



## EAST-WEST PASSENGER RAIL STUDY

### Advisory Committee Meeting #2 – Summary Tuesday, July 23, 2019

Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel  
One Monarch Place, Springfield, MA

#### **Advisory Committee (AC) Attendees & Alternates**

Tim Brennan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
Patrick Carnevale, Western Massachusetts Office of the Governor  
Nancy Creed, Springfield Regional Chamber  
Linda Dunlavy, Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
Astrid Glynn, Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Richard Griffin, MassDevelopment  
John Hahey, Massachusetts Association of Railroads  
Bill Hollister, Amtrak  
Linda Leduc, Town of Palmer  
Senator Eric Lesser, Massachusetts State Senate  
Paul Matthews, 495 Partnership  
Thomas Matuszko, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
Timothy McGourthy, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Economic Development  
Representative Thomas M. Petrolati, State House of Representatives  
Janet Pierce, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
Representative Smitty Pignatelli, State House of Representatives  
Jeff Price, Federal Railroad Administration (by phone)  
Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, State House of Representatives  
Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, City of Springfield  
Sandra Sheehan, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority  
Representative Todd Smola, State House of Representatives  
Rick Sullivan, Western Massachusetts EDC

Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire  
Seth Nadeau, Office of Congressman Jim McGovern  
Elizabeth Quigley, Office of Congressman Richard Neal  
Bethann Steiner, Office of State Senator Adam Hinds

### **MassDOT Attendees**

Ethan Britland, Office of Transportation Planning  
Makaela Niles, Office of Transportation Planning

### **Project Team Attendees**

Drew Galloway, WSP – Consultant Team Project Manager  
Ned Codd, WSP  
Jay Doyle, AECOM  
Regan Checchio, Regina Villa Associates  
Emily Christin, Regina Villa Associates

### **Materials**

PowerPoint Presentation  
Alternatives Handout

### **Public Attendees (see page 12)**

## **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Ethan Britland, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, welcomed the Advisory Committee and public attendees to the meeting and introduced Makaela Niles, MassDOT. He explained that he is the new MassDOT Project Manager for the East-West Passenger Rail Study, as Jennifer Slesinger no longer works at MassDOT. He asked the project team members to introduce themselves (see list above) and invited the Committee members to introduce themselves (see list above).

## **PRESENTATION<sup>1</sup>**

Mr. Britland reviewed the meeting agenda, meeting objectives, and study overview.

### **Existing Conditions**

Mr. Britland showed graphics of the existing rail conditions on the east-west corridor and discussed the challenges and opportunities that will inform the alternatives development. CSX owns the rail from Worcester to New York and currently operates freight trains on the line. Physical constraints include steep grades, grade crossings, and speed limits.

### **East-West Corridor Alternatives Development**

Mr. Britland listed the goals for all service alternatives, which were informed by AC and public feedback. He shared a synopsis of feedback that the project team has received so far. He explained that an important part of his job as Project Manager is to balance the wants and needs of various stakeholders (AC members, members of the public, and other stakeholders).

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<sup>1</sup> The presentation from the meeting is available on the project website, [www.mass.gov/east-west-passenger-rail-study](http://www.mass.gov/east-west-passenger-rail-study).

He summarized factors that affect how rail service operates (population density, employment data, etc.) and described the alternatives development and analysis. He showed an inverted triangle figure to discuss how the alternatives will be narrowed to three final ones:

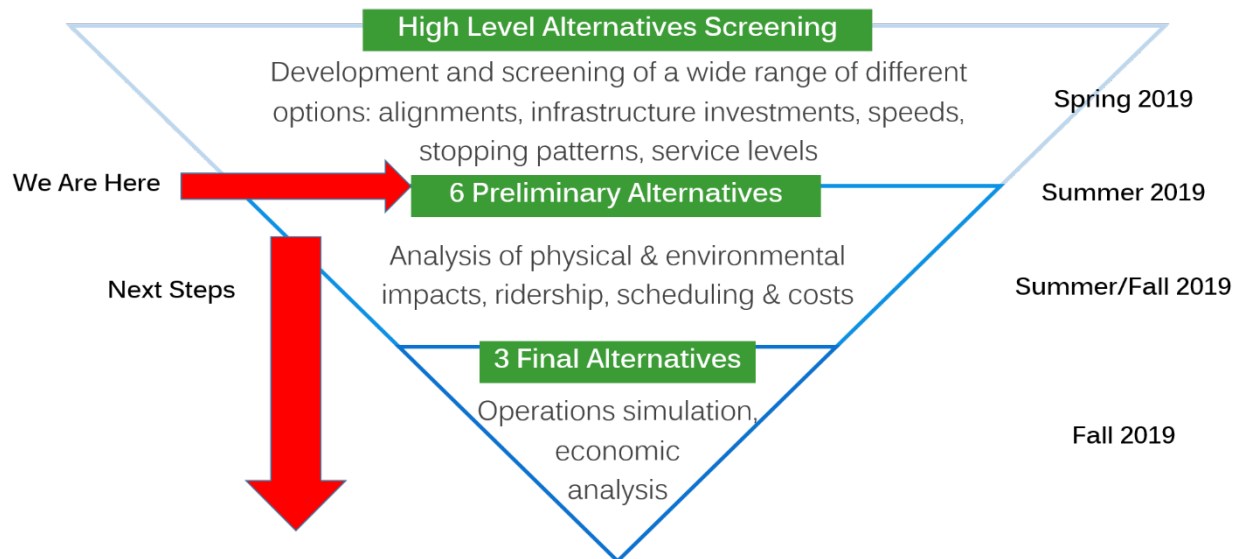


Figure 1: Alternatives Development and Analysis Process

He introduced Drew Galloway, WSP Project Manager. Mr. Galloway listed the key characteristics that were looked at for each alternative during the screening process and noted the Maglev and Hyperloop options were ultimately not pursued due to property impacts, environmental impacts, high costs, and concerns about maturity of the technologies.

**East-West Corridor Alternatives**

Mr. Galloway presented six preliminary alternatives. He noted that the alternatives generally increase in the magnitude of their benefits (speed and frequency), as well as their costs and impacts (to property, environmental resources, etc.) through the presentation. The first few alternatives are less capital-intensive than the later alternatives.

Taken together, the six alternatives are intended to comprise a range of attributes that fully represent the feasible approaches to providing enhanced transit service in the East-West corridor. The alternatives have been assembled to show the benefits of increasing levels of investment and impact, and also to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches (e.g. travel speed vs. cost, faster express service vs. more stops). In many cases, elements of different alternatives can be mixed and matched.

All of the alternatives are currently at a conceptual level of engineering; more detailed engineering and service analyses will be done once the alternatives are finalized. For each alternative, Mr. Galloway showed a graphic that includes the corridor divided into type of use, maximum allowable speeds, and stations.

The alternatives are briefly summarized below:

- **Existing Conditions**
  - This serves as a common baseline for comparing the benefits, costs, and impacts of the subsequent “Build” Alternatives.
- **Alternative 1 – Passenger rail between Springfield and Worcester with upgrades to existing track**
  - New passenger rail service between Springfield, Palmer, and Worcester, with trips to/from Boston requiring a transfer to MBTA Commuter Rail local or express services along the Framingham/Worcester Line.
  - New connecting bus service would use I-90 and US-20 to connect Pittsfield to Springfield and Worcester, with additional stops at the I-90 interchange in Lee and the Blandford Service Plaza.
  - Between Worcester and Springfield, Alternative 1 would implement key congestion-relief improvements, including the restoration of all missing double-track segments, upgrades to tracks and rail line signals, and construction of a new passing siding.
  - Though maximum allowable speeds would remain the same, the improvements would reduce friction between passenger and freight trains, providing more reliable travel times.
- **Alternative 2 – Passenger rail to Springfield with upgrades to existing track**
  - New passenger rail service that offers a one-seat ride between Springfield, Palmer, Worcester, Back Bay, and South Station.
  - New connecting bus service would use I-90 and US-20 to connect Pittsfield to Springfield, with additional stops at the I-90 interchange in Lee and the Blandford Service Plaza.
  - Between Worcester and Springfield, Alternative 2 would implement the same set of congestion-relief improvements as Alternative 1: the restoration of all missing double-track segments, upgrades to tracks and rail line signals, and construction of a new passing siding.
  - While maximum speeds remain the same, these improvements would reduce friction between passenger and freight trains, providing more reliable travel times.
- **Alternative 3 – Passenger rail to Pittsfield with upgrades to existing track**

- New passenger rail service that offers a one-seat ride between Pittsfield, Chester, Springfield, Palmer, Worcester, Back Bay, and South Station.
- Between Boston and Worcester, maximum speeds would increase as a result of capacity improvements and increasing speeds through curves.
- Between Springfield and Worcester, Alternative 3 would implement the same set of congestion-relief improvements as Alternatives 1 and 2: the restoration of all missing double-track segments, upgrades to tracks and rail line signals, and construction of a new passing siding.
- Alternative 3 would also implement targeted track-straightening improvements to key sections of track that currently have tight-radius curves and slower speeds. As a result, the track classification would be upgraded, which would permit an increase in maximum speeds, with roughly half of the segments in the 61-80 mph range.
- Between Pittsfield and Springfield, the lone segment of single-track would be converted to double track. Maximum speeds would substantially increase.
- **Alternative 4 – Passenger rail to Pittsfield with new track in existing alignment**
  - Same set of stations as Alternative 3, providing a one-seat rail ride between Pittsfield and Boston.
  - Improvements and maximum speeds along the Boston to Worcester and Springfield to Pittsfield segments would be the same as Alternative 3.
  - Unlike the first three alternatives, which would use the existing CSX rail alignment and railroad tracks as current trains between Worcester and Springfield, Alternative 4 proposes developing an entirely separate track that runs parallel to the existing rail, though it would remain mostly within the CSX-owned corridor.
  - A separate track between Worcester and Springfield would significantly reduce delays, as the new service would not be sharing its alignment with freight trains operating along the congested CSX main line.
  - Maximum speeds would increase significantly, to 110 mph.
- **Alternative 5 – Passenger rail to Springfield with new track in existing alignment and priority realignments**
  - Same service pattern of Alternative 2, but with no stop in Palmer. It would provide a one-seat rail ride between Springfield and Boston, with connecting bus service between Pittsfield, Lee, Blandford, and Springfield.
  - Between Boston and Worcester, this alternative would rely on the same set of improvements and maximum speeds as Alternatives 3 and 4.
  - Between Worcester and Springfield, this alternative would, like Alternative 4, operate on a separate track that runs mostly parallel to the existing corridor. However, Alternative 5 assumes several additional curve modifications that would allow for longer stretches of 81-110 mph operations and a faster travel speed.
- **Alternative 6 – High speed rail in I-90 corridor with direct downtown service**

- Primarily uses the I-90 corridor right-of-way (ROW), with a new railroad alignment parallel to I-90 to provide new passenger service between Pittsfield and Boston.
- Includes stops in Lee, Blandford, Springfield, Worcester, Back Bay, and South Station.
- Transitions back to the existing corridor to serve existing stations. West of Route 128 a separate track running parallel to the existing alignment would be required.
- Between South Station and Route 128, this alternative would use the existing rail corridor, with the same maximum speeds as Alternatives 3-5.
- Between Route 128 and Lee, this alternative would operate new trains along new railroad tracks in the I-90 corridor, with the exception of segments near Worcester and Springfield. In order to serve the existing train stations in those cities, the service would transition to the existing railroad corridor.
- Alternative 6 would use the Housatonic Railroad alignment to connect from Lee to Pittsfield.
- Maximum speeds vary, but Alternative 6 achieves the highest speeds of all the alternatives.

The following table summarizes the key characteristics of each alternative:

Corridor Type	Alternative	Frequency	Transfers for Pittsfield	Transfers for Springfield	Transfers for CTRail and Vermonter	Travel Time BOS-SPG	Travel Time BOS-PIT	Max Speed (mph)	Rail Stations Served
Shared Rail Corridor -- Existing Rail Alignment	No Build (Existing infrastructure, service)	1	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Rail Transfer at SPG	2:05 – 2:30	3:15 – 3:50	80 mph	Pittsfield, Springfield, Worcester, Framingham, Back Bay, Boston
Shared Rail Corridor -- Existing Rail Alignment	Alt. 1 – WOR – SPG, Upgraded Track	up to 6	Bus Transfer at SPG	Rail Transfer at WOR	Rail Transfer at SPG	2:05 – 2:50	3:15 – 4:10	80 mph	SPG, PLM, WOR, BBY, BOS
Shared Rail Corridor -- Existing Rail Alignment	Alt. 2 – BOS – WOR, Upgraded Track	up to 6	Bus Transfer at SPG	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Rail Transfer at SPG	1:55 – 2:20	3:05 – 3:40	80 mph	SPG, PLM, WOR, BBY, BOS
Shared Rail Corridor -- Existing Rail Alignment	Alt. 3 – BOS – PIT, Upgraded Track & Alignment	up to 6	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Rail Transfer at SPG	1:40 – 2:00	2:40 – 3:10	90 mph	PIT, CST, SPG, PLM, WOR, BBY, BOS
Shared Rail Corridor – New Track in Existing Rail Corridor	Alt. 4 – BOS – PIT, New Track in Existing Rail Corridor	up to 10	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Rail Transfer at SPG	1:35 – 1:55	2:35 – 3:05	110 mph	PIT, CST, SPG, PLM, WOR, BBY, BOS
Shared Rail Corridor – New Track in Existing Rail Corridor	Alt. 5 – BOS – SPG, New Track in Existing Rail Corridor, w/ Realignments	up to 10	Bus Transfer at SPG	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Rail Transfer at SPG	1:25 – 1:45	2:35 – 3:05	110 mph	SPG, WOR, BBY, BOS
Separate Corridor (I-90)	Alt. 6 – BOS – PIT, New High Speed Rail Line in I-90 Corridor	up to 16	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Direct Rail (no transfer)	Rail Transfer at SPG	1:20 – 1:40	2:10 – 2:40	150 mph	PIT, LEE, BLD, SPG, WOR, BBY, BOS

All Time, Speed, Frequency and Station Stops are approximate, pending detailed analysis

Figure 2: Summary of Preliminary Alternatives

**Next Steps**

Mr. Britland presented the next steps for the study, which include a deeper analysis of the six alternatives, including environmental impacts, costs, and tradeoffs. The analysis will also include a high-level look at environmental permitting issues.

He showed a table of the study schedule, noting the study is at about the halfway mark. There are two Advisory Committee meetings and two public meetings remaining. The Final Report will be released in March 2020.

**Discussion**

Rick Sullivan, Western Massachusetts EDC, asked if the I-90 corridor in Alternative 6 is within the existing highway right-of-way (ROW, i.e. the existing state-owned roadway property). Mr. Britland and Mr. Galloway said there are areas outside of the ROW and there would be no space for a new rail along I-90 in the eastern portion near Boston, so the team will also investigate connecting into the existing railroad corridor near the Route 128 interchange.

Janet Pierce, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, asked if dedicated bus lanes would be considered for Alternatives 1, 2, and 5 in which bus transfers are included. Mr. Britland said that level of detail has not been examined yet, but it is something the project team can look into at a high level.

Representative Smitty Pignatelli, MA House of Representatives, said he would eliminate any alternative that does not include rail into the Berkshires. He prefers Alternatives 3, 4, and 6. He suggested swapping Blandford for Chester in Alternative 6, given the I-90 Interchange Study is looking into adding an interchange near Blandford.

Linda Leduc, Town of Palmer, said a station in Palmer is noted in Alternatives 5 and 6 as an additional 3-6 minutes and asked why it wasn't included. She added that I-90 Exit 8 makes Palmer easy to reach and it should be included in both of these alternatives. Mr. Britland said it is challenging to bring rail into the CBD (central business district, i.e. the downtown) and Mr. Galloway explained that the project team consciously chose to not include stops in some alternatives to get a better sense of time accrued for those stops, but all the alternatives are intended to be flexible.

Representative Thomas Petrolati, MA House of Representatives, asked what discussions MassDOT has had with CSX to date. Mr. Britland said MassDOT has not yet met with CSX and is developing alternatives that are consistent with CSX's existing policy on shared operations. Mr. Britland said any alternatives that are advanced would involve a lot of coordination with CSX, but acknowledged it is ultimately CSX's choice whether or not they want to participate in this process.



Representative Todd Smola, MA House of Representatives, thanked MassDOT for all the work done so far, but stated that getting CSX to sign off on this approach is crucial to the project. He said one of the reasons he and others are pushing for stops like Palmer is that they would be feeders for the entire region and would attract people who work in Boston to move out west and would boost economic development. He said that he does not want to see these communities get lost. Mr. Britland said he understands these issues, and that elements like specific stations can be included in any of the final alternatives. At this point, the project team wants to show examples of alternatives with shorter travel times, and demonstrate the tradeoffs of different approaches. Mr. Britland added that in terms of talking with CSX, this study is still in the very early stages, and it will be more productive to share alternatives once they were more developed. MassDOT will engage CSX as the study progresses.

Rep. Smola asked how the speeds of the trains are factored into the overall travel times, given the curves of the track. Mr. Galloway explained that each alternative presented at this meeting went through two stages of development. First was the engineering analysis of the entire alignment, curve by curve, as detailed as 50-foot sections in the curves. Then, the project team simulated schedules and evaluated how the train could take advantage of maximum speeds, with appropriate station stops built in, to calculate travel times. The third step, which the project team has not done yet, will be to take this information and complete a rigorous computer simulation of the track geometry and equipment. This third step will be done when the alternatives are narrowed down to three. At this point in the process, the project team feels they have a reasonably accurate assessment of travel times.

Paul Matthews, 495 Partnership, asked what the improvements to the existing Worcester Line are for the alternatives that include them. Mr. Galloway said the improvements would include optimizing curve alignment where possible to be able to increase speeds by 5-10 mph. Mr. Matthews said he is on the Advisory Committee for MBTA Rail Vision and would like to see Alternative 6 be part of the discussion at Rail Vision. Mr. Britland confirmed his staff and Rail Vision's staff are coordinating and he will discuss these alternatives with them. Astrid Glynn, MassDOT, said both studies are important and will connect at some point, though they are on slightly different time schedules at the moment. She added that the staff of both studies work in the same office.

Linda Dunlavy, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, asked how MassDOT will narrow the six alternatives down to three and if any of the evaluation criteria holds more weight than another. Mr. Britland said that the pending alternatives analysis will result in some alternatives standing out more than others; and some may have issues that make them unpermissible. He said the evaluation criteria are not weighted because different stakeholders and members of the Advisory Committee have criteria that matter more to them than others.

Senator Eric Lesser, MA State Senate, thanked MassDOT for the work completed to date. He said that including Palmer in as many alternatives as possible, including at least one of the final three alternatives, is important. He asked the project team to present what a 60-minute trip between

Springfield and Boston would look like, and if the project team determines that is infeasible, that is important to understand. He said that information would be helpful to know. He also asked that the alternatives analysis include ridership estimates and how the economy would be improved statewide as a result of the alternatives, as well as impacts to Boston, as this could be an escape valve for many people and result in less congestion. He concluded by saying the point of this study is not to just nibble around the edges of economic patterns but to see how it can change those patterns. He said, for example, that no one expected the Seaport could be a technology hub as a result of the Big Dig. Mr. Britland said studying each alternative from an economics perspective will be a big part of the study (both direct and indirect impacts).

Mayor Domenic Sarno, City of Springfield, thanked MassDOT for the work on this study and for holding this meeting. He also thanked Senator Lesser, Governor Baker, and Tim Brennan of the PVPC. He said Palmer should play a key role in this study and expressed how the new rail could provide a benefit to jobs and housing. He said there is potential for the federal government's infrastructure program to provide funding and said it would be crucial to be ready to go if that opportunity arises, similar to what happened with the stimulus program. He asked to see if there is a financially feasible and sustainable alternative that includes a 60-70-minute travel time between Springfield and Boston. He said workers in Boston may want to move out to Springfield if there is an attractive rail connection.

Ms. Leduc noted that the Town of Palmer recently contracted with UMass to produce a report about the benefits rail would bring to the region. She said there are sections in the report about housing and the age of potential riders and thanked MassDOT for reading the report.

Mr. Matthews said that this project could spur economic development not just for western Massachusetts but for central and eastern Massachusetts as well. He noted there has been a nearly 46 percent increase in ridership on the MBTA's Worcester/Framingham Line from 2012-2018 alone.

Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, MA House of Representatives, said the availability of parking at stations is a crucial capital improvement component to this study that cannot be overlooked. She would also like to see if the train connected to the Knowledge Corridor how that would increase ridership. She added that this route would create a Boston to New York corridor, with people in Connecticut also riding the train.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Britland then invited members of the public to provide comments.

Dave Pierce, Chester Foundation, said Alternative 4 shows the need for a third track, but there has already been a third track there in the past. He said CSX has spent four months upgrading the whole line there and it is in good shape. He also noted CSX had offered the line for sale in 2018.

Richard Holzman, Chester Railroad Foundation, said he does not support any alternative that is not rail all the way to Pittsfield. He said he would not support any plans that include buses. He thanked the leadership of the Advisory Committee and said they have been doing a great job. He said the region needs feeder rail even if it isn't high speed. He said Chester and Palmer are united in this effort and he wants the outcome of the study to be bold and imaginative.

Ben Hood, Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop, thanked the Advisory Committee members and said the citizens of Palmer see themselves as part of the Springfield Metro Area. This project, with a stop in Palmer, could connect Palmer to the eastern part of the state but if the rail does not reach Pittsfield then there would not be robust economic development. He said Alternative 6 should include Palmer as it is easily accessible from the Mass Pike.

Karen Christensen, Train Campaign, said bringing rail to Pittsfield is crucial. She said Pittsfield is a potential hub that can provide connections to the Connecticut Hartford Line and New York City.

An attendee said he lives in Pittsfield said MBTA trains currently stop running at 8:00 PM and asked if MassDOT has done a needs assessment for potential customers. He said he does not want to ride a bus and asked MassDOT to consider their riders' convenience.

An attendee said there is an opportunity to build self-propelled cars and Metro-North could add a self-propelled car to Palmer and Chester. He asked MassDOT to look at Chester and Palmer as reservoirs for the surrounding population, and said "if you build it they will come."

A participant from Citizens for Palmer Rail Stop said she was watching NECN earlier and saw the traffic report which showed heavy congestion. She said it is crucial to get cars off the road and it takes up to 90 minutes to get from I-495 to the Prudential Center.

Jessica Sizer, Palmer Town Council, is a student at Amherst and said she does not want to have to choose between where the jobs are (Eastern MA) and her desire to live in the western part of the state. She said it would be easier to get from UMass to Palmer on a train than to get from UMass to Springfield on a train. She noted there are five colleges with students that would prefer to get the train in Palmer.

John Garrett, resident of Greenfield, said he saw an article that said the MBTA has an extra billion dollars and does not know where to spend it, so the agency should spend it here.

Mark Shapp said it seems like MassDOT is building a house with no foundation as there is not enough terminal capacity in Pittsfield or Boston for this project. He said South Station Expansion and North South Rail Link should be done before adding trains anywhere else, and there might not be funding left over. Mr. Britland said the study is still early in the process and the project team will share the projects that MassDOT assumes will be in place or needs to be in place for this project at a future meeting.

Keith Benoit, UMass Amherst Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP), said adding a bus transfer adds a lot of complexity to a trip for people who are low-income, transit-dependent, or disabled. He said if he sees a couple transfers in a commute he would take his car instead.

Donald Blais, former Palmer Town Councilor, said he would not support any alternative that doesn't include Palmer. He said UMass's report for the Town is Palmer is a great study and encouraged everyone to read it.

Mr. Britland thanked everyone for coming and providing feedback and adjourned the meeting. <sup>2</sup>

#### **PUBLIC ATTENDANCE (from sign-in sheets)**

Heidi Bara	Anne Miller, <i>Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop</i>
Keith Benoit, <i>UMass Amherst LARP</i>	Tanya Neslusan, <i>Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop</i>
Donald Blais, <i>Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop</i>	Larry Parnass, <i>Berkshire Eagle</i>
Kevin Bustiga, <i>WWLP - 22 News</i>	David Pierce, <i>Chester Foundation</i>
Karen Christensen, <i>Train Campaign</i>	Kevin Pinle, <i>1Berkshire</i>
Bob Daley, <i>Chester Foundation</i>	Cara Radzins, <i>CRCOG</i>
Jason Fogue, <i>Constituent - Town of Chester</i>	Jerrey Roberts, <i>Daily Hampshire Gazette</i>
John Garrett	Emily Roseman, <i>Office of Senator Lesser</i>
Jacob Hane, <i>1Berkshire</i>	Mark Shapp
Ben Heckscher, <i>Trains in the Valley</i>	Emmaladd Shepherd, <i>Citizens for Palmer Rail Stop</i>
Brendon Holland, <i>Focus Springfield</i>	Jessica Sizer, <i>Town of Palmer Town Council</i>
Richard Holzman, <i>Chester Railroad Foundation</i>	Marrian Sullivan, <i>Springfield Mayor's Office</i>
Ben Hood, <i>Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop</i>	Jonathan Torcia, <i>East Longmeadow Planning Board</i>
Jim Kinney, <i>The Republican</i>	Paul Tutaili, <i>WPMC Radio</i>
Jeanne LeClair, <i>Gateway Hilltowns</i>	Lily Wallace, <i>Office of Rep. Blais</i>
Michael Marciniac, <i>Palmer Planning Board</i>	Roy Watson, <i>Springfield Mayor's office</i>
Parker Mas, <i>Office of Senator Lesser</i>	
Mike Masciadrelli, <i>WWLP-20 News</i>	
Ryan McNutt	

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<sup>2</sup> A letter was submitted to project staff at the conclusion of the meeting. A complete summary of public comments received (including comment sheets, emails, and letters) will be shared in the Final Report.