



June 6, 2023

The Honorable Maura Healey, Governor of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor, Room 280
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Moving West-East Rail Forward

Dear Governor Healey,

Your FY2024 Budget proposal to spend \$12.5 million on Palmer and Pittsfield Rail Projects was a meaningful down payment on West-East rail, which promises to be transformative for Western Mass and the entire Commonwealth.

We applaud your proposed use of Fair Share Amendment revenue to fund these West-East rail early action items, since it is fitting to use the new wealth tax to fund transportation initiatives in rural and less affluent areas of the state.

We are greatly disappointed that the legislature failed to retain your proposed Palmer and Pittsfield rail project funding in the FY2024 budget, despite strong support from legislators in all four counties of Western Mass.

We were also disappointed to see that the draft FY2024–2028 MassDOT Capital Investment Plan also did not include funding for the Palmer and Pittsfield Rail Projects — projects which could have been paid for using transportation bond funding in Chapter 383 of the Acts of 2020.

Expanded passenger rail service across the Commonwealth will have enormous economic and social benefits, not least among them the potential to address the need for housing in Eastern Mass by more closely linking it to affordable and rural areas of Central and Western Mass. Your administration is right to prioritize housing, and West-East rail, like existing MBTA commuter rail, will provide a huge opportunity to increase housing opportunities in communities newly-connected by passenger rail.

Now is the time to move forward with West-East rail. By the end of June, the Western Massachusetts Passenger Rail Commission will release its findings relative to governance of passenger rail service.

With these points in mind, we ask,

- 1.) That you find a way to move forward the design and track work for the the Palmer and Pittsfield rail projects — ideally at this stage by including these projects in the FY2024–2028 MassDOT Capital Investment Plan.
- 2.) That you identify a way to move West-East rail forward with a “sense of urgency.”
- 3.) That you articulate to the public-at-large the near and long term steps to move West-East rail forward, to Palmer, Springfield, Chester, and Pittsfield and onward, to the economic opportunities of the Albany Capital Region.

Thank you for your commitment to this project and we stand ready to provide our support and ideas as it progresses.

Sincerely,

Ben Hood

Ben Hood
For the Western Mass Rail Coalition

email | westernmassrail@gmail.com

CC: Ms. Kristen Elechko, Director, Western Massachusetts Office of Gov. Maura Healey
Ms. Anne Gobi, Director of Rural Affairs, Executive Office of Economic Development

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

[Trains In The Valley](#)

An advocacy group focused on improved and expanded passenger and freight rail service in the Pioneer Valley region of western Massachusetts.

[Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop](#)

An advocacy group working to restore passenger rail service to the “Town of Seven Railroads” at the junction of the Inland Route (Boston to NYC) and Central Corridor (New London to Brattleboro) rail lines, and to improve mass transit options for residents of the Quaboag Valley region.

[Chester Railway Station & Museum](#)

Advocates working to expand rail passenger service in Western Massachusetts.

[The Train Campaign](#)

A rail advocacy organization for Berkshire and Litchfield counties and the surrounding region, sharing a vision for passenger rail as the essential framework for efficient, sustainable transportation in the 21st century. The Train Campaign supports passenger rail initiatives including the East-West Rail, the Pownal line, the Berkshire Flyer, and the Housatonic Line.

For a detailed overview and timeline of the East-West passenger rail project please have a look at this page on the Trains In The Valley website:

trainsinthevalley.org/east-west-rail-in-massachusetts/

The page can easily be found with a Google search on the words “East-West Rail in Massachusetts”