



Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Working Group Meeting #2 Wednesday, June 22, 2022, 1:00-2:30 PM Held Virtually Via Zoom

Meeting Summary

The Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Working Group met for the second time on June 22, 2022. At this meeting, the Study team provided an overview of the updated Goals and Objectives for the Study, information from prior Studies, the current conditions of the corridor, and next steps for the Study. The meeting concluded with a discussion of issues and opportunities for consideration during the Study. The meeting was also open to members of the public, who were given the opportunity to share comments and questions at the end of the meeting.

Meeting Notes

1. *Welcome, Ground Rules and Agenda by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager)*

All attendees are welcomed to the meeting and are informed that the meeting is being recorded. Makaela Niles (MassDOT) introduces herself and explains the ground rules for the meeting including how Working Group members and the public can participate. Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reviews the agenda for the Working Group meeting.

2. *Study Overview and Summary of Working Group Meeting #1 by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager)*

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) explains the Study overview which includes the following:

- Public participation
- Documenting past efforts
- Market analysis
- Physical, regulatory, and right-of-way (ROW) ownership
- Potential service plans and alternatives
- Alternatives evaluation and cost estimate
- Development of recommended next steps

The Study team presents the proposed set of goals and objectives for the Study and describes how feedback was used to update and refine the goals to include the following:

- Support economic development along the Northern Tier corridor
- Promote transportation equity
- Minimize impacts on public health and the environment from transportation

3. *Review of Past Efforts by Paul Nelson, HNTB*

Paul Nelson (HNTB) reviews the past efforts. The Study team has reviewed 25 past efforts including passenger rail and transportation studies, municipal transportation plans/studies, and economic development studies. The Study team has also identified information related to demographics, rail infrastructure conditions, environmental resources, travel patterns and/or trends, as well as future conditions.

The key takeaways of this include the following:

- No previous corridor-wide evaluation of travel conditions along Route 2
- Most transportation planning has been focused more on local travel
- Opportunity for passenger rail service to tie into economic development efforts throughout the Study area
- Need a better understanding of travel pattern changes due to COVID-19

4. *Current Conditions: Market Analysis by Paul Nelson, HNTB*

Paul Nelson (HNTB) reviews the corridor demographics (i.e., population, cost of living, zero car households and poverty levels, employment and economic development, tourism and major attractors, and the 2020 to 2040 socio-economic forecasts) and gives an overview of the overall travel patterns and travel by vehicle.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) notes the following from the demographic data:

- All data represents pre-COVID conditions (2019)
 - Full impact of COVID on society and travel patterns is still not fully understood
 - Study team will be monitoring trends tied to commuting patterns, other travel patterns, employment trends, etc.
- The Study team is using most current MassDOT-approved population and employment forecasts by UMass Donahue Institute
 - Updated forecasts that incorporate the 2020 Census and potential COVID impacts are in development

Paul Nelson (HNTB) highlights the following from the travel patterns overview:

- Motor vehicles are the predominant mode of travel, especially west of I-495
- Most travel in the corridor is local (same county or adjacent)
- Travel volumes along Route 2 have grown closer to Boston but stagnated farther west
- Travel options beyond motor vehicle are limited west of Fitchburg

Market Analysis: Findings & Conclusions

- Lack of transportation options
 - Intercity travel choices west of Fitchburg are limited outside of personal vehicle use
- No unified corridor travel behavior
 - Trips leaving each segment more likely destined to communities outside the Route 2 Corridor
- Population and employment declines expected to decrease travel demand from Worcester County westward

- Based on current projections, underlying demographic dynamics could reduce major growth in these areas of the corridor

5. *Working Group Discussion on Current Conditions: Market Analysis by Paul Nelson*

Paul Nelson (HNTB) asks Working Group members for feedback on the goals and objectives. He asks what attendees see as the most important for planning passenger rail service, and if the Study team should look at any additional data in more detail.

Representative John Barrett comments that the aging population and loss of younger workers may reduce the employment pool. He asks if this will be an attraction to younger people coming to the area to look at some of these jobs.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) says that is the ultimate question. He notes that this will be one of the things that the Study team is looking at, especially with the addition of rail service for new transportation options. He speculates that it is more likely to see people moving into these areas who have jobs in other parts of the corridor and then use the rail service to connect with it, and that would almost happen first before big changes would be seen in the underlying employment and job market. He says the Study team can work with folks who represent those types of economic development agencies in the corridor and try to understand in fine detail how that is implemented throughout the corridor.

Representative John Barrett responds that one of the biggest draws Western Massachusetts has always had is the quality of life, and with technology and broadband improving all the time and more people working remotely, this can relieve the pressure on larger cities. He says that this would be an asset for the area with rail service becoming available. He does not know how in depth the Study team has gone looking at this, but says everyone has heard that “everybody is moving west”, and asks if this would be an enhancement of any kind? He thinks it would be, but just takes it as a selling point. He notes that as more people move west, it is a question of getting them to move even farther west than Fitchburg and Leominster by using rail service as a selling point.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) says that the Study team will be looking at models. He explains that a lot of the growth models for Massachusetts start in Boston and grow out, and the further you are away, the longer you have to wait for it. He mentions that the Study team will also be looking at the opportunity and how feasible is it with something like a rail that might start a different growth pattern.

Representative John Barrett says that just by taking a look at what has been done, it has improved and created growth in Fitchburg because of rail service there. He speculates the same thing will happen into further areas like Franklin and Berkshire, and even into other counties out west with extended rail service.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a comment from Representative Blais, who says “To echo your point, it’ll be important to understand how rail will incentivize economic development.”

Peter Lowitt (Devens Enterprise Commission) says that there has been explosive growth in Devens over the last two years. He is not sure if that would have been captured in the data because it is based on the 2020 ACS. He notes that Devens has added close to 2 million square feet and north of 6,000 jobs and people are hiring like crazy to fill up the buildings that are being constructed. He asks if the Study team will be able to refine the Study to take that into account as it moves forward.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) says that this will absolutely be taken into account. He explains the Study team will be thinking in depth about how this service can connect with the opportunities that are there, so the more information the Study team can find about existing travel patterns to Devens and how likely people are to switch over, the better. He says from what the Study team has learned, Devens is a unique location in the Commonwealth as far as the land available and opportunities for expansion there.

Linda Dunlavy (Franklin Regional Council of Governments) asks if Paul can talk a little bit about how the economic potential of rail in western Massachusetts will be assessed? She also notes that a huge development in western Massachusetts that will not be captured by current data is bringing broadband to so many western Massachusetts communities and to home networks, and she wonders how that will be built into the analysis.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) says that as far as economic potential, the Study team includes the UMass Donahue Institute, and this is the thing the Study team is going to explore. He says the simplest way to think about economic development is a continuation of existing patterns and that kind of propagation of commuters being further west if you can decrease their travel time. He thinks that is going to be the starting point for it and notes that the Study team would have to look at areas where stations may be, so looking at Greenfield or North Adams and saying 'organically, what's going to happen? What is going to change about how people think about travelling here' and 'what models can we do to reasonably anticipate that'? He says that maybe the Study team could work with them to get information about people who are currently traveling and to start to find the right information for a good estimate of what might happen. He says the Study team is also going to be working with two prevailing things: the existing population that is aging and starting to retire, and that's a big part of the population, but there is always the opportunity for other people to come in and fill that. He wonders if the ability of the rail services will be an equal match to that or will one kind of prevail over the other? He also says the broadband is going to be a big part of why people relocate, and the Study team will also be asking about the ability to work remotely as one key drivers of where people choose to live and how much of that is of access compared to other things. He says that just thinking of families with school children and in the school system – are they more or less likely to move just based on the availability of broadband and the ability to work remotely? He thinks it is something that everybody is looking at through COVID and the Study team will look at all the different factors that play into that. This could be shared with the group and once we get data.

Representative John Barrett says that last week he had a trip of 3 hours and 45 minutes getting into Boston. He says Route 2 is worse than what it was in the pre-COVID era and as time goes on, the traffic is heavier. He says what is very correct in all of this is that it's moving further west, noting that it has gone from Fitchburg into Leominster and out to Gardner now, and anyone who travels and uses the route on the Mass Pike that cuts down I-91 and comes up on the Mass Pike is finding it more brutal. He asks how this is impacting the environment and the carbon impact of all these cars piling up more and more all the time. He thinks this must be taken into consideration and says it is now worse. He does not know what the numbers are showing to get into Boston from the western part of the state and does not care what area people are coming in from, whether it's Worcester or Berkshire County, or even southern Vermont for that matter. He says he does not know if that is a question or statement of fact more than anything else.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) says he thinks that when the Study team looked at it, it was only 2019 versus 2021 data. Based on his own travel experience, it is the year 2022 when the Study team has really seen things

significantly ramp up as far as delay and travel time changes and things like that. He says the Study team can try to find ways to see how things have changed from 2021 on as far as congestions and travel times.

Representative John Barrett says that if you're not out of the city by 1:45pm at the latest you run into three plus hours going into his area.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a comment from Representative Blais, who mentions that the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism is using similar LBS data so it might be helpful to coordinate with them. She thanks Representative Blais for the comment and says that the Study team will certainly coordinate with them.

6. *Current Conditions: Ownership, Operations, Right-of-Way by Anna M. Barry, HNTB*

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) explains that as of June 1st, CSX has acquired Pan Am Railways (PAR). She notes that Pan Am Railways' 1,200-mile rail network through New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine is now part of CSX's much larger 21,000-mile network, serving the eastern United States and parts of Canada. She mentions that CSX assumes PAR's half ownership of the Pan Am Southern LLC (PAS) and that PAS is a separate railroad jointly owned with Norfolk Southern that operates freight service from Ayer, MA into Vermont and New York State, however PAS owns the right-of-way between Fitchburg and North Adams. She explains Pan Am Southern/ Pan Am Railway operations on the Northern Tier consist of about 10 trains daily and dispatching responsibility does not always align with ownership. PAS performs dispatching on MBTA-owned stretch from Ayer to Fitchburg and the MBTA has the right to assume dispatching responsibilities under some circumstances. She references several maps that show ownership, maintenance, and dispatching along the track, as well as the class of railroad track and allowable speeds. She notes that ruling grades are uphill grades that impose limits on the weight and size of a freight train, meaning this may require operation of lighter and more frequent freight trains, while heavier trains are slower on uphill grades, and both have an impact on passenger rail service. She also notes that there are 78 total active grade crossings, explaining that active warning devices typically include flashing lights and potentially gates, whereas passive warning devices typically include railroad cross-buck signs, stop signs, and other warning devices that alert a driver or pedestrian that a grade crossing is present.

Ownership, operation, right-of-way: Findings and Conclusions

- Track, structures and signals could support passenger service
 - The track, structures, and signals that allow a given class of track and freight train speeds generally allow for passenger train speeds that are higher than freight speeds
 - The maximum authorized speed on a section of track may be reduced in some areas because of curvature, grades, and approaches to meeting points on single track
 - Significant sections of single track reduce the capacity of the railroad and reduce flexibility for passenger train schedules
- Existing handoff between passenger and freight dispatching has been a successful model. CSX acquisition of Pan Am Railways may bring benefits (shifting trains to Boston and Albany (B&A)) and drawbacks (new shared ROW requirements)

7. *Working Group Discussion on Current Conditions: Ownership, Operations, Right-of-Way by Anna M. Barry, HNTB*

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) asks the Working Group members if any of this information aligns with the Study goals and objectives, what Working Group members see as the most important factors for planning passenger rail service, and if the Study team should look at any additional data in more detail.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a comment from Thomas Matuszko, who says “it may be too soon to know, but with the CSX acquisition, has CSX indicated that they intend to use this line? For instance, might CSX consolidate the line through Pittsfield and Springfield?”

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says that the transaction that was approved by the Service Transportation Board includes a commitment by CSX to allow Norfolk Southern to operate one of its higher speed trains on that Boston and Albany (B&A) track. This the only commitment that the Study team is aware of that was in the public record and there is no outward indication now of what types of changes, if any, might be made on the Pan Am Southern. It is important to remember Pan Am Southern has two owners, one is the Norfolk Southern and the other is CSX and they are both co-equal owners of that stretch of railroad. She says the Study team does not know yet if they’ll put their heads together and how they will, or if they will, restructure the freight service.

Thomas Matuszko (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission) asks if there is a time frame of when these decisions get made with these types of transactions.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says that she does not believe there was a time frame for the change of that freight train that is specific to moving to the B&A, but Norfolk Southern may have an interest in doing that, so they would have an incentive to make that move as soon as they could. She says that as for the rest of the changes, there isn’t a time limit, and it would be up to the individual companies to determine how fast they want to move.

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) comments that Norfolk Southern must actually complete some construction in New York before they can move that train, so it is really not clear when that is going to happen. They have not started construction yet.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a question from Representative Blais who says, “I heard that somewhere along the way that the line has an updated signal system west of Wachusett and is there any truth to that?”

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) responds that the Study team had understood that Pan Am Southern had committed to the implementation of positive train control, which is an enhanced safety system for stopping trains short of collisions and other factors. She explains the Study team was not able to confirm that it had been installed but there was an intent to do it and they will certainly be looking to find out if that has occurred. Anna says she is glad that was mentioned because it is another move in the right direction.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a question from Peter: “Is there any new train technology that might impact the Study that we might be aware of?”

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says that this positive train control is a requirement by the federal railroad administration for most areas where you operate passenger trains. She explains that it is not really new technology, but it is a recent requirement in the last ten years, so that is something the Study team will definitely factor into the consideration of alternatives. She does not think they are what you call new

technology, but this railroad could potentially benefit from, depending on what is looked at, tilt trains or other new features that are not new for providing higher speed services.

Representative John Barrett says he thinks the most important thing the Study team has answered is that it does support passenger service. He says he put in the transportation bill last night knowing full well that it won't go the level that he asked for, but he asked for \$35 million to address two areas of concern here. He says the big elephant in the room, of course, is the condition of the Hoosac Tunnel from Florida and into the city of North Adams, which is critical to getting to the destination of Vermont and New York and to upgrade the lines along the way to deal with some of the things that were talked about with the curves and the grades of some areas because he thinks that needs to be looked at. He says that one of the reasons he submitted the bill is because in a time when there is money available to address real needs, of course they would push very hard for what they call the 'west to east railroad' and the 'east to west line' in the southern part of Massachusetts, beginning in Pittsfield. He thinks that, hopefully, they will be able to get some money over the next couple of years, or at least into the bond issue so that money is available. He says that everyone knows that this is play money that goes in there but aims to get it released and get a commitment from the new governor. He explains that this governor has made a commitment to rail service, but he's going to be gone, so he hopes that the next governor will deal with the issue of putting some money into this. He thinks there will be sufficient support with the western Massachusetts delegation, especially those in the Northern Tier areas and that they would be able to get some money in there. He does not know if it will be \$35 million but says back in 1851 the legislature in the state of Massachusetts committed \$1 million to the construction of the Hoosac Tunnel and 22 years later, it ended up spending \$21 million. He says to imagine what that investment would be in real dollars today. He is sure it would be in the billions of dollars, so he did not think \$35 million was too much to ask for. He also says they must continue to press for that, and he is sure the delegation in the western part of the state would do so. He explains that is just an informational type of thing because they need to look at the Hoosac Tunnel and some minor changes along this route to get passenger service working and would need the cooperation of CSX and others and to think about some of the commitments they made to the STB board in their comments.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) thanks Representative Barrett for the comment and says that while it was said that it would support passenger service, it was not said that it was competitive or high-quality service. Anna says she has a Hoosac Tunnel mousepad, which shows that it is a long stretch of single track in poor condition even on a mousepad, so she thinks it still needs investment.

Representative John Barrett says that he thinks the thing to remember here is there is a historical perspective to this also. He thinks it's the longest tunnel in the United States for train service, or that is what people used to say, and it used to be the longest in North America, so there is a lot of historical perspective to this rail line and doing these types of things, so hopefully it will work, and they will try anything.

8. *Issue and Opportunities Discussion by Anna M. Barry, HNTB*

- Current conditions and issues simultaneously present potential opportunities and constraints, including the ownership of the corridors and the state of the right-of-way infrastructure
 - CSX Acquisition may shift trains to B&A and may impose drawbacks such as new shared right-of-way requirements

- The current right-of-way could support passenger service, but it has been maintained for freight service with grades, curves, and single track that could limit the quantity or raise the cost of good passenger service
 - Existing handoff between passenger and freight dispatching on the Northern Tier has been a successful model, but new ownership may change the model
 - Many passenger train station locations may be able to host new stations
 - Existing governance, regulatory and funding structures could support Northern Tier passenger service, including Amtrak access rights on freight railroads
 - A new state Western Massachusetts Passenger Rail Authority could promote development of new passenger services
9. *Working Group Discussion on Issues and Opportunities by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager) and Anna M. Barry, HNTB*

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) opens a discussion on what Working Group members see as the primary constraints, things that should be considered, opportunities, and other potentially helpful data sets for the development of alternatives.

Thomas Matuszko (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission) comments that it would be very important to try to get some empirical data to determine the shift in employment patterns and work-life patterns to rural areas to justify the “build it and they will come” or “they’re already coming, and they need a way to get to the other urban areas.” He thinks this data set would be crucial to the Study moving forward.

10. *Next Steps by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager)*

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) presents the next steps for the Study goals and objectives. Up to six service alternatives will be developed and evaluated through the Winter of 2023 and the Study is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2023. She explains that the first public information meeting is anticipated to be held in July and the next Working Group meeting will be held later this summer and formal meeting announcements will be available through a few different channels including the Study website, social media, and email. She asks if there are any questions or comments from the Working Group and the public.

11. *Public Discussion by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager), Anna M. Barry (HNTB), and Paul Nelson (HNTB)*

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) opens the discussion up to members of the public in attendance for public comment. She reminds attendees to use the raised hand button to participate verbally and that they will receive a notification on their screen to unmute once they are recognized. She says that the question-and-answer (Q&A) box can be used to submit written comments and questions and ask the attendees participating by phone to dial star-nine (*9) to raise a virtual hand. She asks that people share only one comment or question at a time and limit comments to two minutes so the Study team can hear from as many people as possible about their thoughts on issues and opportunities that should be considered during the development of the potential service plans and alternatives. She clarifies that this is certainly

not the only opportunity to comment, and that comments and questions can be shared throughout the Study process using the comment form on the Study website. She notes that there are several questions and comments that have come in over the course of the meeting in the Q&A.

Jay Flynn asks if some of those studies are available.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) says the answer is yes. She explains that as Paul mentioned, there were several transportation studies and economic development studies that were reviewed as part of this process, which included the Intercity Passenger Rail Governance White Paper that was conducted following the east-west passenger rail process and is available on the MassDOT website as well as the state rail plan and freight plan. There were also some regional transportation studies that were reviewed as well, so she recommends reaching out to regional planning agencies or visiting their websites for some of those efforts or to learn about some of the great work they're doing.

Greta Jochem asks if there were speed maximums on the map of the tracks going across the state. She asks if there is an estimated time for how long it would take to get to North Adams or to Boston for that whole stretch of tracks because it looks like some of the maximum speeds were 30 or 35 miles an hour. She also asks if there is an estimate and asks where she can find more information on who is part of this Working Group.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) responds that the estimate has not been developed yet. That will be happening as the Study team starts to evaluate various service alternatives and those speeds just tell you in a given segment what the maximum is, it does not tell you what the actual speed is throughout a given segment. She explains that is they cannot just add those up and come to a number, so the Study team doesn't have it now, but it is something that will be developed in the next tasks.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) says this is another great question and a great time to plug the Study website where we have meeting materials and information on the website about the Study, including a list of working members. She thanks Greta for those questions and says the next question in the Q&A comes from James.

James Starkey thinks the data showing population growth in Central MA is "declining" along the Route 2 corridor is incorrect. Towns west of I-190 on Route 2 have seen rapid population growth as far west as Athol and Orange.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) responds that there is two parts to that. Part of it is what the Study team has seen in recent history, say like the 2010 to 2020, and he believes that information showed growth in the central segment. He clarifies that the current projections out to 2040 do show little to declining growth. He says that perhaps as those projections are revised, the Study team might see something like the growth you mentioned factor into it. He says the Study team can make sure to specifically look at those towns to see how it's related to that and explains that one that might be incorrect before he thanks James for drawing that to the Study team's attention.

Chris Klem asks if the Study team will develop projections for population, cost of living, and other social/economic/demographic factors that may shift if passenger rail is developed.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) explains there is two parts to the answer on that. For consistent planning throughout the Commonwealth, the Study team has a responsibility to look at the future conditions that are approved i.e., population, household, jobs, number of jobs expected in each MPO or each region

and kind of making they are consistent with that. He does not think that is going to stop the Study team necessarily from testing the things that might change and how they may deviate from that. Right now, the Study team has not established what future conditions will be tested in these ridership models for the evaluation of service alternatives. He notes that that is a good question and something the Study team will be asking as it is put together is 'what is the responsible way to ensure consistency with statewide planning standards of practice?' and then recognizing the potential for transformational changes in how people settle and move around that something like this could do. He notes the Study team is committed to defining how this is talked about and how it will be considered since that will be a big part of the dialogue the Study team wants to have, both with the Working Group and the public, on how that will be done moving forward.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) thanks them and says the next question is from Travis.

Travis Pollack (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) asks if there are any intercity bus options in this corridor, and what is ridership for those services like.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) responds that there is no actual contiguous service along the Route 2 corridor. He says there is bus service at key points, but it doesn't run along Route 2. He says the bus service in the corridor is more sporadic like the bus that visits Williams College and then goes down to New York City and that there is service from Greenfield, but one would have to connect to Springfield to get over to Boston. He explains there is nothing there and there is no ridership the Study team can share, but notes that several years ago, there was a service supported along part of the corridor. The Study team has not been able to get data on this, will be able to share it once it is available.

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) says that Paul is right. He explains that the last time there was service on Route 2 from Boston out to Williamstown was about 25 years ago and the state's project only lasted a couple of years, so it never really had a chance to fully develop a ridership market.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) thanks them for their questions and responses. She says that speaks to a question that came in from Rauley, who asked about existing RTA bus ridership and how that's included into the demand forecasting and some of the OD travel patterns. She asks Paul to talk about that component of it and how some of the RTA bus ridership would be factored either into the StreetLight data or into some of the upcoming analysis for ridership or directions.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) responds that it has. He explains that any sort of transit ridership is a good test of how the underlying demographics are translating into travel by alternate modes, so the Study team will definitely be looking at the ridership in the routes that do exist along the corridor, the kind of ridership they are attracting, and work with team members at Cambridge Systematics and other elements of the Study team to see what that shows as far as predicting or estimating ridership and how that might translate over to rail travel as well.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) says the next question is from Joe. She says that Paul or Anna can talk about the development of the service alternatives and the process the Study team will go through with that including any additional stops along the corridor.

Joe Kurland comments he is glad that Williamstown is included as a place with a major attractor. He asks if that means extending train to Williamstown rather than North Adams is being considered?

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says the Study team is developing overall six alternatives for this Study and where the trains will stop and where the limits are is certainly open for discussion. She explains the legislation that sponsored this Study specifically mentions Greenfield and North Adams, but she thinks the Study team needs to look at any destination that has the potential to add to the utility and usefulness of the service.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) thanks them for the question and response. She says the Study team is running a little bit low on time, and that there are a couple more questions in the Q&A to address before transitioning to some of the closing statements.

Rauley Caine asks how the group plans to adjust for the correlation between the decrease in job growth/employment opportunity in the western segment and the lack of currently available travel options?

Paul Nelson (HNTB) says the lack of options is something the Study team will be looking to address directly as far as how passenger rails can fill a gap and the ability to move around. He doesn't necessarily think they are going to be testing the connection between the two direct links but will look at both and how they factor into ridership and service development of the potential alternatives. He explains the idea being that, like the question have been, job growth and employment is on a projected trajectory. Could rail service change it in any way? He says the idea is that by introducing that travel option, does it change who can access those jobs and who wants to access those jobs, and vice versa, how much of the jobs and economic activity in say, the eastern section, could be connected in a way that was not really favorable before?

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) thanks them both and says she sees a question from Representative Blais, and thinks it speaks to what Anna mentioned about stopping patterns since Representative Blais also mentions coordination with New York about ridership to Albany and how this is something that could be looked at. She asks Anna if there is anything else to add to that?

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says the Study team has not looked at it as part of today's existing conditions but as alternatives are developed, it is something that the Study team can do.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) says the next question comes from Jay.

Jay Flynn asks if the Study team is looking at N-S connections to Pittsfield/Springfield/Boston or only PAS service.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says studying this corridor is quite a substantial effort. She explains that the Study team is not engaged in a specific study of passenger rail on those corridors, but the sources of ridership, the connections of the last mile, as well as the coordination of connections, so meaning the Valley Flyer, meaning any service that might be running in the Berkshires and other locations, meaning RTA services, will be something that will definitely be considered in the development of alternatives and evaluation.

George Kahale comments that there is a bus service between Athol and Gardner connecting to the MBTA at Wachusett station, so there is a service between Greenfield and Athol. He explains that this means there is a bus service between Greenfield all the way to Gardner and to Fitchburg, and from there it can be connected to MBTA to Boston.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) says that the Study team has documented those connections in the Study of current conditions as well.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) thanks him for mentioning those services.

12. Next Steps by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager)

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) thanks the Working Group and the members of the public for attending and sharing comments and questions and encourages attendees to visit the website to submit additional comments or questions or sign up for updates. The materials from this meeting will be made available on the Study website. Looking forward to reconvening later in the summer.

Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Meeting #2 Attendees

MassDOT/Study Team:

- Makaela Niles – MassDOT
- Anna M. Barry – HNTB
- Paul Nelson – HNTB
- Lauren Dvonch – HNTB
- Sara Stoja - HNTB
- Andreas Aeppli – Cambridge Systematics

Working Group Members & Alternates:

1. Jody Ray – MBTA
2. John Barrett – State Representative
3. Kali Puppolo – Office of State Representative John Barrett
4. Linda Dunlavy – Franklin Regional Council of Governments
5. Matthew Russett – Office of U.S. Representative Richard Neal
6. Marco Turra – CSX Transportation
7. Natalie Blais – State Representative
8. Peter Lowitt – Devens Enterprise Commission
9. Rachel Klein – Office of State Senator Joanne Comerford
10. Thomas Matuszko – Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
11. Travis Pollack – Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Public Attendees:

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Anthony Jewell | 11. Ethan Britland, MassDOT |
| 2. Barry Libman | 12. Ethan Finlan |
| 3. Ben Heckscher | 13. Franny Osman |
| 4. Carl Seppala | 14. George Kahale |
| 5. Cedric Ye | 15. Greta Jochem |
| 6. Chris Klem, MassDOT | 16. Ishmael Sharif, MassDOT |
| 7. Clete Kus | 17. James Starkey |
| 8. Cole Czub | 18. Jay Flynn |
| 9. Dan Hodge | 19. Joe Kurkland |
| 10. Danielle Letourneau | 20. Joshua Brown |

21. Julia Blyth
22. Kari Nijiri
23. Kris Gunderman
24. Kris Kretsch
25. Laura Sylvester
26. Loreen Flockerzie
27. Marie Harpin
28. Marla Allisan
29. Meghan Labbee
30. Melissa Glick
31. Michael Perreault
32. Rana Al-Jammal
33. Rauley Caine
34. Susan Bisiewicz