



# CITY OF CONCORD

## REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager—Development

**DATE:** February 24, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Passenger Rail Resolution

### Recommendation

Accept this report and adopt the attached resolution recommending that any passenger rail service implemented as a result of the New Hampshire Capitol Corridor Rail and Transit Alternatives Analysis include service to Concord.

### Background

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation recently commissioned a study of passenger rail that ultimately was called the New Hampshire Capitol Corridor Rail and Transit Alternatives Analysis. This study examined a series of alternatives and, ultimately, settled on five options:

1. No build
2. Manchester Regional Commuter Rail
3. Nashua Minimum Commuter Rail
4. Intercity 8 service (to Concord)
5. Bus on Shoulder

The Intercity 8 service to Concord would not be a typical commuter rail but be akin to the Amtrak Downeaster that operates from Portland to Boston. According to the study, this alternative would generate \$750 million in real estate development between 2021 and 2030 and an additional \$140 million per year in reinvested earnings beyond 2030.

The Study cited the State's existing warehouse property on Stickney Avenue as a possible station location that could also support a transit-oriented, mixed-use development. With the City's recent acquisition of the abutting Tsunis property, there is even greater flexibility for that type of development project in the future.

The capital cost projected for the Intercity 8 would be \$256.5 million with annual O & M cost of \$7.7 million.

The NH Rail Transit Authority, of which the City is a member, is poised to make a recommendation as to which alternative to pursue. The Authority's projects sub-committee recently drafted a motion that would have the Authority recommend the Manchester Regional Commuter Rail Alternative as the "preferred alternative."

The City representative on the Authority questioned this proposed recommendation at the Authority's last meeting citing the fact that the capital cost for the Manchester Regional alternative is only \$10.9 million less than the Intercity 8 and the annual operating costs for the Intercity 8 to Concord were over \$3 million less per year. There was some debate about the costs with some members of the Authority citing the need for construction of a new train platform at North Station and the lack of possible MBTA funding to support the Intercity 8.

Council should be aware, as well, that extending traditional commuter rail to Concord was also examined as an alternative but the projected ridership numbers in the study were not sufficient enough in the consultant's estimation to recommend it as a final alternative. However, City staff note that ridership is contingent upon a number of factors including new economic opportunities.

### **Discussion**

As the Council is aware, generating new economic development is a challenging endeavor. Based on the City's business visits, it is evident that a number of Concord-area companies—particularly those in the science and technology fields—find that recruiting talented employees or attracting clients to Concord can be quite difficult. As one CEO explained, it is as if there is some type of psychological barrier to going beyond Manchester.

The fear for our City and our central NH region is that if passenger rail is built in New Hampshire and it terminates at Manchester, it will further exacerbate this competitive disadvantage. While it is uncertain whether any rail project will ever be funded in our state, staff feels that it would be critical to ensure that Concord, as the State capital, and the central New Hampshire region as a whole, not be ignored. History has shown that new transportation alternatives can significantly and sometimes permanently alter the development trajectories of communities.

The attached resolution simply makes clear that if a rail project is built in New Hampshire, it would be the Council's strong recommendation that it include a connection to Concord.