

# New Hampshire State Rail Plan



# Welcome to the RAC

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# Agenda

- » Welcome and Introductions
- » Plan Overview and Approach
- » Rail Trends and Discussion
- » Stakeholder Outreach Summary and Discussion
- » Vision and Goals Discussion
- » Next Steps

# Welcome and Introductions



# Project Team

## New Hampshire DOT

- Maggie Baldwin – Administrator of Bureau of Rail and Transit, Project Manager
- Louis Barker – Rail Planner

## Cambridge Systematics

- Leah Pickett, CS Project Manager
- Andreas Aeppli, CS Principal-in-Charge
- Christian Higgins, CS Deputy PM

# Plan Overview and Approach



# Purpose of the Plan

- » Update the New Hampshire State Rail Plan to meet all federal guidelines and support future planning, policies, and investment in the state
- » Gather freight and passenger rail data, assess the existing and future conditions on the rail system, and identify needs and opportunities
- » Conduct a robust stakeholder engagement effort
- » Identify and prioritize projects, policies, and strategies to support rail-related goals
- » Develop a framework to examine proposed alternative uses for rail assets that are currently dormant

# Plan Schedule

\* = Kickoff meeting  
 ○ = public meeting  
 Δ = RAC meeting

Task	Months													
	7/23	8/23	9/23	10/23	11/23	12/23	1/24	2/24	3/24	4/24	5/24	6/24	7/24	8/24
1 - PM	*													
2 - Outreach				Δ			Δ	○			Δ	○		
3 - Vision, Goals, Objectives														
4 - Data Collection														
5 - Existing and Future Conditions														
6 Framework - OOS Lines														
7 - State Rail Plan														



# Plan's Technical Approach

## State Rail Plan –Outputs

### Where are we now?

What we need to know to make decisions and invest in our system

Public and private sector input

Public/commercial freight, economic, and passenger data  
Review other plans

Infrastructure conditions; commodity flows, ridership, forecasts; trends

### Where do we want to go?

Vision, goals, strategies and investments to help us get there

Public and private sector input

Data-driven/ stakeholder-informed needs assessment  
Aligns with existing DOT plans & priorities

Vision & goals; needs assessment; framework to evaluate proposed uses of OOS lines

### How do we get there?

A plan to work with partners to achieve NHDOT's rail system goals

Public and private sector input  
Roles and opportunities for partners

Framework for project evaluation and prioritization

Identification of key strategies and investments; rail services investment plan

# Role of the Rail Advisory Council



**Support**  
development and  
**implementation**  
of the plan



Provide **input** on  
and **vet** materials  
and data



**Validate** vision  
and goals



**Connect** with key  
**stakeholders** that  
use the system,  
decision makers,  
and implementers



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# Menti Poll

1. How does freight, passenger, and tourist rail impact New Hampshire?
- 2. Freight:**
  1. What does New Hampshire do well to support freight rail?
  2. What could New Hampshire do better to support freight rail?
- 3. Passenger:**
  1. What does New Hampshire do well to support passenger rail?
  2. What could New Hampshire do better to support passenger rail?
- 4. Tourist:**
  1. What does New Hampshire do well to support tourist railroads?
  2. What could New Hampshire do better to support tourist railroads?

# Rail Trends



# Trends Impacting Rail

## Market Trends

- Industry: forest products, construction, energy, chemicals, agricultural products, consumer products
- International trade

## Consumer Trends

- What's next for E-commerce
- Consumer spending in the Post-COVID-19 era
- Demographics

## Rail Industry Trends

- Industry strategies for growth
- Future of merchandise/mixed freight traffic
- Operational strategies

## Regulatory Issues

- Truck size and weight
- Safety
- Service and economic performance

## Technology Trends

- Positive Train Control version 2
- Electrification
- Autonomous trucks and trains

# Menti Poll

- » Rank these trends in terms of how significant of an impact you think they will have on rail service in NH in the future.
- » Is anything missing from the list?

# Stakeholder Outreach





# State Rail Plan Outreach

RAC  
Meetings

Stakeholder  
Interviews

Public  
Meetings



# Interviews – Completed and In Progress

## Railroads

- Conway Scenic
- CSX
- Green Mountain
- Hobo
- Milford-Bennington
- New England Central
- New England Southern/Merrimack & Grafton
- New Hampshire Northcoast
- NNEPRA/Amtrak
- St. Lawrence & Atlantic

## Shippers

- Forest products
- Sand and gravel
- Fuels

## Neighboring States and Regional Orgs

- NH RPCs
- MassDOT
- MaineDOT
- VTrans

## Trade Associations & Advocacy Groups

- NH Railroad Revitalization Association
- Trainriders NE
- NH Business for Rail Expansion
- NH Rails Trails Coalition

# What We've Heard - Trends

## » Freight Rail

- Shippers have turned away from using rail service that is unreliable
- There is potential to grow the forest products industry in the state (wood, biofuels) and to carry more of this freight by rail

## » Advocacy Groups

- Rail-trail advocates looking to “rail with trail” corridors (private and state owned) and in developing system connectivity.

# What We've Heard - Trends

## » Passenger Rail

- *Downeaster* ridership has fully rebounded since the COVID-19 pandemic
- Some political opposition to passenger rail to Nashua and Manchester; recent legislation would defund rail
- Support for passenger rail among business community; interest in economic dividends

## » Tourist Rail

- Growth industry with substantial opportunity

# What We've Heard – Needs/Opportunities

## » Freight Rail Needs/Potential Improvements

- More capacity to stage cars in NH and New England generally
- Bring network up to 286,000-pound weight capacity, including some key bridges
- Transload sites in NH
- More wood fiber cars
- Double stack clearance
- Increase track capacity on Portland-Haverhill route to better facilitate freight and *Downeaster* passenger trains

## » Freight Rail Opportunities

- NH should pursue CRISI grants to fund some of these efforts
- Opportunities to expand markets/cut costs through facilitating rail use

# What We've Heard – Needs/Opportunities

## » Passenger Rail

- **Needs/Potential Improvements:** *Downeaster* stations in NH lack amenities
  - ▶ Why should station costs fall primarily on the local communities when they are broadly used?
- **Opportunities:** Impacts of proposed Capitol Corridor are not limited to just tapping into the Boston job market (healthcare, tech, other) but also advancing intra-state travel and tourism development

## » Tourist Operations

- **Opportunities:** Expand tourist ridership with enhanced first-class offerings, optimized schedules, and extended seasons

# Menti Polling

- » What needs or opportunities are missing from this list so far?
- » Agree/disagree scale - NH's rail system/service is performing well in the following areas:
  - State of good repair
  - Property management
  - System capacity
  - Service
  - Safety
  - Rail access
  - Rolling stock / equipment
  - Passenger rail stations
  - Multimodal connectivity

# Vision and Goals





# Vision and Goals – Federal Guidance

## Vision:

- » Describe the State's vision for rail transportation for the **20-year time horizon**.
- » Vision should be based on input from **all stakeholders** and describe the intended **role of rail** in the transportation system.

## Goals:

- » **Contextualize** passenger, tourist, and freight rail goals and objectives within the State's transportation system.
- » Demonstrate **coordination** with statewide/nonmetropolitan transportation planning goals and programs.
- » Designed to help **prioritize** RSIP elements that achieve the desired outcomes of the vision.

# 2012 New Hampshire State Rail Plan Vision

The New Hampshire rail system is one that provides an **efficiently utilized** and **well-maintained** railroad system, expanded as appropriate to accommodate increases in freight and passenger **demand** for rail services. It is a system that is fully **integrated** with the national, regional and statewide transportation system, **connecting** the state's urban and rural communities, maximizing the opportunities for **economic growth**, promoting **energy efficiency**, and providing **safe, secure** and **reliable** transportation of people and goods.

# Menti Poll

- » Is there anything else you would like to see included or emphasized in the Vision statement?
- » Anything that should be omitted?

# 2012 Plan Goals

1. Maintain the New Hampshire rail system in a **state of good repair**.
2. Provide a rail system that is **financially stable** and sustainable.
3. Expand the rail system and its capacity to **promote growth** in freight and passenger demand.
4. Provide a rail system that is **environmentally supportive** and sustainable.
5. Facilitate the ability of New Hampshire railroads to be **competitive** regionally, nationally, and globally.
6. Support **economic initiatives**.
7. Realize **public benefits** for public investments.
8. Encourage **public-private partnerships** related to rail services.
9. Educate New Hampshire residents and businesses on the rail system in New Hampshire.

# Menti Poll

- » Is there anything else you would like to see included or emphasized in the goals?
- » Anything that should be omitted?

# Next Steps

- » Continue developing technical material (Spring 2024)
  - Rail system inventory, system use, economic profile, forecasting
- » Finalize vision and goals (Winter 2023)
- » Finish stakeholder interviews (Fall 2023)
- » Conduct first public meeting (Winter 2024)
- » Next RAC meeting (Spring 2024)
  - Review technical material
  - Needs discussion



**Thank you!**