



Improvement Status

The State of Maine, through its Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation are responsible for planning and managing the Amtrak Downeaster and Vermonter. Each state has worked with Amtrak and the host railroads (the freight railroads that own the lines on which Amtrak operates) to make track improvements provide scheduling changes and in some cases add service in the form of additional trains. Both Maine and Vermont have undertaken planning efforts in the past to project future ridership trends and establish goals.

An annual growth rate of 3 percent is assumed in the projections for rail ridership. A number of changes will influence the actual growth in rail ridership in the next several years. The completion of an upgrade to the New England Central's line in New Hampshire and Vermont, where the Vermonter travels, will reduce train travel time and should increase ridership. Vermont and Massachusetts are working together to upgrade the "Knowledge Corridor," another existing freight line in western Massachusetts, for passenger service. When this is complete, the Vermonter will have a direct route that will save additional time between St. Albans and New York. In Maine, the rail upgrade was completed in 2012 and the extension of the Downeaster to Brunswick has commenced. Ridership has increased since that expanded service opened.

Other projects that could increase rail ridership in New Hampshire are in the planning stages. The New Hampshire Capitol Corridor is a proposed passenger service between southern New Hampshire and Boston through Nashua. If the results of planning efforts are favorable and funding is available, initiation of this service could be considered by policy makers by the end of the decade. An extension of MBTA commuter service from Boston through Haverhill, MA to Plaistow has also been proposed and will be studied in 2013. The potential start of this service extension will be based on justifications for funding resulting from this planning and engineering initiative.

Increase Mobility

Rail Ridership

Purpose:

Ridership is a common measure of the utilization of transit service nationwide, including passenger rail. Ridership measures one-way trips, i.e. boardings. In New Hampshire, passenger rail service is provided by Amtrak on the Downeaster and Vermonter services supported by Maine and Vermont, respectively. Amtrak reports ridership on a monthly basis for these services. Increasing ridership shows that more people are riding on passenger rail, either because the existing services are attracting more riders, or because these services have expanded through additional trains, for example, or a combination of the two.

In New Hampshire, Amtrak serves four stops: Dover, Durham, and Exeter with the Downeaster and Claremont with the Vermonter. The Downeaster has five daily trains between Portland and Boston and the Vermonter one daily train between St. Albans, VT and New York and Washington. Ridership on both has shown significant growth and the ability to recover after significant interruptions due to weather events in recent years. Establishing goals for future ridership will provide a measure of the progress this service is making in increasing the personal mobility of people in New Hampshire.

Data:

The data reported here represents the number of passengers who either board or disembark trains at one of the four New Hampshire stations. As noted above, ridership can fluctuate based on the availability or convenience of service,

but also from events and larger trends. For example, weather events that cancel train service significantly affect a month's ridership, and the national recession is also reflected in lower numbers of Americans making discretionary trips.

The data do not include New Hampshire residents who travel by bus or car to Boston and take Amtrak from there. They also do not include a sizable number of daily or frequent commuters who take MBTA commuter rail from Lowell, North Billerica, Haverhill, Newburyport or other Massachusetts stations. At some stations it is reported that one-fourth or more of the passengers are New Hampshire residents.

Rail Ridership

