

Rail & Transit Report

Meredith Slesinger

Administrator

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Transit Activities

RTA Council Meeting

Secretary Tesler chaired the May 10th meeting of the RTA Council. The following items were discussed:

Item 1 Battery Electric Bus Phase 1 – Efficiency Analysis

Item 2 Bus Operator Shortage Research Project

Item 3 The Transit Workforce Center (TWC): FTA's National Technical Assistance Center for Transit Workforce Development

VTA 5311 Audit

MassDOT conducted a required Internal 5311 Audit of Martha's Vineyard Transit on May 2nd and 3rd

MArtap Helping Hands Mini Grant

This grant round opens May 16th and closes June 17th and provides councils on aging and non-profit organizations with small capital purchases to help improve the delivery of transportation services. Past awards have included items such as laptops, printers, GPS systems, tires, and PPE.

FY 2023 Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP) Grants

- MassDOT now accepting applications for FY2023 IRAP grants from freight rail-supported businesses across MA to expand or improve rail or freight access, economic opportunity, safety and job growth.
- Applicants must match public funds w/private funds, with private funds paying at least 40% of a project's total cost.
- Applications due by close of business on **Thursday, June 9, 2022.**
- Recent round of IRAP awards provided total of almost \$3 million to 7 projects expected to create or retain at least 100 new jobs, eliminate 19,000 truck trips each year, and support over 5,000 rail car deliveries each year for statewide businesses.
- Info: <https://www.mass.gov/industrial-rail-access-program>

Berkshire Flyer Pilot Starts July 8th

- Amtrak, in conjunction w/MassDOT and New York State Department of Transportation announced pilot seasonal passenger rail service to operate this year and in 2023 to be known as the Berkshire Flyer, with a route between New York City and Pittsfield, MA.
- Service starts July 8 and will operate on weekends through the summer w/similar schedule next year.
- Berkshire Flyer will include a Friday afternoon departure from New York's Penn Station to Pittsfield, MA, via Albany-Rensselaer, NY. A return trip will be provided on Sunday afternoons. Each train will make several station stops.
- Berkshire Flyer pilot's success will be evaluated to further understand the feasibility and demand of the service before continuing the service, deciding on its schedule if it is to continue, and identifying specific infrastructure improvements or service changes that may be necessary.
- Tickets available soon for purchase on [Amtrak.com](https://www.amtrak.com), the Amtrak app, Amtrak ticket desks and kiosks, and through 1-800-USA-RAIL.

Recent Developments

CSX Acquisition of Pan Am Railways Approved by STB

CSX agreed to:

- Host the Berkshire Flyer in CY 2022 and 2023; infrastructure investment requirements to be determined after two pilot seasons
- Cooperate with Amtrak and third party public agencies to identify improvements to make accelerated speeds on the Pan Am routes and CSXT's Albany-Worcester route and work in good faith to make such improvements promptly
- Commitments from CSX to explore increased passenger service on the Boston-Albany main line. Infrastructure improvements to protect Wachusett Reservoir

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

- Significant federal investment in passenger rail via Amtrak and discretionary grant programs
- FRA Federal-State Partnership has \$12 billion for National Network grants (i.e., appropriate for Western Mass. Rail services). FRA Federal State Partnership has \$24 billion for NEC. NOFOs expected in October and December 2022, respectively.

Next Steps

Service & Infrastructure Planning

- Continue working with Amtrak on feasibility of incremental service improvement plan with near-term focus on improved service between Springfield and Boston (Inland Route) with Springfield as second rail hub in Massachusetts with additional service to Albany
- Update state rail plan to support BIL-driven federal grant applications
- Continue working with Amtrak to pursue federal funds for Positive Train Control funding for the Knowledge Corridor

Pending Federal Grant Applications

- Safety and Security Improvements on the Knowledge Corridor (CRISI)
- Preliminary engineering for Springfield Area Track Reconfiguration (CRISI)

Springfield Area Track Reconfiguration

CRISI grant application pending. \$3.5 million total project cost for preliminary engineering and environmental evaluation. (50% match).

The track changes associated with this project will improve the capacity and efficiency of train movements in the Springfield area and allow for the terminal area to accept the growth in service anticipated for the region. Project improvements will provide direct benefits in reducing travel times and preventing delays on Amtrak's Vermonter, Valley Flyer, and Lake Shore Limited services; averting freight and passenger rail conflicts; facilitating freight operations at the West Springfield Intermodal Yard; and improving passenger rail accessibility.

Additionally, Springfield Union Station sits at the crossroads of major north-south and east-west railroad lines. Improvements included in the Springfield Area Track Reconfiguration Project will provide the foundation for other future rail projects under consideration by MassDOT and Amtrak and unlock the potential for increased and improved rail service across New England and the Northeast.