

Rail Advocacy in the Pioneer Valley

Ben Heckscher
Co-founder | Trains In The Valley

Rail Users' Network Meeting | October 13, 2018
Springfield, Mass.

Themes

- Some Background
- What We Do
- Advocacy Topics
- Lessons Learned
- What Comes Next

Trains In The Valley

Launched in April 2016

Mission

“To advocate for improved and expanded passenger and freight rail service in the Pioneer Valley region of western Massachusetts.”

What we do – high level

- We provide people with information
- We advocate for users (the passengers)
- We work to increase transparency of information
- We act as local “eyes and ears” on the ground
- We point people in the right direction

What we do – some detail

- Update and maintain our website TrainsInTheValley.org (using Wordpress.com)
- Update and manage our Facebook page
- Publish an online newsletter (the *Rail News Roundup*)
- Manage and maintain an email list (using Mailchimp)
- Organize events, from time to time
- Meet and talk with people, groups, elected officials, stakeholders, and others

What we do – Time well spent

Meetings with elected officials — Mayors, Reps, Senators, etc.

Meetings with planners — the PVPC and FRCOG

Attend public meetings — MassDOT CIP and State Rail Plan

Interviews for the media — WWLP-TV, the Republican, etc.

Work with related groups — Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop
the Train Campaign
the Vermont Rail Action Network
the Rail Passengers Association

What we do – the website

Visitors	46,229	Pages	57
Page views	86,771	Posts	50

Top Posts for all days ending 2018-10-12 (Summarized)

[7 Days](#) | [30 Days](#) | [Quarter](#) | [Year](#) | **All time**

All Time

Title		Views
Amtrak Vermonter		15,538
⊕ Home page / Archives		15,388
Freight Railroads		5,941
Springfield Union Station		5,604
Vermonter Extension to Montreal		4,311

For the period April 1, 2016 thru October 12, 2018



Vermont Service on the Knowledge Corridor – eff. Dec. 29, 2014

With new stops in Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield

Vermont service on the Knowledge Corridor

Advocacy hotspots

- Service awareness and public outreach
- Consistently late southbound train
- Parking concerns, Northampton in particular



CTDOT Hartford Line Service – Launched June 16, 2018

Expanded and improved service between Springfield and New Haven

Hartford Line Service

Advocacy hotspots

- Service awareness and public outreach
- Cost to park at the Springfield Union Station garage
- Taking the train to MGM Springfield
- Taking the train to the Big E
- Bus–rail schedule integration in/out of Springfield



Knowledge Corridor Service Pilot – Starting in June 2019

Expanded through service from Greenfield to New Haven

Knowledge Corridor Service Pilot

Advocacy hotspots

- Service awareness and public outreach
- Greenfield–Springfield vs. Greenfield–New Haven service
- Parking at the stations, Northampton in particular
- Fair and equitable prices for tickets
- Fixed vs. differential ticket pricing
- Bus–rail schedule integration in/out of Springfield
- The “reverse commute”



MassDOT East-West Rail Study – Starting soon

Study of the Boston–Springfield–Pittsfield passenger rail corridor

MassDOT East–West Rail Study

Advocacy hotspots

- Public awareness and public input
- Transparency of the process
- Attention to intermediate stops, in particular Palmer
- Boston–Springfield vs. Boston–Springfield–New Haven
- Incremental service vs “gold plated” service

Trains In The Valley – Lessons learned

- The best advocacy is local advocacy
- “Your website is your calling card”
- Always try to be helpful
- If you see something say something

Trains In The Valley – What comes next

- A network of local rail advocates
- Organizing meetings planned for November in Greenfield, Holyoke, Northampton and Springfield
- Fundraising
- Focus the Knowledge Corridor Pilot Service