

The Northeast Corridor Network: The Corridor of the Future A Governors' Vision for Rail in the Northeast

The Northeast Governors Have Long Recognized the Links Among Transportation, Economic Competitiveness, Sustainable Development, and Environmental Quality.

- \$ Transportation – a balanced, integrated, well-functioning system – is essential for a globally competitive economy, broadened employment opportunities, efficiency in the movement of people and goods, redundancy for security, and environmentally sound and energy smart travel.
- \$ Rail – intercity, commuter, freight and their intermodal links – is a vital part of the nation's transportation system that helps balance demand across multiple modes.
 - ▶ Intercity passenger rail provides connectivity for mega-regions, smaller cities, and rural communities. It offers system redundancy and an alternative travel form when severe weather conditions or other emergencies affect other travel modes.
 - ▶ Intercity and commuter passenger rail enhances economic competitiveness and sustained development. With its established communities and densely populated urban areas, the Northeast is renewing itself through mobility by connecting urban and rural economic engines to stimulate growth in our existing communities.
 - ▶ Passenger rail contributes to energy and environmental sustainability. By contributing to a reduction in vehicle miles traveled and the related fuel consumption and vehicle emissions, commuter and intercity passenger rail are important tools for climate change and energy security.

In the Northeast, Passenger Rail is Part of an Integrated Transportation System

- \$ The Northeast Corridor (NEC) Network is the nation's premier passenger rail system. The system – the Boston to Washington Spine; linked routes to Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Canada, and states south and west – supports a mix of intercity, commuter, long distance and regional freight services on rights-of-way that are owned by Amtrak, states and freight railroads.
- \$ The Network is part of a larger transportation system that needs modal balance. Efficient use of the Network dramatically affects the overall viability of the highway, aviation, freight and commuter rail transportation networks that serve the region and the nation.

A Vision for the Northeast Corridor Network

- \$ The Northeast Corridor Network Vision sets a goal of improved, expanded passenger rail service and significantly increased ridership. The Vision also views passenger rail as a means to larger national and regional goals. It seeks to integrate rail into the broader transportation system and make it a significant contributor to improved mobility, economic competitiveness, community revitalization, reduced carbon emissions, and energy security.
- \$ The NEC Network Vision requires a national rail policy with the coordinated goals, institutional relationships and financial resources that allow rail planning, development and investment to be integrated into a truly multi-modal transportation system.
- \$ To ensure that the NEC Network is strategically developed to its highest and best public use, states must have a meaningful role in and responsibility for intercity and commuter rail policy-making.

Performance of the NEC Network: Expanded, High Quality Rail Service

- \$ The Northeast's passenger rail system must increase its share of the current and future travel. The quality and range of services must entice travelers away from congested highways and airports and onto intercity and commuter rail at ridership levels that enhance system mobility.
 - ▶ **Quality Passenger Rail Service:** Safe, reliable, frequent, and time and price competitive service is needed if passenger rail is to attract, retain and increase its ridership. Quality service includes:
 - intercity service, including regional service and world-class higher speed premium service, with reduced travel times, more frequent service, and better on-time performance;
 - more frequent and reliable commuter rail services with expanded service coordination between commuter railroads and upgraded equipment and stations; and
 - enhanced intermodal linkages for more seamless travel with coordinated informational services, compatible fare collections, integrated facilities, and coordinated operations.
 - ▶ **Expanded Capacity:** Expanded rail capacity helps the Northeast's transportation system meet the mobility needs and growth opportunities of the region's changing demographics. It will require a blend of higher speed travel, new service in existing and/or new markets, and comprehensive coordinated planning of infrastructure and operational improvements. With improved capacity, the NEC Network can be an asset to address:
 - highway congestion in the region's metropolitan areas,
 - land and air-side congestion at Northeast major airports (airport access, alternatives for 300-500 mile trips),
 - choke points involving intercity, commuter and freight traffic, including rail-border and rail-port connections, and
 - responsible use of land, housing, community development, and energy resources.
- Goal: Double intercity and commuter ridership region-wide by 2030.**
 - ▶ **Infrastructure and Equipment:** Quality service and enhanced capacity require significantly increased investment in infrastructure and equipment. Without additional investment, the only solution to worsening rail congestion and capacity issues is capping service levels – a situation

that already exists on portions of the NEC Spine.

- Timely action and adequate federal funding are needed to achieve a state of good repair on the NEC through an ongoing program of investment in normalized maintenance and elimination of the backlog of deferred investment.

Goal: Achieve systemwide State of Good Repair including elimination of the backlog of deferred investment by 2015.

Collaboration and Coordination Is Needed to Achieve the NEC Network Vision

- States call for collaborative decision-making, not just an advisory role, for the NEC Network. Federal policy should recognize states' long-standing role as joint funders, owners and operators of passenger rail service.
- Collaborative partnerships should be comprehensive in scope and institutionalized through legislation.
 - ▶ Federal policy should encourage states, the federal government, Amtrak and the freight railroads to work together to improve planning and management of the NEC Network across ownership, jurisdictional and modal boundaries. It should encourage a regional, system-wide perspective. An important step toward such cooperative, coordinated planning is greater parity in federal planning requirements, staffing and financial resources among the modes.
- Collaborative partnerships require accountability among all partners, draw upon empirical data, incorporate transparent decision-making processes, and allow for timely resolution of differences.
 - ▶ Federal policy and regulations should foster processes that provide timely reviews and decisions, thus helping reduce the uncertainty and costs attributable to administrative processes. Federal and state policy-makers should receive regular status reports on progress in achieving specific policy, project and performance goals, and in resolving differences among the affected parties.
 - ▶ Improved collection, analysis and sharing of empirical data will help decision-makers better understand the performance of the rail system, the markets for increased ridership, and the implications of rail travel on other modes, opportunities for sustainable development, energy use, and the environment.
- § As the Congress develops intercity passenger rail reform legislation, it has the opportunity to define a national rail policy and build a sustained institutional framework for on-going collaboration, accountability and transparency. The scope of the collaborative partnership must encompass:
 - ▶ Defining a shared vision for a NEC Network that is capable of meeting the needs and objectives of all its users, regardless of ownership. The vision should articulate how the NEC Network can contribute to achieving the diverse objectives of mobility, economic revitalization, responsible use of land and community resources, smart use of energy, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

- ▶ Developing and implementing a system-wide capital investment plan for the short and longer terms needs of the NEC Network. This includes restoring the NEC infrastructure to the state of good repair. All parties must collaborate in inventorying the assets and defining state of good repair.
- ▶ Determining the costs and allocation of those costs among the shared users of the publicly owned NEC Network. Appropriate flexibility in implementation must be provided to account for unique legal and institutional situations and to require reciprocity related to ownership.

Increased and Sustained Funding Is Essential to Achieving the Vision

\$ Significant additional investment – above recent increased investments made by Amtrak and the States – is needed to return the NEC Network infrastructure to a state of good repair and provide the needed capacity. Current federal policy, which funds intercity passenger rail through annual federal appropriations, hinders the ability of Amtrak and the States to undertake long-term, and cost-effective rail capital investment plans.

Federal Responsibility:

- ▶ The federal government has the dominant responsibility to restore the Amtrak-owned NEC infrastructure to a state of good repair that incorporates normalized maintenance and eliminates the backlog of deferred investment. Amtrak estimates that \$330 million is needed annually for normalized maintenance, and almost \$5 billion is needed over eight - ten years to reduce the backlog of deferred investment.
- ▶ Since the NEC Network is an integral part of a national transportation system, the federal government should contribute to raising intercity service to the next level of performance, including competitive higher speed service. Once state of good repair is achieved, investments in expanded capacity of the NEC Network may be jointly funded by the users commensurate with their use.
- ▶ A dedicated federal capital program of increased, sustained investment in intercity passenger rail is needed for robust rail service. Such a capital program could be modeled on the current federal highway and transit programs.
 - Federal action is needed urgently to create a comprehensive, sustainable portfolio of federal revenues that can address the diverse investment needs of the nation's surface transportation system, including intercity passenger rail. While revenues specific to an intercity passenger rail capital fund must be funded from sources outside the Highway Trust Fund, the contribution of passenger rail – commuter and intercity – to a balanced, effective transportation system must be taken into account as the federal government considers future funding options and uses of federal funds for surface transportation.

States' Responsibility

- ▶ States make significant investments to optimize NEC Network system performance and provide

additional capacity for enhanced intercity, commuter and freight rail service. The Northeast states spent more than \$2.8 billion on infrastructure improvements in support of intercity passenger rail from 1992 - 2001. They spent or committed over \$1.7 billion in capital investments between FY2002-2006, and significant investments continue.

- ▶ Investments made by states, particularly in state-owned territory, should be recognized, acknowledged and accounted for in any funding scenario where a state contributes (or may be asked to contribute) to the cost of intercity passenger rail infrastructure.