

# New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

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Project Status June 2009

## Project Description

- **Project Goal:** The NH Capital Corridor (NHCC) Commuter Rail service will run on upgraded tracks between Boston, MA and Concord, NH, a distance of approximately 78 miles. The proposed commuter service will connect Concord, Manchester, Manchester Boston Regional Airport and Nashua, NH with Boston, MA's North Station.
- **Stations:** Four stations are planned on opening day – Concord, downtown Manchester, Manchester Airport near the Airport Access Road, and Nashua.
- **Costs:** Conceptual cost to extend from Lowell to Concord is estimated at \$250 million to \$300 million. These costs include:
  - Engineering, contingency & escalation
  - Equipment – new coaches and one new locomotive
  - Train layover facility
  - Existing grade crossings upgrades
  - Track, civil, and train control upgrades
  - Four train stations
- **Operations:** The proposed operations for the commuter rail service on the corridor will consist of an express service with medium frequency, four to five trains during peak AM rush hours between 5 AM to 9AM and PM rush hours between 4 PM to 6 PM, with service every 90 minutes during off peak hours (9 AM to 4 PM and 6 PM to late hours). Stops will include four NH rail stations: Concord, Manchester, Airport and Nashua and potentially three MA stations: Lowell and Anderson Transportation Center, Woburn, MA (where the Downeaster and Mass Port's Logan Airport shuttle Service originate) and North Station. Run time between Manchester and North Station is projected to be less than 80 minutes and less than 100 minutes between Concord and North Station.
- **Benefits:** With crucial support from the private and public sectors, NH will return intercity passenger rail from Concord to Boston via the NHCC.
  - The NHCC will provide real and lasting stimulus to the State and national economies. As the train stations are built, private money will redevelop key areas focused on transit-oriented development. Train stations will become a reality through a public Private partnership with the NHRTA.
  - The NHCC will provide jobs both short and long-term, on the project itself, from associated real-estate development and from new business opportunities in rebuilt communities.
  - The NHCC will focus stimulus money on green technologies, environmental benefits and long-term infrastructure while providing much-needed services and offering genuine value for money. The NHCC will connect several major cities within the Northeast to Boston, MA, Concord, Manchester, and Nashua, NH. This is responsible development for both today and tomorrow.

## Funding Commitments

- **Current Funding:** Funding includes \$21 million committed to Nashua rail project, \$7 million committed to Manchester multimodal terminal, operating funds committed by Manchester Airport to airport station shuttle program (Shuttle Service between the airport terminal and the proposed airport commuter rail station) and \$250,000 committed to Merrimack station. In addition, Governor Lynch committed \$1 million in the state capital budget to match federal funds for station site purchase and development in Manchester and Nashua. Total available funding of \$32.25 million.

## Progress to Date

- **Support by Governor Lynch:** Governor Lynch has stated that the passenger rail project is a priority for his administration and has provided key support at critical points in the legislative process in the past year.
- **Nashua Station Location Study:** The Nashua Regional Planning Commission is completing a rail station location study for the Nashua station. Three potential locations had been identified, including south Nashua near FEE Turnpike Exit #1 on the former Dow Chemical site, east of downtown Nashua near Bridge and East Hollis Streets, north Nashua on the Beazer property.
- **New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority (NHRTA):** The State of NH formed NHRTA in 2007. NHRTA was given specific responsibility to develop and oversee the Nashua–Manchester commuter rail project as well as provide support and assistance to other passenger rail efforts throughout the State. NHRTA has a broad based, 28–member board including representative from all areas of the State.
- **Rail Liability:** The biggest variable cost for operation of the passenger rail service is liability insurance. Legislation modeled on the Massachusetts liability cap was introduced and passed by the Legislature during the 2008 session and was signed by Governor Lynch in June 2008.
- **Support by Commonwealth of MA:** Representatives of NHRTA and NHDOT have developed relationships with the appropriate people in MA and are working towards necessary operating agreements to extend commuter rail service into NH.
- **Support by Pan Am Railways (PAR):** Representatives of NHRTA, NHDOT and PAR continue to negotiate agreements necessary to run commuter rail on PAR tracks.

## Next Tasks

- **Station Site Acquisition and Development:** NHRTA must finish the identification and acquisition of station sites in Nashua, downtown Manchester, near Manchester–Boston Airport and Concord. Station locations are extremely important due to their influence on ridership and the opportunities for revenue generation. Actual property acquisition and development activities will follow completion of all the federally required studies. Either the municipalities or NHRTA could end up as owners/operators of the stations.
- **Operating Agreements with Pan Am and MBTA:** When funding becomes available the NHRTA will enter into agreements with both railroads regarding the cost sharing for use of their rights of way and all responsibilities related to joint operations. Representatives of NHRTA led by NHDOT Commissioner George Campbell are working towards those operating agreements. These agreements must be adopted by NHRTA once negotiated.
- **Capital Funding:** NHRTA, working with NHDOT Commissioner George Campbell, will be seeking \$300 million from the \$8 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 set aside for High Speed Rail Corridors and Intercity Rail. Thanks to significant private funding support, TranSystems, Inc. has been contracted to write the proposal to meet the August 24<sup>th</sup> deadline for submission. Nashua Regional Planning Commission is initially managing the contract.

## Support from Congressional Delegation

- **Requested Appropriations:** NHRTA has requested funding for required studies through NHDOT. Two appropriation grants have been requested from the FY2009 budget: 1) \$1.0 million from FTA for an Alternatives Analysis for the Nashua–Manchester portion of the project, and 2) \$3.0 million for preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for the project from Lowell to downtown Manchester. These requests have been submitted and are being supported by Congressman Paul Hodes and Congresswoman Carol Shea–Porter of NH as well as Congresswoman Niki Tsongas of MA.

- **Revisions to Previous Section 5309 New Starts Appropriations:** Congress appropriated funds for the project in four federal fiscal years, FY2000–2003. These appropriations from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5309 New Starts Program were listed as “Lowell, MA – Nashua, NH Commuter Rail Project.” Some of these funds lapsed. However, some of the funds were committed in an FTA grant currently being used for project activities. Before NHRTA can begin working on the full scope of the project to Concord, it is necessary to revise the language for the previous years’ appropriations to read “Lowell, MA – Concord, NH Rail Project.”

## Lowell-Nashua-Manchester Rail Project

