



CT Commuter Rail Council CT Rail Plan 2021-2025 Recommendations

December 15, 2021

To the CT Department of Transportation:

The CT Commuter Rail Council believes it is imperative that we increase public desire to use trains by providing a safe, modern, high-quality customer experience. This includes, but is not limited to, schedules which meet changing public needs, regular on-time service, decreased time between destinations and clean, well-maintained cars and stations. The Council believes that more customers serviced by rail will be possible by coordinating between State funded transit operations as well as coordination with local land-use agencies and developers to support thriving and sustainable neighborhoods near rail stations.

We support promoting the goals of the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI), and we support funding the 'Time For CT' and 'Eastside Access' programs, as well as the following recommendations. The Council understands that existing limited DOT funding cannot properly address need, and therefore supports an increase in DOT funding and aggressive pursuit of federal funding available via the Build Back Better program to meet these recommendations.

1. **Expand Hartford Line through Worcester to Boston.** Projected cost of \$8 billion, with an estimated \$80 billion in economic development - a tenfold return on investment - which can be funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. To include finishing the double railing to Springfield (can increase trains from 34 to 44 daily) and full electrification of the Hartford Line, which will be environmentally friendly and increase trains to higher speeds.
2. **Provide coordinated investment and robust marketing strategy & support to bicycle, scooter, pedestrian and other intermodal enhancements to rail stations, industrial centers and nearby transit-oriented zones of municipalities.** While coordination is essential, these essential enhancements could be funded through a combination of DOT, municipalities, and private investment.
3. **Complete full electrification of rail service and its connecting services in Connecticut to meet the State's climate change and environmental justice goals.** The State should also explore and

integrate battery-powered commuter passenger train sets for areas where full electrification is not feasible.

4. **Create better connectivity between Shore Line East and Metro North lines**, including a more seamless customer experience, more through trains, and increased connecting options.
5. **Conduct feasibility studies to look at the expansion of other rail lines:**
 - a. Waterbury to Hartford
 - b. Waterbury to Torrington
 - c. Increasing capacity of existing freight rail networks
6. **Conduct feasibility studies for possible future services/lines:**
 - a. Extend Shoreline East to Rhode Island with future connection to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority going to Providence and Boston
 - b. Expand service to serve UConn Storrs through either New London or Hartford using existing railroad tracks.
 - c. Establish new Norwich Branch Line on existing Providence and Worcester rails connecting at a new station in Groton with Shore Line East. Commuter service which would connect the U.S. Navy Sub-base, Electric Boat and Pfizer with where employees live in eastern Connecticut and western Rhode Island. Future passenger service possible from Groton to Norwich and Worcester.
 - d. Expand services to existing airports via intermodal options.

The 2021-2025 Rail Plan is an essential time frame in which to make strategic investments and operational decisions that will address the long-term climate change and Covid 19 impacts on transit needs and the efforts necessary to meet the State's environmental goals for greenhouse gas reduction.

The Connecticut Commuter Rail Council submits these recommendations with the expectation that we will provide DOT with additional comments and recommendations when the official CT Rail Plan is submitted.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these recommendations.