

EA/EIE PUBLIC HEARINGS

JUNE 2012

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

NEW BRITAIN

Torp Theatre, Davidson Hall
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT

Time: 7:00 PM
Date: June 7, 2012

ENFIELD

Asnuntuck Community College
170 Elm Street
Enfield, CT

Time: 7:00 PM
Date: June 13, 2012

NORTH HAVEN

North Haven High School
221 Elm Street
North Haven, CT

Time: 7:00 PM
Date: June 14, 2012



| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Study Background | 2 |
| Alternatives Considered | 2 |
| Environmental Impacts | 3 |
| Get Involved & Stay Informed | 4 |

Public Hearings

This public hearing is your opportunity to voice your opinion regarding the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Line High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE). The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), the project sponsor in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MASSDOT), is seeking your comments on improvements that address service-level issues resulting from implementation of the Intercity Passenger Rail Program. The Public Hearings will include a formal presentation followed by an opportunity for public comment. Between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. prior to the formal hearing, the public can view project displays and speak with members of the CTDOT project team.

Participants wishing to comment on the project may do so at the hearing. All oral comments made at the Public Hearings will be recorded. Forms will also be available at the hearings for those wishing to make written comments, either by depositing them into the comment box or submitting them by mail or email to the address shown in the orange "Review and Comment on the EA/EIE" call out box on the left. All written and recorded comments will become part of the Public Hearing record. The 45-day Comment Period began on May 8th and will close on June 22nd. We urge citizens to let us know their views on the proposed project.

REVIEW AND COMMENT ON THE EA/EIE

The Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation (EA/EIE) for the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Rail Program is now available on the program website at www.NHHSrail.com. Copies of the EA/EIE are also available at local town halls and libraries of communities along the corridor.

Public hearings will provide a forum for public comments on the EA/EIE. Comments can also be submitted directly on the program website at www.NHHSrail.com or by mail to:

Mr. Mark W. Alexander,
Transportation Assistant Planning Director,
P.O. Box 317546,
Newington, CT 06131-7546

e-mail address: Mark.W.Alexander@ct.gov

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed project is to increase the safety, quality, frequency, and speed of passenger service along the NHHS rail corridor and to address the current and future transportation needs of Connecticut, Central Massachusetts, Boston and Vermont. This project also proposes to fulfill Connecticut's goal of providing additional commuting options along the corridor by increasing the number of daily trains through several of the communities along the corridor.

The current rail infrastructure between Springfield, Massachusetts, and New Haven, Connecticut, is insufficient to handle the growth expected in the Northeast market. The need for the project is to address the congestion, capacity constraints, and the population and expected ridership growth in the project area. The Northeast market for intercity travel is estimated to reach 200 million medium-distance trips (between 100 and 400 miles) across all major transportation modes – auto, air, and rail – by 2025. With expected population growth, and increased capacity constraints on the study area's highways and at major airports, Amtrak's preliminary estimates are that intercity passenger rail ridership in the Northeast could double by 2030.

Study Background

The NHHS rail corridor includes 62 miles of existing rail line, owned and operated by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak). Historically, the rail corridor included two or more tracks along its entire length, but today consists of just 23.3 miles of double track and 38.7 miles of single track. Passenger rail service in this once-robust corridor declined over the latter half of the 20th century. Currently, passenger service consists of no more than the six to eight daily round-trip passenger trains between New Haven and Springfield (with one continuing to Washington, D.C.) and a single daily round trip between Washington, D.C., via New Haven and Springfield, and St. Albans, Vermont.

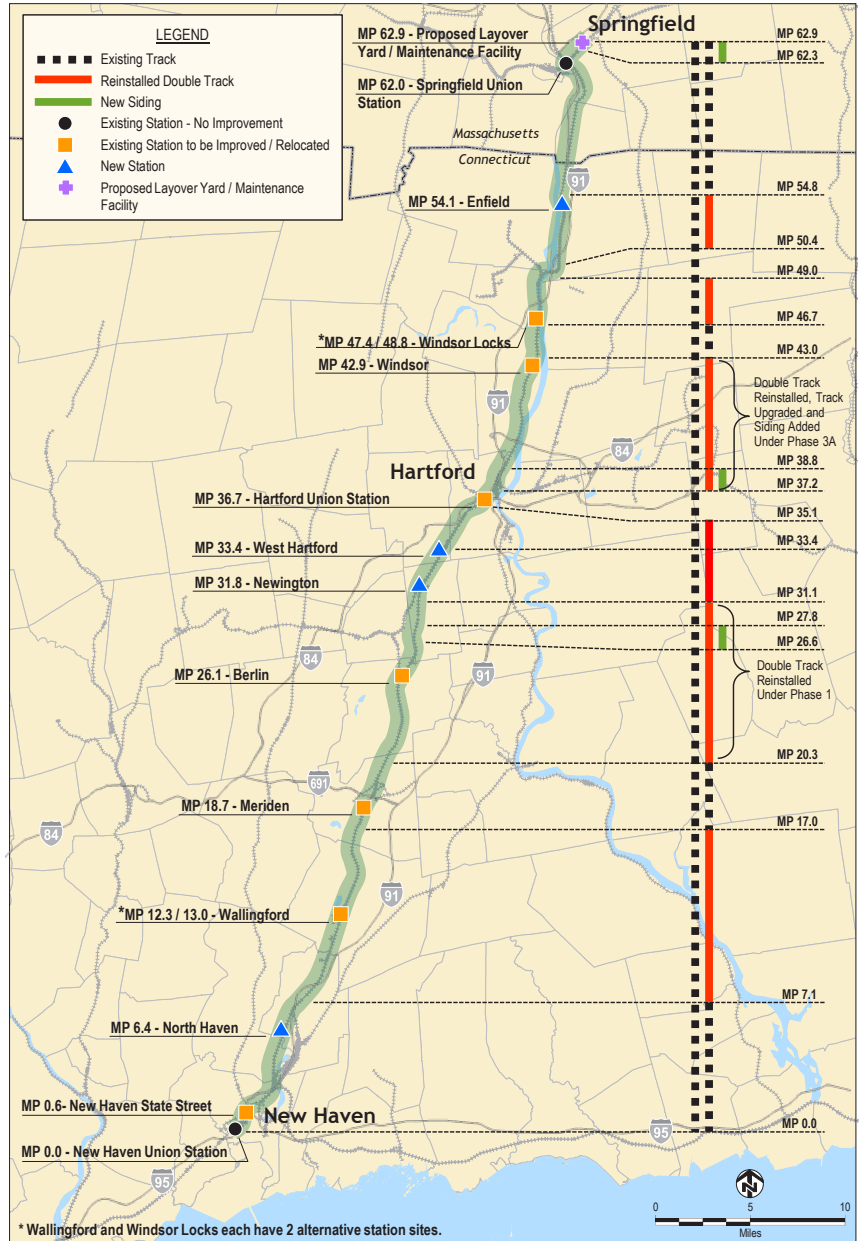
... continued on page 4

Alternatives Considered

The EA/EIE evaluated a No-Build and Build alternative. The No-Build Alternative represents conditions in the future analysis year (2030) without implementation of the proposed project, and serves as the future baseline against which anticipated effects of the Build Alternative are compared to identify any significant project-related impacts. The Build Alternative (the proposed project) would provide for enhanced passenger rail service in the NHHS rail corridor, related rail capacity and train speed improvements, and rail infrastructure improvements (NHHS Rail Program), which are necessary to support the service enhancement.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative assumes that passenger rail infrastructure in the NHHS rail corridor would be maintained in a state of good repair, potentially including any necessary safety and state-of-good repair improvements to the Connecticut River Bridge and the Hartford Viaduct. The No-Build Alternative also includes standard maintenance of the existing bridges and culverts throughout the corridor that are not included in the proposed project. No restoration, improvement or new construction of passenger rail infrastructure would be undertaken in the corridor except as required by Amtrak to maintain safe rail operations.



NHHS Rail Corridor and Proposed Improvements

Build Alternative

The proposed service plan would provide a one-seat ride or cross-platform transfers on service from Washington, D.C. and New York to Springfield, and to Boston and the Knowledge Corridor in the future. The proposed service will provide bi-directional, 30-minute peak-hour service and hourly midday service in the NHHS rail corridor. Related operational improvements include an increase in the capacity of the line to accommodate additional trains, an increase in the maximum train speed from 80 mph to 110 mph, service to future FTA-funded new regional rail stations and reduced scheduled travel times. These operational improvements, in turn, require rail infrastructure improvements including: double tracking replacement, improvements to existing intercity stations, construction of new stations, construction of a layover and light maintenance facility, new railroad passing sidings, and bridge improvements.

Environmental Impacts

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires CTDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration to evaluate many categories of potential physical, natural, and human environmental impacts for the alternatives under consideration for improving the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail corridor. This environmental document has also been prepared in accordance with the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA). The EA/EIE completed for the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield corridor discusses the various impacts and the mitigation associated with each of the improvements in detail. Refer to Chapter 4 of the EA/EIE for further information.

A summary table of the key physical, natural, and human environmental impacts is shown below.



State-Endangered Sick-Leaved Golden Aster

Summary of Key Impacts and Benefits

| <i>Environmental Resource</i> | <i>Potential Impacts and Benefits</i> | <i>Proposed Mitigation</i> |
|---|---|---|
| Physical Environment: Noise and Vibration | Horn noise will not be louder but more frequent and may cause severe and moderate noise impacts. | Establishing Quiet Zones for severe and moderate horn noise impacts which eliminate horn usage in designated areas. |
| Physical Environment: Floodways, Floodplains and Stream Channels | Floodway, floodplain, and stream channel encroachment. | Coordination with CTDEEP and compliance with all federal requirements. |
| Natural Environment: Critical Environmental Areas and Threatened and Endangered Species | Listed species and/or their habitats occur in Connecticut in the vicinity of proposed project improvements. | Work will be within existing railroad right-of-way minimizing potential risk to critical habitats and associated species. Further coordination with USFWS and CTDEEP will occur throughout design and construction. |
| Natural Environment: Wetlands | Potential impacts to approximately 4 acres of wetlands from various project improvements. | Minimize expansion of right-of-way and potential mitigation through CTDEEP and USACE permitting process and appropriate compensatory mitigation. |
| Natural Environment: Prime Farmlands and Farmlands of Statewide Importance | Potential impacts to approximately 4 acres of prime farmland and farmlands of statewide importance along the 62 mile corridor. | Application of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form, and compensatory mitigation. |
| Human Environment: Socioeconomics | Potential impacts would be beneficial, including construction and long-term job creation and induced development near stations. Connections to livable communities along corridor. | N/A |
| Human Environment: Property Acquisitions and Displacements | Potential property acquisitions which would be consistent with local development plans. | Uniform Relocation Act will apply to any property acquisition or taking. |
| Human Environment: Cultural Resources and Section 4(f) | The entire corridor is eligible for listing on the Nation Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as a thematically linked historic district. | Further evaluation of the potential impacts will be completed as stipulated in the Programmatic Agreement. |
| Human Environment: Transportation/Traffic | Potential traffic "level-of-service" impacts due to the increased number of trains and increased station traffic at some grade crossings and at intersections near stations. Provides fast and convenient regional transportation system. | Traffic congestion will be mitigated with traffic signal timing and intersection improvements. |

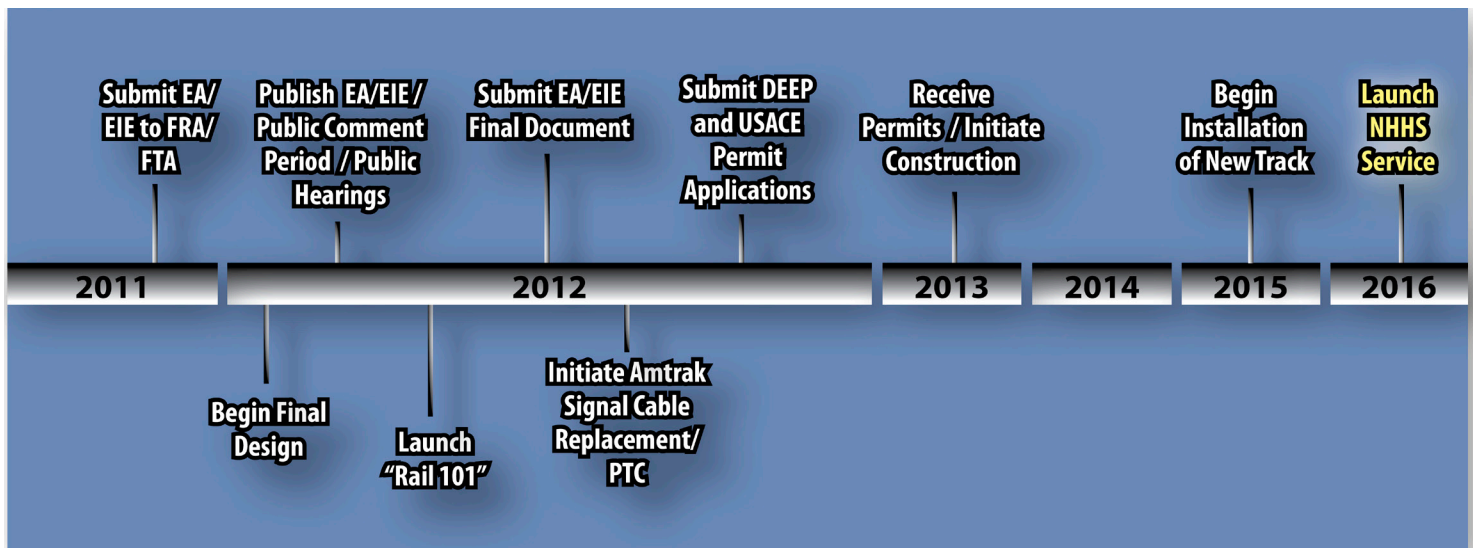


Study Background (continued from page 2)...

At New Haven, the corridor connects with Amtrak trains to New York and Boston, as well as commuter rail service operated by Metro-North Railroad to New York City and Connecticut Shore Line East service, operated by Amtrak, to New London, Connecticut.

Development of the EA/EIE has been conducted through the close coordination and consultation with federal agencies, Massachusetts and Connecticut state-level agencies, local governments/agencies, operating railroads, stakeholder groups, and the public. Coordination included the presentation, consultation, and discussion of project attributes, alternatives, and impacts and stakeholder meetings, agency briefings, and public meetings and presentations.

NHHS Rail Program Timeline



GET INVOLVED & STAY INFORMED

NHHS Contact List

More than 1,200 residents, businesses, local groups and public agencies have already subscribed to the NHHS contact list! Subscribing to the contact list on the www.NHHSrail.com website takes only a few minutes and ensures that you will receive:

- E-alerts with program updates
- Notices of upcoming public meetings
- Issues of the program newsletter

subscribe >

NHHS on Facebook & Twitter

Follow the latest New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Rail Program news on Facebook and Twitter:

 www.facebook.com/NHHSRail

 twitter.com/#!/NHHSRail

Questions & Comments

The program website www.NHHSrail.com provides an easy way to ask questions or provide comments to the program team and receive a response via email.