

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
1/31/2019	Rob Kearns	University of Massachusetts Amherst	rkearns@umass.edu	[see PDF] Attached is a resolution by the University of Massachusetts Student Governmet Association in support of East West Passenger Rail Service	Email to Scott Hamwey
3/12/2019	Andrew Riedl		ariedi82@gmail.com	I think it is fantastic that this crucial rail service is finally being studied and as a resident of Eastern MA, I would love to have the option to visit my family in the springfield area by rail. There are people in Eastern MA who are very much in favor of this project and want to be involved. I am very excited to watch it progress.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Betsy Johnson		betsy@bgjohnson.com	Alternatives need to consider implementation timeline as well as cost. Sooner the better.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Robert Kearns	Umass SGA	rkearns@umass.edu	Hello, I am Robert Kearns, a student of Umass Amherst and a member of student government association. I would like east-west rail to travel to and from work, home, classes, volunteer and internships in Boston Area. I provide survey of Umass students and an SGA resolution in support of East-West rail. Having Bus connection to UMass/5 colleges to springfield and/or Palmer would be great. [see PDF]	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Andy Anderson	Amherst College	aanderson@amherst.edu	High Speed SPG-BOS is my primary interest. I'm an academic and this would facilitate interactions between the academic communities in the pioneer valley and boston. (Yale is nice, but I like harvard better :)) Especially once additional trains become available SPG-NOHO in the near future. Limited stops, of course. I do also think it is worthwhile putting in local service along the existing ROW, especially since that can be provided much sooner than high-speed.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Eric Bascom	East Longmeadow, MA	ericboscom@gmail.com	1. It there a way for the cost report to be released in Jan 2020? As a tax payer im concerned about tax in/creases and costs for investments. 2. Will pittsfield please be a taken out of discussion? It should be part of a northern route study. 3. Why can I travel from fitchberg to boston and not greenfield to boston?	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Eric Bascom	East Longmeadow, MA	ericboscom@gmail.com	1. How is this train high speed rail if it goes through hills and mountains to boston? 2. Can we get all the costs by jan 2020 to allow politicians to debate it??	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Byran Farr	Historic Rt.2 108 Skyline Tr. Chester, MA	btffarr@gmail.com	Consider too those already living in communities inbetween rail stops - like Chester, MA. Husband commutes via car to pittsfield from chester	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Scarlet Lamottle	Palmer Rail Streering Committee - college grad	scarletlamottle@gmail.com	I am a resident of Palmer and it's dissappointing that Western Mass is not a priority. There was mentions of "investments... Investments." we need to INVEST in the entire commonwealth of Massachusetts. You've spent 24.3 Billion on the Big Dig. That benefitted eastern mass which is a small part of mass. Spend money on an investment that is a billion more times beneficial! I believe that a stop in Palmer, MA would be extremely beneficial to the economy and stopping there would bring plenty of people. Palmer was once known as the spot of the seven railroads and many people in Palmer are pushing for a stop to not only improve Palmer economically, but would also put the surrounding towns on the map. Lets spend money on a stop that would be beneficial to all western MA	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Heidi C. Bara	Citizens for Palmer Rail Stop	Bara.Heidi@yahoo.com	I am for highspeed rail with a stop in Palmer. As a resident of Palmer it would improve all surrounding towns in the region, 21 towns, about 195,000 people it would affect. Bringing more jobs, giving these residents opportunities to work in Boston or Springfield with an easier commute. The area would benefit greatly from this economic development. providing more jobs and affordable housing.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	David O'leary	Sierra Club - MA - Transportation Committee	Dave.Oleary@mdsierra.org	The Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter supports expanded east-west rail service. As noted during the presentation, we understand that there are various challenges and we look forward to updates and engaging actively in the decision making process. More detailed and formal comments will be submitted separetly. [see PDF]	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Margaret Montoni		Mmantoni@loomiscommunities.org	1) we have the opportunity to completely change the face of western mass. Young people leave here everyday for "opportunities", things to do etc. The jobs follow the people, the people follow the jobs. So we are in a crazy circle in our state. Let's all work together to make massachusetts (and New England) "the palce to be". 2) the only true change will come from high speed-people won't commute every day w/ 2+ hours each way. 3) I hope I am around to see this happen. It will be Amazing - Let's set massachusetts apart from the rest of the country.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Kerry Jackson	West Springfield, MA	Kerryjackson@rocketmail.com	I know everyone would love superfast high spped rail. But if the "slow" version gets us to south station boston in 1:50 that is fantastic. It was 1hr from commuter rail in framingham. Get the rail going ASAP if it means "slow" I'd be very happy getting emails and work done on the train commute. Missing demographic : the thousands of western MA people who already commute into boston.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form

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3/12/2019	Tayna Neslusan	Sturbridge, MA	tanya.neslusan@gmail.com	tThe most important thing is to connect the towns in western and central massachusetts to boston. We need to prioritize accessibility over speed and probide public transit options. The lack of access to our state capital impedes not only our economic development but our ability to engage politically.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Barbara Huntoon	Chester, MA	bjphuntoon@msn.com	Thank you for the study - looking forward to the study continuig and making E-W rail a reality. Western MA needs the economic growth boston needs housing relief; I90 traffic - particularly westfield to boston needs relief. The rural areas of western mass are ready and desperate for growth. please consider a rail that benefits not only high speed commuters, but the rural areas of the state. and please consider chester as a stop along the rail. it could be truly a win - win for the entire state.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Jeremy Fedors		jmfedors@live.com	East-West passenger rail would be useful to me for trips from worcester to springfield, since I travel south from there on amtrak on occasion. If some trains were closely in sync with amtrak arrivals, it would be an improvement over taking the bus to springfield. I am also thinking that the seperate ROW high-speed rail would be especially good, as the spped would convince more drivers to ditch the car. at least if this combined with improvements to local transit systems. maybe some of the smaller towns could use buses in sync with the trains, in order to travel to the express/local trains stations. P.S. please don't give in to anyone trying to water down plans for the sake of cutting budgets, if it severly limits speeds. people want to ride fast and on-time trains.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019				It would be of great benefit to add real substance to these presentations. The (illegible) approach to presenting material through content free sliders wastes everyone's time.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Moira Murphy	Resident + Coldwell banker realtor	moira.murphy@verizon.net	Consideration to innovative technology have sessions w/ Elon Musk on what his thoughts would be to get this SMALL state connected. We need to think outside the box and get MIT students + professors to get on board with creativity. The maglev or variations to it should be considered.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Joshua Brown		jbrown1082001@yahoo.com	East West rail service can also benefit sports fans whether if its college or professional.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	John Garrett	284 river road, S. Deerfield, Ma	johnjamesgarrett@gmail.com	Dear Gov. Baker, I would encourage you to forget about peter pan bus if you want your governorship remembered. In all seriousness it is vital to have a real effort to connect our commonwealth.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Richard D. Conley	P.O. Box #3 Brimfield Ma, 01010	search4richard@aol.com	I think that we need to consider HUB stations for example one in sturbridge at the intersection of Routes 84/20/90 would be perfect for train and bus dispatch with plenty of room for parking as well as servicing the heart of the region between worcester and springfield.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019	Elle Vandermark			None of your potential riders commute for work from Umass > Boston. You are foaling a significant demographic.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019				Please don't waste time and money on analyzing a MAG-LEV alternative. Include in the analysis a potential connection to Logan Airport because I could see people from western Mass wanting to access the lower airfare out of Boston for domestic and international travel.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form
3/12/2019				I believe that a stop in Palmer MA would be extremely benefivial to the economy and stopping there would bring plenty of people. Palmer was once known as the spot of the seven railroads and many people in Palmer are pushing for a stop to not only improve Palmer economically but would also put the surrounding towns on the map. Let's spend money on a stop that would be beneficial to all Western MA.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Comment Form

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3/12/2019	Stan Rosenberg			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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	Kerry Jackson			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	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	Andrew Jennings			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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	Ben Hood			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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	Richard Holzman	Pioneer Valley Planning Commissioner from Chester		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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	no name provided			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	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	Joshua Brown			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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment
3/12/2019	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.	Springfield Public Meeting 3/12/19 Verbal Comment

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03-13-19_1	nancy rodriguez		nancer1@comcast.net	<p>Saw news of study on high speed train Boston-Pittsfield . . HIGH SPEED - 175 mph , WHY ????????</p> <p>There is a definite need for a train , but 175 mph through bucolic Massachusetts?? .</p> <p>What happens when trains are using old tracks or poorly maintained tracks and are approaching curves, bridges, tunnels at high rates of speed ? (see Amtrak accident records)</p> <p>PLEASE ----- a train YES , high speed NO !!!</p>	MassDOT Contact Us Form
03-13-19_2	Robert Kearns		robsterkmc@gmail.com	<p>Thank you for the informative meeting in Springfield. It was good talking to people on the project team about East West Rail.</p> <p>Is there any possibility that the next public meeting in Western Massachusetts could have a full town hall hearing style meeting?</p> <p>I have also been to a meeting by EEAA which had group focus groups that then would present to the full group and I thought that that style had its benefits as well. Having a combination of styles of meetings at the different meetings would be helpful for public, some people are more comfortable engaging in different ways.</p> <p>I thought I learned new things through hearing what some members of the public, like the folks from Chester and their perspective.</p> <p>It would also be great if there could be meetings in other parts of Western Mass so more people could attend. I carpoled with a friend who took the commuter rail to the greyhound.</p> <p>For example some meeting in the Environmental Justice community of Holyoke, City of Pittsfield, Town of Palmer, Town of Chester, Cities of Northampton and Amherst come to mind.</p>	Email to Jen Slesinger

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03-14-19_1	Bob Daley		rdchester@comcast.net	<p>Each of us, together, finding ways to make our quality of life better, for one another, for our Communities. As a 1/10th member of the Chester Delegation, I would like to express appreciation to MassDOT for your imitative leading to this process. We have the opportunity to expand on what is already being done well and to maximize our existing infrastructure.. E/W rail-track... already in place and about to take a giant leap forward as PTC, Positive Train Control technology becomes operational. I didn't have the opportunity to speak with you personally the 12th, if I may take the opportunity now.</p> <p>First, We are currently Living the Dream of improved transportation for all, through the realization of this Study. With the final proposal Study/recommendation, we can create the future we need....by Inventing it Now. We must get it right and succeed, as the need is great and growing. During the past year, our rural W Mass COA Consortium collected the past 5 years of 'Ridership Report' data from FRTA (the Only Public transit we have) and conducted a 'Senior Transportation Survey'. The data underscored the very limited service model of FRTA, rendering it only minimally effective, and the 'Survey' clearly identified lack of service, incompatible schedules and no transport for recurring Medical appointments, as major problems in search of a solution.</p> <p>Second, the transportation solution equation, is not complex... existing infrastructure + lack of Public transit/growing elderly population + diesel or battery electric powered Rail cars (similar to NJ Transit) would provide a huge improvement, preserving and enhancing our way of life in rural W Mass, not to mention the positive economic growth it would ignite.</p> <p>Third, We urge the Study Committee, when determining the Final Six 'alternate proposals', to be inclusive of the key component of 'additional stops' and in particular, to include the 'Fired up and Ready to Go', Chester Station, located equidistant from Springfield and Pittsfield. It would serve as the collection reservoir for E/W passengers from the surrounding watershed population.</p> <p>Fourth, if there are questions and/or additional information Team Chester can provide...Please reach out to us. We are well prepared and committed to advocate for East West Rail reality, (aforementioned as the Dream) In addition to our Elected Officials, I have cc our Team Chester leaders, Barbara Pease-Huntoon, Chief of Party & Chairwoman, Chester Bd of Selectmen, Dave Pierce, Chester Station Master/Museum Director and Rich Holzman, our Secret weapon :)</p> <p>Thank's to your Team for bringing the discussion forward to our Living room of Democracy, Let's Win this for our Communities</p>	Email to Makaela

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03-16-19_2	John Pelletier	92 Central Ave Newton, MA 02460	john.f.pelletier@gmail.com	<p>It is high time the state brought back scheduled rail service to points west of Worcester. Connecting our largest cities on a single line will allow for easier movement of people and ideas and allow more options for jobs and homes.</p> <p>As the Knowledge corridor commuter service starts its trial this year and CT rail expansion continues to be successful it is critical that the connection to Boston be expanded as well.</p> <p>As someone who uses the Lake Shore to travel to points west of Worcester, usually a couple times a year, and as someone who frequently travels to Worcester on the train to visit family or attend conferences, expanded service would give me far more opportunity. Opportunity to visit family in Hartford, attend fairs, visit cultural attractions etc.</p> <p>I think that an effort should be made to bring the trip time as close to driving at non rush hour times as possible, something around 2 hours would work well I think, obviously more stops means slower service, and the tracks are not as well upgraded as they are from Worcester to Boston...I think you would want at least hourly service once fully implemented, but starting with morning and evening service might make the most sense.</p> <p>It would be great if super basic platforms could be provided in-between, maybe at Brookfield (or east/west Brookfield), and Palmer, but again this should be something that comes in a phase two once demand potential is observed with greater service frequency.</p> <p>I think the service can work as an extension of the current MBTA commuter rail or as an expanded Amtrak service, both should be investigated. I believe the Worcester line is near capacity with equipment during peak times, so it might make sense to have it as an extension of MBTA service to minimize impact.</p> <p>I think, like the Cape Flyer, that service should be studied but then implemented and tweaked. We can study this until the cows come home, but nothing beats running service in a frequent consistent manner for a year or two pilot to see how it works. That said a pilot service would not give much of the economic potential and likely wouldn't cause people to move or switch jobs.</p> <p>In any case, I fully support a review and pilot of frequent service west of Worcester.</p>	Email to Ethan
03-18-19_1	Benjamin J. Turon	Empire State Passenger Association (ESPA)	bjturon@gmail.com	Long email - see PDF (comments about connecting train to Albany; advocates for tilting trains)	Email to Makaela and Ethan
03-18-19_2	Mike Eagan		michaeleagan20@yahoo.com	<p>The current study of train service to western mass must not be viewed solely as a benefit for those of us who live in western mass. How often do you hear that young people can not afford to buy a house in the greater Boston area? I recently read that the average price of a home in Needham is 1 million dollars. My home in Palmer would sell for less than 250k. Boston workers are forced to live in New Hampshire because of the high costs of homes around Boston.</p> <p>Expanding rail service to wmass is a WIN for Boston residents who are desperate for affordable housing. There is plenty of affordable housing in the Quaboag Valley with Palmer being the hub. We are the solution to Boston's lack of affordable housing..</p> <p>The turnpike exit in Palmer makes it a natural for a rail stop which would allow quick access to the train. Known as the " town of seven railroads", a rail stop would service the greater Quaboag Valley. Palmer is centrally located between Springfield and Worcester. Government officials need to do everything in their power to connect the state with a modern rail service.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-20-19_1	Paul Bukowski		paulbukowski@comcast.net	Please consider allowing a train stop in Palmer, at the Steaming Tender Restaurant. I think it would bring some much needed business and tourism into town. Our town is dyeing, so anything would help. Furthermore, it would allow local residents to travel to distant towns without having to drive and add to the already heavy traffic.	Email to Makaela

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03-20-19_2	Ben Hood		palmertrain@gmail.com	<p>It was a pleasure to meet you briefly near the conclusion of MassDOT's East-West Rail Study open house in Springfield. I wish you well in your position as project manager for this important assessment of how to best restore rail service to towns and cities between Worcester and Pittsfield.</p> <p>I would like to bring to your attention a guest viewpoint published earlier this week by MassLive (the Springfield Republican) - https://www.masslive.com/opinion/2019/03/keep-east-west-rail-on-track-guest-viewpoint.html</p> <p>Our four activist groups who wrote and co-signed the article span western Massachusetts from east of Springfield to the Berkshires, and up the Pioneer Valley to Northampton & Greenfield. We are each focused on particular local & regional geographic areas, and collectively we are united in our view of what the Commonwealth as a whole needs.</p> <p>I would appreciate if you could accept the MassLive viewpoint (I have attached a PDF version of it) as a comment in response to the presentation at the Springfield public meeting last Tuesday, March 12. It expresses our grave concern about any move to replace trains with a bus service along the Mass Pike corridor.</p> <p>We strongly favor renewed, frequent train service to downtown locations in Palmer, Springfield, Westfield, Chester, and Pittsfield This is the only way to realize the benefits of transit-oriented development in our western Mass towns and cities with stations on the rail line.</p> <p>Trains have been the missing piece in our part of the state for many decades. At the conclusion of the East-West study, MassDOT needs to move forward quickly with restored passenger rail service for the economic benefit of the entire Commonwealth.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-21-19_1	Barbara O'Donnell		bodonnell1025@gmail.com	<p>Dear Ms. Niles, I wish to add my voice to those requesting the town of Palmer be included in any east west rail venture. I bought my home here in 2011 and due to a variety of circumstances have both my adult sons and their wives sharing this home. They all have primary and secondary degrees and are very employable in the Boston area. The commensurate salary would do wonders in achieving the payoff of student loans and the purchase of affordable housing of their own. This area is an underutilized gateway to so much of the Pioneer Valley and the benefits would certainly go both ways.</p>	Email to Makaela

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03-21-19_2	Laurie Ball		beachgirl2u@hotmail.com	<p>I am writing to overwhelmingly support the extension of the Commuter Rail to Western Massachusetts and establish a stop in Palmer. We desperately need the connection to Boston for many reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Access to opportunities that Boston offers that are not and likely will never be available out here (Jobs, Colleges, etc.) Ø Access to world class healthcare, too many of our citizens have to now travel to Boston via the Pike (aka Parking lot) Ø Access to social and cultural events and activities <p>Right now, we are forced to either spend hours in our cars crawling along the MA Pike...NOT good for the environment. The Pike is constantly overwhelmed with an excessive number of drivers, the road is constantly requiring repair due to excessive use and it is a gross waste of tax dollars. Let's get the train out here and get more cars off the roads.</p> <p>I personally am a huge fan of the rail. I live in Scituate (Greenbush line) up until 8 years ago. While I love the tranquility of Palmer, I miss having the option to jump on the train and go to Boston. My family still lives in Scituate, in order for me to visit – I refuse to drive the Pike anymore – I either take the Amtrak once daily train from Springfield to South Station and then Commuter Rail to Scituate or I drive to Worcester and take the Commuter Rail to South Station/Greenbush.</p> <p>I am personally witnessed the growth and revitalization the restoration of the Greenbush and Middleboro, etc., lines have net on the South Shore. The housing prices have sky rocketed and housing supply is very low. Comparatively, we have a surplus of land and housing in Western MA and the prices are below market. Open the rail and leverage our housing surplus for all the people in the Greater Boston area that cannot afford quality housing.</p> <p>Finally, the Peter Pan bus is not an option. It is no better than driving myself, I have taken it once, it is inconvenient and pricey. I understand the state is subsidizing the fares...just lining private business pockets given the very limited service. No money should be going to a private entity to provide the transportation services the state needs to step up and get this resolved once and for all.</p> <p>Palmer is the gateway to Western MA. We are the Hub for students traveling to the largest University in our state! The surrounding towns would equally benefit from a stop here, it makes perfect sense and could easily be built to mimic any of the stops along the Greenbush or Worcester lines...no fancy stations needed. Just a Commuter Lot and a Station Stop. As you may have guessed by now, I am rabid for this cause. I cannot stress enough how important this is to all of us in this area. We need transportation and we need it now.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-21-19_3	Rachael DeShano		rachael.deshano@gmail.com	<p>I just wanted to write in support of a passenger rail stop for Palmer, Massachusetts. The housing market in the eastern portion of the state is insane. Millennials have little hope of purchasing a house there, especially those who have any college debt. I know this story well because my husband and I lived on the North Shore and looked for a house that we could afford (as far out as the commuter rail lines would go!) for over two years. We got very lucky and found the one job in my industry in the western part of the state that will probably be available for years, which enabled us to move to Palmer and finally purchase a house. But with a passenger rail line stop, we would've been able to consider the town much sooner, as I would've been able to commute easily to my previous job in Boston.</p> <p>Palmer is well-located in the eastern portion of the state, enabling for commuters to drive to a rail stop from surrounding towns easily, plus it has some existing rail infrastructure in place. The town, and the eastern portion of the state in general, is primed for an infusion of young families and businesses, which I truly believe would come if a passenger rail to Boston was an option. I have several friends who are in the same boat we were not too long ago, and know that such a stop would pique their interest.</p> <p>Please, please consider making Palmer a stop on a future passenger rail line. It could greatly revitalize this area.</p>	Email to Makaela

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03-21-19_4	Lorinda Baker	Palmer Town Council	lorindabaker@gmail.com	<p>I am a Town Councilor for Palmer. We have been pressing for years for our chance at a vibrant economy by way of an East-West Passenger Rail stop in our downtown.</p> <p>We are geographically in a better position for this than any other community you are considering. We are the "Town of Seven Railroads". We have a beautifully restored train station and existing commercial rails in every village of Palmer. It is much easier to lay secondary tracks along an already established line than to engineer tracks where there currently are none.</p> <p>A stop in Palmer would not only benefit Palmer but every neighbor in our region.</p> <p>I wholeheartedly reject any attempt to stick a bus alternative in this plan. I frequently drive to Framingham or Worcester to grab the train but I have never, nor would I ever consider taking a bus. We have had the luxury of spending a good deal of time in Japan and Europe and we are woefully behind the times when it comes to public transportation. Let's look to the future and not to the past. A bus on the Mass Turnpike is no different than a car when it comes time for heavy traffic or an accident.</p> <p>Lastly, as a councilor who works tirelessly to try and make this community more attractive with little financial resources, a rail stop in Palmer would do more to spark the economy in this town than anything our council, planning board or town manager can do on our own. Western Massachusetts towns deserve economic equality.</p> <p>Please do not dismiss Palmer!</p>	Email to Makaela

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03-21-19_5	Kelley Slater		kelleyslater68@gmail.com	<p>I never thought I'd find myself writing you a letter. Palmer Massachusetts is a small town known as the gateway to Western Massachusetts.</p> <p>For too long, Boston has viewed anything outside of the 495 as being a no man's land. That is evident in funding, job opportunities, and anything else you can think of for business development. A casino does not heal our employment woes.</p> <p>For far too long western Mass job candidates have had to choose between the only option given to them which is the Massachusetts Turnpike, or simply not applying for any jobs inside the 495. We have been denied the ability to find work in Connecticut due to commute issues, and not having a train available until recently that ran from Springfield to New Haven. This is the 21st century! I'm sure you're aware of that, but it needs to be said.</p> <p>We in Western Massachusetts are still technically in the early part of the 20th century. There are a few very well paying jobs in this area, the five college area Etc. But we are not enamored of being skipped over as if we do not exist! We do exist and not for popular reasons. Most rural towns out here don't even have bus service. We rely on our transportation if we're lucky enough to have it.</p> <p>Putting Palmer on the right track, pun intended, would allow the surrounding towns of Palmer to actually take a train to the opportunity that exists within Boston proper and outlying areas.</p> <p>We all have skills, we all have the ability to make a difference in our economic structure simply by being not fettered by the chains of long commutes. Of wasting gas sitting in traffic for hours on end when we can be happily transported by train to the areas in which we wish to work. Or at least have the opportunity offered to us to apply.</p> <p>When the Quabbin Reservoir was created there was a train called The Rabbit Run. It was flooded and it no longer exists. That train ran to Boston! Sure it was 19th century technology but it gave the residents of this forgotten Forest the ability to travel to Boston. Without having to go on Horseback or stage. Now the only option we have if we want to work in Boston in the outlying areas is to drive and that creates an Untold tax and expense for the person who's trying to better their life with better opportunities!</p> <p>Eric Glasser is currently offering \$10,000 for bostonians to move to Western Mass! He brags that we have cheaper rents that we are affordable versus living in the affluent sections of what has become a gentrified City. I say allow us to live where we live and earn a living that will allow us to thrive without so many roadblocks so to speak to achieve that goal. How would you like a three-hour commute? The traffic on the Pike is ungodly with people exiting via cars Boston area. You sit for hours idling. The Mass Pike was never created to handle the influx of traffic that we have right now. 50 years ago when it was created the population wasn't nearly what it is now for license driver's.</p> <p>We don't have a design flaw we have a population problem. Too many commuters not enough Road. Lighten the load on the Mass Pike reduced traffic incidences by allowing people to have the choice between taking a train and having to drive!</p> <p>By doing nothing you've only contributed to the problem.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-22-19_1	Diana Caissie		leonardnimoyfan@gmail.com	<p>I am a resident of Sturbridge, but spent much of my last 28 years in Brimfield right near the Palmer town line. Seeing the Palmer celebrated as the "Town of Seven Railroads" but never having a commuter rail that the population could benefit from was always frustrating to me.</p> <p>I'm urging you to extend commuter rail to Palmer and Springfield. Palmer is centrally located within the region between Worcester and Springfield. Many of our people commute to those towns and to Boston, so a rail stop here would reduce congestion on the Pike. Also, we have land and housing in this region at very reasonable prices, which could help relieve the housing crunch in the Boston area if there were good rail access to this area. Additionally, the rail stop could improve the economy in this region by attracting more people and businesses here.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-22-19_2	Janice		janicemountain@hotmail.com	<p>Hello there. Please please please push hard for a rail stop in Palmer. The reasons are many! Don't underestimate the incredible value for so many.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-22-19_3	john palmere		islesrbest@outlook.com	<p>I've lived in Palmer since I was born in 1955. Over the years I've seen Palmer loose alot of businesses. I think a rail stop between Palmer and Boston would help this town immensely. Also I would love being able to take a train to go to a Red Sox game. Please bring this to Palmer.</p>	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
03-22-19_4	Maryellen Mcleod		maryellenmcleod@hotmail.com	<p>I am a new resident in Palmer. I bought a 3 bedroom house here in June. I am from the Woburn area I moved here because it is much more affordable to live but once here realized that my quality of life quickly got better since I no longer have to sit in an hour's worth of traffic twice a day to get to work.</p> <p>I believe many other Boston area residents would absolutely love it here too. That's why I am hoping for there to be a rail stop included here. It could not only bring people to Palmer but it would give Palmer residents a way to commute to work and use the rail to travel to entertainment and medical appointments.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-22-19_5	Timothy Nale		timothy.nale73@gmail.com	<p>I never thought I'd find myself writing you a letter. Palmer Massachusetts is a small town known as the gateway to Western Massachusetts.</p> <p>For too long, Boston has viewed anything outside of the 495 as being a no man's land. That is evident in funding, job opportunities, and anything else you can think of for business development. A casino does not heal our employment woes.</p> <p>For far too long western Mass job candidates have had to choose between the only option given to them which is the Massachusetts Turnpike, or simply not applying for any jobs inside the 495. We have been denied the ability to find work in Connecticut due to commute issues, and not having a train available until recently that ran from Springfield to New Haven. This is the 21st century! I'm sure you're aware of that, but it needs to be said.</p> <p>We in Western Massachusetts are still technically in the early part of the 20th century. There are a few very well paying jobs in this area, the five college area Etc. But we are not enamored of being skipped over as if we do not exist! We do exist and not for popular reasons. Most rural towns out here don't even have bus service. We rely on our transportation if we're lucky enough to have it.</p> <p>Putting Palmer on the right track, pun intended, would allow the surrounding towns of Palmer to actually take a train to the opportunity that exists within Boston proper and outlying areas.</p> <p>We all have skills, we all have the ability to make a difference in our economic structure simply by being not fettered by the chains of long commutes. Of wasting gas sitting in traffic for hours on end when we can be happily transported by train to the areas in which we wish to work. Or at least have the opportunity offered to us to apply.</p> <p>When the Quabbin Reservoir was created there was a train called The Rabbit Run. It was flooded and it no longer exists. That train ran to Boston! Sure it was 19th century technology but it gave the residents of this forgotten Forest the ability to travel to Boston. Without having to go on Horseback or stage. Now the only option we have if we want to work in Boston in the outlying areas is to drive and that creates an Untold tax and expense for the person who's trying to better their life with better opportunities!</p> <p>Eric Lesser is currently offering \$10,000 for bostonians to move to Western Mass! He brags that we have cheaper rents that we are affordable versus living in the affluent sections of what has become a gentrified City. I say allow us to live where we live and earn a living that will allow us to thrive without so many roadblocks so to speak to achieve that goal. How would you like a three-hour commute? The traffic on the Pike is ungodly with people exiting via cars Boston area. You sit for hours idling. The Mass Pike was never created to handle the influx of traffic that we have right now. 50 years ago when it was created the population wasn't nearly what it is now for license driver's.</p> <p>We don't have a design flaw we have a population problem. Too many commuters not enough Road. Lighten the load on the Mass Pike reduced traffic incidences by allowing people to have the choice between taking a train and having to drive!</p> <p>By doing nothing you've only contributed to the problem.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-23-19_1	David Golden		davegolden1@comcast.net	<p>I am writing to express my wholehearted support for reopening a Palmer rail stop on the proposed east-west rail line. With it's access to major routes including a Mass Pike exit, Palmer represents a great opportunity for a renaissance in this area, an area feeling the strains of depressed economies and decreasing populations. As the mills that this area was built on have all but closed, there are limited job opportunities in the Palmer and surrounding communities and a railroad stop would be a catalyst for new, affordable growth in manufacturing, retail, services and housing starts. This needs to be an option that is not overlooked but one given a full press chance of becoming a reality. As the entrance to Western MA and proximity to central and eastern MA, a rail stop makes sense to not only help ease traffic concerns but also give hundreds of thousands of MA residents the possibility of home ownership and access to an unlimited amount of local amenities and resources. A win-win all around!</p> <p>I look forward to your full consideration of this hopeful future resurgence in Western and Central MA!</p>	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
03-23-19_2	Nancy Capron		nancap21@gmail.com	<p>I am enthusiastically in favor of a high speed train from Western Mass to Boston. As a person who lives in poverty with no hope for my economic circumstances to improve, my foremost concerns are anything that would make my material reality worse. While increased housing costs may not be directly caused by accessible transportation, there is a evidence of a correlation. Our Republican governor Baker has acknowledged that Massachusetts is experiencing a housing crisis, while his attempt to increase housing stock is welcome it is disappointing that he does not prioritize affordable housing. United Way's ALICE Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed Data shows that 48.8 % of folks living in Hampden County are below the ALICE Level, meaning that 48.8 percent of folks are struggling to maintain themselves housing food healthcare and transportation. If you take an average of the 4 Western Mass counties, there are on average 42.4 % of folks who are struggling to make ends meet. This data is consistent with reports that 42 % of working Americans make less than \$15 dollars an hour, that many households could not manage a crisis that cost \$400, that there are 7 million folk that are behind in their car loan payments, and that nearly 50% of Americans will experience poverty in their lifetime. My concern is that the availability of fast transit to Boston will attract people from the Boston Metro Area to Hampden County and increase both competition and an increased speculation in the housing market. National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) states that Massachusetts is short 169,809 rental units for the 32 percent of renters that are extremely low income. They estimate the need for rental units in the Western Mass area is 52,000. I know through my life experience that the only thing that causes poverty is Public Policy. I can state with out any hesitation that no person is personally responsible for their own poverty. The responsibility for poverty here in America lies squarely at the feet of our elected officials. In Massachusetts that means predominately members of the Democratic party. My hope is that now is the time when the makers of policy are going to view their fellow citizens state of poverty as a priority and enact legislation that alleviates that poverty and in legislation such as the expanded the rail system have as its foundation a ethic of doing no further harm to the poor of Massachusetts.</p>	Email to Ethan
03-24-19_1	Adam Garvey		adamjg9@comcast.net	<p>Thank you for reading my email with hopeful consideration for putting in a train stop in Palmer, MA. Putting Palmer on the right track would open up the whole economy in Western Massachusetts. Palmer is centrally located to everything! The downtown area is just a skip from the Pike which would be beneficial for commuters to park and ride. A revitalization of the downtown is exactly what Palmer could use. Many of the store fronts are up for lease or sale and bringing in a train would attract more people and businesses to the downtown area.</p> <p>Currently, there are just too many commuters and not enough road. The Pike traffic can be horrible, making trips to Boston unbearable. Thus, I notice that if we want to go see a show, or dinner we tend to spend our dollars in Hartford, CT as the commute is just so much easier. I would love to keep our dollars in the state and this this station would be the perfect solution for this area.</p> <p>Palmer and the surrounding towns have plenty of room for development and at affordable prices. A Palmer station would offer much more affordable housing options compared to Boston and other areas. There are many commuters in the surrounding towns and this station would be the saving grace for work/life balance. Many of us have sat in traffic for hours and a train would just be so convenient.</p>	
03-26-19_1	Rick Patoski		rick.patoski@gmail.com	lengthy email (see PDF)	Email to Ethan
03-26-19_2	Elise Anton	42 Beech St., Palmer MA 01069	ekanton@comcast.net	<p>I would like to register my support for a rail stop in Palmer. We are very centrally located and have historically been a rail crossroads. My family lives very near the turnpike in Palmer, and are alarmed at the rapid increase in daily and nightly traffic. If we stand on the Flynt St. bridge over the pike, we can see how many cars have only one passenger. A convenient and affordable form of public transportation in every direction from Palmer would decrease the pollution and noise caused by all these one-occupant vehicles, and perhaps also the accident rate. It would certainly cut down on the slow-downs and traffic jams happening more and more frequently in this area of the turnpike. Commuting by train could be much more relaxing than commuting by car. Palmer and surrounding towns seem to be becoming "bedroom towns" for Worcester and Boston, as property values go up as you head east, so more and more folks seem to be commuting from this area.</p> <p>Let's take a lesson from many European countries and promote public transportation. Please consider a Palmer Rail Stop.Thank you.</p>	Email to Makaela
03-28-19_1	Ruth Curtin		rb.curtin@verizon.net	see PDF of letter (comments about rail stop in Palmer)	Comment form mailed to MassDOT

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
03-28-19_2	Ryan Lafond		ryan.b.lafond@gmail.com	<p>I was unable to attend the public meeting in Amherst but wanted to share a couple of thoughts:</p> <p>- a rail service with sub-90 minute travel time from Springfield-Boston would be our preferred method of travel for ad hoc visits to Boston, e.g. going to an event. Naturally consideration would be given to how convenient the timing was, but the Pike and Boston parking are such a pain I would be flexible there.</p> <p>- biggest benefit is employment opportunities. If Springfield to Boston was 75 minutes or less then I think Boston would be a realistic job market. Train availability would have to mimic existing commuter rail schedules, meaning most inbound available 5-9am and outbound 4-7pm, roughly speaking.</p>	Email to Ethan and Makaela
03-28-19_3	Taylor Williams		taylorgowillia3@gmail.com	<p>I am writing to express my support for an east to west high speed rail. I work in Tech and moved from Boston to the Bay Area 4 years ago. I am now looking to move back to the Northeast. Much of my family is based in western mass and I would love to be near them. I can say without exaggeration the lack of any current feasible public transportation is a top 2 consideration and deterrent to moving back to the state.</p> <p>The reason I would value this real -- The company I work for is based in Boston, I will need to get there a few times per month, sometimes overnight sometimes day trips. After trying the bus a few times I would not include this as a viable transportation option for folks traveling for business.</p> <p>In summary, Massachusetts is losing out on at least one and I venture to bet many other highly paid remote tech workers due to the lack of intra-state transportation options.</p>	Email to Ethan and Makaela
03-28-19_4	Rob Kusner	University of Massachusetts at Amherst	profkusner@gmail.com	<p>Thanks for sharing the notes from the 12 March open house in Springfield. If I'd been in town then, I would have participated and commented. I've a professor of mathematics at UMass Amherst since 1988, and have served at chair of Amherst's Public Transportation Committee (in the 1990s and early 2000s), as chair of the DCR's Norwottuck Rail Trail Advisory Committee (between 2007 and 2016, at former U.S. Rep. John Olver's behest, leading the redesign and reconstruction of this alternative transportation route – and 12-mile long linear park – joining Amherst with Northampton), as a member of the Amherst Select Board (from 2005 to 2008 – chair for some of the term), and an Amherst Conservation Commissioner as well.</p> <p>Many times over the last 3 decades, I've pointed to the need to reduce the number of cars that UMass students (largely from the Boston metro region) bring to the Amherst area. This would help reduce pollution and congestion in our area, and it would also take advantage of a huge "captive" transit-friendly cohort, many of whom rely on PVTA buses when they're in our area, but who revert to private cars all too often (e.g., to return home on weekends).</p> <p>A great way to do this – and at the same time providing reliable, work-on-board, public transit for those who need to commute regularly to and from the Boston metro area for things like work and education, or semi-regularly for medical appointments, sporting events and (for folks like me) even academic collaboration (mostly with colleagues from the Boston-area institutions, but also including access to Logan Airport for more distant collaboration) – would be to redevelop reliable, comfortable (but not necessarily super-high-speed) East-West Passenger Rail between Boston and Springfield, with coordinated a transfer station in Palmer, connecting with a fast rail-shuttle between Amherst and Palmer.</p> <p>There is already enough bus (Peter Pan) and private car traffic to justify an AM-PM commuter version of this, but transforming from a car-centric to train-centric transportation system could easily develop ridership on this route by an order of magnitude more – possibly testing the limits of the CSX RoW between Worcester and Palmer, and maybe also the current single-track RoW between Amherst and Palmer, but worth exploring.</p> <p>If we're going to get more folks to turn from private cars to transit – especially the most transit-amenable folks, who tend to be students or academics (who've seen it done in other parts of the world like England, France, Germany, Japan, and especially China) – we should be linking our flagship public university (UMass Amherst) with our main population center (the Boston metro region) via rail – as it was at the time of UMass's founding (as Mass Ag College) a century and a half ago!</p>	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
04-01-19_1	Pat Stockwell		stockwellp@charter.net	<p>Unfortunately I was not able to attend the meeting in Springfield. However I have read the materials and thought I'd comment. I am retired living in central massachusetts and would have loved an express rail to Boston during my career in technology. It would have greatly expanded my job opportunities, for which I was not willing to fight the traffic or the limited availability of trains at the time. I also love western Massachusetts and the Berkshires specifically. North Adams in particular is experiencing somewhat of a renaissance via tourism and the arts and is the location of another great Massachusetts college, MCLA. I'm sure just like Westfield students they would love the advantages an east-west rail from Pittsfield would offer.</p> <p>I agree with all the public comments, except about the maglev as I do think all options including the latest technology should be on the table. I understand the personas you've developed which represent the potential demand as it stands today, covering all the people who might need or want access to Boston. The Rosa persona seems to align most closely with many of the comments regarding the east-west rail as a way to pull Boston area residents west to live while continuing to work east. The idea of course being lower cost of housing and better quality of life. Personally I believe a robust east-west passenger rail system could potentially create a reverse osmosis type of situation where even the businesses get pulled west from the city once they can entice skilled workers from all over the state. A place like Pittsfield located less than an hour from Albany International and the area with its old factories, mills and warehouses waiting to be renovated and offering cheap rent should be no less attractive to high tech companies than those in Boston, if they can lure the employees. As a central Mass resident wouldn't job opportunities with reasonable commutes both east and west be great?</p>	Email to Makaela
04-07-19_1	D. Phillips		dphillips8_99@yahoo.com	<p>I believe that the East-West Rail Study can be the basis for providing not only fast, frequent service between Springfield/Pittsfield and Boston, but fast, frequent service between Worcester and Boston and, even, Worcester and New York City.</p> <p>Please see the attached comments.</p> <p>Please add me to the mailing list for the Study.</p>	Email to Makaela
04-09-19_1	Cara S. Radzins	CRCOG	cradzins@crcog.org	<p>I attended last month's public meeting for the East-West Passenger Rail Study, and I was encouraged to see such a strong turnout. I appreciate your willingness to accept comments at this critical, early stage of the study, and I would like to share some feedback from the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Metro Hartford area.</p> <p>Attached please find a letter that CRCOG's Executive Director, Lyle Wray, previously transmitted to Congressman Richard Neal regarding the scope of the East-West Passenger Rail Study. We encourage your Study Team to consider this letter and its core contentions, which are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are very concerned that the East-West Passenger Rail Study does not seem to include an analysis of the ridership potential from and to locations in Connecticut and believe the Capitol Region should be considered when calculating the ridership potential and economic benefits of the study's alternatives. Enhanced rail service in the East-West Corridor would be transformative for both Connecticut and Western Massachusetts. Just as the Hartford Line between New Haven, CT and Springfield, MA considered Western Massachusetts in its planning, we believe that it makes sense to include North Central Connecticut in the East-West Passenger Rail Study. • It appears that the scope of this study includes limited analysis of the potential for increased economic development. Increased economic development, such as the potential for transit-oriented development, should be incorporated into the study as a key objective against which potential alternatives are measured. <p>The Pioneer Valley and the Capitol Region have long recognized our interrelated economies and shared assets through our Knowledge Corridor Partnership. We jointly undertook a \$4 million Sustainable Communities Initiative project and have worked closely to promote Bradley Airport and the Hartford Line. We at CRCOG are excited about the prospect of rail service improvements between Springfield and Boston, and we encourage MassDOT to incorporate the Capitol Region into the East-West Passenger Rail Study scope in recognition of our shared economy, history of collaboration, and the reality of the larger passenger rail market.</p>	Email to Makaela and Ethan

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
04-22-19_1	Bob Daley		rdchester@comcast.net	<p>There is no Rail Station stop in the 50 mi between Springfield & Pittsfield.</p> <p>We need to address the lack of access to Public transit, where virtually none exists, before attempting to reduce commuter times. Re opening Chester Station, would provide a reservoir for the surrounding watershed population, which includes 29 Town's within a 20 mi radius.</p> <p>This would provide a great return on investment, on our existing infrastructure, without embarking on huge new projects.</p> <p>With Positive Train Control nearing it's operational phase and the documented need for Public access, via completion of a regional transportation survey and the examination of 5 years of FRTA ridership reports, both highlighting the growing need in rural West Mass... we are at critical mass of the 'urgency of now'.</p> <p>For decades we have expanded infrastructure for personal/commercial vehicle's, at the expense of Community vitality. Much, now by-passes 'Main Street' in so many of our Town's</p> <p>Public transit has not kept pace. Instead of massive new build, we need to scale up what we are currently doing well, maximizing existing Rail systems. Adding a commuter stop in Chester is the right thing to do, for the right reasons, at the right time.</p> <p>For our rural way of life to survive, we must value Community resilience over commute times, provide improved access, take resourceful, smart steps, adapt and create the future we want... the future our neighbors are in need of...today.</p>	Email to Makaela and Ethan
04-22-19_2	Dave Pierce	The Chester Foundation, Inc.	dpiercedlp@aol.com	<p>Hi Makaela, et al:</p> <p>Attached find some observations from Chester we hope you might share with the Committee.</p>	Email to Makaela and Ethan, et al
05-03-19_1	Abaigeal Duda		abaigeal_duda@yahoo.com	<p>I want to state my support for having a rail stop in Palmer.</p> <p>I grew up in Palmer (Bondsville), but after college, I moved to Boston, where I lived for 20 successful years. When my mother became ill almost 10 years ago, though, I returned back to the family farm to care for her and look after my father and the farm. Finding work out here after working in administration at large museums in the Boston area was very difficult, and I cobbled together part-time jobs as a tutor, a house cleaner, a baker, a nonprofit administrator at a tiny organization, etc.</p> <p>Today, I am still under-employed and struggling to find work that fits my qualifications. I am now also looking after my father, who has dementia and who turns 90 this year.</p> <p>While I don't think that I have the energy (nor a vehicle that could stand the wear and tear) for a driving commute to Boston, I would certainly jump at the chance to use a passenger train for the commute if it were available. It could have made a tremendous difference for me and for the farm if it had been available when I first moved back to Western MA.</p> <p>I hope that you can make better opportunities open to others in the future if you adopt a passenger rail line to Boston with a stop in Palmer.</p>	Email to Makaela
05-05-19_1	Dave Pierce	The Chester Foundation, Inc.	dpiercedlp@aol.com	<p>Hi Makaela, et al:</p> <p>Attached find some observations from Chester we hope you might share with the Committee. This may require 2 Emails to include all photos.</p>	Email to Makaela et al
05-02-19_1	Camille Collins Lovell		camillecollinslovell@gmail.com	<p>Hello - I am a resident of Brimfield, who works in Boston, and travels frequently to NYC and DC for work. As you know there is no public transportation serving the small towns in south central MA. So I was excited to learn of the discussion of possible rail service somewhere near me. I was unable to attend the Palmer Rail Stop Study Meeting on Sat. March 16th - I think that was part of the East-West Passenger Rail Study that you manage? At any rate, I am interested in contributing to the study or just getting updates, if that is possible.</p> <p>Thanks!</p>	Email to Ethan

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
05-21-19_1	Heidi C. Bara		bara.heidi@yahoo.com	As a citizen of Palmer, Massachusetts, I am asking you to consider our town of Seven Railroads to be a passenger stop on the East West Rail Line connecting Boston to Springfield. Our location is centrally located and would benefit 20 communities that surround our town. We already have a historic train station with a good location near downtown. A train stop in Palmer will help revitalize our downtown area as well as surrounding towns. The Quaboag towns have affordable housing, something Boston would be interested in and eastern Massachusetts has job opportunities that the Quaboag Region would be able to get to by rail. Palmer is still a rail crossroads, both for east-west and north-south trains, but currently without a passenger stop. Workers and students in the Quaboag towns need better transit options connecting them to employers and educational institutions. We need environmentally friendly transportation, our highways are congested, we need less cars on the road not more. People who commute by train can enjoy the scenery, get work done or take a nap, a lot less stressful than driving a long commute, with too much traffic. I would love to be able to get on the train here in Palmer and get to downtown Springfield for a hockey game or night out in less than a half hour. A trip to Worcester for a baseball game or concert in less than 45 minutes. I like to travel to Boston to see our talented sports teams, the Celtics and Bruins as well as the Boston Science Museum and all the rich history of our state capitol. I would visit Boston more frequently if we were able to commute by train. Thank you for your consideration, hope to hear from you soon.	Email to Makaela
05-26-19_1	Dave Pierce		dpiercedlp@aol.com	Work continues apace on the west end. Two of the private grade crossings lamented on your poster at the last East/West meeting have been removed in Chester. (see attached.) Perhaps more; I'm looking into it. It's as if CSX is preparing the line to order for commuter rail service. It will be absolutely state of the art. As curves are unavoidable in the northeast, including on the Northeast Corridor, the Acela route, there will be virtually no rail mileage in the Commonwealth built to a higher standard. And not an unknown quantity operationally, as MA DOT already owns the east end and has a working relationship in place with both Keolis and CSX. You won't be able to afford not to acquire it. Further updates to follow.	Email to Makaela, Ethan, et al
05-30-19_1	Michael Moran	Baystate Wing Hospital	sszcebak@townofpalmer.com	SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for East-West Study)	Letter to addressed to Makaela; mailed to Palmer Community Development Director
06-02-19_1	James Higby	Chester Board of Selectmen	jamehigby@gmail.com	For consideration by the East-West Rail Study: The statewide benefits of passenger rail in Chester Chester is situated in the only major east-west valley traversing southwestern Massachusetts. It is for this reason that the Western Railroad was originally sited there, as well as the original statewide east-west turnpike, now route 20. The route 20 corridor is just as geographically advantageous today as it was in the 19th century, evidenced by the dozens of freight trains which pass through it every week. With traffic congestion in metropolitan areas steadily increasing, this ingenious historic railroad presents itself as a valuable resource to cope with the great challenges of modernization. The incorporation of a rail stop in Chester will be greatly beneficial to the local community, and also to the entire state of Massachusetts. The town's workforce is largely commuters who use state highways to get to and from work; a public transportation option would not only allow the local population a more efficient commute but also provide a reduction in road depreciation and emissions. A quantitative model of these effects would be an excellent addition to the study, if one is not already underway. We are now presented with a unique opportunity to promote prosperity in the region by re opening the station in Chester. The effects will be felt statewide, and on a national level will help define Massachusetts as the forerunner of efficient and reliable transportation solutions for a sustainable future.	Email to Ethan, et al
06-03-19_1	Seth Kershner		sethkershner@hotmail.com	I read with interest the recent letter to the Berkshire Eagle (May 31) from a Chester resident concerning the need for a rail stop in Chester. As a Hilltown resident and frequent Amtrak user, I support this proposal and urge your office to take the matter under careful consideration.	Email to Makaela and Rep Smitty
06-03-19_2	Roy M. St. George		roy@moultonins.com	I am writing to you in support of the Palmer Rail stop. My wife and I own 3 insurance offices in the area. Palmer, Ware and Belchertown. I feel a stop would be beneficial to all the businesses in the area. It would also be great for people like me who like to travel to Boston for weekends or sporting events to hop on the train rather driving. The benefits are substantial to our rural area for people who may not have transportation as well.	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
06-04-19_1	Linda G. Leduc	Palmer Town Planner	lleduc@townofpalmer.com	<p>I am happy to present you with the attached Town of Palmer's E-W passenger station case study. Please share with the MassDOT consultant team at your earliest convenience.</p> <p>We hope that the compelling information within this document receives high consideration when screening for the criteria of the six E-W rail corridor alternatives and that Palmer is ultimately chosen as an intermediate rail stop when the final three alternatives are determined.</p> <p>I look forward to attending the next Advisory Committee meeting this June where a summary of the existing conditions, the alternatives screening criteria, and the six proposed alternatives will be presented for our consideration. In the meantime, if you could provide me with any details as to the anticipated meeting date and adjusted study timeline, it would be greatly appreciated.</p>	Email to Makaela and Ethan
07-16-19_1	Town of Ware Board of Selectmen		mmidura@townofware.com	SEE PDF OF LETTER (Board voted to support stop in Palmer)	Mary Midura emailed the letter to Makaela
07-29-19_1	Sen. Hinds, Rep. Pignatelli, Rep. Farley-Bouvier, Rep. Barrett, Rep. Mark	MA Legislature	bethann.steiner@masenate.gov	SEE PDF OF LETTER (opposition to bus shuttles)	Letter to Sec. Pollack and Astrid Glynn
07-23-19_1	Patricia D. Carlino	Town of Lee Selectboard		SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for Chester station)	Letter to David Pierce; handed to Makaela at the July 23 AC meeting
07-23-19_2	Daniel Elihu Kramer	Chester Theatre Company	daniel@chestertheatre.org	SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for Chester station)	Email to David Pierce; handed to Makaela at the July 23 AC meeting
07-31-19_1	Thomas Matuszko	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission		SEE PDF OF LETTER (opposition to bus shuttles/alternatives 1, 2 and 5)	Letter to Sec. Pollack
09-03-19_1	Tracy Opalinski	Ware Business & Civic Association	topalinski09@gmail.com	SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for Palmer station)	Letter to Makaela Niles
09-03-19_2	Travis Pollack, AICP	Metropolitan Area Planning Council	TPollack@mapc.org	SEE PDF (lengthy email - recommendations for data collection)	Email to Makaela
09-05-19_1	Ed Pletman	Camp Ramah in New England	edpletman@campramahne.org	<p>I'm writing on behalf of Camp Ramah in New England, a large children's overnight camp located in Palmer MA. We enroll over 900 children each summer and employ over 300 seasonal staff on top of our 20 year round staff. We've been located in Palmer for over 60 years and our camp has prospered and grown over this time period.</p> <p>I'm writing to offer our support for the consideration of bringing the Hi Speed Rail service to Palmer and Western MA. A stop in Palmer would have a tremendous impact on our ability to provide a wonderful option for our staff and families to utilize rail service to travel directly back and forth from Palmer to Boston or western MA. Each week all of our staff have a day off and many, without cars, struggle with making plans to get to Albany or Springfield for their time off. A stop in Palmer would make it incredibly easier for us to facilitate their travel to their time off destination. In addition, during the summer season and year round we have families, campers and guests traveling to us from Boston who I believe would find direct rail service to Palmer very, very convenient.</p> <p>I'm joined by our CEO, Rabbi Ed Gelb, and our Board of Directors in expressing our support for the addition of this rail service and we would be very happy to provide any additional support or comments that might be helpful.</p>	Email to Makaela
10-17-19_1	Daniel D'Alma	IBEW Local 7	none provided	SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for project and stop in Palmer)	Letter to Ethan
10-07-19_1	Rene Wood	Town of Sheffield BOS	none provided	SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for alternatives 4, 5, 6 - opposed to bus service)	Letter to Sec. Pollack

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
11-15-19_1	Dave Pierce, Bob Daley, Rich Holzmann	Team Chester	rdchester@comcast.net	<p>The necessity for a Statewide Rail strategy, one of transformational scope & scale, is well documented and would be in the enlightened self interest of all, as it expands prosperity and influence across the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Expanding our World class infrastructure to bring Commuter Rail to West Mass, will link populations, for new living, work, travel options, sustain our rural way of life, both for for current residents and those wishing to escape the congestion & high cost of East Mass.</p> <p>Including Chester & Palmer Stations in the Final proposal, will build on the ongoing success of North/South Rail, by using those Stations as ridership catchment reservoirs for surrounding populations. Chester Railway Station, the Historic Rail hub since 1841, could be passenger ready with minimal expense.</p> <p>It is sited 50' from the tracks aka 'Railway to the Moon'. It is secured by fencing, has Station side Parking, is handicap accessible, needing only a paved walkway and ATS to dispense tickets.</p> <p>As you work through your progressions and arrive at a recommendation, please view solutions through the prism of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity, leading to commonly realized wealth for all Citizens.</p> <p>Equality of access...the need for improvements in the East can no longer be at the expense of sacrificing the needs of the West. Horizontal equities, in terms of benefits to users, in the form of an opportunity for transit where none exists and for non users, in the form of reduced emissions, traffic congestion and expanded living option's in West Mass. It is the right thing to do, for the right reasons and at the right time..</p> <p>Liberty, to have the choice to live West of the 'Metro' area and travel/work on Commuter Rail. Perhaps the greatest benefit will be the connectivity of cultures, effectively living worlds apart now, while separated by only 100 miles. Our compact State presents an advantage for resilience and the opportunity for clean energy savings.</p> <p>Fraternity, restoring faith in Government, as we work together for common purpose...the greater good.</p> <p>Applying this Formula will lead to solutions for All Massachusetts Citizens.</p> <p>The two most important letters in our Democracy are 'W' & 'E' , as in We the People. We must leverage this best in a lifetime opportunity, to invent the future using Commuter Rail.</p> <p>Reach too high Reach too far Reach for the Whole of the Moon</p>	Email to Ethan
11-21-19_1	John Garrett		johnjamesgarrett@gmail.com	<p>These meetings were originally scheduled for the fall and are frankly not well publicized for such an important project. I fear that the governor has no interest in transit based on both his statements about not needed new revenue to fix the T and the need for "reform" and blog's like Alon Levy's, the transportation expert's. Mr. Levy claims that MassDOT sandbagged the North-South Raillink and I am inclined to believe him. My question is twofold: 1. What exactly is the methodology of the analysis being done & why the unexplained delay? & 2. Has MassDOT addressed the concerns of transit experts like Mr. Levy & is he wrong in claiming that it was a political and not a transit decision to take no action and therefore spend no money? (He strongly criticizes SSX as being provincial thinking about a regional problem)</p> <p>Yours, John Garrett</p> <p>PS - I also realize that you are not the only person who has been assigned to this project as manager and you may not be privy to the calculus inside Baker's head. Here's the link to Mr. Levy's blog, you may be aware already of course. https://pedestrianobservations.com/2018/06/20/massachusetts-sandbags-the-north-south-rail-link/</p>	Email to Makaela
11-21-19_2	Barbara Pease Huntoon	Chester Board of Selectmen	bjphuntoon@msn.com	<p>Thank you so much for the update on the East-West Rail Study! It's much appreciated.</p> <p>Chester is excited about the possibilities E-W Passenger Rail can bring to our area and optimistic of our inclusion in the "Final Three". We plan to be at the Spring meeting in full force.</p> <p>May you have a wonderful Thanksgiving and enjoy the special times of all the Holiday Season!</p>	Email to Makaela
11-21-19_3	David Levitz		davidlevitz@gmail.com	<p>With the availability of the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) and Fed lending rates at historically low levels, why isn't Mass Dot pushing to get the study completed sooner? Instead, it seems the Study Schedule timeline is behind schedule i.e. the Public Informational Meeting scheduled for Nov 2019 has been delayed til next year. This is a waste of taxpayers' resources, most would agree the best and obvious solution is to place new electrified track along 1-90. The economic benefits for the entire state, including Boston, are crystal clear.</p>	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
11-23-19_1	D. Phillips		dphillips8_99@yahoo.com	<p>The materials presented here show a significantly improved set of 6 alternatives compared to the ones I remember seeing posted on the website sometime in the summer. Most notably, Alt. 6 has been modified to divert off the Mass Pike to access the existing Union Stations Worcester and Springfield (as I suggested in my last email) better serving the traditional regional centers. This alternative is my clear favorite as I think that it is the only one that would be able to divert a significant number of auto drivers and support economic development.</p> <p>However, I think that Alt. 6 could be further significantly improved by reducing its travel time east of Worcester. Please re-consider the Boston-Worcester routing suggested in my earlier email, staying on the existing routing from South Station to Westboro and constructing a new cross-country alignment to about Plantation Street in Worcester, avoiding the portion of the existing alignment which drops south of Lake Quinsigamond. This general routing between Worcester and Westboro was considered in the NEC Future EIS for the Worcester alternative. It would reduce the Boston-Worcester distance compared to the existing railroad by about 2.5 miles and by about 3 miles compared to the even more circuitous routing shown in the current version of Alt. 6. I understand trying to stay in existing "transportation corridors" but I think that the advantages of this routing make this exception to the general policy worthwhile. If the North Grafton MBTA station were moved about 2 miles north to South Shrewsbury commuter rail riders would also benefit. Adding a third track between Framingham and about Rt. 128 has been proposed by others to improve the commuter rail service; service to Western Massachusetts would also benefit. Staying on the existing rail route for most of the Boston-Worcester segment would minimize the cost of this alternative.</p> <p>There is inconsistent handling of a Palmer stop in different parts of the material; it can/should be included.</p>	Email to Makaela
01-05-20_1	Mark Shapp		mshapp802@gmail.com	SEE PDF OF EMAIL	Email to Ethan and Makaela
01-28-20_1	Claudia Cass		nokaoi1960@gmail.com	I have a prior commitment on 2/12. Peaseemail me all info. We need this rail from Bostonto Pittsfield!!	Email to Makaela
01-27-20_1	Paul Ravina		ravinasql@gmail.com	SEE PDF OF EMAIL - request for public meeting to be held in Worcester; follow up comments on where old train stations were location	Email to Makaela
01-29-20_1	Charles Hagelgans		chuckcmk@gmail.com	<p>I am excited about the possibility of the East-West rail line. I live in upstate New York. The central medical health facility near here is Albany Med, and I have found them lacking in every specialty area in which I have consulted them. I have therefore journeyed to Mass General in Boston on occasion for my healthcare. The trip on the Lake Shore Limited is long and slow. If I could park my car in western Mass near I-90 and take a speedier East West line into Boston, that would be great. Please count me in as a potential rail patron.</p> <p>Good luck to you and your project.</p>	Email to Ethan
02-05-20_1	Ben Heckscher	Trains in the Valley	benheckscher@gmail.com	SEE PDF OF LETTER TO GOV. BAKER (NNEIRI study, ridership)	Email to Makaela
02-07-20_1	Julian Hartmann-Russell		julianhr@gmail.com	<p>I can't come to the next public meeting but wanted to pass on a note that I think the state is vastly underestimating potential ridership on a Western Mass-Boston rail connection, particularly if it is competitively priced with bus service or priced using a commuter rail scheme. I think ridership would be pushed higher if the two current Valley Flyer AM trains connected with eastbound service from Springfield, so that people in Greenfield/Northampton/Holyoke could easily take the train all the way to Boston. There is huge demand in Northampton and Amherst for improved transit to Boston.</p> <p>I look forward to seeing the next steps in development of this project.</p>	Email to Makaela
02-07-20_2	William Meehan		meehan.w@husky.neu.edu	<p>I believe the East-West Rail Link is essential to the future of the Commonwealth. High-speed rail will link Massachusetts together in a more effective, sustainable way than any other option.</p> <p>The recently released ridership numbers seem inaccurately low. I would personally take advantage of a train to Tanglewood multiple times each summer. I also know people who would move further west for affordable rent if they still had a fast commute to Back Bay or South Station.</p> <p>Furthermore, your team should add an option terminating at Albany-Rensselaer, as the higher population of the New York Capital District may help anchor ridership and fill trains in the reverse direction.</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-10-20_1	Jerome Kaplan		jhkaplan@bu.edu	<p>Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting this Wednesday in Springfield. However, I would like to convey some concerns/suggestions which, I'm sure, you and your committee have already considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amtrak's lone cross-Mass. service, the Mass. section of the BOS-CHI Lake Shore Limited, trains 449/448, is chronically late, due to CSX freight interference. • Until such time as Boston - Montreal rail service is restored (probably never), connecting rail service to/from Amtrak's Adirondack at ALB (Albany-Rensselaer) should be considered. Not only would this provide rail service to/from Montreal, it would also provide additional service to/from Western Mass. Either connecting Amtrak trains or MBTA trains extended to/from ALB are options. • There should be a rail connection to/from Amtrak's Vermonter at Springfield. Perhaps an extension of MBTA service to/from Springfield could provide this connection. As an alternative, rail infrastructure is already in place and could provide direct rail service between Boston and Vermont via Palmer, MA (which features a magnificent HH Richardson depot, now a restaurant). • Service to/from the northern Berkshires (Williamstown, North Adams) should be considered via the "Patriot Corridor" owned by Pan Am Railways, although I suspect Pan Am would resist, claiming passenger trains would interfere with freight operations. • Rail service between western CT and western MA should be considered via a collaboration between CT & MA rail companies. I know that an extension of NYP-ALB service to/from Pittsfield is being considered. However, this would not tap the western CT/MA markets as effectively as an extension of MTA Waterbury service. 	Email to Makaela
02-10-20_2	John Pelletier		john.f.pelletier@gmail.com	<p>My name is John Pelletier, my wife and I currently live in Newton, MA (Newtonville station) and own buildable property in Sunderland, MA. We plan to move there in the next 3-5 years.</p> <p>I am very much in favor of connecting the state better with rail. My wife and I don't own a personal vehicle and prefer to not fly. We frequently use the MBTA to get around Boston and to visit her family in Worcester. I frequently use the Downeaster to visit my family in NH and take vacation trips to Portland, ME. I usually take two or so round trips on the Lake Shore Limited a year, usually visiting Chicago or relatives out in Kansas City. It works fine but takes much longer than it should getting from Boston to Albany. New York has worked hard in the past few years to speed up service, upgrade rails/signals etc. on their part of the LSL line and the speed and ride quality has greatly improved that service but also the Empire service along this corridor.</p> <p>When looking at the 6 finalist options I think we need to be bold and look at a new separate corridor utilizing the I-90 ROW. It needs to be electrified and fast.</p> <p>However, reviewing projects in TX and CA show that this is 20+ years away if not more. In the meantime, I think option 3 is likely the most feasible per dollar spent (dollars unknown of course). This would critically create stops in Palmer, but also create the direct rail connection with Pittsfield and truly connect the state. Buses from Springfield to Pittsfield would be unlikely to serve choice riders and would do little to connect the whole state or improve access to Albany. Option 4 is very attractive as well and future electrification of this option could have significant trip time improvements due to the alignment's focus on higher speeds. But the time difference of 5-10min with existing diesel equipment is likely not worth the project cost.</p> <p>With careful design I think Option 3 could be implemented while not precluding smaller projects that would straighten out curves, improve signals, add passing track etc. to incrementally increase speeds and travel times to match Option 4. Again, done right planning/conduit work for electrification could be built in to make it easier and cheaper to electrify in the future. Especially as we think bigger about an I-90 alignment.</p>	Email to Makaela
02-10-20_3	Andy Hogeland	Berkshire County Selectmen's Association	andyhogeland@gmail.com	SEE PDF OF Letter (opposing bus service, catchment areas)	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-11-20_1	Rene Wood	Town of Sheffield Board of Selectmen	renewood@aol.com	<p>While the Town of Sheffield Board of Selectmen has stated our preferences for the East-West Passenger Rail options is a previous letter, I wish to offer my personal comments, as the session to be held today did not provide time for further comments from our full Board.</p> <p>Any option chosen will not satisfy all but to make this truly a viable East-West, as well as West-East, Passenger Rail line, the option selected must include rail service all the way through to Pittsfield and it must be a solution that can be implemented in a reasonable period of time, otherwise it will be useless. While I wish the State had the resources to invest \$23B needed to run it down the MassPike, I would rather a workable,viable, time-sensitive solution be selected than one that never gets decided or funded.</p> <p>I was surprised to note the reduction of greenhouse gases and taking cars off the highway system were not included or given more emphasis in this rail service discussion, given the legislature's and Governor's emphasis on greenhouse gases, carbon neutrality and climate change mitigation. These should be top priorities (benefits) in evaluating the options as well as guide the state's commitment to this rail line. The dollar costs of any service should factor in these significant cost reductions in green house gases and other state priorities. While such costs may be 'soft' cost, they are real and must be calculated.</p> <p>Also, many of us in Berkshire County would like to be more involved in governmental matters taking place in Boston, such as coming to hearings at the General Court or volunteering to be on committees at the Massachusetts Municipal Association. To do so now requires a trip of about 3 hours each way in horrible traffic plus parking fees. It is not a trip I take lightly. However, I as an elected Selectmen do feel disenfranchised from being able to exercise my full duties by being faced with such a time requirement to do my job as effectively as I would like. A train would allow me to make good use of my time while in route and avoid all the traffic. As one who regularly takes the 2 hour train trip to NYC from Wassaic and use to commute on Metro-North to NY from Old Greenwich for work, I favor traveling by train.</p> <p>This rail route would also connect the various parts of our state in a way that is severely missing and help to mitigate the extreme pressures on the cost of living, housing market, and even growth of Massachusetts population, as well as open up job and economic development opportunities for Western Mass, that is the area truly in the Western part of the state. There is no reason why some part of our state bureaucracy can not consider moving west into less expensive space and begin to decentralize functions now only in the Boston area.</p>	Email to Makaela
02-12-20_1	Joseph Maspo			SEE PDF of letter submitted at 2/12/20 public meeting	Letter submitted at 2/12 public meeting
02-14-20_1	Maureen Doyle		doylemaureen3@gmail.com	<p>Hi! I was unable to attend the recent meeting in Springfield but I want tpo express my "yes' vote in favor of this rail line! When you consider costs, please include all the savings due to less pollution for individual cars, which adds to air pollution and health issues (such as asthma).</p> <p>we need a rail line like this for the people! Look to Europe for a model is you need to.</p> <p>have a good day and weekend! peace, Maureen doyle 508-764-8042 (if you need it)</p>	Email to Makaela
02-16-20_1	Adam Bindas		adamjbindas@gmail.com	<p>I am emailing to express my disappointment regarding the recent study of East-West High Speed Rail in Massachusetts. The ridership numbers, costs, and general options all do not pass and prove to frustrate voters. As a resident myself, if high speed rail was built I would probably strongly consider moving out to western Massachusetts myself and commute in everyday.</p> <p>A properly built East-West rail would enable the entire state to benefit from the successes of Boston's current jobs boom, while enabling a larger array of housing options. Given the divisions we as a country face between urban and rural areas, this conversation is one about equity as much as it is about those with the environment, congestion, and competitiveness.</p> <p>I strongly hope you would consider amendments to the study which would properly take into account the demand, but also give options which enable faster rail connection west to connect the entire state into one community.</p>	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-17-20_1	Paul Opalinski		aaspmo@comcast.net	I believe none of the 6 alternatives reach High Speed Rail standards, therefore, ridership will never reach critical mass. Alternative 7 deserves to be addressed by DOT. Why was the big dig such a success, because it's underground. Support Alternative 7.	Email to Makaela
02-18-20_1	David Phillips		dphillips8_99@yahoo.com	I have reviewed the Fe. 6. presentation that was just posted. I do have comments on this as well. 1) The costs suggested in the exhibits for the high performance alternatives seem to be overstated. They can be reduced by carefully selecting the appropriate improvements. As MassDOT goes into the final evaluation of alternatives I think that it is time to mix/match parts of the different Alternatives. Improvements should be focused on east end where the most people would benefit (including Pittsfield riders). Each segment should be looked at separately: a) In the BOS-WOR segment there seems to be little reason to move to the Mass Pike alignment since that only shows a reduction from 48 to 44 minutes. This segment is, already publicly-owned and virtually passenger-only, so there is no need for separate track. The few at-grade highway crossings should all be separated. The proposed triple track section and other improvements in this segments would benefit all users and should not be "charged" to the East-West project. In the long run, a new, virtually straight alignment more parallel to Rt. 9 should be constructed from a point west of Westborough to Plantation Street in Worcester, including a new bridge over Lake Quinsigamond, saving several miles (again, benefitting Worcester, as well as points west). b) The WOR-SPG segment of the historic rail route is still owned by CSX and is largely single track. Separate passenger rail tracks should be constructed throughout this segment. The portion of the historic route from the west side of Worcester to a point east of Palmer (about 40 miles) is very circuitous and the new tracks should be built on a new alignment following the Mass Pike as far west as Rt. 148, but then cutting cross-country until re-joining the rail alignment east of Palmer, saving several miles of travel. From here until Springfield Union Station the historic alignment is very straight and, assuming at-grade roadway crossings are separated, speed could be very high. Improvements in this segment in Alt. 3 & 5 would be essentially thrown away when a high speed WOR-Palmer alignment is, eventually, constructed. c) The fewest riders would benefit from improvements in the SPG-PIT segment so, perhaps, fewer improvements should be made, at, least, initially. Apparently, much of the historic second main track remains. Perhaps, restoring the missing portions would be adequate. 2) In light of the auto volumes (AADT) on the Mass Pike the ridership estimates seem low for the high performance alternatives, with frequent, fast service that would be very competitive. 3) This study should mention the potential for the BOS-Sturbridge portion of the proposed infrastructure to serve as a major part of a high-speed thru BOS-NYC route, a real alternative for the Shoreline (as identified as an Alternative in the NEC Future EIS). No solution to the problems of the Rhode Island-eastern Connecticut portion have been identified, as yet. Worcester would be a major beneficiary.	Email to Makaela
02-18-20_2	Richard and Beverly Prager		richprager1@gmail.com	Hello. My wife and I live in central MA, and have become aware of the study being made of rail travel from Boston to Pittsfield. We haven't been able to attend the meetings, though we have expressed our support for rail travel in the state in a meeting we had this winter with one of Rep. Neal's staffers, and also with Governor Baker. Thank you for all the work you and everyone associated with the study has done. We downloaded a presentation, and found it very informative. There is certainly a lot of information to evaluate, and it is challenging to weigh the relative strengths of a variety of factors. We are just writing to say that we think these to be the primary considerations: 1. Something concrete needs to come of this, not just wasted time and energy on another study. The result should be that there is more rail service across the Commonwealth. 2. Doing anything with mass transit will save all the carbon emissions from people driving their cars, yet it is important that the carbon emissions from mass transit also be kept to a minimum. This is crucial for the health of our planet. 3. Cost-efficiency is obviously very important. We want to be efficient, but we are definitely willing to pay more to support anything that will reduce our aggregate carbon footprint.	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-24-20_1	Ben Hood	Western Mass Rail Coalition	palmertrain@gmail.com	SEE PDF of handout submitted at 2/24/20 Advisory Committee meeting	Handout at 2/24 Advisory Committee meeting
02-24-20_2	Dan Peacock	Rail Passenger Association and Trains In The Valley	dbpeacock45@gmail.com	SEE PRESENTATION PDF (comments on ridership estimates)	Email to DOT Planning
02-24-20_3	Jerry Smith Jr		treasurechestbysmith@gmail.com	My name is Jerry Smith Jr and I am 19 years old and started a business in Palmer MA due to the easy access from the East and West at exit 8. Also because most towns and city's off the mass pike do not have as much land for new growth as does Palmer and it's centrally located to towns and city's also north and south such as belchertown and Amherst and Hadley and Wales and brimfield etc etc. In meeting new customers the younger generation from Amherst and Hadley and surrounding areas have specified how they attend college her and do not have cars on campus and how hard to get to Boston for employment options or to visit family. Also retired couples that still have alot of life in them but hate the drive to Boston due to traffic and finding parking there that want to catch a show or need to go to state offices or just a big city get a way for the weekend and would so use train service if available because to get a ride to Springfield and back it hard to find or costly. Also so much development opportunities for business and would open up jobs and ways to get to and from said jobs. Palmer already has the history of the town of 7 rails so with what is already opened up for trains it would seem to be least expensive to renew instead of starting over elsewhere where there are no tracks already in place. That is just my observation and opinion. Thank you, Jerry Smith Jr sole proprietor of Treasure Chest Emporium 1422 N Main St, Palmer, MA 01069	Email to MassDOT Planning
02-25-20_1	Peter Rosengarten		pkraudits@gmail.com	<p>Most of the conversation about the East-West Railroad focuses on the potential economic opportunities it would bring to western Massachusetts. What is not discussed as often is the positive impact the railroad would have on the handicap community west of Worcester..</p> <p>My family and I have lived in the Pioneer Valley nearly twenty years. About five years ago I suffered a spine injury. To save time and spare you of the details, I am now disabled, walk with a cane and can no longer drive. This has been especially difficult for me as it has robbed me of my autonomy. I have access to the PVTA shuttles, but they only drive around locally in the Pioneer Valley. If I need to go to Worcester or Boston for a doctor's appointment, my wife or daughter have to take a day off work. Like many handicapped people, my ability to leave my home is predicated on the availability of other people.</p> <p>The East-West Railroad has tremendous support among the handicap community. Whether at physical therapy, church or sharing a PVTA van, the possibility of being able to take a train all the way to Boston is a constant source of conversation among those who have transportation challenges. My completely unscientific poll that has no actual physical data to support my findings, has the railroad with a positive margin of approximately 8 out of 10 people supporting it. The other two people had family in Albany and tend to travel there. It is unusual for any government project to have an eighty percent approval rating.</p> <p>Picture in your mind a person who has limited ability to travel, would now have access to most of the state. They can take a shuttle to the beautifully renovated Union Station, then the East-West Rail to Boston. There, they can use the T to get around the city. When done, take the train back to Union Station. As a handicapped person, I can tell you, this is a very exciting concept.</p> <p>I hope the above comments highlights the positive, personal side effects this project could have for one of our most vulnerable populations, Sometimes that human aspect can be lost among the economic babble and flow charts that are part of any massive proposal.</p>	Email to Makaela
02-25-20_2	Marietta Rapetti Cawse		rapeticawse@gmail.com	SEE PDF OF LETTER (support for rail project to berskires; meeting in Pittsfield)	Letter to Sen. Hinds & Ethan
02-25-20_3	John Haesy			SEE PDF OF HANDWRITTEN COMMENTS (impacts to freight rail)	Submitted to Makaela after 2/24 AC meeting

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-25-20_4	Geri Jennings		izbicki@gmail.com	<p>I live in Southampton, MA and work for a company in Newton, MA. I am only required to come into the office twice a month because I have a 2 hour commute, and on days I come in I work a shorter day so I can leave and get home at a reasonable time.</p> <p>I explored taking public transportation to my office in the past, and learned that the best case scenario was that it would take me *FOUR HOURS* to travel to my office from western MA. At which point I'd basically have to turn around and start the four hour trip home.</p> <p>I would love to see better east/west transportation options, and I know of many others in the area who have worked out of the Boston area at current or in the past who feel the same. I'm excited to see this project continuing to be considered, and I hope it will eventually be completed</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_5	Tighe Dudeck		tighedudeck@gmail.com	<p>I went to the public meeting 2 weeks ago in downtown Springfield about the project. I believe East-West rail it is worth any amount we have to pay, as long as it is built to be as fast as possible, with the shortest travel time between Springfield and Boston. I believe through the years more and more people will see Western-Mass as a viable option to live and commute into the city, as long as the travel time isn't too long.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_6	Shawn L. Smith		shawnsmith22003@yahoo.com	<p>In advance of the meeting tomorrow in Springfield I'd like to offer my take on the proposed options for the service . I like dreaming big . With that said I don't believe option 6 with its price tag and years of construction is the way to go . Incremental steps towards electrification and 150 mph speeds is more attainable . Let's get the trains running as soon as possible because we are already years behind on this . Once we can prove real life ridership goals then the case for massive infrastructure upgrades can be made. I fear that pushing for the most expensive options here will hold this projects progression . I was delighted to see at the meeting two weeks ago the support for connecting shuttle trains to Amherst via Palmer . Ultimately running direct trains from Amherst to Boston on weekends and during college breaks would be very successful. My thought on this would be to provide direct bus service between Amherst and Palmer Station to connect with East west rail Initially is the way to go . It's imperative that ridership estimates , especially when considering the Palmer stop in particular , span out beyond 20 miles. Including the Amherst area with its population of over 30,000 in this estimate is a necessary factor.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_7	Nina Wolff Landau		nina.wolfflandau@gmail.com	<p>I'm writing to share my support for Option 1 for the East-West Rail. I grew up in Amherst, MA and am now a college student in Rhode Island. The inability to get efficiently get from Boston to Western, MA and vice versa, especially without a car, is a huge hindrance for commuters and those traveling for other reasons, including myself when I travel from Boston. High speed electric rail is not only time efficient, but an important part of reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. To truly incentivize people to use trains, they need to be time efficient!</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_8	Kristine Gustafson		x5kitties@yahoo.com	<p>This project is wonderful and I can't wait to use it! Please include a much needed connection in Palmer, Ma!</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_9	John Koski		jkoski12@hotmail.com	<p>I would like to first confirm my support of East - West passenger rail service. I would like to see service that will provide convenient access to Logan airport, include scheduling that is convenient for getting to and from all of the Boston Professional Sports venues, as well as Museums and other top attractions in Boston, and last but not least, be capable of providing commuter service that will make Springfield a real alternative to living in Boston.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_10	Gary Hart		gary_hart@sbcglobal.net	<p>My preferred Alternative is #6.</p> <p>Other Alternatives are in decreasing order: #5 then #4.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_11			carolineewilke@yahoo.com	<p>My preferred Alternative is #6.</p> <p>Jobs with major corporations are dwindling in western mass and greater Hartford. If we'd like to continue to have higher-income year-round residents, we will need to create an easier way to commute to Boston.</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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02-25-20_12	David Broer		dbroer@lincon.com	<p>I'm writing to comment on the current East West Rail Study that the DOT is working on. One of the goals of the project is provide improved access between the western and eastern parts of the state and vice versa. If that's the goal, why are you limiting the study to linear rail options? This is an excellent opportunity for Massachusetts to invest in technologies that are the future of transportation and not something based on 1800s technology.</p> <p>I urge the DOT to look into technologies such as personal drones, projects like skyTran or any other non-linear transportation systems that are being developed. The DOT could work with MIT and/or WPI along with these emerging technologies and be a leader in future transportation systems. Either system I mentioned above could connect many cities and towns and do not limit you to a single path. There are others.</p> <p>Considering the temporal scope of the project and the dollars being considered, the state is at a juncture of where it can be a leader or follow the leader. The technologies can meet the stated goals and be done at a lower cost than rail. As a tax payer I hope you will consider alternatives and go with something beyond rail to move people.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_13	Thomas Casartello, Jr.		tomcasartellojr@gmail.com	<p>I am a resident of Western Massachusetts in the city of Holyoke and a supporter of the proposed East West rail service. I am a frequent user of all of the Amtrak rail services out of Springfield Union Station. I wanted to submit the following bullet points as comments for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives 3 and 4 seem like the most cost effective options and provide the "most bang for our buck." While option 6 is ambitious, the large costs don't seem worth the extra minutes that would be gained. As is demonstrated in many intercity rail corridors, it is not necessary for the rail service to take less time than driving in ideal conditions at 1 AM. Rail services allow people to be productive when they would otherwise be driving and I think it would still be attractive to many users and it would certainly save time during rush hour commuting hours and busy weekend travel periods. Parking is a problem in the city - garages are expensive and street parking is limited. The train would eliminate that hassle. I think 4 would be considered the best option followed by 3 and a good third alternative would be a phased approach that spreads out improvements to the line over phases. An initial phase could perform upgrades to get the service going out to Springfield with limited round trips extending to Pittsfield. The areas where the double track is added in phase 1 could be constructed in a manner to allow the improved line to be upgraded to the standards described in alternative four in a later phase. This could be followed by a second phase that would extend full service to Pittsfield and improve the travel times between Springfield and Boston to what is described in alternative 4. I use the current Amtrak train to get to Boston now when I am going for an overnight trip and the Lake Shore's west bound departure time works for me, but if we had multiple round trips I'd take the train every time. • An infill station in the city of Westfield should be considered in addition to the proposed infill stations in Chester and Palmer and main stations in Pittsfield, Springfield, and Worcester. I am an employee at Westfield State University and can say that the University attracts many students from the Boston area as it is the most residential of the state colleges and the furthest from Boston. Many of our students travel weekly between Westfield and the eastern part of the state to return home and this could be a source of ridership. A stop in Westfield would contribute additional ridership to the service and make it more useful to more people. • Consideration should be given to operating one or two of the Pittsfield round trips west to Albany to connect to the Amtrak Empire corridor which could unlock some additional ridership potential. Consideration should also be given to extending some of the New Haven - Springfield Amtrak trains to Boston as some of our round trips as suggested in the NNEIRI study as this would attract additional ridership from the Hartford area. • Amtrak has proposed a new corridor development program to Congress as part of its FY2021 grant request and will also be pitching the same in its reauthorization request later this year. This program would involve a new grant as part of Amtrak's federal funding that it would use to help states establish new intercity corridor service. States would submit projects to Amtrak for consideration and Amtrak would provide grants from this account to help with startup costs for selected projects including capital costs as well as operational costs for the first year or two. State operational contributions would slowly phase in over the five year startup period in the proposed plan and reach the current PRIIA required percentage after the five year startup period. MassDOT should monitor this situation and consider submitting East west rail for consideration if Amtrak is successful in implementing this program. 	Email to DOT Planning
02-25-20_14	Andy Koch		andrewjkoch@yahoo.com	<p>Don't you think it would benefit more by adding the Rail line from Boston to New Bedford before undertaking the East-West project.? I believe the economic benefits for the Southeast Coast line far, far exceed the East-West. And I live in Westfield.</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-26-20_1	Laura Clampitt		lauracclampitt@gmail.com	<p>I heard about the public meeting on Monday in Springfield. Unfortunately, I doubt I'll be able to make a meeting in the middle of the day. Will there be future meetings planned to accommodate those who work during the day?</p> <p>I'm facing needing to move out of Western Mass due to lack of employment opportunities. If rail service to Boston was affordable and timely, it would open up a new job market for me. Additionally, I think Western Mass would really benefit from regional commuter rail at affordable prices for commuters from Springfield to Holyoke to Northampton to Greenfield. If it was affordable, I think many would use that service. The current problem is Amtrack ticket prices are too high for regular commuting. With lower prices and more frequent service, I think you'd see ridership soar. Also, many in Western Mass are very environmentally conscious. If rail service was structured in a way that one could get rid of their car, you'd have a huge marketing opportunity.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_2	Jonathan Yourga		ultimatemechanic@comcast.net	<p>Hello my name is Jonathan Yourga I would be in attendance of the scheduled meeting however I will be suck in my car commuting home from Worcester at the time of the meeting. For the last two years I commuted to Waltham every weekday of the school year. I spent four hours a day in the car, drove a thousand miles a week and put fuel in my car every day. I don't want to even think about what I payed for that fuel or the tolls! Fortunately I was able to find a teaching position a little closer in Worcester now I spend two hours and twenty minuets a day and purchase fuel every other day. I would ride the train if service existed I would be happy to pay and not mind the length of the ride with all the stops in-between this would allow me to maximize my time by completing grading, lesson planning, e mails, calls to parents, and possibly a little shut eye after a late night college class or parents night while on the train. This would give me more quality time at home with my family and prolong the life of my automobile. My 2004 Toyota currently has 296,000 miles! If I could ride the train I would replace it with an electric car. I am sure more people would do the same. However the east west rail must be in place. Once the rail is in place it will bring more riders as it will allow the state to be connected more efficiently. More riders will come as employees and employers see the employment distances expanded and housing distances will expand as well. Think of all the college students that would be able to ride anytime they wished to return home or the safety benefits of taking concert and sporting event participants off the road and on the rail. Let's face it the bussing that exists now doesn't cut it for my needs and many others yet the bus owners are having heavily and doing anything in their power to prevent this east west rail from happening as they have a monopoly on it right now. You must see the value and invest in the state as a whole knowing both the east and west will benefit from this investment in infrastructure that will only continue to grow the economy of the state. Hell cargo could be transported during none commuting hours as well if you design it right. Please do not kill this needed project.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_3	Shelly K. Burelle		shoeturkey@me.com	<p>I would like to show my support for the East/west rail!! I would love to be able to hop on a train to visit Boston for the arts, shopping or whatever!! Please make it happen!!</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-22-20_1	Gordon Swift	Goshen, MA	cookers@gmail.com	<p>Dear Sirs, I strongly believe that making travel easier for east-west travel will benefit both Eastern AND Western Ma. Personally, I would spend more time in Boston if i did not have to drive to get there.</p>	Email to Makaela Niles
02-22-20_2	Elizabeth Jahn Hart	Feeding Hills, MA	jahnhart@sbcglobal.net	<p>My preferred Alternative is #6. Other Alternatives are in decreasing order: #5 then #4.</p>	Email to Makaela Niles
02-22-20_3	Tim Schmoke		tschmoke@gmail.com	<p>Hi, I just wanted to share my support for options 5 and 6 of the East-West rail alternatives. The primary reason I would take a train into Boston is if it was faster than driving, and it appears that options 5 and 6 are the only options where that is the case. Thank you for letting me share my thoughts. Regards, Tim</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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02-21-20_1	Mathew Geffin		mgeffin@webberandgrinnell.com	<p>Thank you for taking the time to listen to our comments. I sincerely hope we are able to figure out a way to get this done for the good of the commonwealth.</p> <p>By completing a East West rail line between our farhest most points of Pittsfield and Boston will only enhance our ability to grow economically.</p> <p>Imagine the possibilities if residents of this great state are able to choose to live in any part of this great state yet be only removed by 1-2 hours in either direction by high speed rail.</p> <p>It will bring more people because they will be able to afford more moderately priced housing in central and western mass yet work in Boston or any one of our major cities. Companies will be able to cast a wider net and have more moderately priced labor because they can choose from more job candidates.</p> <p>Companies will be able to collaborate even easier between our East and west talent and resources. Education will be linked and even New England as a whole will be an easier place to have self supported higher education, jobs and cities/towns.</p> <p>High speed rail is an essential next step in the growth of our great state. And quite frankly, if we could pull off the big dig and afford it then high speed rail is a NO BRAINER.</p> <p>I hope you get this done sooner rather than later for the good of us all.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-21-20_2	Jack Straw		highlinebumps@gmail.com	<p>Ethan, I support East/west rail. I drive to Boston regularly. Please spend the \$ and do the project correctly. Look at Boston tunnel. Cost overruns but consensus opinion is the cost is worth it. Thanks, Edward Steiger</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-22-20_4	Kevin Shea		kshea@smith.edu	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am a resident of Western Mass (Longmeadow) and I would prefer option #6. My second and third choice options are #5 and #4, respectively. Thank you.</p> <p>Kevin Shea 64 Warwick St. Longmeadow, MA</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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02-26-20_4	Laurie Ball		beachgirl2u@hotmail.com	<p>I am writing to overwhelmingly support the extension of the Commuter Rail to Western Massachusetts and establish a stop in Palmer. We desperately need the connection to Boston for many reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Access to opportunities that Boston offers that are not and likely will never be available out here (Jobs, Colleges, etc.) Ø Access to world class healthcare, too many of our citizens have to now travel to Boston via the Pike (aka Parking lot) Ø Access to social and cultural events and activities <p>Right now, we are forced to either spend hours in our cars crawling along the MA Pike...NOT good for the environment. The Pike is constantly overwhelmed with an excessive number of drivers, the road is constantly requiring repair due to excessive use and it is a gross waste of tax dollars. Let's get the train out here and get more cars off the roads.</p> <p>I personally am a huge fan of the rail. I live in Scituate (Greenbush line) up until 8 years ago. While I love the tranquility of Palmer, I miss having the option to jump on the train and go to Boston. My family still lives in Scituate, in order for me to visit – I refuse to drive the Pike anymore – I either take the Amtrak once daily train from Springfield to South Station and then Commuter Rail to Scituate or I drive to Worcester and take the Commuter Rail to South Station/Greenbush.</p> <p>I am personally witnessed the growth and revitalization the restoration of the Greenbush and Middleboro, etc., lines have net on the South Shore. The housing prices have sky rocketed and housing supply is very low. Comparatively, we have a surplus of land and housing in Western MA and the prices are below market. Open the rail and leverage our housing surplus for all the people in the Greater Boston area that cannot afford quality housing.</p> <p>Finally, the Peter Pan bus is not an option. It is no better than driving myself, I have taken it once, it is inconvenient and pricey. I understand the state is subsidizing the fares...just lining private business pockets given the very limited service. No money should be going to a private entity to provide the transportation services the state needs to step up and get this resolved once and for all.</p> <p>Palmer is the gateway to Western MA. We are the Hub for students traveling to the largest University in our state! The surrounding towns would equally benefit from a stop here, it makes perfect sense and could easily be built to mimic any of the stops along the Greenbush or Worcester lines...no fancy stations needed. Just a Commuter Lot and a Station Stop. As you may have guessed by now, I am rabid for this cause. I cannot stress enough how important this is to all of us in this area. We need transportation and we need it now.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_5	Shelly Brown		mrs_shelly_brown@yahoo.com	I would like to see a stop in Palmer, MA.	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-26-20_6	Jules Wang		julianwang4@gmail.com	<p>My comment on E-W rail is that I'd love to be able to live in western Mass in order to financially sustain living in the state I was born and raise in, one that I love. I also want to contribute to the equity and growth of what's been long described as the "forgotten half" of the state. But I also want to visit my friends and family on the South Shore and keep in touch with my long-established connections in Boston.</p> <p>As it is, I don't own a car and would continue to not want to do so for the sake of my own safety, so I'd be relying on mass transit options which are already less than robust with the RTAs in the west (being BRTA, PVTA, and FRTA). And as it stands, coach buses are pretty much the only option, vulnerable to traffic and demand-based pricing and are in dire need of competition.</p> <p>That's why I'm advocating for the full electrification option for E-W. Travel times would be reduced, increased capacity would allow the state to run a regular schedule instead of Amtrak's once-daily Lake Shore Limited train, and it would stimulate overall development across the Pioneer Valley and the Berkshires.</p> <p>However, most importantly, I believe that such a project would get significant federal funding if the state coordinated the project with the state of Connecticut and Amtrak to build a backup route to the current Northeast Corridor - sections of shoreline trackage are in need of major repairs and climate-proofing, marking the need to develop a resilient inland route through Hartford, Springfield, and Worcester for Regional and Acela trains. Without it, the federal government risks a major decline in revenue should the Boston-to-Washington link be compromised.</p> <p>Please reflect the impacted constituency's desire in your continuation of the study and work on providing a full benefits assessment with revised statistical estimates for the electrification option.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_7	Benjamin J. Turon	Empire State Passenger Association	bjturon@gmail.com	SEE PDF (include Albany in study)	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_8	Mark Bibace		mbibace@gmail.com	I think there needs to be a way to gauge voter approval for this project, before going further. There should be a ballot question on this project. To me it appears to be a huge boondoggle initiated by politicians looking for something to do. How many people in their right mind will travel daily two hours from Springfield to Boston ONE WAY? Are these people serious? I understand Western Mass does not get their fair share of transportation dollars. And they should certainly get funds. But this is a HUGE WASTE OF MONEY, and I hope sane minds will intervene.	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_9	Jay Rossner		rossner_j@hotmail.com	<p>Although those of us living in The Commonwealth of Western Mass feel that this service would be a great and wonderful thing, Charlie Baker has said he would veto any plan put on his desk.</p> <p>The thing is, if every single citizen living outside of route 128 voted against his next run for office, he'd still win, and knows it, he'd much rather give 25 billion to the poorly managed MBTA, after all, out here we ride horses.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-26-20_10	Walt Grohs		wag928s@gmx.com	<p>Once again, were going down this pipe dream in this state. There would only be a few hundred people, if that going to / from Bean Town daily from W. Mass., let alone Adams??? This state threw the people of Adams to the dog's. It is an economic disaster and YOU know it! It is totally insane to spend this amount of our tax money to do this, for so few people to use it. Little has been said on exactly where all this money would come from too. What? Raise more tax's? Raise the gas tax to pay for it? Sorry. This is a liberal tax & spend fraud scheme by the liberals in Bean Town.</p> <p>If you liberals in Bean Town, really wanted to do something worthwhile, why don't you improve the rail freight service instead? Add in some spurs here and there to off load, load freight cars more easily in more towns. This would take a lot of tractor trailers off the roads. Of course, YOU will not be able to gouge the freight companies as you would us, the "General Public" with your BS... well.. maybe some you would, there are a lot of dumb people in this state</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-27-20_1	Casimir Krol		cashil55@hotmail.com	Scrap the whole idea unless it can be proven that the economic benefit far exceeds the cost. Too often citizens tax monies are spent without politicians not having done a thorough due diligence study.	Email to DOT Planning

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02-22-20_4	AP Buckner		apbuck@me.com	<p>Ethan, Thank you & the team for all your hard work on this. Here are the reasons why I support the most expensive, aggressive option that includes Pittsfield and keeps the travel times at the fastest possible level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I worked in workforce development for low income youth for the Job Corps program in Western MA. Transportation was an enormous barrier for students and graduates as it related to housing, access to social services and commuting to employment and apprenticeships. The students came from all over the Northeast and throughout the Commonwealth of MA. I met with dozens of employers including some in Pittsfield who were unable to find qualified applicants. This system would likely spill over to influence other transportation upgrades from the commuter rail to other destinations due to increased demand. People would be earning more and would be able to use zip cars, shuttles, Lyft, etc. • I am grossly under-employed here, having moved to the area 11 years ago. I am also physically limited by medical issues. At the age of 59, I cannot yet retire for a good decade. I formerly was self employed as a contract consultant earning from 90 to 200 per hour depending on the contract. I might be able to do that work again if the rail allowed me to reach more customers without the exhaustion of driving myself. The Pioneer Valley has MANY under employed people. I am sure I am not alone. • It is the right thing to do, for the environment. This variable cannot be underestimated. This alone is enough reason to make these changes. • As expensive as it is, if we can find a way to swing it, the economic benefits should be huge. The impact on Springfield as a desirable place to live and recreate, and the linkages between Springfield Pittsfield and Boston would be significant. • I am an Air B&B host in Amherst, have hosted business people, tourists and graduate students/researchers for 10 years. They are VERY FRUSTRATED coming from other global locations by our backward situation with transport. They are eager to go to Boston, NYC, the Berkshires, Springfield, Washington DC. • I have aging parents in the Metro Boston area aged 87 and 94. I would visit them more often if I didn't have to drive my car, as bad weather or night driving are harder and harder for me. I am sure there are many other aging X'rs and Baby Boomers who also would see more of family and friends, and go to Boston for performances, museums, sporting events etc more frequently were these trains running. <p>Respectfully Submitted, AP Buckner, MHROD Amherst Massachusetts</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-22-20_6	Matt Blumenfeld	335 Middle Street Amherst, MA 01002	matthew@finacialdevelopmentagency.com	<p>Dear Mr. Britland:</p> <p>As a twenty five year resident of Amherst and the owner of a small business, I am writing to express my full support for an East West rail solution that would enable Boston to Springfield to Pittsfield travel on a part with rail solutions in other advanced industrial countries.</p> <p>Let's be bold, and create real high speed rail that would tie our Commonwealth together and spark long term economic development.</p> <p>In case after case around the world, high speed rail has made a huge positive impact on the communities it serves, so why shouldn't Massachusetts, the most technology advanced state in the union by many measures, lead our nation in this realm.</p> <p>Investing in this kind of infrastructure will increase mobility, relieve congestion in the Boston metro area, and increase economic and residential development far into the future.</p> <p>I strongly urge our state leaders to make the boldest investment possible as they consider the various options in the table for East West rail.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Matt Blumenfeld 335 Middle Street Amherst, MA 01002</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-22-20_5	Elisabeth Castillo	20 Glenwood Ave Northampton, MA 01060	lisaca73@gmail.com	<p>Greetings.</p> <p>I am writing in support of improving rail service to Western Mass. I live in Northampton, and while we have a train station, the only service is to South, to NYC or North to Vermont with only one train per day in each direction.</p> <p>I would love to see service from Northampton to Boston; or even from Springfield to Boston.</p> <p>When I lived near Ayer a few years ago, I occasionally took the commuter rail (Fitchburg Line) to Cambridge and Waltham, but was extremely disappointed that it was actually cheaper to drive my car!</p> <p>This is a tragedy. I love trains, and am comforted to use them knowing it is much more energy-efficient than car or bus travel - so I hope to see service to my area of Massachusetts!</p> <p>Thank you Elisabeth Castillo 20 Glenwood Ave Northampton, MA 01060 508 3295 2238</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-22-20_6	Brandon Matulewski		usaskiteam993@aol.com	<p>Hello to whom this may concern I am worried that the infrastructure you plan on building does not cover all of Western mass and only covers the furthest eastern extremes of the counties this line needs to travel at a minimum into the city of Westfield to cover all the folks that live in the hill towns please don't spend my tax dollars unless you are going to cover out to at least westfield</p> <p>Thank you Brandon Matulewski</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-23-20_1	Jo Fr		jaff@meganet.com	If Palmer ma became a train stop where would a train station be in Palmer and why put one in Palmer	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-7-20_3	Lauren Miller		lonewolfette9847@live.com	<p>Greetings,</p> <p>I viewed a PBS NewsHour video on YouTube concerning Texas light rail systems. I believe there is a lot of plausible information.</p> <p>https://youtu.be/jR2Afhd6gWY</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-24-20_1	Joshua Gordon		joshcello@me.com	<p>To all working on the East West rail study and Worcester Union Station's new platform project,</p> <p>Thank you for all the effort you are putting into this study on a great project! Of the East West alternatives being presented today, I'd vote for either alternative number 4 or 6, but they should both have Albany NY as their destination, not just Pittsfield which can still be a stop. Albany would represent a bigger travel market as well as being an Amtrak hub. I realize in our political climate that alternative 6 is less likely given the high cost of a new line along the Massachusetts Turnpike, but having ridden Italy's high speed rail on a quick trip from Rome to Naples watching my drink stay smooth at over 180 mph, I think just as the Massachusetts Turnpike set an example for the country to create and fund the interstate highway system, so would a dedicated high speed rail line set an example for our country to expand such a network at a time when increasing air and road travel will only make global warming worse. Maybe a new line could be built to 220mph bullet train standards of curvature but initially without electrification using high speed diesel trains, then they could be sold when funding is in place for electrification. On the other hand, an electrified line at higher speeds could handle steeper grades better.</p> <p>I would love to be able to travel south and west from Worcester by high speed intercity rail, whether for business or to visit family in NYC and NJ, rather than drive first to Providence or all the way. I think Worcester would get a tremendous economic boost with the convenience of expanding intercity rail even at 90 or 110 mph, as would the rest of Massachusetts. Maybe higher frequency would be more valuable than ultra high speed, as Canada is proposing with its Quebec-Windsor corridor.</p> <p>Another concern: the plan to add an island platform at Worcester's Union Station (https://www.mbta.com/projects/worcester-union-station-improvements) only allows one additional train to be platformed (the track closest to the station already has a platform and a train would be boardable on both sides with the new island platform). Originally the station had 3 tracks that could board trains on that side (see pics), and if Worcester is to be both a commuter rail and future intercity Amtrak hub, 3 tracks seems like the minimum given that one would be needed as a terminal track for commuter rail trains to be turned around. In comparison, Providence RI station has two island platforms and can platform 4 trains, allowing express intercity trains to pass commuter rail.</p> <p>One last thought: there is a never completed but graded rail right of way paralleling route 20 between Palmer and Sturbridge MA; have you considered it as a possible route? https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_New_England_Railway</p> <p>All the best, Joshua Gordon</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-28-20_1	Joshua Gordon		joshcello@me.com	<p>Dear Makaela,</p> <p>Thanks for your reply. One other thought: MassDOT just announced it will be replacing bridges on the Mass Pike (https://www.telegram.com/news/20200227/8-massachusetts-turnpike-bridges-in-westboro-southboro-to-be-replaced-next-summer). Wouldn't it make sense to design the replacement bridges to have the capability of adding high speed rail as an option, by at least having long enough or wide enough spans to accommodate a rail right of way? In Florida, a new interchange (Route 528 and Innovation Way) east of Orlando International Airport was built with extra overpasses to accommodate a future new rail line right of way running south of and parallel to 528; the rail line is now being built by Virgin Trains USA and will extend their Brightline service from West Palm Beach to Orlando. Pic attached. https://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/shaping-our-future/all-aboard-florida/2019/12/17/virgin-trains-talks-disney-build-station-resort/2678091001/</p> <p>All the best, Josh</p>	Response to Makaela Niles based off previous email
02-26-20_11	Todd Steglinski		wsgsd@comcast.net	<p>Mr Britland,</p> <p>I obtained the e-mail I'm using to contact you via MassLive.</p> <p>A few questions.</p> <p>What's the anticipated speed of the trains?</p> <p>Is it likely the rail project will become a reality and if so how far out until ground breaking?</p> <p>Is there a map where I can zoom in Google map style to see the exact route through West Springfield? All I find online is broad, zoomed-out maps. I'd like to zoom in close.</p> <p>How would the state acquire land through municipalities and what would the size / width the state would need? i.e. a 50 foot swath for two sets of tracks. One in each direction. Eminent domain etc.. or if land has a conservation restriction and it falls within the path of the rail project, how does that impact land acquisition and land value payment?</p> <p>Is there an e-mail list or website for public meetings? I found out at the most recent Feb 24th meeting at Sheraton after the fact.</p> <p>Thank you.</p> <p>Todd Steglinski, West Springfield</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-28-20_1	Lucia		luciafoley@yahoo.com	SEE PDF OF COMMENT LETTER	Email to Makaela Niles

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-22-20_10	Matthew Glennon		mattglennon@gmail.com	<p>Hello,</p> <p>My name is Matt Glennon. I am a strong supporter of high-speed rail. As many Massachusetts residents, I am also highly concerned with air pollution and climate change. When not teaching, I travel all over the USA and internationally.</p> <p>When I travel, I see the regions that invest in mass transit tend to thrive long term. Businesses want to locate there, new businesses open around these train stops, and you see a rebirth of economic activity and opportunity! Traffic congestion lessens, and young people want to move there! Look at any stat on the younger, college-educated segment - many don't want to own cars right out of college. Not having high-speed options in the western part of Massachusetts continues to stunt growth in this area as both young professionals and businesses avoid our area in favor of more vibrant "connected" areas of the country.</p> <p>In places I travel that haven't made those investments - you see exactly what we are starting to see in Massachusetts including: traffic, pollution, sky-high real estate prices in the city centers/surrounding areas, and economic stagnation as you get further outside the metropolitan area. Look no further than the number of residents leaving New England each year as evidence.</p> <p>The last item I would point in support of the East/West rail project is residents of Western Mass are about to get a decent rail option - but not to Boston but rather CT and NYC. Failure to take action on East/West rail in our state will inevitably cause Western Mass money flow from Boston area to CT/NYC. Building a high-speed east/west railway will unify the state and increase economic opportunities for all.</p> <p>\Please don't settle for mediocre rail solutions. Build a rail system that gets you faster from point A to point B than traveling by car, and the people will take it in droves. I suggest the state pay for the rail tracks - build the rails tracks with concrete ties for high-speed railways.</p> <p>Then allow high-speed companies to bid on providing rail service (bid on routes) - they have no cost for the rail or ongoing maintenance. Five-year contracts with fixed fares with the cost of electricity being only variable to raise/lower fares during this contract period. Private sector, free market principles with government support - perfect mix for rail!</p> <p>If required, the state and federal government should subsidize passenger tickets as needed during the first five years which would allow the rail provider to ramp up service.</p> <p>Please do not settle for substandard rail systems - New Englanders sets the standard in the world in so many important areas, including: Healthcare, Entrepreneurship, Education, and too many to list here. Let's stop the "noise" around mass transit and do what we all know is the right thing to do for citizens of this state.</p> <p>Best, Matt Glennon Amherst, MA</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-22-20_7	Martin Newman		martynewman413@gmail.com	<p>I agree with those who are saying that the state study greatly underestimated the potential ridership on proposed east-west rail. Connecticut has done what Mass. has not: successfully expanded service to Springfield. The ridership on their "Hartford Line" has dramatically increased year-to-year, and has helped spur apartment construction in downtown Springfield.</p> <p>Even at the circa 1870 speeds that the single daily Amtrak train travels, east-west ridership would be substantial. It is nearly impossible to get to Boston from the Springfield area on the chronically congested Mass. Pike without traffic delays. A Stop at Palmer would spur development being only 65 miles from route 95. A stop at Westfield would pick up lots of student traffic.</p> <p>Residents of Western Mass. have been paying for Boston area transit projects for decades. There is no excuse for the lack of usable, inexpensive rail service to the east. It doesn't even have to be lightning fast.</p> <p>Martin Newman - Westfield</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-22-20_12	Frederico Fernandes		fredericosilvafernandes@gmail.com	<p>Mr. Britland,</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to hear public commentary on the east-west rail project.</p> <p>My take on it, is it is a worthwhile endeavor if done correctly. Meaning, high-speed rail connecting Springfield and Boston directly with as few stops along the way as possible, ideally none.</p> <p>In my opinion, surrounding communities can make the trip to Springfield to catch the rail service. It's convenient enough for all. A points west connecting line could always be added in the future if there was enough demand.</p> <p>As stops are added, travel time increases and fewer people make the choice to ride rather than drive. That would be disasterous for the project.</p> <p>Keep it simple, make it fast, and it's worth the investment.</p> <p>Best regards,</p> <p>Frederico Fernandes Holyoke, MA</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-22-20_13	Claudia Palframan		cchpalframan@gmail.com	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am writing in support of extending rail service to Western Mass. I spent much of my life in eastern Massachusetts, and used the commuter rail and MBTA frequently, for school, work and personal use. Moving to Western Mass was a bit of a culture shock. I could no longer hop on a train, relax, and then enjoy my day. Driving into Boston became a dreaded chore (I had family living in Allston, and visited frequently). I tried the bus, but it takes the same roads as I did - and runs into the same traffic.</p> <p>While I know from many years of experience rail has it's issues, it's still a very convenient way to travel. If I had access to rail into Boston (or Providence) I would, based on my interests and family and friends in the eastern Mass area, probably travel by rail about once a month. When I retire, it will be more frequent.</p> <p>I also feel that it would be an economic help to have better rail access in Western Mass. Many of my younger friends and acquaintances are looking for affordable places to live, and enjoy Western Mass (good theater, music, food, hiking, museums, etc) but do not want to still have a long commute by car (in eastern Mass - most commutes by car are long), but have said they would sit on a train, read a book, relax, or get a jump of the day remotely.</p> <p>Rail would also reduce some of the congestion on the Mass Pike. It would help the economic situation in Western Mass, and it would make Massachusetts more friendly to tourists.</p> <p>By the way, I capitalized Western Mass because it does feel like a different sate than eastern Mass.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Claudia Palframan Chicopee, MA</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-29-20_1	Dan Peacock		dbpeacock45@gmail.com	<p>Ethan Britland, East-West Project Manager:</p> <p>My attached, 2-29-2020, Revised Response to MassDOT's 2-6-2020 Presentation of the East-West Corridor shows that, according to my "Peacock Analysis", "MassDOT's Analysis" Vastly Underestimates Potential East-West Ridership 7.7 to 11.9 Times for Option 3 and 2.8 to 8.4 Times for Option 6.</p> <p>If you have any questions about my ridership analyses, please contact me.</p> <p>Please acknowledge receipt of this E-Mail.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Dan Peacock, Member Rail Passengers Association and Trains In The Valley Daniel Peacock 28 Hayward Drive Surry, NH 03431</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
2-28-20_3	Dave Golden		davegolden1@comcast.net	<p>Good afternoon. I am writing with my thoughts on the alternatives for a proposed east-west rail line. I live in Palmer. First, I do believe there is a need for this service for multiple reasons including giving options to people looking for more cost effective housing and having easy access to the Boston area, allowing for economic growth in the areas where a stop would be located and opening up tourism to not only the western MA area, but Boston without having the cost and search of parking. There are other reasons as well, but I believe these are first and foremost.</p> <p>As to the alternatives, I feel we should start with the most economic choice and it would seem to me that by utilizing, if possible, existing CSX lines would not only be cost effective but would probably offer a faster solution. I think there should be a stop here in Palmer, at the existing station/restaurant, due to the history that this town has with rail ridership and once again, probably offering the easiest, quickest and most cost effective solution. I believe also that by starting with a bus from Pittsfield to Springfield and then a stop in Palmer continuing on to Worcester and then using the MBTA lines, would serve as the test for future needs as at this point in my estimation, the cost/benefit of adding a train from Pittsfield isn't warranted due to the populations of those communities.</p> <p>Thank you for looking at the publics thoughts and ideas! It can only help. Dave Golden</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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02-28-20_3	Noah Pott		npott@bates.edu	<p>Dear Mr. Britland,</p> <p>Below is my public comment regarding the East-West Passenger Rail Study</p> <p>My name is Noah Pott, and I am a volunteer for the Train Campaign (www.traincampaign.org) and a student at Bates College studying Urban Planning and Transportation.</p> <p>When narrowing down the six alternatives for East-West passenger service, serious consideration should be given to Option 6: a completely new electrified high-speed rail line, similar to those found around the world in Europe and Asia. When studying options, ridership is probably the most important factor. And the ridership depends completely on efficiency, reliability, sustainability, frequency, and cost. High-speed rail can deliver on all of those fronts. High-speed rail is the fastest and most time-efficient option. If people can hop on a train in Pittsfield and be in downtown Boston faster than they can drive, that will instantly become the preferred option. As seen around the world, high-speed trains are extremely reliable and run at very high frequencies. It is also the most sustainable form of transportation, surpassing all diesel-powered trains, and can run on 100% renewable energy. Given the zero dollars spent on diesel fuel, and the extremely low cost of maintenance for electric locomotives, passenger ticket costs can remain low and affordable for everyone, boosting ridership even further. Electrified trains also don't contribute to air pollution in dense urban areas and rural towns.</p> <p>The high-speed rail option is also the most expensive, however the economic return will be equally sizable, especially when integrated into a future network of high-speed rail across the country. The higher ridership will also save hundreds millions of dollars of economic output lost by sitting in traffic, as well as play an integral role in combating climate change. Lower traffic congestion alleviates a constant need for frequent road repairs, saving money. Another thing to consider is the cost of doing nothing, or only doing "as much as necessary."</p> <p>Looking through the preliminary study, Option 6 outlines how the tracks would follow I-90 until reaching Lee, where it would connect to the Housatonic Railroad ROW all the way north to Pittsfield. This is slightly concerning for two reasons. First of all, the Housatonic ROW is very narrow and winding, which is hardly conducive to speeds greater than 59 mph (as stated by the 2014 Station Location & Design Analysis Study, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission). Secondly, using the Housatonic ROW would turn Pittsfield into an end station, as the ROW from Lee to Pittsfield comes into the Pittsfield station from the west. This would make the high-speed rail line harder to integrate into the future rail network. For example, on an express high speed train from Chicago to Boston, trains would still have to stop in Pittsfield to change directions, greatly reducing the time efficiency and extending travel times. A much better solution to both of these problems would be to follow I-90 until it crosses the CSX line West of Springfield, and then join the CSX ROW, either upgrading the current tracks for HSR speeds, or building new tracks next to the existing ones, straightening out curves in the ROW at the same time.</p> <p>We also need a high-speed line across the state now. If the building of an entire new ROW for a high speed line becomes too expensive or takes too long, and Option 6 is rejected as a possibility, we should focus on bringing up the speeds of the existing line as high as possible, preferably over 125mph—the higher the speeds, the higher the ridership and economic benefits. This should be done by straightening the current ROW and electrifying the line.</p> <p>A recent study for East-West rail recently came out with much lower projected ridership numbers and higher cost than originally projected. However, I believe that those numbers fail to take into account the ridership numbers when seamlessly integrated into a vast transportation network across the state, as well as access from trains coming from Albany and Chicago. It is also worth noting that new lines in Connecticut and Springfield extending north/south have also greatly exceeded projected ridership numbers.</p> <p>Through my work at the Train Campaign, I've spoken to many people about the possibility of having high-speed rail service across the state, almost everyone in enthusiastic and unanimous agreement — "high speed rail is an absolute must!" — "HSR is a long overdue overhaul of our transportation infrastructure."</p> <p>The State of Massachusetts has a huge opportunity to lead the world in a 21st Century transportation solution. Now is the chance to take that opportunity to the tracks.</p> <p>Thank you for reading my comment, Noah Pott of Great Barrington, MA</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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03-02-20_1	Peter Deluce		outlook_91FFF1CE60098235@outlook.com	<p>GREETINGS,I, HAVE SUBMITTED TO THREE GROUPS MY RAIL PLAN AND HOW TO PAY FOR A PORTION OF IT.TO MY KNOWLEDGE NO RESPONSE. SO IN SUMMARY,HERE IT IS AGAIN.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEW SEAMLESS RAIL (SINGLE TRACK) BUILT INTO/ONTO EXISTING MASS PIKE RIGHT OF WAY.CONNECTING TO CITIES VIA HIGHWAY FEEDERS ,SUCH AS I-291,1-290. OTHER CONNECTORS TO 1-84 INTER CHANGE & SHOPPERS WORLD.RT.9 PLAZA. 2. HIGH SPEED RAIL- WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED, BY STATION STOPS,ACTING AS POSITIVE CONTROL POINTS.ALLOWING A TRAIN TO PROCEED ONLY AFTER ONE HAS ARRIVED,FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTION. 3. THE POWER SOURCE WILL BE ELECTRIC, WITH A BRAND NEW SUBSTATION(S) BUILT GENERATING POWER AS NEEDED,THEN SELLING THAT POWER BACK TO COMPANIES WHEN NOT NEEDED. 4. THE RAIL LINE WILL COVERED BY A CANOPY.INSIDE WILL BE THE POWER LINES.THIS CANOPY WILL HAVE A 2-3 INCH SPACE FROM A TRAIN WELL AND WEATHER PROTECTION VIA NYLON BRUSHES ALLOWING FOR AIR EXCHANGE. 5. A MASTER ARCHTECICUAL FIRM WILL DRAW UP MODULAR PLANS.SO EVERY SECTION WILL ALLOW LOCAL BUILDERS/CONTRACTORS TO PARTICIPATE. 6. RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED , PETER C. DELUCE, SPRINGFIELD,MASS. 	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
02-27-20_2	Laura Sylvester, Ben Hood, Sherry Morgan, Kit Sang Boos	Western MA Transportation Advocacy Network	lauras@foodbankwma.org	<p>The Western MA Transportation Advocacy Network supports immediate development and implementation of east-west passenger rail service between Pittsfield, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston.</p> <p>We feel that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities across Western Massachusetts would benefit from investment in our transportation infrastructure, and related transit-oriented development; • Better transportation options would help residents reach hospitals and health care, mental health and addiction services, and social services agencies assisting with food insecurity and homelessness; • East-west travel is heavily dependent on the increasingly congested Mass Pike. Transportation is responsible for more than 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts. Whether using existing or new rights-of-way, trains would be significantly better for the environment; • The climate change crisis mandates that Massachusetts invest in better public transportation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve health of residents and allow us to meet the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act; • Buses and vans connecting rural towns to trains would allow access to job training and educational opportunities in nearby cities and towns; • Train service spanning the Commonwealth would address regional inequity between east and west, urban and rural; • People who work in eastern Massachusetts would ride a commuter train home to places west of Boston where housing is affordable and lifestyles are less stressful. <p>Political and business leaders from Boston, Springfield, Central Mass, the Pioneer Valley, and the Berkshires are strongly in favor of east-west passenger rail across Massachusetts. In a letter to the Boston Globe, Roger Crandall, MassMutual CEO, said, “With headquarters in Springfield and a growing presence in Boston, we see firsthand how both sides of the state can benefit from a stronger connection with each other. However, like so many others, we also face the gridlock that prevents all residents from traveling easily between both ends of the Commonwealth. East-west rail would be a true game changer. It’s time to stop thinking about if we can do this and instead talk about how we are going to do it.”</p> <p>On February 21, 2020, the Boston Globe Editorial Board endorsed the east-west rail project noting that western Massachusetts has not been “getting a fair shake when it comes to transportation spending.” The Globe’s editorial board wrote that the value of the east-west rail project could attract federal funds for the project.</p> <p>We are concerned that MassDOT’s consultants have dramatically underestimated ridership in the East-West Passenger Rail Study of service between Boston and Pittsfield when compared to projections made by the 2016 Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI). At the presentation on February 6, 2020 in Springfield, the consultants estimated a ridership of 247,700 on a 150 MPH service that would cost \$25 billion. By contrast the NNEIRI study of service between Boston, Springfield, and New Haven forecast 429,665 annual boardings at stations between Boston and Springfield on a 90 MPH service costing \$685-855 million. Even adjusted for inflation to 2020 dollars, the cost to implement this top-level NNEIRI service would have been more affordable and achievable by comparison with all the service levels being considered in the current study.</p> <p>We strongly urge MassDOT to reconsider its ridership projections, including calculation of induced demand, and careful consideration of more robust forecasts in the NNEIRI study. We also encourage development of final alternatives which are appropriate in scale to the need to connect all parts of our Commonwealth as soon as possible with passenger rail service.</p> <p>Laura Sylvester Ben Hood Sherry Morgan Kit Sang Boos On behalf of the Western MA Transportation Advocacy Network</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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02-15-20_1	Frances Cress		mfcress@comcast.net	<p>To Whom It May Concern,</p> <p>The inequity in financial support from the state between suburban communities that provide the lion's share of support to their school systems and the state aid given to poorer, non-performing communities is dramatic. The eventual degradation of school performance in these suburban districts is inevitable if we can not achieve a more equitable sharing of Chapter 70 funds AND if changes are not made to Proposition 21/2 which limits our ability to levy taxes locally. In Longmeadow, MA there has been little increase in housing values since the recession of 2008. As a consequence, the prospect of continuing to meet Proposition 21/2 requirements to increase our tax base in support of education and other needs is nil and will soon become an impediment to maintaining quality education.</p> <p>There is a solution for Longmeadow and other communities in the Western part of the state who are in need of revenue generation for varying reasons; the EW passenger Rail. EW Rail service will certainly contribute to growth in valuations in the Western MA real estate market and to stronger economies among the towns along it's corridor. The influx of new people and new money always achieves that. At present the ability of Boston's needed labor force to find affordable housing within the Boston metropolitan area is greatly strained due to a continuing meteoric rise in these costs. To that we add the existing infrastructure's (Mass Pike) declining ability to carry the increased traffic volume it has witnessed in the last 20+ years and the resultant increase in commuting times to Boston which are now at unacceptable levels. The rail option is truly the only viable economic decision that is also environmentally friendly.</p> <p>The current EW Passenger Rail models fail to appropriately address predicted ridership and should not be used to make decisions about the efficacy of the concept. A dynamic model that considers induced ridership as a result of a new EW rail is necessary. A load of only 10-15% on "existing" ridership figures is ludicrous especially when we know the "actual" increased ridership figures for the Downeaster line are at 53%. Which, by the way, blows the usual induced ridership percentage used in Europe of 35% completely out of the water. If the Downeaster figures aren't sufficient indication of pent-up demand, I don't know what is. The current EW Rail model regarding ridership is nonsense.</p> <p>High speed rail service west to east and vice versa is needed to assist the economies in the Western part of the state expand while providing support to sustain the boom in Boston business. It is an environmentally sound way to provide access to lower priced housing markets for the employees needed to fuel that boom. The current cost of housing in Boston metro area exceeds what a large portion of the labor market can bear and it reduces the quality of life for those who are forced to make it work at a risk to the businesses that employ them. The reduction in automobile use and associated delays in transport time, overcrowding and congestion in route to Boston and within the city limits will be greatly mitigated. Consider the impact of the reworking the Alston interchange alone! EW Rail is a "must do" for this state to retain its position with industry and as #1 in the nation for its schools.</p> <p>If the study also fails to evaluate the income generated from "induced ridership numbers" the evaluation of it's efficacy in relation to construction costs is faulty too. I see no detail in the current study that supports this more reasoned, rational approach either.</p> <p>Fran Cress Longmeadow MA</p>	Email to DOT Planning

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02-29-20_2	Rob Kusner		profkusner@gmail.com	<p>Dear colleagues:</p> <p>As I mentioned in my comments at the public meeting in Springfield on 12 February 2020 – coincidentally, the 211th birthday of our "first rail president" – the biggest population of potential east-west rail passengers consists of the students, staff and faculty at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, along with the Five Colleges communities located around Amherst.</p> <p>Students, many with families and friends in the eastern part of the Commonwealth, already make regular trips by private car or bus; their access to internships and jobs in the Boston metro area would be greatly enhanced by east-west passenger rail; a station in Palmer with a direct rail shuttle link on the existing passenger-ready track to Amherst, would significantly increase ridership projections and reduce the per-passenger cost for the project.</p> <p>While faculty and staff are a smaller fraction of the Amherst-area population, they and their non-student neighbors also account for thousands more east-west trips each week; if even a portion of these long-distance travelers made the transition to rail transit (an attractive option: it's easier to get work done on a train than in a car), they'd form a base of regular east-west commuters.</p> <p>For these reasons, and as an official from Ware suggested in her later remarks at the same Springfield meeting, it's essential for both UMass Amherst – home to nearly 30,000 students and the largest Massachusetts employer in western Massachusetts – and the Town of Amherst to have "seats at the table" in planning for east-west passenger rail. I urge you to engage with the UMass Amherst Chancellor's office and with the Amherst Town Manager to make those "seats" available.</p> <p>Cordially,</p> <p>--</p> <p>Rob Kusner</p>	Email to DOT Planning
03-02-20_2	Roy Davis		davrxx@gmail.com	<p>I reside in Upstate New York. Has the MassDOT also examined working with NYSDOT to operate the possible future service to Albany-Rensselaer where trains can be turned and serviced? This would assuredly cut costs and increase ridership for just 49 more miles beyond Pittsfield. Thank you for your attention.</p> <p>Roy Davis</p>	Email to DOT Planning
03-02_20_3	Steve Wheelock		steve.wheelock.phd@gmail.com	<p>Makaela Niles</p> <p>I was unable to attend the most recent public meeting in Springfield.</p> <p>I don't know whether this is a valid criticism but I didn't see any benchmarking comparisons on the ridership from Pittsfield to Boston reported in the local news. I would like to know if the consultants hired by DOT did any benchmarking in analyzing possible ridership between Pittsfield and Boston. The news reports I read didn't indicate the consultants benchmarked their studies by checking their assumptions or making comparisons to other regional commuter lines. The reason I ask is the estimated number of riders between Pittsfield and Boston seemed extraordinarily low, judging from the news reports.</p> <p>If there was no benchmarking I should like to comment that MetroNorth's Harlem line has about the same trip time (2 hrs. 18 min for Pittsfield to Boston) as the trip from wassaic, NY to Grand Central, 2 hrs. 5 min to 2 hrs. 14 min. and MetroNorth runs 4, 7-car peak trains weekdays in the morning from 5:00 am to 7:00 am from Wassiac and on weekdays afternoons 5, 7-car peak trains from Grand Central to Wassiac between 4:00 pm and 9:00 pm. Could you explain why or why not this wouldn't be a valid benchmarking comparison and why benchmarking was omitted?</p> <p>Thank you, /Steve Wheelock/</p>	Email to Makaela Niles

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
03-01-20_1	Garry Sager		garry_sager@hotmail.com	<p>I read your study and don't understand the need for such expenses. It doesn't seem to help on general transportation in Mass. It seems it would provide more service to more passengers in Connecticut than most areas of Mass just look at the north corridor rt 2 as the major route across the top of the state. Also with more new technology wouldn't this be replaced with self driving buses or another type of transportation so better roads seem a better alternative. It seems a little old fashioned that we are expanding rail after allowing it to slowly disappear. Their used to be trains from Boston to Montreal, Albany and other places.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
02-13-20_1	Keith Benoit		kbbenoit@umass.edu	<p>Hello,</p> <p>Is the "cost per rider" calculated as a one time fee or an annual basis? I would implore MassDOT to not be concerned with even the highest cost per rider that they calculated because personally operated vehicles (POV) cost even less than this and they operate at only 20% efficiency when they are driving (one passenger in a five passenger car). POV's then sit idle for 99% of the day. The cost per rider can be seen as taking a POV off of the road, which furthers state sustainability efforts. Furthermore, the network effect of connecting the states 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest cities cannot be calculated.</p> <p>I would not support any option that does not include a stop in Palmer. My master's project in regional planning is creating a transit-oriented development plan for the Town of Palmer and in my analysis, the town would receive economic benefits that exceed the state's projections. The town also is connected historically to Boston, New York City, Springfield, Buffalo, Easton, and Holyoke because it has historic landmarks from landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead and architect H.H. Richardson at the old rail station. The landmarks in all of these cities can be reached by rail if the East-West Passenger Rail Service is implemented with a stop in Palmer.</p> <p>MassDOT is severely discounting the amount of professional commuters that would take this line from Springfield and Palmer. Several of my colleagues would be willing to commute to Boston where the average pay is \$20k plus higher than Western Mass and live in housing that is significantly cheaper.</p> <p>I would further not support any option that contains a bus. Transferring severely diminishes the travel time and detracts from the "pleasure travelers" experience - some who take the train because it is not a bus. It would also make travelers with mobility or other impairments more challenging. Additionally, competing with the bus service will force them to become more competitive and create better options for their customers who tend to fewer mobility options.</p> <p>Thank you</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
03-04-20_1	David Fite		david.fite90@gmail.com	<p>I am writing you to again express my support for the proposed East / West rail corridor, and offer some final thoughts as you head into the next phase of design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A combination of options 4 and 5, with stops in Palmer and Chester, seems like a clear front runner at this point. This meets the goals of the Western Mass Rail Coalition, and the state itself. It would be really helpful in the next presentation to have detail call outs of the area(s) in option 5 where we'd do work. Having these call outs would help the public understand the challenges we find in these hilly areas. - Federal funding is very unlikely. - The public needs to be provided with a better understanding of why your estimate is high. There is an ethical obligation to review the estimate in the previous study and reconcile the two estimates for the public. It may be that a good portion of the increase can be explained by escalation and a better understanding of the work, but the public is owed an explanation and you will be asked about this again. - The state should provide a range of scenarios for induced demand, including scenarios that exceed national averages, or approach NYC, DC, and even European levels of use. What it looks like without induced demand is not enough. Having this gradient helps the public see a range of more plausible outcomes. - The state needs to provide us with a price to upgrade to electric by 2030 and an add alternate to do it now for each final option. This is inevitable work. - It may be helpful to show something in a perspective view or section so the public can have an understanding of change in grade in Central Mass. - Option 6 causes a lot of problems. The existing corridors have a long history and communities have already been built around them. Reusing the existing corridor causes less disturbance and reintegrates rail into the community organically. I have been driving the Pike a lot lately, and I have been noticing some the pinch points at the overpasses and the areas in Central MA where you would be near water, or doing steep grade change. I have a really hard time imagining this work occurring in certain areas without it completely destroying people's commutes for a period of time. <p>Please keep up the good work, we look forward to seeing your final options.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
03-15-20_1	Lauren Miller		lonewolfette9847@live.com	<p>Western MA is home for a lot of people working in Eastern MA (lets just say Boston). An alternative to driving would be a huge help. Whether the need to go dramatic or not is up in the air. My hope had always been for Amtrak to add a few more Lake Shore Limiteds. One per day in each direction makes it nearly impossible to get anywhere beyond Boston or NY within the same day. ALB - NYP - PHL takes less than one day but getting to ALB requires a good drive from Western MA.</p> <p>Of the 6 plans, at least 3 include Pittsfield. Unless the Berkshire Flyer (PIT - NYP) sees the light of day, it'd be nice to have 1 of the 3 plans that include Pittsfield.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
03-17-20_1	Travis Pollack	MAPC	TPollack@mapc.org	see PDF (criteria for selecting three alternatives)	Email to Makaela and ethan
06-09-20_1		Chester Board of Selectmen	rdchester@comcast.net	see PDF (support for station in Chester)	Letter/Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
06-10-20_1	William Meehan		meehan.w@husky.neu.edu	<p>I appreciate that the study has reconsidered its ridership projections for the existing alternatives, but I think that there should also be alternatives ending in Albany. Pittsfield on its own may not provide significant ridership, but there would be a large number of potential riders in the New York Capital Region. Trains could also be scheduled for easy transfers to Amtrak trains heading north to Montreal, west to Buffalo, or even south to New York.</p> <p>Current scheduled travel time from Pittsfield to Albany-Rensselaer on the Lake Shore Limited is 64 minutes. With targeted track improvements west of Pittsfield, travel time from Albany to South Station could realistically be less than 4 hours in alternatives 3-5 and around 3 hours in alternative 6. Any of these would be less than the current travel time from Boston to New York, and alternative 6 would beat driving in even light traffic.</p> <p>Extending this rail study to Albany could feasibly open up new catchment areas and reduce cost per rider. For that reason, I believe it's worth analyzing.</p>	Email to DOT Planning
06-11-20_1	Paul Makinen		pmakinen_20712@yahoo.com	<p>I feel some sadness reading the high cost estimates from the Advisory Committee 5 presentation, because I'm old enough to remember when Conrail removed a lot of the second track between Springfield and Worcester (I frequently rode Amtrak between Springfield and Boston when I was at UMass 1976-1980)---wish they had rail-banked it, but that was before state governments commonly paid for that kind of thing.</p> <p>Anyway, I'm glad there is finally some progress on this.</p>	Email to Makaela
06-11-20_2	Greg Moore		mooregr@greenms.com	<p>I missed this, but let me say as a resident of New York, I would LOVE increased east/west train service to Boston.</p> <p>For example a decent early morning east bound train, say leaving Albany a 7:00 AM would get my support!</p> <p>Bring it on!</p>	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
06-15-20_1	Dave Phillips		dphillips8_99@yahoo.com	<p>I continue to monitor the Mass. east-West Rail Study from afar. I see that you are making progress. A few comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While using the Downeaster and modified Hartford line models have produced somewhat better results I still think that they severely underestimate the market potential relative to the proposed investment. Specifically, if you are investing in "separate track" (which is essential west of the publicly-owned, predominantly-passenger section east of Worcester) you need to use it intensively (i.e. at least, hourly) to get your money's worth. The usage of the Mass Pike gives us a clue that there is enough of a market to support hourly rail service. The Downeaster and Hartford models don't reflect the huge market impact of hourly service. • Regarding which alternative(s) should be included in the final round of analysis, it should be a hybrid (as I have commented previously): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Boston-Worcester: shared upgraded track will be fine, since freight is carefully controlled (the East-West line should not be "charged" for the upgrades, since they need to be done, anyway). o Worcester-Springfield: As noted above, sharing track with CSX freight has been demonstrated in various corridors elsewhere as unable to deliver fast service at reasonable cost. The success of the the Commonwealth's purchase of the Worcester Line has demonstrated the efficacy of this approach. There is no reasonable choice between Worcester Union Station and Auburn and between Palmer and Springfield Union Station but to construct next to CSX. However, the Mass Pike corridor provides a much shorter/straighter/faster opportunity between Auburn and Palmer, bypassing the circuitous historical rail route; grades are not significant for well-powered passenger trains, especially, if electrified. If you are paying for new track (I assume that we are talking new double-track which will readily support as much service as you want) you should put it in the shortest possible route (reducing the amount of track required). o Worcester-Hartford: The current study has ignored the potential for creating a new inland version of the NE Corridor by sharing the investment in new tracks between Worcester Union Station and Sturbridge (enroute to Springfield) to create a direct Boston-Worcester-Hartford-New Haven-NYC route, greatly benefitting Worcester and, thus, Massachusetts. Only 35 miles of new rail route in the I-84 corridor would be required. Hartford is planning a new 4-track station as part of the re-construction of I-84, which will readily support this level of service. o Springfield-Pittsfield - Given the lower potential ridership, a phased opening of this segment, construction to lower standards without electrification and, perhaps, with track sharing, should be considered. If the rest of the route is electrified and operated with multiple-unit cars, a portion of the fleet could be equipped with diesel engines (or batteries) and cut off in Springfield to continue to Pittsfield. o Pittsfield-Albany - It's only about 32 miles from Pittsfield to the connection to the passenger-only line to Albany (Rensselaer). Given the increased market this connection to the Empire State, and points west, this would provide, it would seem worthwhile to do some "back-of-the-envelope" analysis of the added cost vs. added ridership/revenue. 	Email to Makaela

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
06-25-20_1	Maurice J. Ferriter, Esq		mferriter814@yahoo.com	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rail service from Springfield, and parts west, to Boston.</p> <p>A little background. I used to ride the " Montrealer" from Holyoke to Grand Central Station, as early as 1939 to see the World Fair on Long Island. I rode the "tracks " from Holyoke to New York for many years thereafter, including going to serve during the Cold War and later for the Korean War. I rode trains in Europe, Asia and during the war in Korea. I traveled from Holyoke to Fort Hood Texas, from there to San Francisco on a troop train and later from San Francisco to New York on a troop train. My point, I have had experience riding the "rails".</p> <p>I served as counsel to the Holyoke and Westfield Railroad and negotiated it's settlement with the Penn Central during PC's bankruptcy proceedings.</p> <p>I was one of the founders of the Holyoke Heritage Park Railroad, a nonprofit that was supported by the the Commonwealth, and ran from the Holyoke Heritage State Park to Westfield. I left for other matters some years later and retired as President Emeritus.</p> <p>I am a supporter of rail service from the Golden West to Boston. I support the proposals of Richie Neal and Eric Lesser, I believe the time has come!</p> <p>I have recently taken the Amtrak from Springfield to Boston, at the suggestion of my daughter, who resides in and practices law in bean town. She was concerned with my driving on the Mass Pike with the heavy traffic and wild driving. I agree with her and I shall continue to take the train.</p> <p>I thought my constructive criticism might help you develop a plan that made the experience more acceptable to the traveling public.</p> <p>Richie Neal's fight to restore the Springfield Station is a wonderful start and should be an inspiration to State government to continue to upgrade the service at the station. The passengers should have better access to the "rails". I understand that this is presently being addressed. They should have someone on the platform to inform and direct them to the correct train. There was confusion as to the track and to which train, when two arrived at approximately the same time. There was confusion as to which car on the train to Boston was to be boarded. In short, communication was lacking.</p> <p>I was fortunate to have a seat it the business car and found it comfortable, but lacking the same experience I found on the European trains. I felt I was back on a 1930's train. The snack bar was unkept and the attendant seemed to be disinterested! Maybe I'm just getting old and grumpy, but I didn't have the same feeling on my last trip by train from Venice to Florence on a high speed train! We can do better!</p> <p>One other matter that needs attention is the timing of the service for a day in Boston. It just makes common sense that a train that leaves Springfield in early morning and returns in early evening would attract many more customers. It will also relieve the congestion on the turnpike.</p> <p>In sum, I believe that with the proper planning we will be able to have outstanding service on modern trains, with friendly employees and have many riders!</p> <p>I hope my comments are helpful and I wish you great success in this venture!</p>	Email to DOT Planning

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
06-29-20_1	Marc Warner	Warner Transportation Consulting, Inc.	marc@warnertransportation.com	<p>Mr. Britland,</p> <p>I watched the video of the June East-West rail presentation, but felt that much of the demand study seemed a little breezy. Perhaps this was appropriate given the general audience and the technical nature of demand forecasting. I, however, am very much a technical person--I have a Ph.D. in transportation systems from MIT, and have been leading travel demand studies for the last 28 years--and am curious about the modeling techniques and assumptions used. What zone structure and market segmentation did the modelers use? What is the forecast year? What assumptions did they make about the rail fare, station parking costs, and auto costs and travel times? What is the basis for the coefficients in the mode choice routine? What assumptions did they make about induced demand?</p> <p>I presume the answers to these questions are in the latest AECOM and WSP demand report. Can I get a copy?</p>	Email to DOT Planning
09-11-20_1	Noah Pott		npott@bates.edu	<p>Dear Makaela,</p> <p>My name is Noah and I am a student from Great Barrington, Mass. studying urban and transportation planning. I have a question/comment about the East-West Rail Study:</p> <p>Is electrification of the rail corridor (using overhead catenaries) being considered at all? While having a somewhat more expensive construction cost, there are numerous benefits to electrification. Trains running on electricity can accelerate considerably faster than their diesel counterparts, reducing travel time significantly (especially over longer distances). They are also capable of much higher speeds and are much more reliable than diesel engines (is the 110mph speed limit on Alt 5 and 6 due to rail infrastructure limitations or diesel locomotive maximum speeds?). Electric locomotives are also MUCH more environmentally-friendly than diesel locomotives, and the operating and maintenance costs are significantly lower as well.</p> <p>If construction cost is the main barrier, various agreements could be made with CSX and MBTA, as both would have an incentive to switch to electrified rail — CSX could run faster and cheaper electric locomotives with their freight trains in the Mass section of their network, and MBTA would reduce operating costs and travel times, and increase reliability and ridership with an electrified commuter rail system. Amtrak could also benefit, with greater integration into the already-electrified Northeast Corridor. All of this would also contribute to environmental goals — something that Massachusetts prides themselves in dearly.</p> <p>I think that a hybrid of Alternatives 5 and 6 would be ideal, and I think that the possibility of electrification should at least be studied/considered. If some of the rail alignments for reducing travel times in Alt. 5 were applied to the extension to Pittsfield in Alt. 4, with an amendment to consider catenary electrification (greater reducing travel times and boosting frequency), Massachusetts would have a 1st-class passenger rail network that would catch the eyes of the entire Northeast and beyond.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my comment, and I look forward to hearing back!</p> <p>Noah Pott of Great Barrington, MA</p>	Email to Makaela Niles

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
10-02-20_1	Thomas Casartello		tomcasartellojr@gmail.com	<p>Good morning,</p> <p>I am a resident interested in the East west rail study. I watched the advisory committee meeting the other day where the cost benefit analysis numbers were presented. I was wondering if the project team has calculated separate cost benefit numbers for the two segments (what the cost benefit would be for the eastern Springfield - Boston segment vs the western segment if a phased approach was done.) Has a phased approach been considered as a viable approach?</p> <p>I think a great phase one approach would involve building out the Springfield to Boston segment and then launching with full service to Springfield and a pilot service to Pittsfield on the unimproved Springfield to Pittsfield line where perhaps one or two round trips would extend to Pittsfield - the proposed project doesn't improve speeds as much west of Springfield so I think If a couple round trips could be fit into CSX's schedule it would be A feasible pilot with the Springfield to Worcester improvements. I also believe Amtrak is probably the most logical choice for the operator. I think this corridor is more feasible as an intercity route connected with Amtrak's national rail network than as a commuter service and it would provide an opportunity to collaborate with Connecticut on a common pool of rail equipment for all the regional intercity rail services. I think a great way to design the service is to operate most of the round trips as New Haven to Boston trains with perhaps a single Washington - Boston train along the inland route. To complement this I think it would make sense to look into developing the Two round trips to Pittsfield as Albany - Boston trains as connectivity to Amtrak's Empire Corridor would probably improve the feasibility of that segment and would complement the Lake Shore Limited well.</p> <p>Thanks for the consideration of these comments and I intend to submit them at the public meeting also. An additional comment - I believe Westfield should be added as a stop.</p>	Email to Makaela Niles
10-22-20_1	Marc Warner		marc@warnertransportation.com	<p>If you get a chance, please pass these on to the relevant speaker at the meeting this afternoon:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The comparable route methodology chart on page 64 of the draft report shows income, bus vs rail mode, and need for a transfer among the factors used in the ridership forecast. What formula or parameters did the consultants use to account for these variables? What was their basis for these formulas or parameters? 2. Given that the cost-benefit ratio for all of the options seem to be below the level to warrant federal funds, what is to be gained (other than by the consultants) from a further analysis of non-passenger transportation benefits? 3. Even if Congressman Neal did come through with an earmark for substantial capital funding, would the state continue to support East West passenger rail if it were obliged to cover the costs of the needed operating subsidies? 	Email to Makaela Niles

<p>11-20-20_1</p>	<p>Bruce Hain</p>		<p>brucewhain@gmail.com</p>	<p>ALTERNATIVE 5 - POTENTIAL CORRIDOR REALIGNMENTS There are seven proposed realignments described vaguely under Alternative 5. Your commenter has attempted to delineate them as far as possible with some degree of exactness, to see what their physical properties might be, and what consequences their realization might entail. The proposed realignments are addressed as Shortcuts 1 through 7 below, and are numbered as running east-to-west.</p> <p>Shortcut 1 Auburn-Oxford-Charlton: Shortcut 1 is the lengthiest of the seven proposed realignments at about 3.2 miles, and runs through mostly-level terrain along the north side of the Massachusetts Turnpike. The exiting of traffic from and reentry to the existing line would present problems due to its two-track configuration in hilly terrain (reduced to one in many places) where adding additional tracks has not been addressed, requiring local traffic to somehow be shunted aside while the faster traffic passes to and from the Shortcut. Further: This Shortcut establishes a dangerous precedent as shown in a number of drawings, where an apparently desired but not otherwise documented or described extension of it is shown bypassing its connection to the old right-of-way on the east, and thereby bypassing the great passenger station of Worcester, which has already had its train capacity and amenities gutted and debilitated perhaps never to be restored. This is a modus operandi seen in extremely numerous cases throughout the US in the decades since World War II, where such great stations from the golden age of rail expansion - offering speed and capacity impossible to duplicate today - have been debilitated, ruined and demolished. (See St. Louis, Cincinnati, Albany, Troy, Detroit, Birmingham, Buffalo, Joplin, Kansas City, including three credible attempts to get Grand Central demolished in my lifetime.) AMTRAK HAS SHOWN A DISGUSTING DEGREE OF COMPLICITY IN THIS. My viewing in Google Street View shows Worcester to possess old buildings of amazing quality and extraordinarily high quantity from the 20th Century and before, placing it in a special category of extraordinary and irreplaceable assets that must be preserved as part of the American experience. The existing Worcester Station is essential to that goal. And besides: THE EXISTING WORCESTER STATION IS THE BEST BET FOR ACHIEVING PASSENGER DRAW. It would further be achieved by offering passengers good service from the towns along the old line where service has been abandoned - feeding the big interchanges such as Worcester - but I doubt that is what your consultants and engineers have in mind, because the disgusting precedent in our faces- and these documents - bely their true intentions. This Shortcut 1 must be opposed with all possible force and urgency.</p> <p>Shortcut 2 Charlton: Shortcut 2, among others, is a nonstarter, and it's difficult to imagine it not being clearly and intentionally so. The approximately 1.5-mile route cuts across a well-to-do, wooded residential area and private school campus, and is elevated in it's configuration to some significant degree, making it the more intrusive and undesirable as seen from the ground. A number of seizures and demolitions would be required in addition to the properties that will be otherwise ruined as against not having the shortcut in close proximity. The alignment bypasses Rochedale, set at a fairly broad curve between two long tangents on the old line, where a station might be set up - and no doubt previously existed - to serve the local populus and feed passengers onto the regional and proposed high-speed services. Your planners could not but fully expect what would happen in terms of local uproar and litigation if construction of Shortcut 2 were to be attempted.</p> <p>Shortcut 3 Charleton: Shortcut 3 originates in Charlton Depot, a place where a station might logically be expected to serve local passengers, and to feed regional and proposed high-speed services thereby. Here the original line cuts round the perimeter of a rock hill in a long 1200-foot-radius curve (good for 45mph) encompassing about 90 degrees. Planners propose replacing this with a surmised 5000-foot-radius curve, cut or tunneled deep into the rocky wooded hill in this well-to-do residential area. The realignment would be about 4700' long. At its deepest your commenter surmises the tunnel or cut would be about 110' feet below the surface at top-of-rail, and according to the conditions encountered might necessitate a substantial broadening of any cut towards the surface elevations, making for a big gash in the landscape. Whether tunnel or cut, the "gash effect" would still obtain at the ends of the new alignment, where any increase in radius would result in bringing the line closer, and onto, the properties particularly of the fancy and venerable old houses found close to the line in Charlton Depot, - with a proportional increase of intrusiveness accompanying any degree of expanded radius. Naturally the shortcut will increase the rate of ascent for eastbound traffic to about 1.4%. It is unknown if the original well-liked gash is to be abandoned with advent of this newer better one. All told the proposal seems unlikely of realization because of its intrusiveness.</p> <p>Shortcut 4 Spencer: Shortcut 4 would probably be accomplished by constructing an approximately-4350-foot-long double-bore tunnel. But the places where the tunnel or cut comes level with the land would entail the same type intrusiveness encountered above, plowing through a number of houses and properties, the owners of which would</p>	<p>Email to Makaela Niles</p>
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				<p>likely be duly offended by the damages proposed and resort to litigation.</p> <p>Besides the expense and likely litigiousness of these Shortcuts 1 through 4 - including possibly two double-bore tunnels (That's three miles of tunneling right there, involving a minimum of four boring operations: picking up the parts and reassembling the mechanism for each succeeding bore.) seen by planners as enabling a continuous higher speed through the area, of something like 80 - not average speed - they fail to take into account that the route they're traveling so fast is taking them in the wrong direction. In getting from Boston to Framingham, Worcester, Brookfield, Palmer and Springfield, the route(s) chosen in modern times should have some relative bearing in the right direction. In olden times railroad engineers would attempt to select the lowest obstacle impossible to cut or bore through and arrange a circuitous and therefore gradual approach on either side of it, called developing a grade. With modern capabilities this is no longer the only option, yet planners here are proposing developing the old skewed headings for high speed travel, when they should be used for feeding the high-speed express service generally located elsewhere. As an example, the 7.6-mile East Brookfield-Worcester Tunnel described in the foregoing comment of November 19 would take at least 25 minutes off the time to travel all of these improvements, combined with the compulsory existing alignments - and probably for less money - especially given the long and potentially arduous litigation involved. (The said tunnel has the distinct advantage of being located nowhere at all through much of its length for some practical purposes.) The old Boston & Albany is a thing of incalculable value, as much a part of the beloved local scenery as the scenery itself, and the practical part of that value lies in serving the communities along the line and feeding the express service.</p> <p>Shortcut 5 East Brookfield: It's difficult to tell what the planners mean by proposing some kind of upgrade at East Brookfield. The curve there is fairly broad at R=2750' and has a substantial spiral offset. It is hemmed in by the somewhat soggy nature of the surroundings through which much of it passes, which could get litigious where alterations are concerned, and the relatively new CSX car rack facility (which appears little used) requiring an interlocking amounting to a single mainline switch that, according to American custom, must have a tangent section of a certain length facing the points - which tends to tighten the curve otherwise. I cannot see any advantage to changing much of it, but that's what you get when paid planners are permitted to conduct their consultancy without having to say what they're about. They should be about removing grade crossings in Framingham. (I mean, is there a big sewer or something? What about a siphon? The predicament of Framingham is omitted from the study.)</p> <p>Shortcut 6 West Brookfield: The West Brookfield upgrade, far from instituting a stop at West Brookfield, seems to contemplate eliminating a rather speedy alignment including a curve with 2500' radius having long tangents on either side of it. Planners seem to be considering replacing same with another double-bore tunnel, of deeper draught and superior length to the ones already discussed here. As an example of an R=2500' curve that many are familiar with: the tunnel from NY Penn Station to New Jersey (part of the greatest railroad engineering achievement of all time for a hundred years standing, till China) has such a curve at it's New Jersey portal, and by the time the last car's around it you're doing 80 (wonder of electric traction) though what with propaganda kinks and various and sundry, the speeds have lately slowed. The instant proposal is a silly waste and not worth the enormous cost of construction and maintenance - being as it is, located at one of the extreme nodes of the existing line's circuitousness and barely serving to abbreviate it - especially if you consider the needless custom of building two tunnels, each just slightly too small to accomodate two trains (whereas with a two-track tube trains can move at higher speeds) owing to "safety reasons" (see the series of deadly tunnel fires in the Alps) which are easily debunked as something that might be considered extortion in some circles.</p> <p>Shortcut 7 Warren: It's impossible to tell what this improvement would entail. Perhaps it's intended to move the tracks away from the carefully shuttered station so it can never be used again.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bruce W. Hain Queens, New York B.A. Music, Marlboro College, '79 November 20, 2020 Sole Academic Qualifications 646-710-0869</p> <p>RAIL-NYC-ACCESS.COM</p>	
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ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-1	James Garrett		jgarrett@hatfieldps.Net	<p>Your study concludes with saying you need more studies! You should be ashamed of yourself Sec. Pollack and Gov. Baker! Found these 1300 other pages of studies you lying liars!</p> <p>https://web.archive.org/web/20170106024324/http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/northernnewenglandrail/Documents.aspx</p> <p>Just admit that the Picknelly brothers are pulling your strings and drop the "nice Republican" act.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-2	Ann Marie Messbauer		massmess@juno.com	I understand that this is a very complicated and expensive project. I have read the summary of the alternatives and would like to support the Hybrid 4/5 plan. (I live in Springfield.)	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-3	Roland Cadorette		rbcado2780@comcast.net	I would like to see East-West Rail in Massachusetts become a reality.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-4	Athena O'Keeffe	Town of Amherst, Clerk of the Council	rbcado2780@comcast.net	<p>The Amherst Town Council voted to adopt the following resolution on October 19, 2020: RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE EAST-WEST PASSENGER RAIL</p> <p>Whereas, residents of Amherst are underserved by public transit connecting them to Worcester and Boston; and</p> <p>Whereas, the Flagship Campus of the University of Massachusetts is located in Amherst and many of its students, faculty, and staff would benefit from public transit connecting them to eastern Massachusetts, including other UMass campuses and work and internship opportunities in Worcester and Boston; and</p> <p>Whereas, train service would provide an alternative to travel on the heavily-congested Massachusetts Turnpike; and</p> <p>Whereas, travel by rail reduces carbon emissions and air pollutants; and</p> <p>Whereas, inequity in public transportation creates an environmental justice issue for low-income and minority populations living in Amherst; and</p> <p>Whereas, Amherst is a potential passenger rail stop on the Central Corridor rail line, running between New London, CT and Brattleboro, VT; and</p> <p>Whereas, a passenger rail stop in Palmer could serve as a transfer point to train service north on the Central Corridor rail line to Amherst; and</p> <p>Whereas, PVRTA bus service connecting Amherst to Belchertown Center could be extended to Palmer as an interim step, pending restoration of train service to Amherst station.</p> <p>NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Town of Amherst supports East-West passenger rail connecting Springfield and Boston with a station stop in Palmer.</p> <p>BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the Amherst Town Council shall cause a copy of this Resolution to be sent to Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker; members of the MassDOT East-West Study Advisory Committee; Massachusetts President of the Senate Karen E. Spilka; Massachusetts Speaker of the House of Representatives Robert A. DeLeo; Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation of the General Court; State Senator Joanne N. Comerford; and State Representative Mindy Domb.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-5	Gail Farnsworth French	Quaboag Region Coordinating Council, Chair	gfarnsworthfrench@yahoo.Com	<p>Dear Ms. Niles,</p> <p>The Quaboag Region Coordinating Council (QRCC) encourages MassDOT to implement east-west passenger rail service across Massachusetts with a stop in Palmer.</p> <p>The QRCC, a state-recognized transportation planning and advocacy group, meets monthly in Ware. Chaired by Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation, its participants include representatives of local town governments, senior centers and COAs, social service agencies, regional hospitals, regional transit authorities (RTAs), a veterans advocacy group, regional planning commissions, the superintendent of public schools, community representatives and MassDOT. After years of helping to develop and promote the Quaboag Connector van service, the QRCC understands the transportation needs of residents throughout the Quaboag Region as it provides essential travel to daily destinations including employment, medical appointments, job training, educational institutions, and vital grocery and supply venues. The Quaboag Connector is a lifeline service for many, and we are currently in the process of re-designing it to be a model for expanded rural transportation.</p> <p>A video infomercial was created to locally and generate support for the Quaboag Connector service. We have included it here to provide you with a sense of its purpose and success: https://youtu.be/iKV-MHeW7ql</p> <p>Currently serving residents of 9 towns, the Quaboag Connector continues to expand to meet the transportation needs of rural residents in a region which has few other public transit options. Future planning for the van service includes pilots of fixed route service along major state highways connecting even more towns between Worcester and Springfield.</p> <p>Our current work and efforts would be greatly enhanced by the addition of train service at Palmer. Through coordination with the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) and Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), the Quaboag Connector already connects to their routes, thus providing a baseline for regional connectivity. A rail stop in Palmer would be augmented by the current Connector service providing a more seamless connection to the state at large. We envision the Connector as a providing a vital service to residents by acting as a feeder for the train stop.</p> <p>A rail stop in Palmer will boost the local economy by creating new business and employment opportunities, but more importantly it will result in numerous economic benefits to the Commonwealth. Our Region's beautiful and land-spacious communities have the potential to mitigate the unsustainable housing crisis now afflicting the eastern part of the state. Access to rail transportation in Palmer will relieve the current congested and unpredictable travel route of the Mass Pike and create an opportunity for productive worktime travel while lessening dependence on fossil fuels. True economic benefit for the whole state hinges on statewide equitable and accessible transportation options for all residents. We are diligently doing our part to assist residents of the Quaboag Region with transportation and are encouraged by this effort by MassDOT to equitably serve the Commonwealth.</p> <p>We have closely followed the East-West Passenger Rail Study, and look forward to future development, as soon as possible, of a much-needed train service connecting the four major cities of Massachusetts and including a Palmer stop in our Quaboag region.</p> <p>Sincerely yours,</p> <p>Gail Farnsworth French, QVCCDC Chair, Quaboag Region Coordinating Council</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-6	Sarah Kleinschmidt		sarah.kleinschmidt@gmail.com	<p>Thank you for undertaking this study and considering some alternatives to our current transportation mess.</p> <p>I would like you to strongly consider the plan 4/5 or other higher cost options for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - costs of climate change will be catastrophic to the region, for instance as Seaport and other coastal areas are underwater - climate change related flooding will likely shift more population West in state - expected ridership is difficult to estimate and likely below future actuals. For instance, I currently live in Cambridge but am interviewing for a job in Springfield. Transportation time and mode is a key factor as I decide where to live and work. Once these alternatives exist I would be very likely to take advantage of them even though I currently am not located in these areas. <p>In short, I want to encourage you to think and act both broadly and boldly. Our current model is broken, leading to traffic, injuries and already downtown flooding. Leadership means being able to see big threats and make big moves to manage them.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-7	Arnold Mark Zinan		benkarkis@comcast.net	<p>There is no way, the cost of a rail system is justified by the need. People from Boston and the suburbs are not coming out to Springfield. They never have and never will.</p> <p>And, how many people, are going to travel to Boston. Especially, living with Covid, means working at home.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-8	Kent Patterson		kenthudson@aol.com	<p>Although a New York State resident, the building of an East/West corridor is logical accross the state.</p> <p>Eastern Mass (BOS-SPR) is corridor decades overdue for building (and some trains may continue to NYC, WAS). Honestly, I'm surprised it took this long.</p> <p>Western Mass has attractive destinations, and could use some improved service to the state capital, Boston. Also, nearby is Albany west connections west.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-9	Amanda Knightly		knightlya@gmail.com	<p>I am a young professional who went to college in Boston, but my family is from South Hadley. The Boston area is far too expensive even for highly educated people like me to afford to live comfortably in. East-West rail along the Pike is practical and makes SO MUCH SENSE! Please take this step so our cities can continue to be home to young professionals post-COVID, and we can have viable housing options further out.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-10	Greg Moore		mooregr@greenms.com	<p>From New York, but if you could coordinate with NY to extend any trains to Albany, I would DEFINITELY ride, as would most of my family!</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-11	Andy Berkvist		berkvist@comcast.net	<p>I am all in favor of adding rail stops along the East-West corridor. Making it possible to get from Pittsfield to Springfield to the Boston area (with stops in-between, or transfers to the local commuter rail) would be a boon to travelers (and reduce pollution). Staying off icy roads in winter would also be a plus.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-12	Nathanael Nerode		ncn_politics10@fastmail.fm	<p>Failure to study service to Albany, NY has crippled the study. The added ridership and revenue from service to Albany -- paid for by upstate New York residents such as myself visiting Massachusetts -- would substantially defray operating expenses of any selected option.</p> <p>The study should be reopened to consider extending all Pittsfield service to Albany-Rensselaer station. Ridership and revenue from New York residents would improve the financial profile of the system while the operating costs would not change much.</p> <p>The availability of Amtrak's facilities at Albany-Rensselaer would provide operating synergies for the layover of trains between runs, and therefore reduce capital costs at Pittsfield -- Pittsfield would only require a station and not a layover facility. Doing the necessary upgrades to track necessary for the less than 40 miles from Pittsfield to Schodack Landing (where Amtrak's Amtrak-owned line from Albany separates from CSX) is likely to be cheaper than adding a layover facility in Pittsfield. The Amtrak-owned line should not need upgrades as it was upgraded quite recently and currently carries only one passenger train each way per day.</p> <p>This would also provide additional service options for Massachusetts residents visiting upstate New York, or points beyond -- or for Pittsfield residents commuting to Albany, which is well within commuter range.</p> <p>I strongly support the recommendation that "MassDOT should work with Amtrak to determine terms for increased right-of-way usage and the feasibility of service to Albany". I would add that the New York State Department of Transportation and New York State government in general, as well as the local governments in the Albany area, should be contacted as well. New York might want to add a station in Chatham.</p> <p>Other than this comment, I support any of the options (3, 4, or 4/5 hybrid).</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-13	Hugh Barrett		hughjbarrett@gmail.com	<p>Thank you to the Mass DOT staff and the Advisory Committee Members for their work to date.</p> <p>The draft study notes in the Section 5.3, Next Steps and Recommendations, that additional area of future study include more detailed analysis of "potential economic and community impacts and benefits of East-West Passenger Rail." (Page 110). The draft study then describes a number of potential area of study including local community engagement, potential economic benefits, and expectations of use by the business community.</p> <p>Notably missing from the area of future study include the potential environmental, community health and equity benefits of replacing automobile emissions with enhanced rail service. I would encourage the inclusion of the study of said benefits in the draft study.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated clearly that air quality and local air particulate emissions have significant public health implications. A study conducted at Harvard indicates higher particulate emission is associated with an 8% higher death rate from COVID-19, which is consistent with other studies that show increased exposure to air pollution results in other significant negative medical outcomes. There is also research that demonstrates the disparate impact of air pollution on communities of color. https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-pollution/</p> <p>I would strongly urge that the recommended areas of future study include the potential public health and economic benefits (reduced mortality, reduced medical and hospitalization costs) from replacing automobile commuting with enhanced rail service. Besides being the right thing to do, it may also indicate significant financial benefits to the Commonwealth beyond the usual business and economic development near the new train service.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-14	Kevin Tierney		kevintierney@rocketmail.com	<p>Would it be possible to get a copy of a ridership forecasting technical memorandum or other similar documentation to review? I tried to get additional technical details on the forecasting method from the previous Northern New England Study that is cited in the East-West report, but I could not find anything with technical detail there either. I have some concerns about the appropriateness of using the incremental direct demand methods that are generally described in the East-West report, but it may be that I simply do not fully understand what was done.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-15	Tom Robitaille		thomas.robitaille2513@gmail.com	I am a Chester resident moved here 4 years ago lived close by my whole life. I purchased my home in Chester to be secluded as most Chester residents have. I believe this would bring more people to Chester which would inevitably bring more crime. Leave Chester the way it is most people in Chester chose to live here to get away from big city's as Pittsfield, Springfield, and Boston, not looking for a direct route to those city's.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-16	Robert Kearns		robsterkmc@gmail.com	<p>I support East West Rail from Pittsfield, Springfield, Palmer to Boston. MassDOT should be planning to have a preferred alternative and have a timeline to do this as an economic development and stimulus project for the pandemic relief.</p> <p>I travel between Western Mass and Eastern Mass to visit my girlfriend and would take the train. I have taken the Lake Shore Limited East-West to experience the ride previously and it is a very scenic route.</p> <p>When I was an undergraduate student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst I also traveled frequently between Eastern and Western Massachusetts. Other students travel this frequently as well to visit family, go to internships or other matters. The Peter Pan bus is not preferable, I would rather take a train, and other students would as well.</p> <p>For the Public Meeting on October 22nd, I wish you allowed more comments and that we were able to see the comments of other participants and vote on them. I have seen this done in other zoom meetings. I had my hand up and was not allowed to speak because I asked a question in the Q&A.</p> <p>Is MassDOT assuming fixed fares or fluctuating fares for ridership?</p> <p>I would urge MassDOT to have fixed fares like the CT Rail, Downeaster and MBTA commuter rail over fluctuating fares of the Vermonter, Valley Flyer and Amtrak Northeast Corridor.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-17	Betsy H. Port		betsyhp27@gmail.com	<p>Dear Ms. Niles-</p> <p>I am unable to participate tonight due to a previous engagement. The significant work you have done is admirable but it was difficult to read all the charts and graphs online. The print was too small.</p> <p>I urge you to get things going ASAP and I hope you are no longer considering using buses in Western Mass to achieve the travel needs of our residents in Western Mass.</p> <p>Please send me the results of the meeting tonight. We sorely feel left out and abandoned in this area. It was easier to travel by rail in the 1800s around here! What a sad state of affairs!!!</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-18	Peggy H. Davis		phd@ganeydn.com	<p>I was glad to hear the comments at the Zoom meeting today. I would like to stress my interest in a train that would connect North Adams-Greenfield-Boston.</p> <p>I had the pleasure of taking the train to Glacier National Park and with the help of the motel operator, we did not need a car for our visit at all. In a similar fashion, I would love to see tourists coming to the many spots along Rt. 2 for vacations without their cars, using a network of buses or vans to get from one place to the other. Greenfield, Charlemont, Shelburne Falls, in my area, have many tourists.</p> <p>Personally, I would be using the train to go to Boston. I've used the Greenfield to NYC train once it started and know that, post-COVID, I would be using a train to Boston much more often than I currently drive to Boston. When I do so, I park at the closest station on the Fitchburg line and get to Boston that way. I hope to see a train I can take from Shelburne Falls, but I'd settle for Greenfield!</p> <p>Peggy 413-624-3204 389 Adamsville Rd Colrain MA 01340</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-19	Lauren Miller		lonewolfette9847@live.com	<p>I am very pleased to see the study is moving forward. I am extremely hopeful to see Pittsfield included with rail access beyond the once daily round-trip of the Lake Shore Limited. Alternative #3 or #4 are my favored options. I believe they balance both sides of keeping costs reasonable, better speed options, and median impact of existing environment. Thank you.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-20	Stephen		ginger4017@gmail.com	<p>Why are people so infatuated with this idea? It will be a giant waste of taxpayer money for years to come. People don't want to ride the train and with situations like covid-19 no-one wants to be crammed together just like the subway.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-21	Michelle O'Brien		mobrien005@nycap.rr.com	<p>I'm curious about the study since I am very interested in having a rail connection from Pittsfield to Boston but have not seen-heard-or been contacted for any kind of poll that would ask area residents if they would use this service. I have only seen articles talking about the service. This is a service we desperately need.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-22	Kate Fletcher	Town of Stockbridge, Planning Board	pbs.kate@gmail.com	<p>Good morning, I was not able to attend the presentation and public comment session on the rail study nor have I followed the issue. I do not have a transportation background but it seems that train lines depend on density which could be problematic in this case if the investment in infrastructure involved is costly. That said, has improved bus service been considered as an alternative? I understand that there are buses with wifi and comfortable seating that are a far cry from the buses of the past (and probably present) with their dirty windows, odors of chemical cleaning supplies, inconvenient schedules and less than inviting stations like the one in Springfield. It would seem that an improved bus service could offer the flexibility and advantage of being scalable depending on demand.</p> <p>Thank you, Kate Fletcher Planning Board Member Stockbridge, MA</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-23	David Golden		outlook_391a54d24b9fc730@outlook.com	<p>Hi Makaela. I am a resident of Palmer and had been involved in the early stages here of trying to bring back east/west rail service. I am so happy with how far this has come and do know it's far from a done deal but can't help but feel the excitement here in Palmer about the possibility. Palmer needs this shot in the arm as the last MA Pike exit with almost no commercial growth. This exit serves as the Gateway to Western MA and we should be thriving but we are not. As the Chairperson of the Palmer Master Plan Steering Committee, this is a major concern that has consistently been brought up and possibilities for that growth just continue to elude Palmer except for this East/West Rail stop! As I looked through the draft report and watched last evenings forum, which I applaud the folks who made this happen, I have to say that as a layperson with no real rail knowledge, Option 3 jumps off the pages to me as the smart choice to get this project moving. Funding is no doubt an issue so why wouldn't we save the billions for the sake of maybe 20 minutes saved travel time? I am confident that the price tag will play a huge part in the decision making and will push the decision back by probably years so let's present a viable option, #3, and get Western MA opened to the rest of the Commonwealth! We are ready, willing and able to make this happen for Palmer and all of Western MA!</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>David Golden</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-24	Sasha Gainen-Truslow		sgainentruslow@gmail.com	<p>I'm baffled why Chester would be a stop on the proposed line. There's absolutely nothing there. Obviously the creators of this study have never been to Western Mass. Another issue is that an Amherst/Northampton stop makes much more sense than Springfield. The people who live in Springfield and its suburbs don't travel to Boston. They have no need for this train. Northampton/Amherst has seven colleges in the area which have a large population from Eastern Mass. There's currently not even bus service from these schools to Boston. The Pioneer Valley is majority middle/upper class who travel often. I'm sure they would love an easier way to get to Logan Airport. Northampton already has a new train station, and Amherst has an old one. Either could be used for this new project. Thank you.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-25	jeffrey scott penn		jspsed@verizon.net	<p>hi guys - regarding the East West Rail link i have a few thoughts. thru Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway and the National Wild and Scenic Westfield River, i have helped lobby for protection of the extraordinarily rare Rural lands of Western 413. such onslaughts as the Gas Pipeline, Acres of misplaced Solar Fields and Inappropriately sited Wind Turbines are harming this rare and delightful treasure of nature; this irreplaceable landscape. such unsympathetic projects are usually promoted for Economic Development. we must remember, this area's less expensive living is partly due to our relative isolation from urban centers. we live out here knowing we need to travel for services; it is not right to demand the services follow us - instead, we are stewards of this historic and beautiful Rural Landscape.</p> <p>that said, vast historical change occurred in three sweeps - late 18th century theft of all the lands from the native americans who, unfortunately, sided with the French in the French and Indian War. the second wave was the coming of the Railroad which led to intensive settlement around industrial establishments. the last wave was two-fold; the coming of the Automobile and the great depression which resulted in redirection of commercial travel and jobs away from the rural region to the urban centers and the slow eventual closure of local industry.</p> <p>in order to reinvigorate local economy, we need to recognize local character and qualities and augment them - Arts, Recreation, Home industries and rural-scaled local services. to this end, the best infrastructure to add would be Internet Access and Public Transportation.</p> <p>while it is compelling to add East-West Rail transportation, centering one new rural stop would not solve this. it would recreate the same type of overdeveloped node which we successfully argued to end the potentially devastating Turnpike Exit proposal. instead, the former Train Depot villages (Hinsdale, Washington, Bancroft, Chester, Huntington and Russel in our region) should be considered for a local service like the historical Rabbit Run of the Rural Quabbin area. this could be subcontracted to Historic Trains or part of the greater DOT and bring local people to Pittsfield, Westfield or Springfield opening the world to the Rural region without associated overdevelopment pressure.</p> <p>please consider thank you cheers jeff</p> <p>jeffrey scott penn, architect 77 worthington road huntington ma 01050 413-531-1868</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-26	Pieter W. Lips		wordworks@fairpoint.net	<p>Mr. Britland,</p> <p>I have been casually following the progress of this study, even attended one of the regional meeting in Springfield, Mass. I had my advertising and marketing business in Pittsfield for many years and live just over the state line in New York.</p> <p>I'd be curious to know what discussions you have had with CSX headquarters in Jacksonville in regard to allowing 'slots' for additional passenger service over any shared track segments. Amtrak's train #448, the Lake Shore Limited was delayed an hour recently due to downed trees along the right-of-way east of Pittsfield. Also, where will locomotives and coaches come from? The German firm Siemens is building locomotives in the US now, State supported passenger services have been buying these locomotives. You are likely (certainly should be) of issues when acquiring passenger coaches from the giant Chinese coach builder China Railway Rolling Stock Corp. (CCRC).</p> <p>Thanks, Pieter W. Lips East Chatham, NY</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-27	Jonathan Adams		jonathan.r.adams@gmail.com	I would like to advocate strongly for the adoption of the Alt 4/5 hybrid option. Increasing maximum speed and reducing travel time by 10 minutes between Worcester and Springfield is critical to making rail travel competitive in central and western Massachusetts. As more connection options open up, particularly as an NEC alternative, this time savings will accrue even more for all future riders in this corridor.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-28	Brad Blauhut		bradblauhut@gmail.com	<p>To Whom it may concern:</p> <p>As a traveler between Albany, NY and points in Massachusetts, I am excited about the prospect of increased rail frequency. Currently, there is one option - the Amtrak Lake Shore Limited. Even at it's best performance, it is not even an option I would consider. The trains are chronically late and Amtrak employees are rude. And even when it's on schedule, the trip from Albany to Springfield takes well over two hours.</p> <p>However, since Pittsfield is just 30 miles from Albany, and the ninth busiest station in Amtrak's system, I feel that extending your planned rail enhancement to the Albany/Rensselaer station would make your system MUCH more accessible.</p> <p>Thank You, Brad Blauhut bradblauhut@gmail.com</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-29	Tamsin		mcflusenpants4@gmail.com	I think an East-West rail line would be quite beneficial. It would allow for easier commuting between Boston and other more westerly cities in Massachusetts, and would also encourage in-state tourism.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-30	Barbara Alexander		bjalexander@earthlink.net	I attended the Zoom on October 22, 2020. The study appeared to be engineered to produce a pre-ordained result. I speak as a Harvard PhD in economics, and a former Chief of Research at the Texas Public Utility Commission. If what seems obvious is, in fact, the case, I strongly advise the staff involved, especially the younger ones, to resign and go public with their knowledge about this process. One of the first studies I led at the Texas PUC was a cost-benefit analysis of a large power plant in the early 1980s, in which a more traditional staff group had rubber-stamped an industry request. Even the rather conservative PUC was determined to do better for the public interest and produce a genuine analysis. The Commission directed my group to re-do that analysis and to review all such applications in the future, being aware that more and more economic growth was being produced with fewer and fewer energy inputs. The Massachusetts DOT, by contrast, seems to be on track to cut off even the prospect of a re-established lifeline to the entire Western part of the state, in the teeth of a climate emergency. It is a travesty, and having taken part in it may haunt those complicit in it for the rest of their careers.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-31	Matt Sokop		msokop@hotmail.com	A much simpler first step would be the construction on an exit from the mass pike directly to the Southborough metro rail stop along with a sufficiently size parking garage to accommodate the cars that currently park there with the additional cars that would come from western mass. Additionally, TOD could be included to make the location more of a hub of commercial opportunity with retail, residential and commercial space fully explored as options. Traffic from western mass to this new exit would be minimal and being able to take rail to Boston from this point would greatly reduce travel time to Boston as well as preclude the need to pay for expensive city parking.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

<p>DraftReport-32</p>	<p>Joseph Zagrobelny</p>		<p>joseph@nine-ai.com</p>	<p>We have a key follow up meeting with Massport this week to discuss iSAIL Transit from Logan Airport west you can help make it happen, and make it all the way to Pittsfield just imagine Boston to Pittsfield in 33 minutes versus over 3 hours Now imaging that for \$300M versus \$2.4 to \$6.6 billion!!</p> <p>Now imagine that we integrate iSAIL Transit with the future of education for ALL, based on the proven Tiger Ventures Alternative High School that prepares even the most challenged for graduation with the necessary skills to be successful in life – career, college, and many even start thriving companies right out of high school.</p> <p>As we work to decarbonize and embed equity and racial justice into all Urban-Rural planning, there's no better way than to get everyone engaged with iSAIL Mass – The Future of Community, Education and Transportation with Pods that Fly How exciting would it be to see ALL the Mass Communities be world leaders with Opportunity for ALL in a \$4 trillion ecosystem?</p> <p>Nine-AI is a team of very unique scientists (MIT PhDs), educators and seasoned entrepreneurs that rapidly get innovation into practice. We would love to see if we could work together as we revolutionize education, transportation and communities – to build the Mass-Global Regions we need, and reduce housing costs by 75% for underserved in East Boston with an education and transportation revolution.</p> <p>During the current pandemic, communities of color are bearing a disproportionate burden, and the large racial divide in America is widening. The Business Roundtable with 208 CEOs has a mission to change the game for Family Wealth for African American, Latinx and indigenous and “ensure every person can fully realize Opportunity and Justice in America.” https://www.businessroundtable.org/equity Several companies are Nine-AI partners.</p> <p>iSAIL is Integrated StreetSmart AI (SAI) and Lifestyle – AI based on functional theory proven to work where other methods fail. iSAIL is Super-disciplinary, multi-dimensional People-SAI Partnering to iSAIL Optimize Quality of Life – for ALL People and the Planet. iSAIL Learning & Transit will radically reduce the impact of racism and poverty on society and create great opportunities for everyone. It will reduce rents for the underserved by 75% in all major metropolitan areas and transform education with iSAIL HILL – Holistic Integrated Learning for Life. iSAIL HILL is based on the proven Tiger Ventures Alternative High School that prepares students for life by combining entrepreneurship and business with education. Many underserved students build thriving companies after graduation in communities with few resources – everyone is well prepared for what’s next in life. iSAIL HILL, Tiger Ventures on Steroids, integrates the Next Generation Transportation and StreetSmart AI (SAI) to make learning Amazing, Engaging, Exciting and Rewarding – learn on a screen, apply in work and play – and get paid in the transformational Value Chain Optimization – driven by SAI-based Radical Finance Innovation for Schools, Teachers, Students and businesses of the future – today – guided with a fresh team spirit – and if necessary, trained Leaders for Tiger Ventures by our Dr. Suzanne McLeod – one of the great forward-thinkers in education.</p> <p>iSAIL Transit is Towers, Guides and Pods that Fly for 80-100 mph intracity/250 mph intercity at the cost of asphalt, \$2M-3M/mile and 1/100th the cost of even light rail at \$250M/mile, \$1B/mile for hyperloop (IF it works) and up to \$5B/mile for heavy rail. iSAIL is based on decades of R&D at DARPA, NASA and MIT with AI proven to work where other methods failed. iSAIL Transit will open up a whole new world of urban-rural affordable housing and land use optimization, turn commutes and freight delivery from hours to minutes, and Radically Reduce GHG emissions. SAI will ensure we don't have 737 max-type issues.</p> <p>Our iSAIL Tower architecture can include revenue from Transit, a breakthrough Renewable Energy T&D Backbone, EV Charging and 5G, and integrated into the education system for a transformation in learning and education from birth to end-of-life and funding from many sources – including the 208+ companies on the Business Council to end racism – I'll send you more details if you'd like.</p> <p>5G is VERY critical to solving the Racism Public Health Crisis along with iSAIL HILL and Transit – to transform education and reduce rent for the underserved by 75%! Together, we can lead the Nation for meeting the our North America-Global (mobility) objectives, and start with near-term objectives that could include: 1. Freight demand modeling and analysis as we're engaged with the U.S. DOT – to build the Transportation Network we need – local, national and international</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
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				<p>2. Safety-Security – iSAIL Next Gen Communications and integration with the Air Force Team Awareness Kit (TAK) used by all DHS agencies – will help address is the 1,000% increase in border drug traffic</p> <p>3. Workforce</p> <p>4. iSAIL Energy-Fin-Transit – Massachusetts East-West-Regional-International - including connection to Montreal and Quebec Hydro for energy decarbonization.</p> <p>Please contact me to discuss how we can meet the urgent demands for East-West Mass transit innovation, decarbonization and education AND create Great Opportunities for ALL, especially those that have lost hope Thank you very much!</p> <p>Joe</p> <p>Joseph Zagrobelny Founder & CEO, Nine-AI www.nine-ai.com M: 781.825.3267 joseph@nine-ai.com</p>	
DraftReport-33	David W.		dlw_public@mac.com	<p>Dear Ms. Niles,</p> <p>I understand you are accepting comments about the prospect of expanded passenger rail service to and from the Berkshires.</p> <p>As a citizen of the Commonwealth, I would like to weigh in heavily in favor of renewed east/west rail connections between Boston and the Berkshires (Pittsfield and/or North Adams).</p> <p>It's not just a question of commercial costs, benefits, ROI (and ratios): it's a question of knitting together the state and its people, its culture, its ability to connect citizens with each other and to anticipate and support the future of telework in Massachusetts, to mitigate global warming by reducing auto traffic on our highways, and to help transform the economies of towns and cities from the Berkshires to Boston. It's "Field of Dreams": "if you build it, they will come."</p> <p>The 21st century demands and will reward clean, efficient, relaxing passenger rail to and from the Berkshires — to promote and invest in Western Massachusetts's economy and to better unify the state from east to west & west to east.</p> <p>Thanks to the Department of Transportation for its serious consideration and support for East-West Passenger rail in Massachusetts.</p> <p>Very kind regards,</p> <p>David W. Williamstown, MA</p> <p>p.s.: Thank you for please not adding me to any mailing lists.</p> <p>CC: Rep. Smitty Pignatelli</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-34	Anonymous		lekobe11@gmail.com	Consider a stop in Westfield, MA. Large college population would utilize this service frequently.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

<p>DraftReport-35</p>	<p>William B. Freedberg</p>		<p>willfreedberg@gmail.com</p>	<p>Dear Makeala Niles and Rail Study staff,</p> <p>I would like to add my comments about east west passenger rail..</p> <p>I appreciate the vast amount of effort and funds that have been put into the state's studies of the rail system.</p> <p>I am very concerned that such very forward looking and ambitious proposals that are being put forth are so expensive that it will be essentially impossible to initiate any east west rail service at all during our current pandemic period of great financial stress.</p> <p>We are sure to be facing very strained finances for state and local governments, and certainly at the Federal level for some time.</p> <p>I believe it is essential to think in terms of small "PILOT" plans to initiate some small but meaningful service to see if that can attract ridership and test what the potential for more advanced levels of service can be. Under the present financial constraints there is no way that a large program, however attractive on paper, can be funded.</p> <p>We should advocate for starting simple and small. That seems to me to make more sense at this time than planning big and being unable to start at all.</p> <p>Why not start small? Our grandchildren who love Thomas the Tank engine stories learn about friendly good service provided by just Thomas and his two coaches Annie and Clarabel.</p> <p>Why not begin very simply with one engine and two coaches a day from where the MBTA ends at Worcester Union Station to Palmer and Springfield and over the hills to Chester and Pittsfield.</p> <p>Consider providing refreshments for travellers as they watch our beautiful scenery go by.</p> <p>Work with CSX who owns the tracks to create schedule times that work around freight schedules, and are good for East-West passenger needs without duplicating AMTRAK's Lake Shore Limited.</p> <p>That could create some good "P.R." for Amtrak and CSX.</p> <p>We hear hopeful talk about East West rail, but too much focus on big size and enormous costs.</p> <p>Can't we begin "starting small" with something less complicated and costly. Why not begin to serve the public and learn what the ridership will be.</p> <p>If starting this way proves successful with people riding and desiring more service that will be a clear green signal to move down the line towards bigger plans. This could begin in months, not years.</p> <p>Starting sooner and smaller makes more sense in our present difficult times than studying and restudying bigger plans for an ideal system that would not be funded in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>We could and should work on this NOW.</p> <p>Why wait for years of more studies and higher start up costs?</p> <p>This letter includes portions of a letter I sent to the Springfield Republican, the Berkshire Eagle, and the Country Journal a few weeks ago.</p> <p>Thank you for letting me comment with my THINK SMALL thoughts.</p> <p>Respectfully, William B. Freedberg</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
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ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
				18 Winter Street Northampton, MA 01060	
DraftReport-36	Martin Wasiak		martin.wasiak@gmail.com	This might be answered elsewhere, but why wouldn't the line be extended a mere 27 miles further to Albany? Isn't Albany a major rail stop which would bring in more passengers and thus reduce costs? Not to mention make the line significantly more useful to everyone?	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-37	Nicholas Schumacher		ncschu@gmail.com	My criticism with the results of this study and the results of many American rail studies are that people are only going to use a rail service in mass quantities when the rail service provides better and faster service than driving/bus. Based on the speeds I observed in the documents, I find it hard to believe that these benefits will be achieved from any option. Without traffic it's about 2 1/2 hours from Boston to Pittsfield. Taking a train that takes an extra hour or more is not going to be attractive to many people and is the reason why many long distance trains are not doing well in the United States. If the state wants to invest in rail, then it needs to invest with intellect, by investing in true high speed rail that can reach speeds of 150-200 mph and provide a real beneficial change to society. Accompanied by local transport options (busses) from train stations, high speed rail would get cars off the road and encourage people to take public transport over longer distances.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-38	Clay Oshiro-Leavitt		clay.oshiroleavitt@gmail.com	E-W Rail is also shooting itself in the foot by stopping at Pittsfield - it should continue across the NY border and on to Albany (a metro area with a population of over 1m). By only providing service east of Pittsfield (rather than west as well), this limits the job and economic opportunities afforded to those living in Central and Western Massachusetts. By running through to Albany, this would provide travelers from Massachusetts with valuable connections to Vermont, NYC, upstate NY, Toronto, and Montreal. Furthermore, this leverages existing passenger rail infrastructure - the Albany-Rensselaer Amtrak station is a multi track, multi platform high capacity station with numerous amenities. Amtrak also has facilities for maintaining and servicing equipment in the Albany area. Both of these could be utilized, rather than requiring costly construction of lay-over tracks and facilities in the Pittsfield area. Continuing on to Albany would be a boon both for Massachusetts as well as New York, and provide the region with an integrated, connected network to numerous destinations.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-39	Anthony Daly		anthonydaly@hotmail.com	Dear Makaela Niles, I am writing in support of expanding East-West rail to Pittsfield. This project would of course require smart planning and massive investment, but its potential to improve congestion inside 128 and share some of the economic dynamism of eastern Massachusetts with the western side is enormous. Please give full consideration to how this project can be successfully implemented. Many thanks for your time and consideration. Best, Anthony Daly North Adams	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-40	Frederick Smith		rs.js.ss@verizon.net	How can the Town of 7 Railroads be dismissed from being a stop for the railroad? With the MGM Casino now in Springfield, it will help everyone involved from people who want to go there, for people who works jobs that will be needed like the taxis and shuttles, etc. With the riots that have happened and still are in the large cities, don't you think that people will want to move to smaller, quiet peaceful towns pike Palmer? It's a win-win for many people and businesses. Fewer cars on the road definitely helps too. Plus people get jobs in other areas because these small towns don't have much of a manufacturing base.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-41	Bonnie Kimberly Shackelford		bkshackelford@gmail.com	Yes, please include Palmer. This will help people in the Palmer area go to Springfield and Boston. It will save on gas and emissions. If the timing was right, I can also utilize the train to commute to Springfield for my job at Baystate Medical Center. Please help the community by including Palmer as a stop. Thank you and have a wonderful weekend.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-42	Paul David DeVries		pauldaviddevries@gmail.com	I am still digesting the alternatives. Right now, I am leaning toward Alternative 4 or Alternative 4/5 Hybrid. I think making travel by rail more accessible will be a good thing for the state, speaking as someone for whom mobility used to be an issue.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

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DraftReport-43	Sheryl Chase		sherylannchase@gmail.com	I would benefit from and east - west rail system. I live in Palmer and often must commute to the Boston area. Currently the drive time during peak hours can be more than 2.5 hours each way. Even if the rail system is not faster, I would gain the ability to work as I travel, making the commute time more efficient for me. I also feel this would reduce the effects of many cars exhaust, making a healthier environment	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-44	David Maloof		dfmalooof@gmail.com	Hello . . . I'm writing in support of East-West Passenger Rail service. I know that I (and my family) would visit Boston much more often if we had this transportation option. We have lived and worked in Boston, and miss it; but driving there is reliably stressful and relatively expensive. And people from Eastern Mass. surely could use a break, and could take the train out to Western Mass. It could be an educational experience: some of them might realize that there is life and culture throughout Massachusetts. Thank you, David Maloof	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-45	Michael Follo		braves9@gmail.com	To Mr. Ethan Birtland: I'm interested into transportation & the proposed Pittsfield to Boston rail service & I would like to know on when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement document will be completed as well as to when virtual public meetings will be held to get feedback on the DEIS. In addition, when will construction begin on the project & since South Station is overcrowded, is the proposed service going to operate only between Worcester & Pittsfield temporary or will it still go into South Station as planned, who will operate this service & what year do you expect that passenger service will begin. I would greatly appreciate to hear back from you in regards to this project, my e-mail address is braves9@gmail.com Sincerely, Michael Follo	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-46	Eileen Bauer		bauereileen01@yahoo.com	Phone: (617) 216-0978 regarding the East-West passenger alignment, why don't you straighten the line around Spenser, MA. Currently, it makes a big loop to the south. I realize it would require some leveling of the terrain and the taking of land but you'd eliminate the loop.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-47	Cynthia Kowalczyk		cjkowal@charter.net	As a retired senior citizen I would love to be able to go to Boston for the day and take advantage of all that the city offers. I, along with many of my friends and relatives dislike driving the highways and crowded cities, especially I 90 especially where it intercepts with 84 and 290. As a college student I used the trains often from Springfield to New Haven and found it relaxing and where I could study or read along the way. I can see it would be very helpful for those working in the Boston area and living in Western Mass. Besides the fact that it would cut down on pollution and save wear and tear on your vehicle, especially in inclement weather. Surely would cut down on accidents caused by distracted drivers. I understand there are costs involved, but I'm sure the two parties can meet halfway and come up with a useful plan that would benefit all.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-48	David Phillips		dphillips8_99@yahoo.com	<p>Mr Britland -</p> <p>I am satisfied with the Mass DOTs recommendation for Preferred Alternative for two of the three segments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of the MBTA-owned line between Boston and Worcester - With the upgrades already planned by MassDOT to improve the existing commuter service in this segment (including eventual electrification) it will support good quality express service for trains to/from Western Mass. With electrification it will be possible to reduce the projected 53 minute travel time shown in this report for the 44 miles. 2. Use of track shared with CSX freight between Springfield and Pittsfield - Given the relatively low ridership anticipated in all alternatives in this section this solution is not inappropriate. The use of trains with dual-mode propulsion capability would allow them to operate through to Boston with electric power. The increase in ridership that would result from the network effect by connecting with Empire Service trains at Albany-Rensselaer needs to analyzed. <p>My primary concern with this report is with its recommendation of Alt. 3 for the mid-section, specifically the portion between Auburn and Palmer. This segment is several miles longer and has much more curvature than the the direct routing via a Mass Pike alignment considered in Alt. 6, resulting in travel time for this segment of 1:04 for Alt. 3 vs. 35 minutes shown in February for Alt. 6. The route is shown as being built with a single track in this segment making it problematic whether the proposed 9 daily trips would be achievable; clearly, there would be no ability to grow the service by operating more trains. This would make rail service totally uncompetitive with driving or, even, bus service. The likelihood that CSX would permit a significant amount of construction in this constrained segment is also questionable. Alt. 6 had by far the highest ridership. The bottom line is that while Alt. 3 has the lowest capital cost, it would attract very few riders and, thus would require the highest operating subsidy.</p> <p>The biggest advantage of the Mass Pike routing is that it would go through Sturbridge, the logical jumping off point for a new route parallel to I-84, direct to Hartford, where it would connect to the existing Springfield-New Haven route. This would create a new inland Boston-New York City route via Framingham, Worcester, and Hartford, about 18 miles shorter than the Shoreline route via Providence.</p> <p>MassDOT has said that hybrid alternatives (combining pieces different alternatives for the three basic segments: Boston-Worcester, Worcester-Springfield, and Springfield-Pittsfield) would be considered in this Study. However, the report contains no analysis of this hybrid, although I strongly recommended it in my comments on each previous presentation of interim products of the Study. It appears that the project is being set up to fail.</p> <p>I propose that Massachusetts and Connecticut jointly study the concept of a new railroad between Sturbridge and East Hartford, about 29 miles. Some preliminary analysis of this was performed as part of the NEC Future Study.</p> <p>D. Phillips</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-49	Amber Smith		amberskys81@gmail.com	<p>I live in Palmer Massachusetts it says the study has been going on for two years I've lived here for five in this is the first time I have heard of it it's now Nov. 13 2020!! My husband myself my parents and brother and sister all have season tickets to Fenway and we would absolutely love a rail stop In Palmer Massachusetts to go to these games!! Also I bet not unlike myself half of the Palmer residents don't even know about this! I'm going to ask every person that I know that lives in Palmer to see if they heard of this and I'll get back to you and let you know. The only reason I know about it is because the Palmer Journal Register gave out free papers to every resident on October 22nd 2020</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-50	Nathanael Nerode		ncn_politics10@fastmail.fm	<p>Supplementary comment: This editorial from the Albany (NY) Times-Union newspaper editorial board tells you what you need to be studying!</p> <p>https://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Editorial-Hey-what-about-Albany-15723667.php</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-51	Benjamin Turon		bjturon@gmail.com	<p>Dear Sir/Madame,</p> <p>Overall, I'm pleased with the alternatives presented by the East-West Rail Study – I think double-tracking the entirety of the existing formerly double-tracked Boston & Albany railroad now owned by CSX as laid out in Alternative 3 is the most expedient route going forward, providing the biggest bang for the buck.</p> <p>I'm not in favor of dedicated passenger tracks when clearly "higher speed" passenger trains and freight can share a upgraded double-track line, as seen across the world from the NYC-Albany Hudson Line to the West Coast Main Line in the UK. Major track realignments as put forward in Alternatives 4 and 4/5 should only occur if MassDOT or Amtrak purchases the CSX mainline Worcester-Springfield and ties in a curve realignment and grade separation rebuild program with electrification to enable through "Inland Route" service with the current New Haven-Springfield CT rail service extended to Boston and a number of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor 'Regional' services traveling Virginia-Boston via the new Inland Route.</p> <p>As opposed to building and enacting a high-frequency corridor service from outset, MassDOT may also instead want to consider the approach adopted by Virginia, which has over the past decade had a program of adding one-at-a-time passenger train frequencies to routes already served by an existing Amtrak long-distance trains, a strategy requiring a smaller initial upfront capital investment compared to building an entire new high-frequency corridor at once. For example, Virginia in 2012 leveraged the existing Amtrak Washington-New Orleans 'Crescent' service over the freight tracks of the Norfolk Southern to extend an existing Boston-DC 'Northeast Regional' train to Lynchburg VA. With ridership and revenue above expectations and covering operating costs, Virginia is now working on extending a second Northeast Regional frequency to Lynchburg.</p> <p>Finally, any future follow-up study needs to examine Albany, NY as the logical terminal for a future East-West rail service through the Berkshires. At Rensselaer there is also an existing Amtrak crew base, maintenance facility, and currently an operating food service commissary – eliminating the need to build any of these facilities in Pittsfield. Albany-Rensselaer is also Amtrak's ninth-busiest station, serving a metro region of over a million people, and providing connections to cities across New York City, Upstate NY, Vermont, Montreal, and Toronto. Including it would considerably boost ridership and revenue compared to a train terminating at Pittsfield – greatly improving the cost-benefit ratio at little additional cost in additional infrastructure.</p> <p>With all the questions, criticisms, and counterproposals that the East-West Rail study has generated, furthermore in-depth research and planning is warranted. I support white paper" on the governance, organization, and management of passenger rail within the Commonwealth, also a reexamination of ridership and cost/benefit estimates, and more detailed engagement with local businesses, Amtrak, CSX, and New York State. I hope that this study is not a dead end, another pile of paper to gather dust, but the end of the beginning in the process of bring high quality passenger rail service to the Boston-Springfield-Albany corridor.</p> <p>Benjamin Turon Ballston Spa, NY</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-52	William N Traylor		wtraylor26@aol.com	<p>Train service between Pittsfield and Boston should be increased immediately. Such a step would give a real world test of the desire for this service. The steps necessary for this step to be taken do not seem to be insurmountable. Let's at least have something tangible come out of all of this discussion.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-53	Dalton G Dwyer		dalton@industry.com	<p>Would it be possible to discuss some of the economic and quantitative assumptions used in the study? There are a number of assumptions that, as an investment banker used to working with DCF, could be challenged, or at least a discussion of sensitivities on these assumptions might be included. I would be pleased to have a conference call of circa one-hour to review the issues in mind. Thank you, Dalton Dwyer</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

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DraftReport-54	Steven E. Miller		semiller48@gmail.com	<p>We really need systems thinking when it comes to the benefits of passenger rail. The current proposals don't look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Connections to Albany, New Haven, and Montreal will amplify benefits even more. These expanded economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail.</p> <p>In addition, MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal. Given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-55	Peter Traub		phtraub@nycap.rr.com	<p>MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-56	Kyle pobieglo		kylepobieglo24@yahoo.com	<p>I travel to Worcester an Boston daily an a train from Palmer would be amazing</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-57	Philip Orenstein		philip.orenstein@yahoo.com	<p>Its a very impressive, well intentioned study. The final recommendation is based on a cost benefit analysis, while appropriate for this study, is driven by several highly subjective assessments and quantifications. However, certain facts are quickly evident, such as the high cost (\$2.5 - \$4.5 bln), ~65% of ridership is Springfield to Boston and the modest projected ridership. The harsh reality is that the tracks in this relatively low ridership area will cost the same (looking at the big picture) than those with much higher ridership between larger cities. While I would be delighted to use this service, at this point in time I would conclude that such a significant infrastructure investment is better directed towards newer, less expensive and more flexible technologies. This would include hybrid and ultimately electric bus service and the required charging capacity. This could be implemented faster and continuously modified to adapt to shifting populations and traffic patterns. This approach is less appealing in terms of highway traffic congestion, but the impact of COVID on commuting patterns requires a broader reassessment of these considerations.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-58	Christopher Franks		ducknshover@gmail.com	<p>I believe MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. For instance, an additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening - to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited - would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are already being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I would like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-59	M Linehan		mlenny123@msn.com	<p>This West to East train travel is vital. Pittsfield was foolishly left out of connection to 90 a: when it was built b: when the state gave up on a bypass route(hurting North Adams as well). Isolation has kept this city struggling. Looking west see how well Albany is connected to everywhere...looking east Springfield has some connections while Worcester enjoys more. Western MA is only 100 miles from the Boston Harbor...why is it treated so poorly?</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-60	Tyler E Swanson		tswans1234@gmail.com	<p>I believe that we should be acting now to reform and revitalize our transportation sector with both climate mitigation (reducing pollution from transportation) and climate adaptation (making our transportation system more resilient to a changing climate).</p> <p>Given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.</p> <p>Furthermore, MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible.</p> <p>Additionally, I feel strongly that MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.</p> <p>I also want to highlight the MassDOT's linear approach when we really need systems thinking when it comes to the benefits of passenger rail. The current proposals don't look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Connections to Albany, New Haven, and Montreal will amplify benefits even more. These expanded economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail.</p> <p>Finally, I am concerned about two aspects of the financial analysis. First, the study discounts future costs and benefits at 7%, which is very high in terms of today's economic environment and market observable rates. In theory, the discount rate should have its basis significantly weighted in terms of costs of capital, which are at historic lows across nearly all investment activities. The discount rate used in the UK government's economic analysis for the HS2 line, for example, is 3.5%. I would like to see MassDOT provide a cost/benefit analysis using a range of discount rates, as a different and in fact more realistic rate could significantly enhance the viability of the project.</p> <p>In addition, in the table on page 101, the East-West line residual value (again discounted at 7% to a present amount) ranges from \$40 million to \$77 million, depending on the investment option developed. This amount seems low for what would then be a fully mature rail line. According to MassDOT, the residual future value represents 25% of the original cost of the East-West project. For instance, if the option selected had an original cost of \$2.0bn, the analysis assumes that in 30 years (2050) the residual economic value of the line is only \$500m. This amount is then discounted at the disadvantageous 7% rate. I believe that these numbers need to be revisited and revised to give a true picture of potential economic impact of East-West rail.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-61	JUDITH BECHARD		judithbechard@comcast.net	<p>There is almost NO public transportation in the town of Palmer. To get anywhere east or west of Palmer we need to drive there. Although the trains might not provide 'commuter for or all, if we are ever going to reduce pollution & commuter congestion we need to establish a better transportation infrastructure. Train travel is something we need to consider.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-62	Sheila B. Irvin		sheilaanneirvin@gmail.com	<p>want to highlight the MassDOT's linear approach when we really need systems thinking when it comes to the benefits of passenger rail. The current proposals don't look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Connections to Albany, New Haven, and Montreal will amplify benefits even more. These expanded economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-63	James Kupernik		james@vidmob.com	<p>I feel strongly that MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to NYC, upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal. As a business leader in Pittsfield, this would make it easier to source talent from the capital region and have easier access to our headquarters in NYC</p> <p>The current proposals don't look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Connections to Albany, New Haven, and Montreal will amplify benefits even more. These expanded economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-64	John Masiero		johnmasiero47@gmail.com	<p>There was a time when General Electric employees in Pittsfield could take the train to Boston in the morning for a meeting/conference and be home again the same day. Today this would involve about five hours of driving and the expense of parking in that congested city. Light-weight electric rail could be a solution.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-65	Lisa A Powers		powersbaker@hotmail.com	<p>MassDOT should focus on immediate steps to improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost. I understand specifications are being discussed. I'd like to see all parties work to implement this and also work with New York on service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-66	Brian Bissell		bbissell@berkshire.rr.com	<p>Building climate-friendly infrastructure for the long term health of people and economies is a no-brainer</p> <p>I feel strongly that MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-67	Benjamin, Springfield Resident		ben.bland@live.com	<p>I am a lifelong Springfield resident. I want to be able to easily take the train to Boston for leisure, shows, and nightlife (assuming those become a thing when the pandemic is under control). The Pike is annoying and I rack up a huge amount of mileage on my car, and the bus is not fast or convenient enough. We should have train service as an option for Springfield Residents. We already have to go east for everything else - people go east for work, education, restaurants, nightlife, etc. There are just more amenities out East because central and Eastern Mass have become so well developed and Western Mass is still more rural/suburban/xurban. We want easier access to those amenities. I would take the train on weekends if I didn't have to drive. If the commonwealth has to be culturally so Boston-centric then those of us out west want to be able to participate</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

<p>DraftReport-68</p>	<p>Steve Strauss</p>	<p>Rail Passengers Association, NYS Council Representative</p>	<p>straussnyc@verizon.net</p>	<p>www.railpassengers.org</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on MassDOT's East-West Rail Study. The document represents an informative first step with good documentation of existing conditions, understandable maps and tables and identification of three reasonable alternatives.</p> <p>The Study does a good job of breaking the project into the three logical and distinct segments (BOS to WOR; WOR to SPG and SPG to PIT) and explaining the particular situations, options, costs and travel times for each segment.</p> <p>That said, MassDOT and their primary consultant, WSP, seem to have set up the study, to examine the costs and benefits of expanding east-west passenger rail service, so as to portray the idea in the worst possible light. Two primary decisions by MassDOT result in seemingly high capital costs and low ridership creating low cost-benefit scenarios for improving passenger rail service.</p> <p>First, MassDOT established the western terminus of the study in Pittsfield, a city of 44,000 people rather than Albany, NY, a city of 97,000, in a metro area of well over 500,000. Albany is the 10th busiest Amtrak station in the United States and has passenger rail connections to New York City, Chicago, Montreal, Rutland (VT) and Toronto. In addition, the Albany-Rensselaer station has existing train storage, maintenance facilities, crew quarters and a commissary that could be made available for expanded service to Boston at a likely lower cost than building new facilities in either Springfield or Pittsfield.</p> <p>Extending Massachusetts East-West service an additional 38 miles to Albany provides greatly enhanced network connectivity and a much larger terminal ridership market for trip origins and destinations. It is critical that New York State DOT's Rail Division be brought into this effort.</p> <p>Second, MassDOT has presented the full build-out costs of each alternative without acknowledging that most states take a much more incremental approach to improving intrastate and interstate passenger rail service. If you look at two very successful state-focused expansions of passenger rail – North Carolina's Piedmont service between Raleigh and Charlotte and Maine's Downeaster, both have had significant initial capital costs, but both have expanded incrementally, growing service and making additional capital investments in line with growing ridership over an extended time period.</p> <p>The study demonstrated that the cost projections are in-line with what the Commonwealth is experiencing on other rail corridor improvement projects. MassDOT should have provided a more positive tone to the study and included Albany as the western terminus to have presented a more realistic picture of how to expand passenger rail service across the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Governance and Operations</p> <p>Discussions of how the Commonwealth might initiate and/or operate expanded east-west passenger service omitted or downplayed expansion of a Rail Division within MassDOT. Rail divisions are a fairly common practice for states with PRIIA Section 209 state-supported Amtrak service. North Carolina and Michigan oversee extensive state supported passenger service operated by Amtrak. Connecticut uses a third-party operator overseen by Connecticut DOT for CT Rail. Massachusetts DOT currently participates in the Section 209 State-supported trains program as well as the cost-sharing arrangements of Section 212 pertaining to the Northeast Corridor.</p> <p>Accordingly, in the short-term, MassDOT could add a second daily round trip between Albany and Boston operated by Amtrak and funded by the Commonwealth through the Section 209 program. While Amtrak is a high cost provider, this is the fastest way to respond to the interest of Western Massachusetts in having greater connectivity with the Boston area. This approach also requires negotiation with CSX Transportation.</p> <p>Housing Costs and Other Economic Benefits</p> <p>The report acknowledges that more work needs to be done to identify the economic benefits of enhanced east-west connectivity through frequent passenger rail service. Similarly, more work needs to be done on how the high cost of housing limits economic growth in the Boston area and how reductions in travel time between Worcester and Boston</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
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				<p>and perhaps Palmer and Boston could expand the availability of affordable housing by expanding the Boston commuting shed. This is a real, measurable benefit that should be considered in the next stages of this project.</p> <p>Suggested Enhancements to This Study or Future Studies/White Papers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formally bring New York State DOT into the planning process. 2. Develop more incremental approaches to implementing one of the 3 recommended options. 3. More clearly state the assumptions on high and low level platforms for each station. (Unfortunately, CSX generally restricts high level platforms in mixed freight and passenger use territory.) 4. Detail station parking assumptions associated with ridership forecasts. 5. Introduce discussion of fare revenue to meet operating costs. The Commonwealth of Virginia is meeting it's "above the rail" operating costs from fare revenue for state-supported extensions of NEC Regional train service in several corridors. 6. Provide more details on 10% transfer assumptions to CT Rail and identify transfer assumptions in Boston to NEC service and the Downeaster. 7. In funding options, note that FRA Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program is generally only available for use on publicly-owned assets and those not in a State of Good Repair. 8. In funding options, note that the BUILD grants program operates at the agency level and is not specific to any U.S. DOT administration (FTA, FRA or FHWA). 	
DraftReport-69	Tracy Ducasse		interlace8@gmail.com	<p>It would be wonderful to have a rail system that stopped in Palmer, it would cut down exhaust polluting the environment. It would be great to take the train into Boston, and go points further from there. I was an extensive traveler before Covid, and have always used public transport where ever I have been. If places like the UK can have a train system that benefits rural areas, why can't we. It would be a great asset.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-70	Paula Geier		saintpaulas@gmail.com	Worked in inspection for Csx	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-71	Jim Brown		jobrown773@gmail.com	<p>I believe the long-term material, human, and environmental benefits of statewide passenger rail will far outdistance any upfront costs. Especially if much of the track is already laid. It appears to me that any CSX conflicts will be resolved over time through experience and planning. Transit will benefit in having alternatives, and people's quality of life will improve by lessening the attachment to the automobile. Finally, the economy will be stimulated via increased movement of goods (non-CSX) and people.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-72	Anezka Sebek		sebeka@newschool.edu	<p>I don't live in MA but I do live in Kingston, NY. I have been frustrated with the lack of rail service on the West Coast of the Hudson. The reason the East Coast counties are wealthy is because of the rail line there. To meet the END OF FOSSIL FUEL in the US in ten to twenty years, we have to rebuild our RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE. It will save money for people to commute AND it will prevent pollution. We need an electrical grid powered by wind and sun to drive the trains...then we will all make the planet more liveable.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-73	Katie Challinor		katie.e.challinor@gmail.com	<p>I believe that we should be acting now to reform and revitalize our transportation sector with both climate mitigation (reducing pollution from transportation) and climate adaptation (making our transportation system more resilient to a changing climate).</p> <p>Given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

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DraftReport-74	Karen Christensen		karen@berkshirepublishing.com	<p>I am troubled by two aspects of the financial analysis. First, the study discounts future costs and benefits at 7%, which is very high in terms of today's economic environment and market observable rates. In theory, the discount rate should have its basis significantly weighted in terms of costs of capital, which are at historic lows across nearly all investment activities. The discount rate used in the UK government's economic analysis for the HS2 line, for example, is 3.5%. I would like to see MassDOT provide a cost/benefit analysis using a range of discount rates, as a different and in fact more realistic rate could significantly enhance the viability of the project.</p> <p>In addition, in the table on page 101, the East-West line residual value (again discounted at 7% to a present amount) ranges from \$40 million to \$77 million, depending on the investment option developed. This amount seems low for what would then be a fully mature rail line. According to MassDOT, the residual future value represents 25% of the original cost of the East-West project. For instance, if the option selected had an original cost of \$2.0bn, the analysis assumes that in 30 years (2050) the residual economic value of the line is only \$500m. This amount is then discounted at the disadvantageous 7% rate. I believe that these numbers need to be revisited and revised to give a true picture of potential economic impact of East-West rail.</p> <p>I also want to highlight the MassDOT's linear approach when we really need systems thinking when it comes to the benefits of passenger rail. The current proposals don't look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Connections to Albany, New Haven, and Montreal will amplify benefits even more. These expanded economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-75	Karen Christensen		karen@barringtoninstitute.org	<p>I believe that we should be acting now to reform and revitalize our transportation sector with both climate mitigation (reducing pollution from transportation) and climate adaptation (making our transportation system more resilient to a changing climate). Given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.</p> <p>To make this happen successful, MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.</p> <p>In addition, MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-76	Rachel Lucy Christensen		RACHEL.L.CHRISTENSEN@OUTLOOK.COM	<p>I feel strongly that MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-77	Nicholas Russo		nrusso93@gmail.com	<p>Thank you for your time in taking on this important study. As a native of Berkshire County, having a non-automotive transportation option to connect to the rest of my state is very important to me. With Amtrak service now reduced to three days per week, the options are now limited further. Peter Pan and Greyhound remain alternative options, though they do not improve on travel times compared to the Mass Turnpike.</p> <p>The one aspect I would very much like to see considered is a connection through Pittsfield to Albany, rather than a terminus at Pittsfield. With a population of 100,000 and multiple Amtrak connections to downstate, the Empire Corridor, and Canada, Albany would provide a large boost to any cost/benefit considerations of East-West service. I am not sure why this scenario was not considered in this initial study, but it is not too late. A rail connection between two state capitols would be a boon to ridership, and help provide more revenue to cover costs of service to less profitable stations. I ask you to please consider this scenario in the study alternatives, even if it means extending the study or comment period. It think it would be worth the investment. Thank you!</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

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DraftReport-78	Charles O'Brien		charles.h.obrien@gmail.com	We desperately need more high speed rail as an answer to global warming. I would use the East-West rail at least a few times a year. I currently live in Boston.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-79	Martha Klein		Martha.klein@sierraclub.org	I own an apartment in Great Barrington MA. Taking the train to Boston from Pittsfield is the greatest thing, but is not super convenient right now. I would travel by train frequently to Boston and NYC, because driving is costly and inefficient. MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible. Trains are an ideal form of transportation that can help us meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets. I believe that we should be acting now to reform and revitalize our transportation sector with both climate mitigation (reducing pollution from transportation) and climate adaptation (making our transportation system more resilient to a changing climate). Given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-80	Stephen Benedetti		stevil666@yahoo.com	I think a rail stop in Palmer could greatly benefit the economy of this often overlooked part of the state.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-81	Melanie Drewnowski		msroxi02@yahoo.com	This would have many layers of benefits from work opportunities, extracurricular, educational while also increasing revenue for Boston plus decreasing emissions.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

<p>DraftReport-82</p>	<p>Ben Hood and Anne Miller</p>	<p>Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop</p>	<p>palmertrain@gmail.com</p>	<p>Submitted by Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop 11/19/20</p> <p>In June 2020, Secretary Pollack expressed the hope that the East-West Passenger Rail Study would lay the groundwork for moving the idea of higher speed rail between western Massachusetts and Boston by way of Worcester from a study to an actual project. As the study concludes, MassDOT should be looking for a way to create a shovel-ready East-West rail project at a time when the Federal government is likely to develop an infrastructure bill to stimulate the economy and make much-needed improvements to the country's transportation systems.</p> <p>Unfortunately the current East-West Passenger Rail Study alternatives are unlikely to qualify for Federal funding due to their high cost and reputedly low benefit, resulting in minimal benefit cost ratios.</p> <p>All that is needed to create an East-West rail project eligible for Federal funding is to revisit and revise the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI), released by MassDOT in 2016. The NNEIRI study provides a blueprint for affordable, higher speed train service between Boston and Springfield. MassDOT should take the NNEIRI plan off the shelf, revise it to extend service west to Pittsfield and Albany, and make it a shovel-ready project that is fully qualified for Federal funding.</p> <p>We encourage MassDOT to develop a "New NNEIRI" project to address the great need of Massachusetts for frequent train service running west from Boston to Springfield and Pittsfield, and connecting to north-south service at Springfield, and to UMass/Amherst and UConn/Storrs via bus and future train service at Palmer.</p> <p>Here are specific ways in which a "New NNEIRI" project could improve on the East-West Passenger Rail Study alternatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The population of Worcester is 185,428 (metro area pop. 923,672), and the population of Springfield is 153,606 (metro area pop. 631,982). They are the 2nd and 4th largest cities in New England. It is outrageous that these two cities are barely connected by passenger rail in the 21st century. MassDOT should make it the highest priority of a shovel-ready "New NNEIRI" project to implement frequent train service between Springfield and Worcester. 2. To benefit the entire Commonwealth, a "New NNEIRI" project should extend intercity passenger rail to Pittsfield (city pop. 42,142), and Albany, NY (city pop. 96,460; metro area pop. 883,169). The added connection to Albany will more than justify the additional cost of service west of Springfield. 3. We appreciate the inclusion in the East-West Passenger Rail Study of infill stops in Palmer and Chester to connect the vast rural areas of Central Massachusetts and the Hilltowns to all the cities west and east. Every train in the NNEIRI plan would have stopped in Palmer; and every train in a "New NNEIRI" project should stop in Palmer and Chester. 4. A "New NNEIRI" project should include plans for temporary bus and subsequent rail connections to the Flagship Campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and to the University of Connecticut in Storrs, both of which will be served by direct connection at the east-west stop in Palmer. UMass Amherst: 24,209 undergraduates; 7,141 graduate students; 1,462 faculty and 4,741 staff. UConn: 18,847 undergraduates; 7,097 graduate students; 9,620 faculty and staff. 5. Demands for "high speed rail" in effect derailed the original NNEIRI plan (itself originally a high speed study), delaying rail service to Springfield well beyond 2020, the year in which NNEIRI-envisioned service could have begun. No question the United States should be building high speed rail networks nationwide, but in Massachusetts higher speed rail now can lead to high speed rail later. A "New NNEIRI" project could start train service with speeds less than 90 mph in order to reduce the much greater capital expense required to reach true high speed service using the CSX right-of-way. By starting with less costly, "higher speed" service, MassDOT will be able to better evaluate the need for train service along this route before making an enormous capital investment. 6. The East-West Passenger Rail Study narrows the scope, low-balls the ridership, inflates the costs, and underestimates the benefits of passenger rail service between Boston, Springfield, and Pittsfield. A "New NNEIRI" project would address all of these failures by expanding the scope to include Albany, NY; by basing ridership projections on more comparable proxy markets elsewhere in the U.S.; by reducing capital costs to cover only 	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
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				<p>improvements needed to run less than 90 mph trains west of Worcester; and by calculating and including in the benefit/cost analysis all of the economic and environmental benefits that will accrue from expanded, frequent train service spanning our state.</p> <p>A “New NNEIRI” project will require oversight and planning to realize its full potential by connecting to regional and interstate public transit services. As a first step, the legislature and MassDOT should create a passenger rail authority to coordinate and develop statewide passenger rail service on the Inland Route, the Knowledge Corridor (home to the Valley Flyer pilot service), the Northern Tier, the Central Corridor Line, and the Housatonic Line. The authority could also collaborate with CTDOT, NYSDOT, and VTrans to ensure seamless connection to passenger trains running across our borders.</p> <p>Ben Hood and Anne Miller 60 Buckland St. Palmer, MA 01069 413-283-2141</p> <p>Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop</p> <p>http://www.palmertrain.org palmertrain@gmail.com</p>	
DraftReport-83	Dan Gagner		dwgagner@gmail.com	This would be such an incredible opportunity for the state to expand west. I've worked for 8 years commuting from Palmer to Boston Children's Hospital. This would be a game changer for me.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-84	Elise Lennon		eliselennon@yahoo.com	Rapid and frequent East-West rail travel is essential for the economy of Western Massachusetts, and will also provide much easier access for tourism travel to Boston from Western Mass.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-85	Tom Hutcheson		thutcheson111@gmail.com	<p>Broaden Cost-Benefit Considerations November 19, 2020</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the East-West rail line study. This comment calls on the Commonwealth to produce a comprehensive infrastructure plan and to advocate in Congress for a change to the current reliance on solely financial cost-benefit analyses, as they are detrimental to the public interest.</p> <p>I urge the Commonwealth to produce a comprehensive and integrated transportation plan designed to channel infrastructure development into forms suitable for the long term. Having individual projects stand or fall without considering their place in an overall long-term policy and plan is inefficient and a poor use of taxpayer dollars. The Commonwealth is a whole, and decisions made with smaller perspectives are not helpful in the larger term, which is after all the province of public policy.</p> <p>Infrastructure development means not only transportation infrastructure, but transportation within the larger economic, social, and ecological environments. Projects that benefit multiple goals can and should be prioritized over projects that are designed to solve only smaller problems. The world is complex, and the “siloiing” of issues is counterproductive to good public policy. This project (no doubt among many others) provides an opportunity to break out of that habit of thinking incorporate broader goals.</p> <p>The benefits of such planning must be measured in terms of meeting multiple policy goals, not simply financial cost. While some may see this as a luxury not provided the private sector, it is a necessity for public investment, as the efficiency of meeting multiple public policy goals is a different kind of efficiency from getting a low bid for a particular product. The goals of increased housing availability, job opportunities and broader economic development, rural equity, and mitigating climate change are all assisted by greater rail transportation.</p> <p>Ridership estimates, even for several years out, measure just a small part of the benefits of an expanded rail system—of which this project is only one part, if a necessary one for the southwestern part of the state. To further reduce those estimates of a partial benefit by not including induced ridership is to willfully blind ourselves to the greater range of benefits.</p> <p>Similarly, without including the benefits of avoided carbon emissions, job site flexibility, and access to affordable housing (to name only some of the factors that should be included in a comprehensive policy), any solely financial cost-benefit analysis, while a necessary part of the plan, is short-sighted in today’s world of integrated solutions.</p> <p>I understand that the Commonwealth relies for major transportation projects on funding from a federal system that mandates such an analysis and insists on limiting assistance to those projects proving financial benefits. It is therefore essential that the Commonwealth work with its representatives in Congress to change this myopic perspective. I am copying my Representative and Senators on this comment and request that those considering these comments urge the Commonwealth to make the same argument to the Massachusetts delegation.</p> <p>Still, unless the Commonwealth is serious about addressing the ecological and social dimensions of sustainability (which includes economic development), relying on such cost-benefit analyses as those made in this study will not be sufficient to protect itself and its citizens. I doubt that all benefits can be monetized. As demonstrated by this study, acting in the public’s short-term financial interest can and will do more harm than good to the public’s long-term economic and ecological interests.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-86	Megan Whilden		marvelousness@gmail.com	<p>I want to highlight the MassDOT’s linear approach when we really need systems thinking when it comes to the benefits of passenger rail. The current proposals don’t look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Connections to Albany, New Haven, and Montreal will amplify benefits even more. These expanded economic, social, and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-87	Monk Schane-Lydon		monk@monksvoice.com	Ultimately, for me, the train has to be about saving time and convenience. It takes me 2.5 hours to drive to Boston, and I can then go wherever I want in the city. If the train can get me there in under 2 hours, I'm interested. Especially for the ride back. If I take the train to Springfield, I'd want transportation from there to sites in the area. I wouldn't want to be dumped at the train station, with no way to get to the mall. The train should be a faster, cheaper alternative to get from A to B. Anything less is a waste of time.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-88	Cricket Saurel		saurel@bcn.net	MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible. I also feel strongly that MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-89	Jeffrey Nathan		jeff@jnld.com	MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible. Sincerely, Jeffrey Nathan	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-90	Rosemary Starace		rosemary.starace@gmail.com	Investment in passenger rail should be given priority as Massachusetts develops plans to address climate change. Transportation now contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy. Expanded passenger rail service is a necessary part of both climate mitigation (reducing pollution from transportation) and climate adaptation (making our transportation system more resilient to a changing climate). The current proposals don't look at the amplification of benefits that will come from new connections in Springfield and Pittsfield. The rail system that is taking shape - with new services like the Valley Flyer, upgrades underway on the Housatonic Line, and proposed projects like the Northern Tier Line - will be more than the sum of its separate parts. The MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-91	Charles Kenny		ckennymd@gmail.com	I believe the first effort should focus on high-speed freight trains bound for the mid-west and west. Capturing more of the container market would improve Boston's port standing, give Pittsfield an opportunity to manufacture high speed rail equipment, and set the stage for later, less profitable passenger traffic.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-92	John R Schreiber		john.schreiber8@gmail.com	The western part of Massachusetts is economically depressed and cut off from the rest of the state by lack of transportation and inclusion in regional NY State cable news as opposed to Massachusetts. Establishing an east west transportation corridor will re link the state together, encourage economic growth and provide lower cost housing to the Boston Metro area. A complete win-win.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-93	David V Walker		dvwalk@gmail.com	We really need this train in Massachusetts! All the way to Pittsfield! Maybe eventually even to Albany. Fastest options should be prioritized! Relieve the pressure on the Boston housing market! Revitalize the economy of western mass! The berkshires are beautiful, and doing this project will bring in loads of visitors and tourists and artists and the like. Add the housatonic railway as well!	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-94	Lisa Andersen		land444@gmail.com	Having seamless rail access to Boston from the Berkshires provides a vital connection that would help stabilize the economic health of Berkshire county. Drawing visitors from the Boston and east coast allows Massachusetts to keep more of its disposable income in-state, and provides greater reach for the many small businesses that reside in the Berkshire region. The housing market would also grow. This is an important piece of infrastructure that helps to grow the greater state community.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-95	Kristin Hatt		samhatt@earthlink.net	<p>The East/West rail service must extend from Investing in infrastructure for a train that goes from Boston through the Berkshires all the way to Albany to create the most efficient and ultimately productive and successful transportation system for the citizens of the commonwealth to grow together, seems to be a common sense approach to the 21st century problems we face. To reduce the number of cars on the road on a given day in the cities, but make them accessible to the citizens who need to visit, ease the highway congestion and emissions that causes, and reduce the stress of travel. Most importantly the East/West Rail will allow other communities outside of Boston and Worcester to benefit from the economic growth that a well planned mass transit system creates like a pipeline. Western Massachusetts, including the Berkshires, needs to be plugged into this pipeline.</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
DraftReport-96	Barbara Palmer		ABPALMER2@GMAIL.COM	<p>Thank you for the thorough study on East-West Rail, and for the opportunity to comment. As a long-time resident of the Berkshires I am an eager supporter of infrastructure initiatives that further smart growth in our beautiful region and make it possible for the Berkshires to be vibrant economically in addition to being a cultural and outdoors mecca. Future generations need places to live and work away from the coast. Mass transit has to be part of that infrastructure.</p> <p>Mass transit is a component of addressing climate change in addition to accessibility. In the high-population northeast we must have foresight in planning infrastructure away from the coast. Rail is a long-term solution for those dual challenges -- climate and accessibility -- and one that is used in most developed countries to great positive effect.</p> <p>I was shocked that the presentation showed a negative impact of the rail project on air quality. The speaker explained that the engines run quite dirty. While electrifying the line may not be feasible, investing in high-efficiency, clean technology is key. Our cars, airplanes and airports are not 50 years behind the rest of the world, and our rails shouldn't be either.</p> <p>I am disheartened that the plan did not make a recommendation to move forward. On climate change and on the regional economy, we don't have time to lose. Please invest in our future with state-of-the-art rails now. It is an investment that has a long life, and our children will be grateful for our foresight and care.</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>

<p>DraftReport-97</p>	<p>Andrew Jennings</p>		<p>aajennings@aol.com</p>	<p>After reviewing the East-West Study Draft Report I realized how timid it was. Recommendations were few and most decisions were punted until further research was done. Much of the additional research could have been included within the scope of this study. This timidity may result in the consignment of this study to a shelf to gather dust. Being overly cautious kept ridership estimates and benefits low, likely overestimated costs, and slowed any implementation of the service.</p> <p>The stated central question of this study is "How can we connect people in western Massachusetts with central and eastern Massachusetts using a passenger rail service that provides fast, frequent, attractive service in a cost-effective and achievable manner?" With this central question in mind, only alternatives for trains operating between Pittsfield and Boston were studied. Bold consultants would have quickly recognized that such an operating plan would likely not be as cost effective as a service between Albany / Rensselaer and Boston. Such a service would not only open up markets by connecting to the existing Amtrak Empire Service (including the market to be served by the proposed Berkshire Flyer) it also holds the potential for significant cost savings because Albany / Rensselaer has service facilities, a crew base, and the potential for equipment sharing that would not have to be duplicated at Pittsfield or Springfield. The East-West study should have included at least a preliminary review of this option.</p> <p>Another area where the study was timid was it apparently used CSX's engineering standards for shared track to develop what changes were required for passenger trains operating in certain speed ranges. Those standards did not appear to be independently reviewed for their reasonableness nor was any account made of the benefits such changes would bring to CSX's operations were considered. Such acceptance likely increased projected costs.</p> <p>I understand why the Downeaster and the Hartford Line were used as proxies to project ridership. But I wonder if those proxies understate the potential ridership as the Berkshires have unique cultural attractions that adds to the potential ridership. Certainly, if the operator of the service can add Friday night and weekend surge capacity the proxies likely understate the potential ridership.</p> <p>This project has a number of potential partners who should be interested in sharing the ridership increases that come from the improved network connectivity, and who should be interested in the cost efficiencies that can come from sharing facilities and equipment, and from improved utilization of fixed facilities. The potential benefits from partnering with MBTA, Amtrak, or CT rail were not highlighted.</p> <p>Bringing Massachusetts together with East-West passenger rail service has benefits beyond the transportation benefits calculated in the study. For international travelers beginning or ending their journeys in the Berkshires, Logan Airport competes with Port Authority airports. Western Massachusetts residents seeking the expertise of teaching hospitals now are indifferent to hospitals in the Boston area or in New York City. The Berkshires would attract more visitors from eastern Massachusetts if better non-auto transportation options were available. East-West rail would make Massachusetts more competitive.</p> <p>Feeder bus service may enhance the proposed service. Although preliminary alternatives 1, 2, and 5 which had all East-West rail passengers traveling west of Springfield transferring to bus did not make sense, specific markets might work better with a bus transfer. Specifically, passengers with an end of their journey in Lee or towns south of Lee could have a faster trip using a feeder bus to Springfield or Palmer as they would not have to travel all the way to Pittsfield to catch the train. Similarly, a feeder bus from Amherst to Palmer might be advantageous to travelers. The impact of an integrated bus /rail network was not explored in this study.</p> <p>Decision makers should also keep in mind that East-West rail has synergies with other projects designed to expand the passenger rail network. East-West rail would complement restoration of rail passenger service on the Housatonic Line. Not only would some passengers connect between the two services, but the first / last mile infrastructure developed for one service would be used by passengers utilizing the other. Similarly, plans to extend a Downeaster service to New York City become easier to implement if passenger rail service exists on the Boston and Albany route between Springfield and eastern Massachusetts.</p> <p>I believe that an East-West passenger rail service has far better potential than this draft study indicates. The benefits are understated, and the costs are overstated.</p> <p>Ironically, the pandemic has created an opportune time to quickly implement a variation of preliminary alternative 3. Rail freight volumes are down, and Precision Scheduled Railroading has been implemented making more slots potentially available that could be used for passenger service. With revenues down, CSX should be looking toward additional revenue to keep its operating ratio in line with investor expectations. Track rental payment from passenger service could provide some such revenue. Rail passenger volumes are much lower than they were pre-pandemic, potentially allowing existing locomotives and cars to be used for an east west service even with additional social distancing on existing services.</p> <p>If the Commonwealth were to act boldly and generate excitement for this project with potential partners ranging from New York State to the MBTA, it is conceivable that a pilot East-West passenger rail service could be operating as a</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
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ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
				<p>COVID-19 vaccine is rolled out to the general population. Let's be bold. Let's put people to work building a better rail passenger network in Massachusetts.</p> <hr/> <p>1) Even this question is timid as it minimizes the desire of those in central and eastern Massachusetts to access western Massachusetts</p>	
DraftReport-98	Massachusetts Sierra Club		clint@massachusetts.sierraclub.org	<p>The Massachusetts Sierra Club simply urges you to commit to East-West Passenger Rail and to develop and implement a plan to achieve it as soon as possible.</p> <p>Our highways are operating at overcapacity. Massachusetts is home to the first, second and fourth largest cities in New England all of which are located along the congested I-90 corridor. Yet vehicles are the overwhelming mode choice along this route because other mobility options barely exist west of Worcester. Worcester and Springfield must be well connected by rail for reasons of equity and economic development. Finally, given the enormous volume of travel on the Mass Pike, we should be using this project as an opportunity to help meet the Global Warming Solutions Act by reducing intercity travel by private vehicles.</p> <p>The Draft East-West Passenger Rail Study has so many limitations that it is not a strong basis for making a decision. It would have been better if the East-West Study had more closely resembled the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI).</p> <p>The Sierra Club instead suggests that you reverse the goal and find a solution with a combination of ridership and costs that will make the project's Benefit-Cost Analysis sufficiently attractive to the US DOT so that it will receive approval for Federal funds. This could be done through a wide range of options that could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include ridership synergies with other routes such as the Vermonter, Hartford Line, Valley Flyer and Berkshire Flyer. • A marketing plan to increase ridership. • Extend East-West service to Albany, which would enable travellers from Boston to Pittsfield to enjoy numerous new destinations such as Montreal to the North, Buffalo and Toronto to the West and New York City to the south. • Improve the Worcester Line to reduce the trip time and increase ridership on the East-West service (e.g., triple-tracking, level boarding, electrification). These costs should not be allocated to this project since these improvements should already be done for MBTA regional rail. • Phasing of the implementation. • Benefits of infrastructure improvements to existing Amtrak service starting with the Lake Shore Limited and to restoring the Inland Route via Springfield and Hartford that was dropped in 2004. The Boston-Springfield segment should be developed as the first leg of an alternative spine for the NEC as was outlined in the NEC Future study. • Add a station in Westfield that can serve that important Western Massachusetts city and can also serve much of the Berkshires if part of a first phase. • State acquisition of all or part of the right of way to better control costs and service. • Improvements to RTA services that feed into East-West service to increase ridership. • Adding Housatonic service to build out the state rail network and increase mobility options via Pittsfield. • Quantification of benefits to freight service if passenger service runs in its own right of way. • Finally, if the goal is truly "East-West" service for all of Western Massachusetts then this should include the Northern Tier route as well. <p>The time is right for trains because the next Presidential administration will be even more supportive of passenger rail. Rail projects have a long lead-time; now is the time to be planning for the future.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-99	Nicholas McGee		nmcgee21@yahoo.com	<p>This is not a "go big or go home" scenario. The study shows 3 of the most expensive options, being implemented immediately. This does not need to be the case. Phasing is a great way to get something started and watch it grow. This will also help quiet the skepticism shown in the report on ridership and development in the affected towns and areas. And with a new federal administration who is historically in favor of infrastructure AND rail projects, there could be a lot of opportunity for federal help with the cost.</p> <p>Boston is a big region, and it typically gets the larger end of the wishbone when the statehouse is dealing out things. The East-West rail project could help both of these problems simultaneously as well. By allowing for frequent travel between places like Palmer and Springfield to Boston, those who work in Boston but cannot afford it can move to any town along the transit line, as numerous people have already along many of the commuter lines of the MBTA. This relieves congestion in the city itself, grants access to those in Western Mass who otherwise would not have it, and allows for growth in the spine of this connecting region between Eastern and Western Mass.</p> <p>Lastly, I think an independent study would greatly benefit the idea of an East-West Rail corridor. Having a team picked by Baker and his administration when he has clearly not put any clear thoughts into transit and has cut funding significantly, was a sure-fire way to have the team come back with this study's response of recommending another study and pushing the responsibility even further. An independent study by a group or organization with no claims to or stake in this project would be helpful to find out more accurate numbers on cost, revenue, and even emissions (I find it hard to believe that there will be more emissions with a rail system in place than there are currently, for example).</p> <p>In conclusion, I am a bit disappointed in the study's inability to look towards the future and see the long-term benefits of implementing such a system in the Bay State. The benefits and the promises of development, inter-regional connectivity, and a secondary route from Boston to NY far outweigh the negatives presented.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-100	Dominick Villane		dominickvillane1@msn.com	<p>Dear Mass DOT, Please know how important a West/East rail link is to the economic sustainability for Western Mass. Today it is impossible for us here in Western Mass. to leave here in the morning to attend important hearings on Beacon Hill and return home in the evening. I hear over and over it is too expensive to build. Truth is it will be too expensive not to build. We have a rare opportunity with our Senior Congressman Richie Neal sitting as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Time will show this is the time for strong leadership to make this happen. Innovation and Technology will also help advance travel and and keep costs down. Thank you for considering this comment and plea.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-101	Carlene Tavares		lenoxpandm@gmail.com	<p>Western Mass is the best kept secret - please help the East coasters discover - all the treasure nestled in the Berkshire Hills</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-102	Ben Sands		bfs43@cornell.edu	<p>I think east west rail is a fantastic idea and we should prioritize making this train go as fast as possible so it will be a viable alternative to the mass pike.</p> <p>I also think it's silly not to consider extending this to Albany, which is a huge market and would increase ridership. Also this would allow connections to NYC, Montreal, VT, etc.</p> <p>Thanks for reading, Ben Sands Somerville Mass.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-103	Matthew Sanchez		mattsanchez1018@gmail.com	<p>East west rail is essential for the growth and development of all Massachusetts. Incorporating this development with the adding of third track express line from Worcester to Boston.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-104	David Guenette		david.guenette@gmail.com	<p>The conclusions of current East-West Rail Study lack three characteristics: Intelligence, Ambition, and Imagination.</p> <p>The Alternative No. 6 is closest of the six outlined plans, but the failure to anticipate and consider other rail connections—of which Pittsfield to NYC or Housatonic Line is foremost—shows a relatively short-term frame of mind. Build out of infrastructure required building on active imagination and a willingness to think long-term. A guiding principle must be the significant reduction of automobiles and the alternative of an integrated transportation system that supports people moving about without requiring the ownership of personal automobiles; large cities (e.g., Boston) have pervasive public transportation (although in need of better investment and infrastructure development), but the further out west one goes, the absence of pervasive public transportation clearly is a major contributor to the study's projected low ridership numbers. People need to get to the stations, but if they otherwise are forced into car ownership, their use of personal cars will continue.</p> <p>People—even those in large urban areas, but even more so beyond the borders of the biggest cities in Massachusetts—are economically oppressed by their need for personal automobiles due to the cost of purchase, maintenance, insurance, and fuel. A comprehensive passenger transportation can lessen this astonishingly high cost to individuals and thus freeing up personal resources for other important improvements within our economy and society.</p> <p>The fastest passenger rail service between Pittsfield (and connecting on to Albany and thus points west and connecting to NYC) and Boston is the best of these proposed plans, but even this plan is a significant failure of imagination. In twenty years' time, improvements in technology will support autonomous electric vehicles that can be hired locally on an as-need basis and intercity rail is well-suited for long distance travel. Constraining plans to relative short-term timeframes contributes, no doubt, to the lack of imagining a better future, as does the short-term investment/payback mentality plaguing our country.</p> <p>Please do better. The place to start is the best of your plans, Option 6.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-105	Toby Butterfield		tobymjbutterfield@yahoo.com	<p>I wish MassDOT would look at the bigger picture and the benefits that flow from making transportation regional. Boston to Albany service, with Worcester, Springfield and Pittsfield as intermediate stops, would be a boon to central and western MA and their business and tourist sectors. Albany's population of nearly 100,000 and its Amtrak stations would allow connections to upstate New York, the Hudson Valley, Vermont and Canada.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-106	Daniel Cantwell		danielhcantwell@gmail.com	<p>To the Massachusetts Department of Transportation</p> <p>Thank you for allowing me to comment on the East West Passenger rail study.</p> <p>I live and work in New York State, but I have strong connections to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and I visit and do business here often. I believe increased rail service to Western Massachusetts, with extended service to New York State, should be high on the list of transportation priorities for MassDOT.</p> <p>In May of 2019 I traveled to Boston via Albany using Amtrak's Empire Service and the Lake Shore Limited. The fare was competitive (low), and it was an enjoyable, although long, trip. MassDOT should focus on immediate steps and provided an additional daily round trip to Albany via Springfield/Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited. This would be simple, low cost, start. I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts.</p> <p>The Albany - Schenectady - Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area in USA is an intercity anchor with a population of over 800,000 and Albany is one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further transport connections for MA residents between upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal and Massachusetts. Extending East-West service the additional 38 miles to Albany provides greatly enhances network connectivity and a much larger terminal ridership market for trip origins and destinations to Western MA. Albany/Rensselaer station also has established train servicing facilities which could be used through leasing agreements rather than building new. That is why it is critical that New York State DOT's Rail Division be included to work in this effort.</p> <p>Finally, given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Daniel H. Cantwell, Registered Architect, Owner, DHC Design</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-107	MARYJANE DUNLOP		sellu1@aol.com	<p>MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-108	MARYJANE DUNLOP		sellu1@aol.com	<p>I feel strongly that MassDOT should be working with New York State on train service to Albany, with Pittsfield as an intermediate stop. Albany is an intercity anchor with a population of nearly 100,000 and one of the country's busiest Amtrak stations, offering further connections to upstate New York, the Mid-Hudson region, Vermont, and Montreal.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-109	Travis Pollack	Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Senior Transportation Planner	tpollack@mapc.org	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to review on the draft report, and we appreciate the opportunity to serve on the advisory committee for the East-West Passenger Rail Study. We offer the following comments on the draft report.</p> <p>The study found that, while the alternatives could reduce rail travel times from Boston to Pittsfield by more than one hour, the high projected capital costs make implementation difficult, particularly given that the project would have difficulty qualifying for federal funding. Nonetheless, we agree that MassDOT should continue the analysis to determine how changing travel patterns and future federal, state, and local funding programs could be beneficial, including carbon pricing and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) fees.</p> <p>We also offer these additional comments: Phasing: The study findings note that over two-thirds of the projected ridership is between Boston and Springfield. Future studies should consider an approach that includes an early phase of rail to Springfield with coordinated bus services connecting Pittsfield and Springfield. Other intercity passenger rail projects in the US have had similar bus/rail phased implementations that could bring insight into a phased implementation, with the goal of an ultimate one-seat passenger rail operation from Boston to Pittsfield. Future Travel Needs: We agree with the study recommendation to survey businesses and residents across the Commonwealth on how post-COVID travel and living trends, including work-from-home policies, might impact future travel and possibly make living outside of the Boston core more attractive. Findings from this survey would be helpful for the rail study as well other regional and statewide travel modeling. Operations and Governance: We agree with the recommendation for a white paper on governance structure options for passenger rail outside of the MBTA service area. The paper should include best practices from states that have successful state rail programs including Virginia, North Carolina, California, and Florida. This should also include an analysis of how these states coordinate with their freight rail partners. Funding Options: While the report includes a list of potential funding and finance options, a more detailed analysis of which funding and finance programs the project might qualify for, or show the most promise, would be helpful.</p> <p>Summary Table: The summary table 1-2 in the Executive Summary would be more useful if total travel times were included, as well as the number of projected round trips. The table should also include a footnote on where readers can learn more about the "Enhanced Hartford Line" and "Downeaster" scenarios in the report, as there is no explanatory text of these terms in the Executive Summary.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at tpollack@mapc.org.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-110	Jim Geary		jim.geary@outlook.com	<p>As a resident of Worcester I strongly support east-west rail improvements in the Commonwealth. Not only would this improve mobility for Mass residents, but it would allow connections to CT, NY, VT, and beyond. While airports, seaports, and highways are often rightly viewed as "loss leaders" that must be expanded and improved to drive the economy, rail for some reason is expected to justify its own existence through fare collection. This is wrong. We must invest in rail regardless of revenue projections just as we must invest in our airports regardless of current flight density. East-west rail will pay off tax revenue in the long run, and the Commonwealth must start now while borrowing costs are cheap, to provide a robust rail network for the next generation.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-111	Matthew Barison		workingdefinition@gmail.com	<p>This major undertaking is needed and would be a great benefit to the Commonwealth. I support the option that provides the fastest service, although even that option is not fast enough. I think we can do better and build a truly high speed rail system that does not share trackage (at least west of Worcester) with freight rail.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-112	Rev. Allison Stokes		gallisonstokes@gmail.com	<p>I believe that we should be acting now to reform and revitalize our transportation sector with both climate mitigation (reducing pollution from transportation) and climate adaptation (making our transportation system more resilient to a changing climate). My conviction about this comes, in part, from attending a webinar about TCI on Tuesday, November 10th: "The Transportation and Climate Initiative: Clean Transportation for Rural Communities."</p> <p>Given that transportation contributes over 40% of Massachusetts' greenhouse gas emissions, and is the largest source of air pollution of any sector of the state's economy, investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
DraftReport-113	Heidi C. Bara		bara.heidi@yahoo.com	<p>As a resident of Palmer, MA, "The Town of Seven Railroads", a train stop here would benefit 21 surrounding communities as well as revitalize Palmer's downtown. To be able to take a train to Springfield to watch a hockey game, Boston for a Sox game or museums and dinner. To be able to connect to NY City, Pittsfield to Albany and beyond to Canada. Boston needs Western Mass for affordable housing. The population in Western Mass would have access to more job opportunities in the city. If we can start with existing track, and as ridership increases , improvements can be made for a faster ride. The state of Massachusetts needs East West Rail, with a stop in Palmer.</p> <p>Thank you</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-114	Rep. Lindsay N. Sabadosa (D)	State House Representative, 1st Hampshire District	Lindsay.Sabadosa@mahouse.gov	<p>Thank you so much for your work on the East-West rail study. It has been interesting to watch this process unfold. I believe, however, as we have progressed with the study, we have run into, time and time again, its fundamental flaw: it looks only at Massachusetts. Our state has never, in recent times, invested in public transportation outside of the Boston area. Now, with the East-West rail study, we are, for one of the first times, examining rail outside of the eastern half of the state. In this study, we are ignoring what we have learned from the Valley Flyer, a much smaller project but an important one; we must work with other states. New England is simply too small to discuss rail as something that starts and ends in Massachusetts alone. From calculating potential ridership to determining who runs the railway system, East-West rail must be viewed in the context as a second Boston-NYC corridor, and an inland one that is less affected by climate change.</p> <p>In order to proceed and best access federal funding, Massachusetts must collaborate with CT and NY on a plan to make this rail a reality. We must calculate estimated ridership based on where and how people will travel, i.e. between our major urban centers in the Northeast. Massachusetts must either decide we are in the railroad business or we must find the partner that can run a service that is going to be cost effective for riders. We need a realistic cost of all the land that must be taken in order to make the service happen, a clear picture of the environmental impacts, a real list of barriers to construction with potential solutions, and a plan to present to the federal delegation in NY, CT, and MA that will allow them to secure the necessary funding for what will be a once in a generation project.</p> <p>The Northeast's infrastructure is failing on multiple fronts. Our roads were not built for high speed transportation. Our rail lines are barely usable, slow, and costly to maintain. Members of this advisory committee and the general public are asking the Commonwealth to make a bold investment and think beyond what we are currently doing to imagine what we could be doing. I hope that we will take this initial study and turn it into something that could be meaning not just for Massachusetts but for the entire Northeast region. We have the start of the second Northeast corridor within this study. We look forward to working with MassDOT as it explores the true potential of this rail and makes it a reality.</p>	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)

<p>DraftReport-115</p>	<p>Thomas Matuszko</p>	<p>Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Executive Director</p>	<p>tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org</p>	<p>November 19, 2020</p> <p>Dear Secretary Pollack,</p> <p>We appreciate the effort that has gone into the East/West Rail Feasibility Study which evaluates options for expanded passenger rail service across the Commonwealth. As you are aware, Berkshire County has very limited rail service. This study, along with the soon to be expected one for the northern route through Greenfield to North Adams, are key first steps in bringing about regularly scheduled service that will connect our region to other parts of the state. Our comments are intended to strengthen the integrity of the study and to clarify recommendations that will serve to set the direction for future efforts and lead to the implementation of reliable passenger rail service.</p> <p>Updated Cost Estimates Price estimates for the rail infrastructure improvements appear to be high and may overestimate the actual cost. It is recommended that a new price estimate for the improvements be developed by an organization whose main work is rail construction. This would likely improve the benefit cost ratio and provide a cost savings when the project proceeds to bidding/construction. Directly related to this, future efforts should focus on identifying ways to drive the cost down through innovation such as design build and public/private partnerships.</p> <p>Rail Service Operations and Oversight Discussion should be included regarding MassDOT's ability to provide oversight on passenger rail services. Options should be explored and evaluated to determine the approach to providing oversight on statewide rail programs and operations. Public-private partnerships should also be investigated and assessed which may result in substantial cost savings and reduced financial risk.</p> <p>Economic Benefits The Benefit Cost analysis could be improved by taking into consideration the indirect economic benefits which will result from enhanced rail service. This new service will increase economic activity and add new jobs; increasing ridership above what is reflected in the study. This effect stemming from increased economic activity should be reflected in new ridership projections and the recalculation of the benefit cost. The draft report recommends working with local and regional governments to facilitate land use decisions. The final report should also include a recommendation for MassDOT to work with and actively engage local and regional governments to identify indirect economic benefits.</p> <p>Commitment to Further Progress Most of the recommendations contained in the draft study require further effort. MassDOT should commit to providing the necessary staff support and resources to move identified actions along and insure that they be completed in a professional and expeditious manner and do not languish. The final report should include a schedule for MassDOT to complete these efforts.</p> <p>Preferred Alternative BRPC recommends that the 4/5 hybrid be selected as the preferred alternative. It provides the fastest travel time, has the largest number of daily trains, and has the greatest potential for this alternative to achieve success. The draft report recommends keeping Alternatives 3 and 4 under consideration until additional information is known. It is recommended that only one alternative, the 4/5 hybrid, be selected as the only alternative so that it can be expeditiously advanced in greater detail.</p> <p>Travel Time Improvement The maximum speed between Springfield and Pittsfield is indicated as being 59 miles per hour. This is the slowest speed rating along the entire route. Improvements should be identified that would increase the average speed of 44 mph and improve the travel time of 1:12 hours between Pittsfield and Springfield.</p> <p>Corridor Acquisition Analysis All the alternatives developed in the study are based on the premise that CSX will remain the owner and based on CSX passenger rail requirements that are over burdening and costly. This has resulted in a significant number of improvements being required for the proposed service which come with a significant price tag. An alternative approach</p>	<p>Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)</p>
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ID No. (date)	Name	Address/Affiliation	Email	Comment (verbatim if email or comment form, see PDFs for letters)	Source
				District The Honorable John Barrett, Representative, 1st Berkshire District The Honorable Paul Mark, Representative, 2nd Berkshire District The Honorable Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Representative, 3rd Berkshire District The Honorable Smitty Pignatelli, Representative, 4th Berkshire District Mayor Linda Tyer, City of Pittsfield Jonathan Butler, President and CEO, 1Berkshire	
DraftReport-116	Robert & Lynne Horvath		lynnehorvath@outlook.com	Ywo things: Sooner or later we are going to kill our world with travel and transport (car, bus, airplane) emissions. It's looking more like sooner. We must make high capacity vehicle travel available. For Pete's sake, look at Europe and Asia. 2) In Western Massachusetts, we want to grow our towns and economy despite weather problems,, but can't do it with such large distances and one major highway. We need easy, inexpensive travel (Amtrak is exorbitant).	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-117	Ron Yaple		ronyaple1@gmail.com	When our children were young in the early 2000's, we took two family trips from Pittsfield to Boston. The Lake Shore Limited ran late from Albany and the crawl over the Berkshire Hills seemed to last forever, and we sat while CSX freight took priority. Nonetheless we enjoyed our journey and accepted the extra time compared to the Mass Pike. Our trip was for leisure. A commuter daily trip, if over 3 hours would be out of the question. Even so, I support improved tracks, trains, and other infrastructure and will use the trains to Boston over the next 20-30 years in my retirement. I'd rather be relaxing, reading, and writing than sitting at a crawl on the Mass Pike. The absurdity of car travel for commuting and long-distance leisure should be obvious to everyone by now. I'll conclude with this: MassDOT should focus on immediate steps that would improve connectivity for western Mass. An additional round trip to Pittsfield in the morning and evening, to complement the existing daily Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, would be relatively simple and low cost, and I understand that detailed specifications for such a service are being discussed among rail advocates and experts. I'd like to see cooperation between all parties to implement this improvement as soon as possible.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-118	Amy Cairy		amylmoy@yahoo.com	This service would open up many more job opportunities for myself and my family. Certainly, it would do the same for countless others.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)
DraftReport-119	Adam Garvey		adamjg9@comcast.net	The East-West Rail would be game changing for the entire state. Palmer, the town of seven railroads has a perfectly, centrally location for a station. The Massachusetts Turnpike exit and route 20 lead you right into downtown Palmer, making an easy location for daily commuters. This project would benefit the entire state, offering Boston residents affordable housing. This opens up doors for western mass, with jobs and opportunities. Many area residents work in Boston and commute. I would rather spend my money in Massachusetts, rather than West Hartford, and Manchester CT. as the commute is so much easier. This project is way overdue, and EVERYONE would benefit.	Comment on Draft Public Report (October - November 2020)