

ID_No	Name	Comment	MassDOT Response
1	James Garrett	<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>	<p>The East - West Passenger Rail study area and goals were different from NNEIRI, and were intended to explore potential pathways towards additional passenger rail service between Western and Eastern Massachusetts. The study leveraged analysis from the previous NNEIRI effort, and also developed more detailed capital cost estimates for alignments and technologies, as well as speeds and travel times that were not investigated within NNEIRI.</p> <p>As noted in Chapters 1 and 6, there is additional work to be done to fully complete the conceptual planning stage for East-West rail. This work includes discussions with CSX about certain physical/operational elements and requirements, understand the governance options for expanded passenger rail in Massachusetts, more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts, and evaluation of funding sources and strategies.</p>
2	Ann Marie Messbauer	<p>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.)</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.</p>
3	Roland Cadorette	<p>I would like to see East-West Rail in Massachusetts become a reality.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>

4	Athena O'Keeffe, Clerk of the Council	<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, PVTA 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;</p>	Thank you for your comments. We appreciate your interest and formal support regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
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Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation of the General Court; State Senator Joanne N. Comerford; and State Representative Mindy Domb.

5	Gail Farnsworth French (QRCC)	<p data-bbox="397 56 940 121">Makaela Niles, Project Manager MassDOT East-West Passenger Rail Study</p> <p data-bbox="397 170 604 203">Dear Ms. Niles,</p> <p data-bbox="397 251 1518 316">The Quaboag Region Coordinating Council (QRCC) encourages MassDOT to implement east-west passenger rail service across Massachusetts with a stop in Palmer.</p> <p data-bbox="397 365 1559 820">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 data-bbox="397 868 1518 982">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:</p> <p data-bbox="397 982 819 1015">https://youtu.be/iKV-MHeW7qI</p> <p data-bbox="397 1063 1532 1258">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 data-bbox="397 1299 1545 1445">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 (PVTA) 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</p>	<p data-bbox="1591 56 2593 203">We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.</p>
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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.

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.

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.

Sincerely yours,

Gail Farnsworth French,
QVDC
Chair, Quaboag Region Coordinating Council

6	Sarah Kleinschmidt	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.</p>
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7	Arnold Mark Zinan	<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>	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments.
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8	Kent Pattterson	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
9	Amanda Knightly	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
10	Greg Moore	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
11	Andy Berkvist	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>

12	Nathanael Nerode	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
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13	Hugh Barrett	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. This study presented a high-level, quantitative assessment of the changes in transportation-related emissions that would likely result from a wide-range of service scenarios. Future analysis could allow for the assessment of environmental, community health and equity implications of those emissions changes.</p>
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14	Kevin Tierney	<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>	<p>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. To clarify, the same ridership model employed for NNEIRI was used as a base from which to incrementally build this study's model. The study's Ridership Methodology document will be available on the study website.</p>
15	Tom Robitaille	<p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
16	Robert Kearns	<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</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.</p> <p>Although fares are implicitly incorporated via the two proxy services used for the ridership forecasts, the actual cost of a rail fare between two markets was not explicitly incorporated into the ridership model (or developed within this study).</p>

commuter rail over fluctuating fares of the Vermonter, Valley Flyer and Amtrak Northeast Corridor.

17

Betsy H. Port

Dear Ms. Niles-

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.

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.

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!!!

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We apologize for the difficulty in reading the graphs and charts during the meeting, and all meeting material has been posted to the study's website.

18	Peggy H. Davis	<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</p> <p>Peggy H. Davis Calligraphy 413-624-3204</p> <p>389 Adamsville Rd Colrain MA 01340</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. We appreciate your interest in the study. As you may be aware, legislation has passed that includes a study of passenger rail options between North Adams, Greenfield, and Boston via Route 2.</p>
19	Lauren Miller	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.</p>
20	Stephen	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments.</p>

21	Michelle O'Brien	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As detailed in Section 2.5 Civic Engagement, the study convened three public meetings where public feedback relative to the alternatives considered and evaluated was sought, including two in-person meetings held in Springfield (March 2019 and February 2020) and a virtual event in October 2020. The study also held six Advisory Committee meetings over the course of the study where members of the public were welcome to attend and participate.</p>
22	Kate Fletcher	<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,</p> <p>Kate Fletcher Planning Board Member Stockbridge, MA</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. We appreciate your interest in the study. None of the Preliminary or Final Alternatives contemplated improved bus service as the sole or primary means of connecting the corridor markets. While modern bus amenities increase passenger comfort, feedback from the Study Advisory Committee and general public was largely negative with regards to implementing bus service in place of new passenger rail connections. Although the Bus Rapid Transit technology was assessed during the development of alternatives, it was discarded due to its limited ability to achieve travel times that would be competitive (or faster) in the western portion of the corridor than the personal automobile.</p>

23	David Golden	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.</p>
24	Sasha Gainen-Truslow	<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.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. Chester's inclusion as a stop is due to calls from local advocates and the historical presence of a train station and passenger service. Amherst/Northampton does not lie on the existing rail corridor that all of the Final Alternatives employ, so it could not be a stop on the corridor service as defined in the Final Alternatives. However, those communities and others within the Five Colleges area all lie within the 20-mile ridership catchment radius for Springfield Station. In addition, the updated ridership forecasting methodology was adjusted in order to enhance the ability for trips to and from those communities via Springfield Union Station.</p>

25

jeffrey scott
penn

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. 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.

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.

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.

please consider
thank you
cheers
jeff

jeffrey scott penn, architect

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. This study was focused on connectivity between Pittsfield, Springfield and Boston. It is also important to note that the number of stops on a service has impacts on the overall travel time.

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26	Pieter W. Lips	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. CSX was formally advised the Study was being undertaken and has been provided periodic updates of its progress by MassDOT. The study team has been guided by CSX policies regarding operation of passenger service over its lines and has taken these policies into account in developing the service plans and infrastructure improvements envisioned for each alternative. As noted in Chapters 1 and 6, there is additional work to be done to fully complete the conceptual planning stage for East-West rail. This work includes discussions with CSX about certain physical/operational elements and requirements.</p> <p>Details related to the procurement of passenger rail locomotives and coaches, including the vendor, style, and model number, would be investigated in a subsequent phase.</p>
27	Jonathan Adams	<p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.</p>
28	Brad Blauhut	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>

29	Tamsin	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
30	Barbara Alexander	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.	<p>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. Consistent with the guidance provided by the federal government, the study's monetized benefits strictly flow from the transportation-related effects of the project (e.g., faster rail trips result in travel time savings, reduced transportation-related emissions, etc.). The Benefit-Cost Analysis Technical Memorandum will be made available on the study website and will provide more information on the process and inputs used within the benefit-cost analysis.</p> <p>As noted in Chapters 1 and 6, there is additional work to be done to fully complete the conceptual planning stage for East-West rail. This work includes a more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts.</p>
31	Matt Sokop	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.	Thank you for your comments. We appreciate your interest in the study. As Southborough is already served by the MBTA Commuter Rail, the provision of additional car storage at this location is unlikely to provide substantial benefits to residents of Western Massachusetts (especially those with limited or no access to a personal vehicle) or the intent of the study (i.e., examine passenger rail connections between Pittsfield, Springfield and Boston).

32

Joseph Zagrobelny

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!!

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.

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?

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.

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.

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

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments.

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.

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.

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.

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
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
3. Workforce

4. iSAIL Energy-Fin-Transit – Massachusetts East-West-Regional–International - including connection to Montreal and Quebec Hydro for energy decarbonization.

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!

Joe

Joseph Zagrobelny

Founder & CEO, Nine-AI | www.nine-ai.com | M: 781.825.3267 | joseph@nine-ai.com

33	David W.	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
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34	Anonymous	Consider a stop in Westfield, MA. Large college population would utilize this service frequently.	Thank you for your comments. We appreciate your interest in the study. Given its proximity to Springfield Union Station and the use of a 20-mile catchment area for the Preliminary and Final Alternatives ridership forecasts, it was assumed that the majority of ridership demand for new service to and from Westfield would be captured in Springfield. The potential for in-fill stations along a preferred alignment could be assessed in future analyses.
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35	William B. Freedberg	<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. 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>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
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That could create some good "P.R." for Amtrak and CSX.

We hear hopeful talk about East West rail, but too much focus on big size and enormous costs.

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.

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.

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.

We could and should work on this NOW.

Why wait for years of more studies and higher start up costs?

This letter includes portions of a letter I sent to the Springfield Republican, the Berkshire Eagle, and the Country Journal a few weeks ago.

Thank you for letting me comment with my THINK SMALL thoughts.

Respectfully.

William B. Freedberg

18 Winter Street
Northampton, MA 01060

Email willfreedberg@gmail.com

36	Martin Wasiak	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?	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.
37	Nicholas Schumacher	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. With improvements along the East-West corridor and given historical congestion levels in the eastern part of the state, it is anticipated that new passenger rail service could offer travel times that would be competitive and more reliable than travel by personal automobile.
38	Clay Oshiro-Leavitt	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

		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.	
39	Anthony Daly	<p>Dear Makaela Niles,</p> <p>I am writing in support of expanding East-West rail to Pittsfield.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Many thanks for your time and consideration.</p> <p>Best, Anthony Daly North Adams</p>	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
40	Frederick Smith	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.	We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.
41	Bonnie Kimberly Shackelford	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.	We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.

42	Paul David DeVries	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study and thank you for your comment regarding a preferred alternative. At this stage of conceptual planning, MassDOT recommends keeping Alternatives 3, 4, and 4/5 Hybrid under consideration, as additional information may be worth considering before the focus is narrowed to one or more alternatives. The next steps outlined Chapter 6 do not require the selection of one alternative.
43	Sheryl Chase	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	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
44	David Maloof	<p>Hello . . .</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>David Maloof</p>	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

45	Michael Follo	<p>To Mr. Ethan Birtland:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>I would greatly appreciate to hear back from you in regards to this project, my e-mail address is braves9@gmail.com</p> <p>Sincerely, Michael Follo</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. This conceptual planning study reflects a high-level feasibility analysis intended to explore and identify a wide range of infrastructure improvements and service scenarios that would facilitate new passenger rail connections between Western and Eastern Massachusetts. Chapter 6 details additional studies and analysis recommended to advance the conceptual planning stage prior to any project development actions.</p>
46	Eileen Bauer	<p>Phone: (617) 216-0978</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. In developing Preliminary Alternative 5, which was later refined into the Alternative 4/5 Hybrid, the central segment between Springfield and Worcester was assessed to identify the most cost-effective sections of track that could be realigned, balancing anticipated capital costs for improving the segment against its projected travel time savings.</p>

47	Cynthia Kowalczyk	<p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
48	David Phillips	<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 be 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 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</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. This study sought to generate infrastructure and service concepts for new passenger rail service along the existing rail corridor, as well as another corridor where higher speeds could potentially be achieved (Alternative 6 and I-90). It is worth noting that, to achieve the high speeds that could be realized along the I-90 alignment, electric (or dual-mode) trainsets and electrification of the central segment would be required.</p> <p>To clarify, Alternative 3 proposes the restoration of missing double-track segments between Springfield and Worcester (i.e., there would be two tracks, but they would be shared with CSX freight movements).</p>

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.

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.

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.

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.

D. Phillips

49

Amber Smith

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

We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.

50	Nathanael Nerode	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
51	Benjamin Turon	<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</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph. As noted in Chapters 1 and 6, there is additional work to be done to fully complete the conceptual planning stage for East-West rail. This work includes discussions with CSX about certain physical/operational elements and requirements.</p> <p>While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>

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.

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.

Benjamin Turon
Ballston Spa, NY

52

William N
Traylor

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.

As noted in Chapters 1 and 6, there is additional work to be done to fully complete the conceptual planning stage for East-West rail. This work includes discussions with CSX about certain physical/operational elements and requirements, understand the governance options for expanded passenger rail in Massachusetts, more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts, and evaluation of funding sources and strategies.

53	Dalton G Dwyer	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. Details regarding the assumptions and rates used within the benefit-cost analysis (BCA) presented at the end of Chapter 4 can be found in the Benefit-Cost Analysis Technical Memorandum, including the undiscounted values for each major component. As this was conceived as a transportation study, the BCA was conducted in accordance with USDOT's federal guidance for the evaluation of transportation projects for potential discretionary grant funding, which utilizes 7% as the standard discount rate. The Benefit-Cost Analysis Technical Memorandum will be made available on the study website.</p>
54	Steven E. Miller	<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.</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>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>

55	Peter Traub	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
56	Kyle pobieglo	<p>I travel to Worcester an Boston daily an a train from Palmer would be amazing</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
57	Philip Orenstein	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. Although buses are more flexible than rail, bus service may not offer travel times that are competitive with travel by automobile given historical congestion levels in eastern Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT will be evaluating how travel patterns and congestion may change and continue to change due to the pandemic across the state and across all transportation modes.</p>
58	Christopher Franks	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
59	M Linehan	<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</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.

While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.

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.

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.

61

JUDITH
BECHARD

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.

We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.

62	Sheila B. Irvin	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>As noted in Chapter 6, a more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts is recommended.</p>
63	James Kupernik	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>As noted in Chapter 6, a more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts is recommended.</p>
64	John Masiero	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>Electrification was investigated along the I-90 corridor within Alternative 6. However, the horizontal and vertical geometry of the existing rail corridor largely limits maximum achievable speeds in Alternatives 1-5 to a level that can still be attained using modern diesel equipment.</p>

65	Lisa A Powers	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
66	Brian Bissell	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p> <p>While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
67	Benjamin, Springfield Resident	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>

68	Steve Strauss (NYS Council Representative – Rail Passengers Association)	<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. 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</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>As noted in Chapter 6, project phasing could be an opportunity to respond to an interest in change sooner rather than later and can also be evaluated in the context of funding opportunities.</p>
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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.

Governance and Operations

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.

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.

Housing Costs and Other Economic Benefits

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 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.

Suggested Enhancements to This Study or Future Studies/White Papers

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).

69

Tracy Ducasse

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.

We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.

70

Paula Geier

Worked in inspection for Csx

Thank you for your comment.

71	Jim Brown	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
72	Anezka Sebek	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments.</p>
73	Katie Challinor	<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>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p>
74	Karen Christensen	<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</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. In January 2020, U.S. DOT released its Benefit-Cost Analysis guidance, including guidance related to residual value and discounting. Based on this guidance, and in accordance with OMB Circular A-94, a 7 percent discount rate is used for this analysis.</p>

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.

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.

75 Karen Christensen

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.

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.

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.

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.

While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.

76	Rachel Lucy Christensen	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
77	Nicholas Russo	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
78	Charles O'Brien	<p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>

79	Martha Klein	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</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>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p> <p>While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
80	Stephen Benedetti	<p>I think a rail stop in Palmer could greatly benefit the economy of this often overlooked part of the state.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.</p>
81	Melanie Drewnowski	<p>This would have many layers of benefits from work opportunities, extracurricular, educational while also increasing revenue for Boston plus decreasing emissions.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>

82	Ben Hood and Anne Miller	<p>Comment to MassDOT on [DRAFT] East-West Passenger Rail Study</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 	<p>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. The East - West Passenger Rail study area and goals were different from NNEIRI, and were intended to explore potential pathways towards additional passenger rail service between Western and Eastern Massachusetts. The study leveraged analysis from the previous NNEIRI effort, and also developed more detailed capital cost estimates for alignments and technologies, as well as speeds and travel times that were not investigated within NNEIRI.</p> <p>As noted in Chapter 6, the East - West Passenger Rail Study is a significant step forward in realizing the potential for enhanced service within the corridor. The next steps identified in this chapter continue to advance the conceptual planning phase for East - West Passenger Rail.</p>
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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

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.

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.

Ben Hood and Anne Miller
60 Buckland St.
Palmer, MA 01069
413-283-2141

Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop

<http://www.palmertrain.org>
palmertrain@gmail.com

83	Dan Gagner	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
84	Elise Lennon	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

85	Tom Hutcheson	<p data-bbox="397 56 887 126">Broaden Cost-Benefit Considerations November 19, 2020</p> <p data-bbox="397 175 1553 321">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 data-bbox="397 370 1559 597">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 data-bbox="397 646 1553 873">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 “siloing” 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 data-bbox="397 922 1564 1182">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 data-bbox="397 1230 1564 1409">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 data-bbox="397 1425 1553 1445">Similarly, without including the benefits of avoided carbon emissions, job site flexibility,</p>	<p data-bbox="1596 56 2623 284">Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. As noted in Chapter 6, the East - West Passenger Rail Study is a significant step forward in realizing the potential for enhanced service within the corridor. The next steps identified in this chapter continue to advance the conceptual planning phase for East - West Passenger Rail, including more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts.</p>
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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.

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.

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.

86

Megan Whilden

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,

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

		and environmental benefits need to be properly counted in order to show the true viability of East-West Rail.	
87	Monk Schane-Lydon	<p>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.</p> <p>The train should be a faster, cheaper alternative to get from A to B. Anything less is a waste of time.</p>	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
88	Cricket Saurel	<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> <p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>

89	Jeffrey Nathan	<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> <p>Sincerely, Jeffrey Nathan</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
90	Rosemary Starace	<p>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).</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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p> <p>While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
91	Charles Kenny	<p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments.</p>

92	John R Schreiber	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
93	David V Walker	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!	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
94	Lisa Andersen	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
95	Kristin Hatt	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

96	Barbara Palmer	<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>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p>
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97

Andrew Jennings

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.

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.

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.

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.

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,

Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.

In January 2020, U.S. DOT released its Benefit-Cost Analysis guidance, including guidance related to project benefits. As noted in Chapter 6, more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts is recommended.

and from improved utilization of fixed facilities. The potential benefits from partnering with MBTA, Amtrak, or CT rail were not highlighted.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

1) Even this question is timid as it minimizes the desire of those in central and eastern Massachusetts to access western Massachusetts

98	Massachusetts Sierra Club	<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 	<p>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>In January 2020, U.S. DOT released its Benefit-Cost Analysis guidance, including guidance related to project benefits. As noted in Chapter 6, MassDOT has recommended next steps to continue advancing the conceptual planning phase for East - West Passenger Rail, including more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts.</p>
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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.

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.

99	Nicholas McGee	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
100	Dominick Villane	<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</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As noted in Chapter 6, MassDOT recommends an evaluation of funding sources and strategies.</p>

		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.	
101	Carlene Tavares	Western Mass is the best kept secret - please help the East coasters discover - all the treasure nestled in the Berkshire Hills	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.
102	Ben Sands	<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. bfs43@cornell.edu</p>	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.
103	Matthew Sanchez	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

104	David Guenette	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
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105	Toby Butterfield	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p>
106	Daniel Cantwell	<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,</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>

investment in passenger rail should be given priority in the region's recovery plans.

Thank you,

Daniel H. Cantwell, Registered Architect, Owner, DHC Design

danielhcantwell@gmail.com

107	MARYJANE DUNLOP	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments. As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.
108	MARYJANE DUNLOP	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.	We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

109	Travis Pollack (MAPC)	<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:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. As noted in Chapter 6, MassDOT has recommended next steps to continue advancing the conceptual planning phase for East - West Passenger Rail, including more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts, and an evaluation of funding sources and strategies.</p>
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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.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at tpollack@mapc.org.

Sincerely,
Travis Pollack, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner
Metropolitan Area Planning Council

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Jim Geary

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

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.

		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.	
111	Matthew Barison	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.	Thank you for your comments. We appreciate your interest in the study. Except when transitioning in and out of stations, two of the three Final Alternatives (Alternative 4 and 4/5 Hybrid) would operate along a new separate, passenger-only track between Springfield and Worcester. Between Pittsfield and Springfield, each of the Final Alternatives would increase capacity via the restoration of a missing double-track segment, but passenger trains would continue to share the corridor with freight movements.
112	Rev. Allison Stokes	<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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p>
113	Heidi C. Bara	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	We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.

of Massachusetts needs East West Rail, with a stop in Palmer.
Thank you

114

Rep. Lindsay N. Sabadosa

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.

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.

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

We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.

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.

115	Thomas Matuszko (BRPC)	<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>Thank you for your comment. We appreciate your interest in the study. While this conceptual study effort is focused on passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston, extensions or connecting service could be examined as part of any future permitting or project development.</p> <p>In January 2020, U.S. DOT released its Benefit-Cost Analysis guidance, including guidance related to project benefits. As noted in Chapter 6, MassDOT has recommended next steps to continue advancing the conceptual planning phase for East - West Passenger Rail, including further discussion with CSX, more detailed study of economic and community benefits and impacts, understanding governance options for expanded passenger rail service in Western Massachusetts, and exploring funding sources and strategies.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p>
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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.

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.

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.

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 could be to acquire the corridor from CSX. A cost analysis could determine the price point where it would be more cost effective to acquire the corridor and lessen the amount of CSX required improvements. Also, by acquiring the corridor, passenger service would not suffer from operation decisions being made by a freight railroad.

Construction Phasing

It is recommended that construction of system upgrades for the preferred alternative, 4/5 hybrid, emanate out of Springfield in a simultaneous manner towards both Pittsfield and Worcester. This will serve to insure that connectivity to Pittsfield does occur and occur much sooner in comparison to construction of improvements beginning in Boston

or Worcester and moving west

Operating and Maintenance (O/M) Costs

The document lacks detailed data on O/M costs for the various alternatives. At a minimum, this information should be provided for the 4/5 hybrid alternative. This information is critical to determine the price point for tickets and to determine what level of subsidy will be necessary. Please add this information to final document along with any other anticipated revenue. Related to operations, the RTC rail corridor capacity analysis was not mentioned in the draft. Please add a discussion and include the analysis in the appendix to the final report.

Service Connection to Albany

The study's recommendations should advise that this new east-west service should connect to Albany/Rensselaer and that MassDOT Rail and Transit Division initiate discussion with Amtrak and NYSDOT. By adding this 37 mile segment, additional options are created and can further increase ridership and provide additional economic opportunities.

Engage CSX

For this new service to become operational, approval from CSX is required. Conversation with CSX should begin immediately to be able to implement this east-west service in a timely manner. Waiting for some future point to start a dialogue would likely lead to further delays. Also, these discussions can be used to determine if CSX has any interest in selling this corridor.

Green House Gas Emission (GHG) Reductions

This study determined that the displacement of vehicles and mode shift to rail will not provide a net reduction in emissions due to high level of pollutant emissions from the locomotives. The study should recommend that more attention be given to identifying a cleaner fuel or another locomotive type that has lower emissions and results in lower GHG emissions.

Legislation and Funding

The final document should include a discussion on appropriations and authorization legislation to secure funding for this rail project at both the State and Federal level. Including policy recommendations for funding and corresponding amounts will assist

legislators as they develop their bills to acquire funds. The study is limited in its discussion on other potential funding sources and at a minimum a list of funding sources should be included.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the draft East/West Passenger Rail Study and trust that these comments will be addressed in the final document. BRPC is committed to improving mobility options in the region and looks forward to working with MassDOT in advancing this effort through to service implementation.

These comments were endorsed by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission at its meeting on November 19, 2020.

116	Robert & Lynne Horvath	<p>Two 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).</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>MassDOT is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution stemming from transportation in the Commonwealth and will continue to explore the environmental and social benefits that new and/or increased passenger rail service can provide throughout the state.</p>
117	Ron Yapple	<p>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:</p> <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>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p> <p>As the existing rail corridor is owned by CSX west of Worcester, any passenger rail operator, even Amtrak, must comply with their terms and conditions. Current CSX guidance related to high-speed passenger trains requires the development a separate, passenger-only track to avoid interfering with freight movements wherever the passenger train operating speeds exceed 90 mph.</p>
118	Amy Cairy	<p>This service would open up many more job opportunities for myself and my family. Certainly, it would do the same for countless others.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest in the study, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts.</p>
119	Adam Garvey	<p>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.</p>	<p>We appreciate your interest and formal support in this effort, and thank you for your comments regarding west to east passenger rail service in Massachusetts. We are also confirming that a rail station stop in Palmer is in each of the Three Final Alternatives.</p>