



EAST-WEST PASSENGER RAIL STUDY
Public Meeting #1 – Summary
Tuesday, March 12, 2019

UMass Center at Springfield
1500 Main Street, Springfield, MA

Advisory Committee (AC) Attendees & Alternates

Tim Brennan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Patrick Carnevale, Western Massachusetts Office of the Governor
Senator Harriette L. Chandler, State Senate
Todd Fontanella, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
John Hahey, Massachusetts Association of Railroads
Senator Adam Hinds, State Senate
Linda Leduc, Town of Palmer
Thomas Matuszko, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Joel McAuliffe, Office of Senator Eric P. Lesser
Maureen Mulaney, Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Travis Pollack, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Elizabeth Quigley, Office of Congressman Richard Neal
Sandra Sheehan, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
Representative Todd Smola, State House of Representatives

Additional Elected Officials

Mayor Alex Morse, City of Holyoke

MassDOT & MBTA Attendees

Jennifer Slesinger, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Makaela Niles, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning

Project Team Attendees

Drew Galloway, WSP – Consultant Team Project Manager
Joel Anders, WSP
Jay Doyle, AECOM
Ned Codd, WSP
Paul Bergquist, AECOM
Sarah Paritsky, Regina Villa Associates

Kyle Olsen, Regina Villa Associates

Public Attendees (from sign-in sheets)

Andy Anderson
 Heidi Bara
 Patrick Beaudry, *PVPC*
 Dan Bergeron
 Pat Bergeron
 Ray Blair
 Charlie Blanchard, *Town of Palmer*
 Gil Bolduc
 Constance Brawders, *Town of East Longmeadow*
 Laura Britton, *Office of Representative Lindsay N. Sabadosa*
 Joshua Brown
 Auger Bruno
 Paul Burns-Johnson, *Palmer Planning Board*
 Dr. L. B. Butler
 Craig Carr
 Tom Casartello
 Richard Conley
 Stephanie Connors, *SR Commercial Realty*
 Jeff Cramer, *Western Mass News*
 Sheila Cuddy, *QV CDC*
 Jim Czach, *Town of West Springfield*
 Nikki D.
 Bob Daley, *Chester Foundation*
 Elle Van Dermark
 Mike Dobbs, *Reminder Publishing*
 Bryan Farr
 Jeremy Fedors
 Lucia Foley, *South Hadley Bike/Walk Committee*
 John Foley
 Wilma Foley
 Matt Gamelli, *City of Westfield*
 John Garrett
 Rob Gromosky
 Anthony Guaraiona
 Greg Guimoed
 Patience Hartley
 Ben Heckscher, *Trains in the Valley*

Richard Holzman, *Chester Railroad Foundation*
 Shelley Holzman
 Douglas Honn
 Ben Hood, *Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop*
 Barbara Huntoon, *Chester Railway Station/Town of Chester*
 Karen Huntoon
 Kerry Jackson
 Mike Jefferson
 Andrew Jennings
 Betsy Johnson, *Walk Bike Springfield*
 Doug Johnson, *Walk Bike Springfield*
 Robert Kearns, *UMass SGA/Sierra Club*
 Clete Kus, *BRPC*
 Scarlet Lamothe
 Blake Lamothe
 Theresa Little
 Bill Malloy, *CCS*
 Margaret Mantoni
 Paul Marchese, *St. Germain Investment Mgmt*
 Michael Marciniec, *Palmer Planning Board*
 Doug Marsh
 Rich Masse, *MassDOT*
 T. Masterson, *City of Northampton*
 Jonathan McHatton
 Bill Meier, *Atane Consulting/Amherst Railway Society*
 Anne Miller, *Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop*
 Todd Miller, *Quabbin Econ. Development*
 Hector Molina, *WWLP-22 News*
 James Mullen, *Train Campaign*
 Moira Murphy
 Richard Murphy
 Tanya Neslusan, *Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop*
 G. O'Brien
 Hannah O'Donnell
 Krystal Oldread, *AECOM*
 David O'Leary, *Sierra Club*

J. Oliver
 Tracy Opalinski, *Wane Business and Civic Assoc*
 Rich Parr, *The MassINC Polling Group*
 Joey Pellegrino
 Marcus Phelps, *Southwick Planning Board*
 David Pierce, *Chester Foundation*
 Kathleen Plante, *Business West*
 Michele Pringle
 Stacy Pringle
 Cara Radzins, *CRCOG*
 Will Ramsdell, *Western Massachusetts Office of the Governor*
 Jermaine Read
 Carl Reiner
 Lori Reiner
 Andrew Riedl
 Kim Rivera, *MA Parents United*
 Amanda Rivera, *Western Mass News*
 Dana Roscoe, *PVPC*
 Walter S.

Ellen Schwaitz
 Kelsey Sheehan
 Emmaladd Shepherd, *Citizens for Palmer Rail Stop*
 Herb Singleton
 Jessica Sizer
 Eddie Sporn
 Paul E. St. Sauveur
 Laurel Stachura
 Brian Sullivan
 Michael Suprenant, *Sturbridge Board of Selectmen*
 Jonathan Torcia, *East Longmeadow Planning Board*
 David Tudryn, *Michael Baker International*
 Benjamin Turon, *Empire State Passover Association*
 Clark Wallace, *The Train Campaign*
 Lily Wallace, *Office of Representative Natalie M. Blais*
 Corinne Wingard

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the East-West Passenger Rail Study, provide a background of completed work and obtain feedback from the public on their priorities for rail service on the East-West corridor.

Meeting Format

The meeting began with a presentation at 6:10 PM followed by time for public comment. From 7:00 to 8:00 PM, there was an open house with activities for feedback and informational boards (see page 7 for Open House details).

Materials (Available on project website)

- PowerPoint presentation
- Boards from open house

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Jennifer Slesinger, MassDOT Project Manager, welcomed the public to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Ms. Slesinger introduced the project team, including other MassDOT project members and consultants from WSP and AECOM. She recognized and thanked the many elected officials that made it to the meeting.

Ms. Slesinger announced that her departure from MassDOT is scheduled on Friday, March 15 and introduced the new East-West Passenger Rail Study Co-Project Managers, Makaela Niles and Ethan Britland.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Ms. Slesinger began with an overview of the meeting agenda, which included the presentation, a public comment period and an open house. She emphasized that MassDOT is in the early stages of this study and that no decisions have been made yet. She explained that the meeting was the first of three planned public meetings, and that an Advisory Committee Meeting was held on December 18, 2018. She reviewed the objectives of the meeting.

Ms. Slesinger explained that CSX, a freight rail company, owns the existing corridor from the New York state line to Worcester and runs roughly 14+ trains per day. MassDOT and the MBTA own the rail line from Worcester to Boston; the MBTA runs 58 Commuter Rail trains per day in both directions. Amtrak also uses the line to run service twice per day between Boston and Chicago. These existing uses will affect the capacity of the lines to run new service. She explained that previous studies on the East-West corridor included the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative between Springfield and Boston and the State Rail Plan, which recommended that MassDOT study the Boston to Pittsfield corridor.

Ms. Slesinger explained how market demand helps MassDOT determine the amount of rail service to provide. For the East-West Passenger Rail Study, MassDOT will look at the demographics of Massachusetts cities and towns, automobile and rail travel patterns and demand, and how travel time determines attractiveness of service.

Ms. Slesinger further described existing rail conditions. The existing rail corridor has many curves that cannot accommodate high speeds. Ms. Slesinger explained that while Amtrak has the right to provide passenger service on freight-owned lines, the host railroad has the right to set the terms for an operating agreement.

Ms. Slesinger explained three types of potential alternatives. The first, a shared corridor without right of way changes, would be the easiest and least costly option, but would provide the longest travel time. The Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative only studied alternatives feasible within the existing shared corridor. This study is looking at alternatives outside the existing corridor, as described in the second and third type. The second is a shared corridor with selected right of way changes, which would decrease the travel time but require capital investment and interruptions during construction to expand the corridor and shift the path of the railroad to reduce the amount of curves. The final alternative is a separate corridor, which would provide the fastest travel time, but require massive capital investments. The separate corridor is anticipated to run along the I-90 corridor.

Ms. Slesinger explained that the study is currently conducting the high-level screening. The next step of the study is to determine six alternatives that include information on travel times,

projected ridership, capital investment requirements, and an understanding of the potential benefits and impacts.

Ms. Slesinger ended the presentation and explained the open house format.

Ms. Slesinger reminded the audience that there are many ways to provide public feedback. She explained that the public can email [Makaela Niles](#) or [Ethan Britland](#) or fill out a comment sheet that was provided in the open house.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Todd Miller, Economic Development Coordinator and Planner for the Quabbin Region, asked if this presentation will be available for the public. Ms. Slesinger explained that all meeting materials need to be made fully accessible and will then be posted on the project website. She emphasized that members of the public on the project email list will be notified when these documents are available and encouraged all attending to sign up for email alerts.

Stan Rosenberg, a former member of State Legislature for Western Massachusetts, said Western Massachusetts is very engaged in the East-West Passenger Rail Study, and requested that MassDOT provide more opportunities for a “public hearing” so everyone can express their thoughts. He believes public hearings are a better outlet for working together than an open house style public meeting. Mr. Rosenberg then explained he is excited and appreciative that the project is moving into this new phase, but that a similar study (Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative) has already been completed and cost the state a large amount of money. He emphasized again that Western Massachusetts is one community, and that its citizens want rail in all parts of the four counties. He said he knows the study is focused on the existing CSX route and a potential I-90 route but urged MassDOT to immediately start a study on the “Northern Tier” [i.e. the east – west Pan Am Railways corridor along the northern portion of Massachusetts], affecting Franklin County, Hampshire County and North Adams. He explained that there is an abundance of housing in Western Massachusetts which is beneficial for Eastern Massachusetts workers with reliable transportation. Mr. Rosenberg ended his comment by explaining that if rail is operating on both the northern and southern routes, all parts of Western Massachusetts can be connected to Boston, helping to repopulate Western Massachusetts and create statewide opportunities for economic growth.

Barbara Huntoon, Chair of Chester Board of Selectmen, said she took the bus from Chester to Pittsfield and then the train to Springfield. Ms. Huntoon explained she is from the forgotten areas between Springfield and Pittsfield, which need proper development. She explained that a railroad stop in Chester would benefit all local hill towns, and Massachusetts residents don’t need to spend \$800,000 on a Brookline home when they could spend \$400,000 on a home in Chester.

Kerry Jackson, a West Springfield resident, said she is a Boston transplant from West Roxbury who moved to Springfield 15 years ago since she knew Springfield was a more affordable place to live. She explained that she knows there are thousands of Boston residents who can’t afford

to buy a house, and that if there were reliable transportation options people would come. Ms. Jackson ended by asking MassDOT if they have done a study to see how many people would move out if rail service was brought to Western Massachusetts. Ms. Slesinger said the market analysis tells part of the story, but MassDOT has also come up with some personas to better imagine how people would use rail service.

Andrew Jennings, a Billerica resident, said he would love better transportation in Western Massachusetts for recreation and tourism. He asked if there will there be a non-rail option (like buses) analyzed and brought to the end of the process, because the study geography gives MassDOT only one party to deal with – CSX. He stated that MassDOT needs a non-rail option to use as a negotiating tactic with CSX.

Ben Hood, a Palmer resident, emphasized that MassDOT can't forget about the places in between the big cities, they need to be included. He said it is beautiful up the valley, and people want to come out to hike the valleys and see the beautiful places. He explained that he is a little worried about the alternatives presented and believes they might leave out towns like Chester and Palmer for the second time in history. He said MassDOT needs to empower areas that have been treated unfairly and create a fully developed network of transit.

Richard Holzman, a Pioneer Valley Planning Commissioner from Chester, said he wanted to reiterate what other speakers have already said. He explained that MassDOT needs to look at connecting towns and human beings together, since quality of life is precious. He said MassDOT should not look at what the potential market demand is, but instead help develop that demand. He said maybe the numbers aren't there now, but MassDOT can help make that demand happen. If the agency invests in both the Northern and Southern Tier, the regions will see a major transformation in the economy. He added that MassDOT should ensure a new rail service connects to existing rail lines, and if I-90 is selected as a corridor for high-speed service, MassDOT needs to figure out how to make local downtown connections through a connecting network of rail services.

An attendee said he was concerned with the inclusion of a Maglev train on the list of alternatives, explaining it suggests a lack of seriousness in the study. Ms. Slesinger responded by saying MassDOT is looking at all possible ranges of alternatives in this phase of the project, eventually whittling that down to six strong alternatives. Ms. Slesinger added that Maglev is a magnetic rail that uses electromagnetism to levitate and move trains with minimal resistance.

Joshua Brown said he took the Commuter Rail and Greyhound to this meeting. He explained that the East-West rail service would benefit Boston sports fans going to Yawkey, North Station, Fenway, TD Garden, and Foxboro. He also explained that it would provide a link to Connecticut Rail and get Connecticut sports fans into Boston. He emphasized the sentiment that the whole region and its economy would benefit from the East-West Rail.

David Pierce started by clarifying that there is only one Maglev that runs from Shanghai to the Airport. He explained that Chester is pushing for rail service because it already has an established

station and parking. He said there are 11 hill towns that could easily access Chester’s rail station, and the museum at the Chester Station would create tourist revenue.

Ms. Slesinger ended the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. She encouraged attendees to attend the open house and talk to the project team. She added that all comments made at the meeting will be posted online and all feedback will be incorporated into the study.

OPEN HOUSE

The open house segment of the public meeting was arranged with informational boards along the perimeter of the room containing details about the study, including potential alternatives. The project team members were available to speak one-on-one with members of the public and answer their questions.

One of the boards contained an interactive activity that used the personas of potential riders of the East-West Rail. Members of the public could leave a dot on the persona that they identified with the most and could also leave a sticky note with comments about that persona (see the [Personas Display Board](#) on the project website). Dot counts and transcriptions of the sticky notes are available in Appendix A.

Members of the public could also write on comment sheets provided in the open house. A total of 23 comment sheets and two letters were submitted during the meeting. A complete summary of public comments received (including comment sheets, emails, and letters) will be shared in the Final Report.



Appendix A – Rider Personas Exercise Results

Name of Persona	Persona Description	Number of Dots
Janet	Business Manager who lives in Chicopee, works in Springfield and travels to Boston several times a month	6
Mark	Graduate student who lives in Westfield and travels to Boston suburbs to visit family and friends	1
Frank	Retired Springfield resident who seeks access to medical care in Boston	5
Rosa	Works in downtown Boston and lives in Cambridge, but is seeking a more affordable place to live	0
Lisa	Vacationer who lives in Boston and travels to a weekend time-share in Western Massachusetts	1

Written Comments on Post-it Notes

Persona	Comments
Janet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster the better! • Commute from Palmer to Windsor, CT. Commute from W. MA and work in Boston. • Live in Westfield, commute to Boston 2-4 times per week. • Commute from Wellington/Cabot. Logan Airport. Boston Sports! (Redsox, Celtics) • Faster is better. 3-4x 1 day. Connections to Northampton. • Janet, but business in Boston. Daily commuter (few to 5 times/week) • Faster the better. Daily commuter. So multiple trips/day. Bring the young people back to Western Mass.
Mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local service inside Western MA, as well as beyond. • Go to Logan Airport • How much is the MA tax increase for rail? Will there be stops for sports events? Will this save time vs. by car? • UMass Amherst student market through Palmer or Springfield and Boston. • Last-mile public transit options in Western Mass communities need more support to connect w/ new rail service • Intra-regional rail transport options are just as important (Westfield-Springfield)
Frank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live in Palmer and commute to work in Boston. • Springfield – (Palmer) – Worcester – Framingham – Boston • Airport access – Logan, Bradley, Albany too! (Need good single level route from train w/ luggage) • Visit family/friends in Greater Boston. Go to shows, sports, museums in Boston. Ikea (Newton + Brockton) • Work at UMass Medical Amherst. Need to get to UMass Worcester.
Lisa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use rail to make daytrip to Boston – Lisa in reverse.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to connect with NYC trains in Hudson Valley – for maximizing tourism • No commuters on your list!
<p>Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a rail stop in Palmer. Commute to Boston for sports events and enjoy the city. • Lives in the hill-towns, works in Worcester or Boston, or simply travels to the city for sports, events, etc. • Lives and works in Boston. TOO EXPENSIVE! Moves to Chester because the housing is more affordable! The environment is amazing! • Sightseeing. Retired. Tourism. Enjoyment of train ride. • Impact to civic engagement – State House briefing. • Lives in Worcester. Occasionally visits family/friends in Baltimore by taking Amtrak/bus to Springfield and continuing south on Amtrak. East/West rail could make the Springfield trip/transfer quicker. • Palmer is comparable to Framingham. Springfield – Palmer – Worcester. • Lives in Boston. Commutes to Western Mass for school. • RTAs as feeders to trains. • Commute to work in Pittsfield • Commute from Chester to Pittsfield.