



East-West Passenger Rail Study Update MassDOT Board of Directors

April 13, 2020

Update on Study Process

- Study began December 2018
- With input from the Advisory Committee, developed project goals:
 - Better transportation options to/from Western MA
 - Support economic development
 - Improve attractiveness of Western MA as an affordable place to live
 - Reduce auto trips along the corridor
 - Reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality
- Study Team developed 6 Preliminary Alternatives
 - 5 followed existing CSX rail corridor to different degrees; 1 created new corridor along I-90
 - 3 offered combinations of bus and rail between Pittsfield and Boston
 - Travel times, costs, ridership and impacts of each varied



Update on Study Process

- Advisory Committee stated clear preferences for Alternatives with continuous rail service all the way between Pittsfield and Boston
- Advisory Committee and public raised questions on ridership forecasts and conceptual construction costs at February 2020 meetings
- MassDOT has been working to respond to these questions in preparation to narrowing the six Preliminary Alternatives to three
- Advisory Committee meeting being planned for April 2020 to answer questions and narrow down to three Alternatives for additional analysis

Questions from the Advisory Committee

Q: Ridership estimates seem low, particularly when compared to MassDOT's 2015 Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI) study

- *Study Team will clarify East-West ridership compared to similar segments included in NNEIRI, and will present alternative analyses for model forecasting*
- *As previously planned, the ridership analysis will also include induced demand based on area type*

Q: Can you expand demographic coverage to better capture rural travel patterns and student populations?

- *Study Team will examine ridership impacts of increasing Western MA station buffers from 20 miles to 40 miles*

Q: Capital costs seem too high, especially when compared to NNEIRI

- *Study Team will update/clarify cost estimate elements and provide cost comparisons to similar corridors*

Next Steps

- Meeting with the full Advisory Committee late April/early May to discuss and **narrow the six Preliminary Alternatives down to three for final analysis**
 - *What are your service priorities?*
 - *What tradeoffs are acceptable? Not acceptable?*
 - *Are there hybrids of the alternatives that we should consider?*
 - *What are the three alternatives that should be studied in greater detail?*

Next Steps

Analysis of three final Alternatives to include:

- Final ridership forecasts
- Rail Traffic Controller modeling
- Benefit – Cost Analysis
- Final cost estimates and high-level funding assessment

Expected final Report and Recommendations

- Discussion and evaluation of 3 Alternatives
- Recommended next steps and follow up inquiries