funding of capital improvements.

Deliverables

Final Study Documentation
Maps, Graphics and Conceptual Designs

