Passenger Rail Station Location and Design Analysis Project

Public Meeting
Pittsfield, MA
August 6, 2014
Public Meeting – Pittsfield, MA

• Schedule of the Public Meeting
  ▫ (1) Introduction/Welcome
  ▫ (2) Presentation on the Preliminary Findings
  ▫ (3) Updates on the Development of the Passenger Rail Service
  ▫ (4) Questions/Answers/Comments

*For the flow of the meeting we ask that questions be held until the Q&A portion of the meeting.
Proposed Passenger Rail Service

- The Housatonic Railroad Company (HRRC) is proposing to restore passenger rail service between Pittsfield, Massachusetts and Danbury, Connecticut along the Berkshire Line connecting with Metro North in Southeast, New York or continuing onto Grand Central Station.

- The HRRC proposal would make it possible for a passenger to board a train in New York City and travel all the way to Pittsfield, Massachusetts and vice versa.
The Berkshire Line

The Berkshire Line is a 38 mile long rail corridor in Berkshire County, Massachusetts that passes through the Towns of Sheffield, Great Barrington, Stockbridge, Lee, Lenox and the City of Pittsfield.
Planning for the Proposed Service

• The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) received a $240,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation (administered by MassDOT). HRRC provided $60,000 of in-kind match.

• The funds were used by BRPC to conduct a passenger rail station location and design analysis. (Study)
Overview of the Study

• Station Location Analysis
  ▫ Identify feasible locations for passenger rail stations that meet local, regional and operational needs.

• Railroad Operations Analysis
  ▫ Refine ridership estimates and the preliminary service plan.

• Anticipated Benefits & Impacts
  ▫ Identify the potential benefits and impacts of the proposed rail service and passenger rail station locations.

• Station Facility Design & Ownership Considerations
  ▫ Develop sketch plans for potential passenger rail station locations and identify ownership scenarios for the passenger rail stations.
Public Participation

• Ten plus (10+) sub-regional and community focused public meetings have been held over the past year and a half.
  ▫ Two (2) sub-regional meetings for local public officials
  ▫ Two (2) sub-regional general public input meetings
  ▫ Six plus (6+) community working meetings with local officials

• Online public comment survey (140 responses)

• At least one (1) additional public meeting to be scheduled
Station Location Analysis

- Station Location Analysis Methodology (Tiered Analysis)
  - Identified developable land adjacent to the rail corridor and grouped the land into target areas.
  - Analyzed whether the target areas met local needs, regional needs and operational needs in order to identify the top ranking target areas to study in greater detail.
  - The top ranking target areas were studied in greater detail to identify actual sites within those target areas.
Target Areas (TA’s)

The GIS analysis identified 1,885 acres of developable land within 500’ of either side of the rail corridor.

The adjacent developable land was grouped into twenty-eight (28) different target areas to facilitate the discussion of the eligible land.
Analysis of TA’s for Regional Needs

- The following are the evaluation criteria used to analyze how well a TA meets the needs of the region.

  - Station located at the northern terminus of the rail corridor to serve northern Berkshire County.
  
  - Stations located in or near the most densely populated areas to serve the greatest number of residents.
  
  - Stations located in close proximity to one or more federal interstates and state # highways to improve the connectivity to the surrounding areas.
  
  - Stations located in areas that provide riders with easy access to the most frequented tourist attractions and accommodations.
Analysis of TA’s for Operational Needs

- To ensure operational efficiency, HRRC suggests that stations be located at least ten (10) miles apart.
Results of the Regional & Operational Needs TA Analysis

- The regional and operational needs analysis identified the following municipalities as the best locations to host initial passenger rail stations.
  - ✔ Pittsfield
  - ✗ Lenox
  - ✔ Lee
  - ✗ Stockbridge
  - ✔ Great Barrington
  - ✔? Sheffield (conditional)
Analysis of TA’s for Local Needs

- The following are the evaluation criteria used to analyze how well a TA meets the local needs of the community.
  - Will the use of the TA as a passenger rail station maximize economic benefits by supporting existing businesses and downtown areas?
  - Will the use of the TA as a passenger rail station maximize access and connectivity to the community?
  - Will the use of the TA as a passenger rail station complement existing community development efforts?
  - Will the use of the TA as a passenger rail station fit with the existing community character?
  - Will the use of the TA as a passenger rail station avoid adverse environmental impacts?
# TA Ratings for Local Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pittsfield</th>
<th>Lenox</th>
<th>Lee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Downtown Pittsfield (E)</td>
<td>Crystal Street (G)</td>
<td>Downtown Lee (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. West Housatonic Street to West Street (G)</td>
<td>Willow Creek Road (P)</td>
<td>Columbia Street (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. South Street to West Housatonic Street (P)</td>
<td>New Lenox Road (P)</td>
<td>Route 102 (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Holmes Road (P)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Turnpike to West Park Street (P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pleasant Street to Turnpike (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Greylock Street to Lenox Line (P)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall TA Rating is in parentheses – *(E)xcellent, *(G)ood, *(F)air, and *(P)oorn
### TA Ratings for Local Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stockbridge</th>
<th>Great Barrington</th>
<th>Sheffield*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>South Street to East Main Street (G)</td>
<td>Downtown Great Barrington (E)</td>
<td>Sheffield Center (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Glendale (P)</td>
<td>Housatonic (E)</td>
<td>Cook Road (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cherry Street to South Street (P)</td>
<td>Van Deusenville (P)</td>
<td>West Stahl Road to Connecticut (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Glendale Middle Road (P)</td>
<td>North Plain: Pearl, Welcome, George (P)</td>
<td>Rannapo Road/Ashley Falls Road (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>North Plain: South of Division Street (P)</td>
<td>Town Line to Sheffield-Egremont Road (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>South Main Street (P)</td>
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</table>

* The Sheffield Center TA is the best location for meeting the local needs of the community; however, that TA is located within ten (10) miles of Great Barrington. The West Stahl Road TA is best for the operation of the passenger rail service, but does not meet the local needs of the community. Both TA’s were studied to identify potential station locations.
Desired Characteristics of Station Sites

• Areas of land for consideration should be approximately two (2) acres in size, however; smaller downtown areas may still be workable.

• Areas of land for consideration should have at least 250’ feet of frontage on tangent track or nearly tangent track.

• Access to the area of land for consideration is feasible.

• Areas of land for consideration with zero or one environmental constraints are viewed more favorably than areas with two or more environmental constraints.
“DRAFT” Recommendations for Initial Passenger Rail Station Sites

*Alternative Sites in Italics*
City of Pittsfield

- Joseph Scelsi Intermodal Transportation Center
  - *Hawthorne Avenue*
Town of Lee

- Westside Downtown
  - *Pleasant Street Station*
Town of Great Barrington

- Historic Station Area
  - *South Street/Maple Street*
  - *High Street/Main Street*
Town of Sheffield

- State Line Station
- *Silver Street Station
Town of Lenox

• Lenox is not recommended for an initial passenger rail station because it is located within ten (10) miles of the proposed passenger rail station in Pittsfield and the rail corridor passes through the less developed eastern portion of town.

• Lenox residents will be well served by the proposed passenger rail stations in Pittsfield or Lee.
Town of Stockbridge

- Stockbridge is not recommended for an initial passenger rail station because it is located within ten (10) miles of the proposed passenger rail station in Great Barrington and little opportunity exists for economic development in areas adjacent to the potential passenger rail station locations because of environmental constraints.

- Stockbridge residents will be well served by the proposed passenger rail stations in Great Barrington or Lee.
Railroad Operations Analysis

- Refinement of Ridership Estimates
  - The basis for the ridership refinement analysis is a 2010 marketing study prepared by Market Street Research (MSR).
  - The MSR report concluded that over a five (5) year period, a properly structured passenger rail service between Pittsfield, MA and New York City would generate a median ridership of two (2) million one-way fares.
  - It is important to note that the median ridership estimate provided by MSR includes both Connecticut and Berkshire County passengers.
  - To isolate the number of one-way fares attributable to Berkshire County the number of Connecticut one-way fares was estimated and subtracted from the total two (2) million fares.
Railroad Operations Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-region</th>
<th># of One-Way Fares</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Danbury-New Milford</td>
<td>340,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other CT</td>
<td>573,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County</td>
<td>1,086,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000,000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Danbury-New Milford estimate is from the 2008 Danbury Branch Improvement Program Report prepared for the State of Connecticut. The estimate from the report is slightly reduced to account for CT only commuters that were not isolated in the report.

The remaining number of one-way fares are split with a higher number to Berkshire County because it receives significantly more visitor-days per year compared to the Other CT region, 2.5 million visitor-days and 1.04 million visitor-days respectively. (Economic Report, Stephen Sheppard)
Railroad Operations Analysis

- **Preliminary Service Plan**
  - The initial service plan will be more fully developed as HRRC gains more insight into the markets to be served.
  - The initial service plan indicates that HRRC will operate eight (8) full round trips daily between Berkshire County and points south.
  - HRRC prefers to connect with the Metro North service at the Southeast station on the Harlem Line because it will provide more favorable trip times for through trains to Grand Central Station (if capacity allows) and for connecting passengers.
Anticipated Benefits

- The 2011 “Economic Benefits of Housatonic Railroad Passenger Service” report by Center for Creative Community Development projects that the proposed passenger rail service will have significant economic benefits to the region in the first ten years of the project.
  - The increase in economic output during the first decade is projected to be $625 million dollars with an average of 610 new jobs created.
  - Over the anticipated three (3) year construction period, the region’s economic output is expected to increase by $100 million dollars per year and 733 new jobs are expected to be created.
Anticipated Benefits

- During the operations period, the service is expected to contribute $33.5 million dollars of economic output per year for the region and create 431 new permanent jobs.

- The impact on the tourism sector in the region is projected to be significant with an additional 80,000 visitor-days expected in Berkshire County attributable to the passenger rail service.

- In the tourism sector the creation of 126 new jobs is projected with an additional $12.5 million dollars in additional economic output per year also projected.

- During the operations period, local governments in the region are expected to receive $2.6 million dollars in additional revenue each year.
Anticipated Benefits

- The proposed passenger rail service may provide an alternative means of intra-county transportation for residents and visitors (e.g. Great Barrington to Pittsfield).

- The selection of downtown station sites is critical to the viability of this service as an intra-county transportation option as the downtown stations will allow passengers to access destinations without the use of a vehicle.
Anticipated Impacts

- Noise and vibration are the most common impacts associated with any passenger rail service.
  - Noise and vibration impacts are not expected to be significant issues along the rail corridor. However, certain areas along the rail corridor, especially those in proximity to public at-grade crossings, will be subject to the sound of the locomotive horn.
  - Federal regulations require locomotive engineers to routinely sound the locomotive horn at all public at-grade crossings, except in areas designated as “quiet zones” or where wayside horns are installed.
  - The planned replacement of the jointed rail with welded rail in the rail corridor will significantly reduce the noise and vibration impacts from the trains.
# Comparison of Train Noise with Common Noises

**Source:** Federal Railroad Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise level (dBA)</th>
<th>Home Appliances</th>
<th>Speech at 3 ft</th>
<th>Motor Vehicles at 50 ft</th>
<th>Railroad Operations at 100 ft</th>
<th>General Type of Community Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Jet Aircraft at 500 ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>110</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Threshold of Hearing</td>
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**Railroad Operations (100’)** | **Noise Level (dBA)**
--- | ---
Horn | 96-110
Locomotive | 90-95
Rail Cars (50 mph) | 75-85
Locomotive (idling) | 70-75

*Source: Federal Railroad Administration*
Station Location Design & Ownership Considerations

- Conceptual site plans for several of the recommended passenger rail station locations are posted.

- The report will not recommend any definitive ownership scenarios for the passenger rail stations, but instead recommend that a dialogue begin between various public entities occur to determine the interest of each in owning a passenger rail station.

- For example, the stations on the Downeaster service between Brunswick, ME and Boston, MA are owned by a mix of both public and private entities (municipal, transit authority, private, public university)
Next Steps

- Release “Draft” Report in mid August
- Release Final Report – September 2014
- Final Public Presentation - TBD
- 30 Day Comment Period - TBD
Contact Information

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Project webpage:  
http://berkshireplanning.org/projects/passenger-rail-station-location-and-design-project/