

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

New Hampshire Department of Transportation, PO Box 483, Concord, NH 03302  
(603) 271-3734

<http://www.nh.gov/dot/programs/nhrta/index.htm>

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# Strategic Plan

## 2015 - 2019

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This Strategic Plan is being prepared for a 5-year planning interval to help better define passenger rail activities throughout the state. A robust passenger rail network is an essential part of New Hampshire's multimodal transportation network.

## **Vision**

Develop and implement comprehensive, coordinated and prioritized project and funding plans for passenger rail services that provide New Hampshire citizens:

1. Commuter rail services to in-state and out-of-state employment centers,
2. Tourist services to recreation areas,
3. Easy access to regional inter-city passenger rail services and other multi-modal transportation systems.

## **Mission (Approved 11/15/07)**

Develop and provide commuter and passenger rail and related public rail transportation services in New Hampshire.

## **Goals**

Each project may develop its own goals that are to be met within the timeframe of this 5-year Strategic Plan.

1. Connect major cities and towns in New Hampshire with passenger rail services where tracks and/or rail rights-of-way exist.
2. Connect the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport to the passenger rail network.
3. Provide passenger rail services at major gateway stations.
4. Improve and add additional layers of detail to existing rail map.

## **Projects**

### **New Hampshire Capitol Corridor**

An Alternatives Analysis Report was completed by rail consultant URS in early 2015. Based on an analysis of the report, the NHRTA Board has selected as the preferred alternative, "MBTA commuter rail service to Manchester-Boston Regional Airport and Manchester with a continued interest in extending passenger rail service to Concord". The selection was based on initial capital costs, ridership, annual Operating & Maintenance costs, and the superior economic benefits this alternative could provide.

Project-specific goals include:

- Reorganize the structure of the NHRTA Board to better position for federal funding.
- Continue to promote public-private partnership (P3) legislation to broaden potential financial support for the project.
- Explore and pursue funding sources for construction of the project.

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- Work with the Cities of Manchester and Nashua to consider implementation of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and/or Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) zoning.
- Continue outreach to promote public awareness about the community / economic benefits that passenger rail will provide.

## **Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative**

Claremont Station is served by Amtrak's Vermonter service, and is a potential stop on a future high-speed "Knowledge Corridor", running from New Haven, CT to Montreal and beyond. A group of citizens are active on 2 fronts – a request to continue to include Claremont as a stop on the high-speed knowledge corridor, and an investigation of possible station improvements or relocation.

Project-specific goals include:

- Invite representative from this corridor to future NHRTA Project Committee meetings
- Actively monitor corridor developments and better determine NHRTA's future roles

## **Downeaster**

Amtrak's Downeaster provides service from Brunswick, ME to Boston's North Station, and includes stops in NH at Dover, Durham, and Exeter.

For many years, the Exeter Station Committee has been trying to convert the baggage room of the former Exeter Station into a heated/cooled waiting area. They received a \$400,000 Transportation Enhancement grant but after spending \$90,000 on some preliminary engineering, they found it to be too costly and burdensome to comply with FTA regulations. The Exeter Board of Selectmen agreed to continue the project with only Town funds. Steady progress is being made, but no completion date has been announced.

Durham Station is also served by Amtrak's Downeaster service. All passengers must board and alight from a 30-foot long mini-high platform. Plans are underway to improve station accessibility but no completion date has been announced.

Project-specific goals include:

- Continue to monitor and support development around the three NH station areas.
- Support service enhancements along the line.

## **North Country**

The NHRTA will continue to support and encourage increased passenger rail operations in the northern tier of New Hampshire.

As of May 2015, two private corporations are independently trying to establish this connection. Both would use the former Mountain Division tracks in New Hampshire. One service would be a

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daytime service (Golden Eagle); the other would be an overnight service (Hotel Train). Both would try to synchronize their schedules to make for an easy connection to the Downeaster in Portland, ME.

## **APPENDIX:**

### **Other Notable Projects/Initiatives**

#### **Plaistow/MBTA Extension**

This project is on hold.

#### **Somersworth**

A group of citizens are interested in establishing some type of rail service. No specific project has been put together; it is still in the early investigation stages.

#### **Portsmouth**

When soliciting public input several years ago for the State Rail Plan, Portsmouth residents were also eager to have some type of passenger rail service. No study or investigation is currently underway, however.

#### **Lebanon**

Shortly after the NHRTA was formed, Lebanon made a presentation to the NHRTA to see if the NHRTA could help them re-establish a passenger rail connection to White River, Jct, VT. No further activity has occurred.