Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Public Information Meeting #2

Thursday, October 26, 2023, 6:00 PM

Held Virtually Via Zoom

Meeting Summary

The Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study team held a Public Information Meeting on October 26, 2023. At this meeting, the Study team shared an overview of the study's background, reviewed the public workshop, presented the development and evaluation of the Phase 2 alternatives, and garnered feedback.

Meeting Notes

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

All attendees are welcomed to the meeting and informed that the meeting is being recorded. Makaela Niles (MassDOT) introduces herself, thanks the public and the members of the working group in attendance and explains the meeting notes and procedures including how to participate. She reviews the agenda for the Public Information meeting, which includes an overview of the study, public workshop review, Phase 2 alternative development and evaluation working group discussion, public comment and participation, and finally next steps.

2. *Study Overview by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager)*

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reviews the Study background and process, which includes the following with each task building on the previous:

- 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

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) explains the Study goals and objectives as supporting economic development along the Northern Tier Corridor, promoting transportation equity, and minimizing the impacts from transportation on public health and the environment.

3. *Public Workshop Review by Anna M. Barry and Paul Nelson, HNTB*

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) reviews the two-phase alternatives development process presented in January of 2023 and states that the public feedback on the initial alternatives led to the development of the Phase 2 Alternatives. Phase 1 includes a lower investment option and a higher investment option for a one-seat-ride from North Adams to Boston North Station, with the following assumptions: four stations, five trains per day, the right of way will be used by both commuter trains and freight trains, dwell time at stations will be two minutes per Amtrak's scheduling standard, train locomotives will be diesel with Amfleet passenger cars, and no modifications will be made to MBTA infrastructure.

The lower investment option included minimum signal improvements and some trackage additions to support meet-and-pass locations. The higher investment option includes more track and signal infrastructure improvements.

Based on an evaluation of the two levels of investment, the higher investment allows for travel time reduction of more than one hour. The lower investment provided a four-hour travel time while the higher investment resulted in just under a three-hour travel time. Higher ridership is a function of reduced travel times. While higher investment creates more transportation costs per rider, lower annual operating costs are realized due to higher ridership. The higher investment also resulted in greater positive environmental impact with a greater vehicle miles travel reduction.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) reviews the feedback from the public workshop that led to the Phase 2 alternatives.

The study considered:

- Additional stops
- A connection to Albany
- Seasonal attractors
- Potential upgrades to support higher speeds
- Ridership projections and cost estimation questions

Paul Nelson (HNTB) reviews the initial ridership estimated process and how it changed for Phase 2 of the study. He explains that the initial ridership estimation process for the Phase 1 evaluation was a three-step process that started with a comparison between observed MBTA Commuter Rail boardings and origin-destination trip data along the Northern Tier corridor. The ridership estimates then looked at the impact of travel times on ridership for similar intercity service. These estimates are then used to estimate the potential ridership of the initial service alternatives.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) explains the updated, four-step ridership estimation process used for Phase 2, which uses a comparison of transit travel time to the auto travel time between the same

destinations. The estimation model was also adjusted to reflect the less frequent intercity service. Recent travel patterns for intra-Corridor trips on the Downeaster are also applied to estimate intra-corridor, non-Boston-based travel along the Northern Tier. He reviews the trip activity data for the corridor. Catchment areas around potential stations are also described as a factor in estimating ridership.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) reviews the cost estimation process. Cost categories include construction cost, acquisition of real estate for the right of way, a civil system contingency at 0% design, vehicle or train costs, escalation for future costs, and engineering and permitting.

The Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study is at a pre-design stage and, as a result, contingency costs account for unknown but expected elements of the project. The cost estimates are based on material, equipment, and labor costs from recent railroad construction projects in Massachusetts and surrounding states. Refinements were made to the cost of track components, the consideration of recycled rail and materials, and rolling stock estimates. Station estimates reflect station accessibility features.

4. *Phase 2 Alternatives Development and Evaluation by Anna M. Barry and Paul Nelson, HNTB*

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) presents the Phase 2 service alternatives that were developed based on input received on the two initial alternatives. All four proposed alternatives in Phase 2 build upon the improvements incorporated into the higher infrastructure investment alternative presented in Phase 1.

Alternative 3 – Electrified Service. Overhead catenary system with electrified rolling stock. A new double track in Charlemont is included. Tracks are to be upgraded from Class 3 to Class 4. Electrification is overhead. Crossings need upgrades. Some bridge rehabilitation is necessary. Signal replacement and Positive Train Control are proposed. Station stops are added in Athol, Ayer and Porter Square, Cambridge. North Adams is proposed to have a layover facility.

Alternative 4 – Full Local Service. Full local service proposes to include dditional station stops in Shelburne Falls, Athol, Gardner, and Porter Square. New double track is needed in Buckland. Tracks are to be upgraded from Class 3 to Class 4. Crossings need upgrades. Some Bridge rehabilitation is necessary. Signal replacement and Positive Train Control are proposed. North Adams is proposed to have a layover.

Alternative 5 – Albany Extension. From North Adams, service is extended through Schenectady and Albany. Other stations include Greenfield, Fitchburg, Porter Square, and North Station. Double track is required in Charlemont, and Stillwater and Clifton Park NY. Additional improvements include grade crossing upgrades, bridge rehabilitation, signal replacement, and Positive Train Control implementation. North Adams layover is not included, as facilities in Albany are assumed to be utilized.

Alternative 6 – Northern Tier Rail Link. This alternative includes a connection in Fitchburg from the MBTA Fitchburg Line to the Northern Tier Rail service. Stations include North Adams, Greenfield, Athol, and Fitchburg. Tracks are to be upgraded from Class 3 to Class 4. Crossings need upgrades. Some bridge rehabilitation is necessary. Signal replacement and Positive Train Control are proposed. North Adams is proposed to have a layover.

Total Projected Costs per Route Mile are discussed for Alternatives 1 through 6. Additional project construction costs for the Hartford Line and South Coast Rail are presented for comparison purposes.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) notes that ridership is related to travel time, as a reduction in travel time increases ridership. Travel time for Alternatives 3 through 6 shows a reduction of about one hour between North Adams and Boston compared to Alternative 1. Environmental impacts and passenger rail impacts are estimated to be minimal. Freight rail impacts are assumed to be minimal except for the unknown impacts of Alternative 5 – Albany Extension. Sixty-nine rail crossings are assumed to be impacted for all alternatives except for the Albany Extension which has 119 crossings due to the increased route mileage.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) presents the ridership estimation for the alternatives. Alternative 3 – Electrified Service and Alternative 4 – Full Local Service have the greatest effect on ridership. Alternative 6 – Northern Tier Rail Link has a built-in delay due to the transfer to MBTA Commuter Rail service. Alternative 5 – Albany Extension is in competition with other existing services in New York.

Operation and maintenance costs are higher for the electrified service; however, the ridership is the highest of the alternatives. Transportation cost savings accrue due to lower vehicle use and a decrease in parking fees paid in metro Boston. The economic impacts during construction assume Alternatives 2 through 6 are very similar and would transpire over four years while Alternative 1 assumes only three years of construction.

Economic impacts from construction include direct construction costs, indirect construction costs from vendors, and induced costs defined as the spending that occurs due to increased economic activity in the area.

The comparison to other services includes the Pere Marquette in Illinois/Indiana/Michigan, the Piedmont in North Carolina, the Downeaster in Massachusetts/New Hampshire/Maine and the Vermonter.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) explains that the key takeaways are that all alternatives can provide connectivity, mobility, and transportation choice, and are estimated to provide positive environmental and economic benefits. Alternative 3 – Electrified Service and Alternative 4 – Full Local Service generate higher ridership levels and the measurements associated with them, including transportation costs savings and VMT (vehicle miles traveled) reduction.

5. *Public Comment by Makaela Niles, MassDOT (Project Manager)*

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) opens the floor for questions and comments from the public as well as suggestions for next steps. She reviews the protocol for asking questions and/or sharing comments.

Representative Natalie Blais thanks the team for the comprehensive presentation that incorporated many of the questions and suggestions presented throughout the study process, and notes the excitement in Western Massachusetts for rail.

Senator Jo Comerford echoes Representative Blais' comments, inquires about outlining the next steps to study for the meeting participants and how to they can be most engaged, and asks how many people are in attendance or registered for the meeting.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) notes that the meeting has 143 active attendees and explains that, based on the feedback received, the alternatives will be refined and recommended next steps for the study process will be developed.

Andy Hogeland requests additional information about long-term economic development.

Representative John Barrett echoes the comments made by Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Blais and expresses that the time has come to get am implementation program going.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a question from Clint Richmond who asks, what is superelevation?

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) explains that superelevation is elevating the outside rail to account for the impacts of higher speeds and improve passenger comfort through curved locations.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) mentions that the rail service will pass through curved zones in central and western Massachusetts.

Rebecca Bialecki asked to clarify Athol's inclusion as a potential stop and states that it is one of the few communities that has seen population growth in the last two years, and would like that to continue. Rebecca mentions that new housing development coming and that the rail service would be important an asset to help continue the momentum.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) comments that Athol has been included in at least a couple of the proposed alternatives.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) expresses thanks for highlighting the connection between economic development, transportation, and housing, and reads a question from Mike Small, who asks about the population growth projected for Greenfield, if there will be a policy to encourage dense affordable housing to encourage walking and discourage sprawl or building in existing woodland and, failing the existence of policy for affordable housing, if there will be any plan to prevent spikes in rents.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) expresses thanks for highlighting the connection between transportation and housing and adds that as any actions move forward, coordination with municipalities would be needed.

Andrew Fitch inquires about what else residents could do to support Northern Tier Passenger Rail.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) notes that the public meeting attendance, together with the comments and questions received throughout the process has helped to shape the process. She expresses appreciation for the comments, questions, and participation throughout the process and mentions that continuing that momentum with comments, questions, participation, and reaching out to elected officials.

Sean Suhoski states that Athol is the hub of the North Quabbin region of the Commonwealth and points out that it is the second most populous stop between Gardner and Greenfield, with twelve thousand residents like North Adams. Sean mentions the access to the rail for economic development purposes whether for commuting or to increase job opportunities, and for access and quality of life, and expresses his excitement for the study.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads two questions from Glenn Eaton regarding additional parking in Gardner, Athol, Greenfield, and North Adams: Have land acquisition costs for additional parking and/or costs relating to constructing additional parking lots or garages been included in the cost estimates, and have sites been identified in the study's analysis or will those sites be identified by the time the final plan is complete?

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) states that the study generally identified potential locations for parking around most stations; however, parking lots or garages are not specifically included in the cost estimate. The study has focused on the station construction cost.

Janice Sorensen expresses interest in the local option and asks about what the cost of a ticket would be.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) states that fare policy is usually developed further along in the development of a transportation service and was not the focus of this study at this stage of planning.

John Garrett echoes previous comments, expresses interest in Alternative 3 – Electrified Service and Alternative 4 – Full Local Service, and supports building the service quickly. He discusses the cost of electrification and the impact on meeting climate goals, and asks about the study's cost per mile, compared with various international and national rail projects.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) states that the study's estimates were developed using the best information available by experts in this type of work who drew upon their experience, and notes that as the project is refined, prices can also be refined.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) adds that this question arises a lot with rail, and transit projects in general. He mentions a report that was completed on why it is cheaper to do transit in other countries and notes the standard of practice for these types of efforts. He notes differing standards for substation construction and other elements.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a question from Clint Richmond who asks if the catchment for a station is larger for intercity travel compared to commuter rail.

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) states that catchment areas could be considered larger for intercity service and that this was taken into consideration along the corridor. He mentions the relationship between how far away someone is from the service and the trip time to connect to the service, and the of the East-West rail project on passenger decision-making.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) notes that in developing and modeling travel schedules, connections to North-South service was considered.

Pam Harty thanks the team for including a stop in Athol, advocates for electrification, and wants to ensure there is an understanding of what the costs are. Pam is also interested in understanding the impact on the environmental justice communities if diesel trains are used.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) notes the benefits of electrification and adds that the other alternatives, even with diesel, show reductions in VMT. She mentions the study considers five trains per day and the impact of additional trips would be evaluated in a future phase of permitting.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) states the emissions from vehicles taken off the road are generally higher than the emissions released from the trains that would be running. He mentions the consideration of the impacts of idling or diesel emissions.

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) adds that there's variation in the types of emissions based on the rolling stock utilized.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads questions from Susan Abrams, Ferd Wulkan, and Clint Richmond related to combining alternatives (e.g., the potential to combine Alternative 3 and Alternative 6), any impacts that combining alternatives may have on costs and the environment, and potential phasing.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) explains that the team evaluated six alternatives for the purpose of showing the impacts and characteristics of the alternatives, and states that phasing is part of the next steps of implementation for policy makers and communities to weigh in on as the project progresses. She notes that Alternative 6 has the longest trip time and combining it with Alternative 3 would lose the benefit of the speeds.

Steven Ellis notes the benefits of the service to provide equitable access to economic, medical, and cultural resources in the eastern part of the state and mentions that, by building a service that attracts riders and is ecologically sound, the greatest economic and quality of life value from the project over time can be yielded. Steven expresses interest in more stops and mentions that the transfer in Fitchburg included in Alternative 6 could undermine the success of the system.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads comments from Jim Mahon and Soren Henry supporting Alternative 4 – Full Local Service.

Lisa Blackmer requests that train schedules and fare cost be analyzed as economic drivers, for example as development of employment opportunities and tourism.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) explains that modeled schedules were developed to serve a variety of needs, and that feedback from this meeting can be incorporated in the next steps.

Ferd Wulkan favors Alternative 3 – Electrified Service and asks if federal funding is available.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) states that there are federal funds for intercity rail projects.

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) adds that federal legislation designates federal funding for intercity rail service and notes that each project is reviewed for economic efficacy.

Brianna Drohen states that she represents a nonprofit in North Quabbin area that works with young adults and mentions that transportation is a challenge for them. She expresses interest in the station in Athol and asks if the study included planned construction projects when looking at long-term economic development improvements for the area. She notes that local large housing projects and business incubators are being built.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) states that population factored into the alternatives.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) states that benefit cost ratios will be looked at as part of the next phase of the study and that it includes a prescriptive way to measure things. He notes that one of the benefits considered is the increase in real estate value around stations.

Simon Kent expresses interest in Alternative 3 – Electrified Service and mentions that, in terms of economic savings, including other local stations is also great.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a question from Taylor Guss who asks if Alternative 3 – Electrified Service and Alternative 4 – Full Local Service have been considered together.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) explains that elements could be added to the alternatives as they move forward.

Marcus Bean expressed concerns about reliability, the number of trips, and costs.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) states that the projected schedules determined the infrastructure that would provide a reliable service and mentions operations and maintenance.

Tom Bernard advocates for the project to move forward for the economic, environmental, and equity benefits the rail service is expected to bring.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads questions from Dawn Nelson**,** Elaine Sednek, and Emily Crowley regarding connecting to other transit services outside of the Northern Tier, how easily people will be able to move around Boston by public transportation from this service, ridership potential from UMass, and connections from the PVTA or FRTA to the Greenfield station.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) explains the direct MBTA connections to the Red Line at Porter Square and to the Green Line, Orange Line, and commuter rail services at North Station. She mentions the need for support from communities and various stakeholders.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) shares that most of the station locations that were examined are at or near existing RTA hubs and services could potentially be coordinated to make connections.

Susan Abrams expresses excitement about the electrified option and expresses that the Northern Berkshires are particularly isolated and hard to reach for people who don’t have cars.

She mentions that maintaining a fast connection would make the service effective and asks about the impact of additional stops on speed and whether there is a possibility for a combination of some local service with some limited service.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) shares that combining alternatives is possible. She notes the relationship between stopping patterns and ridership and that accessibility, mobility, and connectivity are important factors.

Andreas Aeppli (Cambridge Systematics) adds that, due to the limited service frequency of 5 trains, generally the practice is to try to put the same service out across all trains.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a comment from Ben Lamb who expressed excitement to see a realistic opportunity to bolster the economy of the entire Commonwealth through such a high impact project.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) reads a comment from Senator Jo Comerford who agrees with Andy about the benefit of seeing longer term, community based economic projections for the Northern Tier communities, and says a climate impact analysis for the electrified service to help have a fuller picture of return on investment.

Chris Barkan offers appreciation for the presentation and asks why the ridership for electrification is estimated to be higher than higher investment.

Anna M. Barry (HNTB) explains that the reduction in trip time allowed for the addition of stations which generated additional ridership.

Paul Nelson (HNTB) adds that including Ayer as a station stop adds ridership to Alternative 3.

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) shares that the team will be able to respond to all remaining questions and comments after the meeting.

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

Makaela Niles (MassDOT) explains the next steps, which include making refinements and developing recommended next steps based on the feedback received, and thanks members of the public for attending and sharing their comments and questions. She encourages attendees to visit the Study website to submit additional comments or questions or sign up for Study updates. The materials from this meeting, including the video recording, will be made available on the Study website.

Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Public Information Meeting #2 Attendees

MassDOT/Study Team:

- Makaela Niles – MassDOT
- Anna M. Barry – HNTB
- Paul Nelson – HNTB
- Sara Stoja – HNTB
- Rachel Gies - HNTB
- Andreas Aeppli – Cambridge Systematics
- Sofia Clark – City Point Partners
- Julie Callahan – City Point Partners

Public Attendees:

1. Alice Bojanowski
2. Allen Pope
3. Amy Proietti
4. Andrew Fitch
5. Andy Hogeland
6. Ann Hennessey
7. Anne Miller
8. Anthony Jewell
9. Anthony Manica
10. Barbara Alexander
11. Ben Heckscher
12. Ben Lamb
13. Benjamin Condit
14. Bob Seay
15. Brad Clements
16. Brad Harris
17. Brian Parkinson
18. Brianna Drohen
19. Bruce Spencer
20. C Mark Blatchley
21. Candace Hope
22. Cara Sturdevant
23. Carolyn Sellars
24. Carrie Greene
25. Casey Pease
26. Chris Barkan
27. Christine Copeland
28. Christopher Rodriguez
29. Claire McGinnis
30. Clete Kus
31. Clint Richmond
32. Connor Kowalski
33. Dale Waterman
34. Dan Peacock
35. Dana Roscoe
36. Daniel Racicot
37. David Greenberg
38. Dawn Nelson
39. Deborah Benoit
40. Debra Smith
41. Diane Parsons
42. Donna Bell
43. Donna Riggs
44. Drew David
45. Edward Hines
46. Elain He
47. Elaine Sednek
48. Elena Cohen
49. Eliana Tetreault
50. Elizabeth Giannini
51. Emily Bayard
52. Emily Crowley

53. Emily Villegas
54. Evan Fox
55. Ezekiel Baskin
56. Faith Williams
57. Ferd Wulkan
58. Fran Fortino
59. Frances Ludington
60. Franny Osman
61. Fred Heyes
62. Fungai T
63. Geve Mollins
64. Gillian Budine
65. Glenn Eaton
66. Grady VerPlanck
67. Greg Snedeker
68. Gregory Cox
69. Hannah Rechtschaffen
70. Isaak Baranoski
71. James Mussoni
72. Janice Rowan
73. Janice Sorensen
74. Jared Cowing
75. Jennifer Bernard
76. Jennifer Waryas
77. Jennifer West
78. Jenny Wright
79. Jeri Moran
80. Jim Mahon
81. Senator Jo Comerford
82. Joe Kurland
83. Johan Sednek
84. John Anhalt
85. Representative John Barrett
86. John Garrett
87. John Hostage
88. John Waite
89. Jonathan Franklin
90. K only
91. Kali Puppolo
92. Kate Richardson
93. Katherine Montgomery
94. Kathleen Lewis
95. Kathryn Soule-Regine
96. Kevin Bowe
97. Kristen Elechko
98. Kristin Cole
99. Larry Kuttner
100. Larry Mitchell
101. Liam Carey
102. Linda Dunlavy
103. Lisa Blackmer
104. Lisa Danek Burke
105. Marcel LaFlamme
106. Marcus Bean
107. Marie King
108. Marie-Elena Bigelow
109. Marjorie Kaye
110. Mary Ann Sacco
111. Matthew VanHeynigen
112. Melinda LeLacheur
113. Meryl Mandell
114. Michael Wagner
115. Mikael Pyrtel
116. Mike Small
117. Milo Chang
118. Molly Rapp
119. Morgan Everett
120. Nancy Klaips
121. Nancy Slator
122. Representative Natalie Blais
123. Nikki Garrett
124. Pam Harty
125. Pam Roberts
126. Patricia Murray
127. Paul Lipke
128. Paula Consolini
129. Raquel Jardim
130. Rebecca Bialecki
131. Rebecca Merrell
132. Remy Housley
133. Reona Kubomiya
134. Richard Colton

135. Richard Solomon
136. Robert Heller
137. Robert Slysz
138. Ross Jacobs
139. Roxann Wedegartner
140. Ruby Siegel
141. Scott Bastarache
142. Sharon Tracy
143. Shaun Schofield
144. Shaun Suhoski
145. Simon Kent
146. Soren Henry
147. Steven Ellis
148. Susan Abrams
149. Susan Cloutier
150. Taylor Guss
151. Thomas Green
152. Thomas Matuszko
153. Tim Pyper
154. Tom Bernard
155. Trevor Brightman
156. Wil Neeley
157. Yaroslava Yashchuk
158. Zeffa Kinney
159. Zoom user

Appendix A – Additional Public Comments Received

Question	Asker Name	Answer
What is the minimum and maximum projected time for rail service to become available under any of the alternatives? (Is it a matter of months, years, decades...)	Kate Richardson	As various steps are necessary prior to any implementation, a sample implementation timeline may be presented at upcoming meetings.
Can Paul speak in more detail about the VMT Reduction analysis - does it just analyze the Route 2 corridor VMT reduction, or does it also include MassPike VMT reduction benefits? I live in Williamstown and currentlly drive to Boston at least monthly. Many of those trips are driving Route 7 south to the MassPike East rather than on Route 2. I think that is quite common among people in the northern Berkshire area of North Adams/Williamstown/Pittsfield community. And this train service would be a game changer for those Pike travelers.	Thomas Green	The VMT reduction calculations assume that trips shifting to rail currently use Route 2.
As much as I would like to see all lines electrified, I don't see it as realistic for this project. See the example of South Coast Rail. Alternative 4 (local service) seems the most realistic. Forcing people to change trains in Fitchburg is a non-starter. Extending to Albany shows little benefit for the cost.	John Hostage	Thank you for your comments, John.
David Greenberg, Colrain: Thanks for reaching out to us. I strongly believe that we shoud be electrifying everything as our climate plan requires, so I support the electric train option.	David Greenberg	Thank you for your comments, David.
as a frequent Rt 2 traveler,i noticed praticulat particularly heavier traffic between Fitchburg and Gardner. The local option would best alleviate this situation and remove alot of traffic problems on Rt2 I believe.	James Mussoni	Thank you for your comments, James.
Thank you for representing the North Quabbin Rebecca!!!	Brianna Drohen	Thank you for your comments, Brianna.

Q. Why do the capital cost estimates assumed that MassDOT would need to purchase new rolling stock for this service? MassDOT has other intercity rail service in region, as example the Valley Flyer. The Valley Flyer was started without the need to purchase new equipment.	Ben Heckscher	The Valley Flyer was implemented by extending the route covered by existing intercity equipment, whereas there is currently no operating intercity equipment in the Northern Tier corridor.
What is the estimated cost per ride for example from Greenfield to Boston and N. Adams to Boston, one-way and round tirp?	Fran Fortino	Thank you for the question, Fran. Fare policy is typically developed further along in the development of a transportation service and was not the focus of this study at this stage of conceptual planning.
When projecting ridership did you consider how much a draw MassMOCA would be?	Mike Small	The projected ridership incorporates information from trips recorded by location-based service (LBS) vendors to MassMOCA and other major destinations in the corridor.
Thank you for your very thorough work! Your “eye charts” are very helpful! I’m very supportive of the return of some form of rail service to northern Berkshire County and support the local stops option. Would the plan be to build the service from West to East or East to West?	Paula Consolini	The Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study is a conceptual planning study assessing rail service alternatives along the North Adams-Greenfield-Boston corridor.
I’ll do a better job of helping to promote these events, then. Thanks, Makaela.	Andrew Fitch	Thank you for your participation and engagement, Andrew.
My biggest concern is for increased connectivity to NS rail in Greenfield	C Mark Blatchley	Thank you for your comment, C Mark. Improving connectivity and increasing mobility are key objectives of the study.
Susan Cloutier New Salem Select board I hope any parking and station development include solar electric generation facilities and recharge stations.	Susan Cloutier	Thank you for your comments, Susan.
I understand this is early in the process, but has the benefit of and for the proximal higher education institutions been included in further analysis plans? For instance I would anticipate easier access to MCLA in North Adams as a potential booster for enrollment and participation in programs.	Ben Lamb	Improving connectivity and access to destinations is one of the objectives of the study. The proposed alternatives aim to provide combinations of various elements to test how these characteristics relate to each

		other, while meeting the goals and objectives of the study.
I love hearing all the good work you all have done to reflect our wishes. My request: In future presentations, please also provide projections for the avoidance of fossil fuel use in the event that the electrified option is adopted.	K only	Thank you for your comments, K. Benefits such as avoided emissions will be included as part of the benefit-cost analysis.
Another reuest is whether you can address phasing of the project, so aspects of train service can begin relatively sooner, without waiting for everything to be built. We'd like to see how service can commence as soon as reasonably feasible.	Andy Hogeland	Thank you, Andy. The potential for phasing may be further examined as part of this or any future planning activities.
I would second Andy Hogeland's suggestion about trying to model the broader, longer-term economic development effects of this--especially as an aid to the process of decongestion of the Boston metro area. Daily commuters might come in from Athol. People working remotely but coming in to a Boston office once or twice a week might be able to move to the Greenfield area, or even to lovely North Adams.	Jim Mahon	Thank you for your comments, Jim.
I have a lot of concern with drainage under the track as many of the culverts date from earliest efforts to put a rail line here in the 1800's.	C Mark Blatchley	Stormwater run-off and the adequacy of drainage infrastructure may be evaluated as part of any future planning activities.
For the next public meeting, would it be possible to include a more in-depth climate analysis -- focusing on the carbon-reduction benefits of all electric service (not only the vehicle reduction, but the electric service itself)?	Elena Cohen	Environmental benefits may be discussed further at the next round of meetings.

If we go with an alternative that increases local stops in central and particularly eastern Mass, it will increase travel time for people in western Mass. I'm concerned that could decrease ridership in the west.	Emily Bayard	Thank you for your comment, Emily. The proposed alternatives aim to provide combinations of these elements to test how these characteristics relate to each other, while meeting the goals and objectives of the study.
Thank you so much for those comments about electrification being so high! How will we reach our climate change goals if we don't start electrifying.	Christine Copeland	Minimizing the impacts of public health and the environment from transportation is one of the goals of the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study. The proposed alternatives aim to provide combinations of various elements to test how these characteristics relate to each other, while meeting the goals and objectives of the study.
The answer to why it is more expensive is prevailing wage.	Rebecca Merrell	Thank you for your comments, Rebecca.
Thank you, Makaela, Anna, Paul, and Andreas for all your work on this! This is Ezekiel Baskin from the New England Rural Health Association. I just wanted to echo many others in their support for this - especially for alternatives 3 & 4. I would love to see an electrified alternative with full local service. Transportation is a key social determinant of health, especially in rural communities like those in the North Quabbin that have long histories of underinvestment from the state, and having access to rail would have a significant positive impact on health outcomes as well as economic development.	Ezekiel Baskin	Thank you for your comments, Ezekiel.
I assume it was mentioned before I arrived, and will hear that on the recording, but if not, can you comment on the relationship between this connection and the North South Rail Link? AND other question is what best way for residents to advocate for this rail connection.	Franny Osman	The Northern Tier passenger rail service alternatives in this study terminate at Boston's North Station. Related to advocacy, please connect with your elected officials regarding this effort.

I would also like to express my support for the electrification option. The environmental benefits, over team, might even become a factor to attract even more ridership from folks who want to live conscientiously. More analysis on long-term environmental impacts of electrification vs. diesel would not only be great for educating the public on the options, but also for galvanizing support among more groups, particularly as gen-z enters the workforce.	Kate Richardson	Thank you for your comments, Kate.
Let's not undermine the speed of the trip across the state by adding too many local stops	Susan Abrams	Thank you for your comments, Susan.
I am very intereted in understanding outgoing traffic to towns as destiination centers for increased tourist $	C Mark Blatchley	Estimated induced benefits from the project have been calculated in relation to the construction spending. Additional types of induced benefits may be further studied as part of this or other efforts.
Does the economic development impact consider commercial in additional to residential real estate?	Brianna Drohen	The benefit-cost analysis incorporates an estimated increase in real estate values (including both commercial and residential uses) within a certain proximity to the proposed train stations.
Is Amtrak the only rail service that is currently being considered to use the rail, or is there a possibility that MassDOT would have its own passenger rail service, similar to CTrail on the Hartford Line?	Kate Richardson	Thank you for the question, Kate. The study assumed Amtrak may operate the proposed service. Please note that Amtrak is the only railroad that has rights of access to the facilities of any other railroad or regional transportation authority.
I'm excited by this project, any option is better than what we currently have! I'd like to be another voice of support for electrification, might as well do it now rather than redo it in a few years. Also happy to see more stations on the list. I think the worst option would be to stop in	Drew David	Thank you for your comments, Drew.

Fitchburg instead of going all the way to Boston.		
FTA runs a bus to Northampton students could take. But not on weekends.	Mike Small	Thank you for this insight, Mike.
Thank you for providing this opportunity tonight. As someone who commutes to Boston from a hilltown west of Shelburne Falls, having this service would be invaluable. As a rider the number one priority is the reducing ride time. The lower cost alternative(s) would not provide a ride time that would make it worth it to use a commuting alternative. One note, the towns west of Shelburne Falls will likely NOT go to North Adams to ride to Boston (as shown in slide), we would get on in Greeenfield. Thank You.	Lisa Danek Burke	Thank you for your comments, Lisa.
Thank you SO much!	Dawn Nelson	Thank you for your participation and engagement, Dawn.
Excellent presentation—thank you so much~	Susan Abrams	Thank you for your participation and engagement, Susan.
Thank you!	Kathryn Soule-Regine	Thank you for your participation and engagement, Kathryn.