



Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

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July 25, 2014

Meredith Hatfield, NH Office of Energy and Planning
Johnson Hall, 107 Pleasant St.
Concord, NH 03301

Re: New Hampshire State Energy Strategy – Draft

Dear Ms. Hatfield:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft New Hampshire State Energy Strategy. The report fairly summarizes the results of the energy baseline, energy vision, resource potential study, and policy analysis. It moderately addresses the barriers and gaps standing in the way of that vision and puts forth a series of policy recommendations and strategies to address them.

However, there is a significant void in the transportation analysis and policy sections about existing and proposed passenger and freight rail service and their impacts on future energy policies and strategies.

The 2012 New Hampshire State Rail Plan (Rail Plan) identified and evaluated issues and opportunities related to rail transportation in the State. The Rail Plan also discussed the significant changes in the regional transportation system since the Rail Plan was last updated in 2001. Multi-modal services provided by railroads, truckers, air freight and maritime carriers move more products at lower prices to and from the marketplace than was imagined possible 20 years ago. A principal reason for continued, and in some markets expanded use of rail, is that rail is **the most energy efficient** and cost-effective choice for moving goods by land.

Passenger service has changed significantly with the creation of the Amtrak Downeaster intercity passenger rail service connecting Massachusetts and Maine, including three stations in New Hampshire. Additionally, the Amtrak Vermonter and tourist railroads continue to provide passenger service within the State.

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 14-municipality Manchester region, the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) has been actively involved with the NH Rail Transit Authority and the NH Capitol Corridor Study. Upon reviewing consultants' preliminary efforts to quantify the impacts of this proposed service, SNHPC steadfastly supports the extension of passenger rail to southern New Hampshire, with stops at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport and downtown Manchester. While the NH Capitol Corridor study has not been finalized, it is anticipated there will be strong positive energy, economic and air quality impacts associated with this vital transportation link into the region. In addition to increases in economic and tourism activity, the extension of passenger rail would likely be accompanied by decreases in motor vehicle traffic on area highways, and improve quality of life in the greater Manchester area.

By improving passenger rail infrastructure, freight rail is also improved, making it more energy efficient and economically beneficial for businesses in the state. In summary, if the draft New Hampshire State Energy Strategy is to be valid, it needs to incorporate the both passenger and freight rail into the report and its policies.

If you have any questions, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE
PLANNING COMMISSION

David J. Preece, AICP
Executive Director