



Date **February 23, 2020**

To **Members of the East-West Rail Study Advisory Committee, and
MassDOT's East-West Rail Study Team**

From **Western Mass Rail Coalition**

RE **Our View | The Key Elements of an East-West Rail Service**

Restored frequent passenger rail service across Massachusetts is long overdue. As MassDOT develops three final service alternatives for its East-West Passenger Rail Study, we urge the Study Advisory Committee and the Project Team to focus on three key factors:

1. Expanded passenger rail service between the three largest cities of Massachusetts should be designated a high priority for implementation as a major element of our state's plan to address its transportation and environmental crises.
2. A higher speed service (with speeds up to 90 mph) within a few years would be preferable to high speed service (with speeds up to 150 mph) 10-20 years from now.
3. Amtrak has the legal right to operate additional service on CSX's east-west line and increased service could theoretically run on this line as soon as state officials negotiate an agreement with Amtrak. The start of service would be subject to any infrastructure improvements that CSX may request but we believe that it is doubtful that over \$2B in improvements would be necessary to operate a relatively small number of additional trains.

The study must recognize that passenger trains traveling across Massachusetts are part of a much larger network serving cities in multiple states, and filling several gaps in northeast corridor intercity rail travel.

Five major cities should be connected by thru east-west passenger rail service:

Boston–Worcester–Springfield–Hartford–New Haven as well as service that extends to both Pittsfield *and* Albany.

MassDOT therefore needs to be working with CTDOT and NYSDOT to develop and implement meaningful service and scheduling.

We consider the following elements essential to the final plan for east-west train service:

1. The service should use the existing CSX right-of-way to maximize the benefit of transit-oriented development in the cities and towns along the route and to address issues of regional inequity between eastern and western Mass, and between urban and rural areas;
2. Any east-west rail service must be fully integrated with the existing CTrail Hartford Line service, and not require a change of trains in Springfield;
3. The service should start with six (6) thru round-trip trains each day between **Boston–Framingham–Worcester–Palmer–Springfield–Hartford–New Haven;**
4. The proposed service must allow for early morning and evening travel between Boston, Worcester, Springfield, and Hartford;
5. The service should start with four (4) connecting round-trip trains each day between **Springfield–Chester–Pittsfield–Albany;**
6. The schedules for the new services should be fully integrated with the Valley Flyer and Vermonter service along the Knowledge Corridor, so as to allow scheduled transfers between these services and the east-west service;
7. The service should include PVRTA bus service from UMass to Palmer, timed for connection to east-west train schedules.

Western Mass Rail Coalition

An association of rail advocacy groups working together
to expand the use of passenger rail in Western Massachusetts.

westernmassrail.org

Member Organizations

Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop

palmertrain.org

Contact: Ben Hood

palmertrain@gmail.com

The Train Campaign

barringtoninstitute.org

Contact: Karen Christensen

karen@barringtoninstitute.org

Trains In The Valley

trainsinthevalley.org

Contact: Ben Heckscher

trainsinthevalley@gmail.com

Chester Railway Station & Museum

chesterrailwaystation.net

Contact: Bob Daley

rdchester@comcast.net