



Virtual Public Workshop Announcement

A virtual public workshop for the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study will be held on **Wednesday, January 11, 2023, at 6:00 PM via Zoom**. At this public workshop, the Study team will present the two initial service plan alternatives and evaluation framework. Feedback received will be used to develop four additional service plan alternatives as part of Phase 2.

Information about registering for this meeting is available on the Study [website](#).

Railroad 101 - Intercity and Commuter Services

There are many variations among trains and rail services. Among the most critical are the distinctions between intercity and commuter passenger rail services, as various federal laws and regulations define these services.

This section is the continuation of the Commuter Rail Service vs. Intercity Rail Passenger Service discussion included in the June 2022 newsletter.

Commuter Rail

Commuter rail services serve markets consisting of commuters generally travelling from suburban and smaller urban areas to work in a central urban location. Other characteristics also help define commuter rail service. They include service schedules around typical office hours, closely spaced stations and stops, and the use of multi-ride tickets and passes.

Intercity Passenger Rail

Federal statute defines "intercity rail service" as all passenger rail service except commuter rail service. This broad definition includes a variety of service options. All of them include amenities suitable to the type of service for passenger comfort that are not typically found on commuter rail trains, including comfortable seats, meals and washrooms on most cars. Long distance train service ranges from 750 to 2,800 miles.

This type of train includes Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited that operates between Boston and Chicago, IL.

"High speed" intercity passenger rail service in the United States has been considered to be a route of up to 500 miles and attaining highest speed of about 160 miles per hour. The only current example of high-speed rail service in the U. S. is the Amtrak Acela service that operates between Boston, MA and Washington D.C.

"Regional intercity rail" service routes can be up to 750 miles in length and include the "Downeaster" running between Portland, ME and Boston, MA. It is sponsored by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) and operated by Amtrak.

Why are definitions important?

The main distinction is how the federal government funds passenger rail projects and which agency oversees the projects as they are developed. The Federal Transit Administration of the U. S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) funds and oversees commuter rail projects and does not fund or oversee intercity rail projects. In turn, the USDOT Federal Railroad Administration provides funding and oversight of intercity rail projects only, and not commuter rail projects.

Another reason the definitions are important is that Amtrak has the right under federal law to access the facilities on any other railroad property. No other entity has this right of access in the United States.

Because of these distinctions, the type of passenger rail service being planned is very important. To review the Massachusetts Intercity Passenger Rail Governance White Paper, which includes additional information, please visit the MassDOT East-West Passenger Rail Study website at: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/east-west-passenger-rail-study-documents#governancewhite-paper>

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is conducting a study to examine the benefits, costs, and investments necessary to implement passenger rail service from North Adams to Greenfield and Boston, with the speed, frequency, and reliability necessary to be a competitive option for travel along this corridor. Please visit the Study website for more information on the project: <https://www.mass.gov/northern-tier-passenger-rail-study>.

If information is needed in another language, please contact the MassDOT Title VI Specialist by phone at (857) 368-8580.

Caso esta informação seja necessária em outro idioma, favor contar o Especialista em Título VI do MassDOT pelo fone 857-368-8580.

Si necesita información en otro lenguaje, favor contactar al especialista de MassDOT del Título VI al 857-368-8580.

如果需要使用其它语言了解信息, 请联系马萨诸塞州交通部 (MassDOT) 《民权法》第六章专职人员, 电话 857-368-8580。

如果需要使用其它语言了解信息, 請聯系馬薩諸塞州交通部 (MassDOT) 《民權法》第六章專職人員, 電話 857-368-8580。