

Hello Brandy:

I am commenting on your energy report, specifically the assumptions you make about transportation. I am president of the NH Railroad Revitalization Association, (NHRRA). Founded in 1992 NHRRA is a transportation advocacy organization whose mission is the upgrade of the rail system in NH to facilitate the restoration passenger rail service and enhanced freight rail service as part of a balanced transportation system.

I currently serve on the executive committee and board of Southern NH Regional Planning Commission. Previously I served on the executive committee and board of Rockingham Planning Commission. I also served as Chairman for two years.

In several sections you use the term public transit options. How do you define public transit options? You use the phrase in relationship to transporting individuals to tourist destinations. What are the transportation modes that service tourist destinations in NH? Is there a transit option that provides a reliable level of service that could be used by tourists? Currently there is no rail service from Boston or Canada our major trading partner, to any tourist destination in NH. The Downeaster serves Exeter, Dover and Durham none of which are tourist destinations.

There are now direct flights from Boston to Beijing, Tokyo, Dubai, Turkey, Europe and England. Flights will be added to Hong Kong and Shanghai. All of these countries have spent billions on public transportation. It is highly unlikely that when visitors from these countries reach Boston they will rent a car and come to NH? Will they instead take a train to Hyannis or a ferry to Provincetown?

In your section on mass transit you suggest that an obstacle to implementation of mass transit is that NH is a rural state and there are no concentrated centers of demand. The combined populations provided by Google of Concord, Manchester and Nashua is over 239,000 people. All of these cities are on the same rail line and is the subject of the NH Capitol Corridor Rail study. If we are such a rural state why will we invest about 800 million dollars in widening Rt 93? The Downeaster rail service is carrying over 560,000 people.

The reality is that southern NH south of Concord is suburban Boston. The construction of Rt 93 in the early 1960's solidified that position. We have the same symbiotic relationship with Boston that cities like Stamford, CT, White Plains, NY and Jersey City have to NYC. Boston and NYC provides the jobs. NH and suburban NYC provide the workers. However what has happened in NYC is that due to the accessibility of rail there is a reverse commute which has turned Stamford, White Plains and Jersey City into economic powerhouses. This can be done in NH also. It will also allow NH to tap into the Boston worker pool. There is also a rail study in progress that is exploring extending rail service from Haverhill to Plaistow.

Another perspective that needs to be addressed is how we use our rail-banked rail corridors. These are abandoned corridors purchased by the state for future rail use. For example the I 93 transit study conducted by NH and MA, in which my rail group was a stakeholder, evaluated transit options to complement the widening of Rt 93. One of those options is restoration of rail service on the old Manchester and Lawrence rail corridor. Millions are now being invested in converting it to a rail trail. Is this the best use of this corridor? These corridors need to be evaluated for their use for freight rail.

NH currently has no direct rail connection with Canada. You referenced the Pioneer Valley initiative. The Knowledge Corridor as it is known will benefit four states and if treaty negotiations with Canada are successful will restore service to Montreal. There needs to be comments made about developing a funding source to implement energy saving public rail options.

Thank you for reading my comments.

Peter J. Griffin.