



## Waterbury Rail Line Fact Sheet

### Proposed Actions

- **2020** – Expedite the development of specifications and design and delivery of new rail equipment already authorized
- **2020** – Commit to acquiring new dual-powered locomotives (8) and rail cars (24) dedicated to operating on the Waterbury Rail Line:
  - Capital Cost = \$150 million (not to exceed; 35 year financing period)
  - About \$18-to-\$20 million per new train set – 1 locomotive plus 3 rail cars
- **2021** – Add 1 new trip in the AM peak period (7:30-8:30 am) and 1 new return trip in the evening peak period (6:30-7:30 pm) – immediate action by December 31, 2020:
  - Operating Cost = \$450,000
  - Doesn't include cost to maintain or other incremental increase in administration cost
- **2023** – Add an addition trip in the AM peak period and evening peak period – by December 31, 2022 (when signal system and PTC operational):
  - Operating Cost = \$500,000
  - Doesn't include cost to maintain or other incremental increase in administration cost
- **2025** – Provide 30-minute service during the AM and PM peak periods and 60-minute service during off-peak periods when signal system and PTC operational and new rail equipment delivered and commissioned for service:
  - Operating Cost = \$5.3 million
  - Doesn't include cost to maintain or other incremental increase in administration cost
  - System will accommodate up to 10 trains per hour
- **2021-2025** – Construct a new rail storage yard and maintenance facility along the Waterbury Rail Line:
  - Capital Cost = \$140 million (35 year financing period)
- **2025-2030** – Add station amenities:
  - High level platforms
  - Platform canopies

- Ticketing machines/kiosks
- Real-time traveler information/notices/alerts
- Full accessibility
- Connections to downtown areas
- Future station rehabilitations, relocations and replacements

### Infrastructure Points

- Longest of the 3 branch lines at 27 miles
- Track in generally good condition; max speed = 59 mph – several sections have speed restrictions due to grade crossings and condition
- Single track; “dark” territory because of lack of signals – only one train allowed on the line at any time
- Connects to the New Haven main line at the Devon wye; only the inbound (toward New York) connection is in service, can’t get to New Haven unless travel to Bridgeport and transfer
- Average travel time between Waterbury and Bridgeport is about 55 minutes
- State has invested about \$90 million for new traffic control signal system, Positive Train Control (PTC) and passing sidings
  - Source of Funds = signals = 100% state bond; larger component of the funding; PTC = federal participating part of the all system project
  - Year allocated = 2015
- No commitment to increase service to take advantage of new signal system once operational

### Current Service and Operations

- Six stations on the WRL – Waterbury, Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Seymour, Ansonia and Derby/Shelton
- Limited service; only 15 trips daily – 8 inbound toward Bridgeport and 7 outbound to Waterbury
- 2½ hours between trains
- Once signal system operational, multiple trains will be able to operate on the line – capacity would allow up to 10 trains per hour
- Service generally ends at Bridgeport; one trip continues to Stamford and two trips (one in the morning and one in the evening) stop at Stratford
- Daily ridership is about 1,000

- Annual (2019) ridership totals about 345,000, a 94% increase over the total recorded in 2004
- Ridership increased 34% when one morning train added in 2007

### Problems and Concerns

- Insufficient number of trains in the morning and evening time periods
- Can't make connections – concerned if you miss a connection, you have to wait a long time; 2-to-2½ hours
- Over half (55%) of riders transfer to a New Haven main line train
- Existing equipment is unreliable, in poor condition and not clean
- Riders want CTDOT and MNRR to be more responsive to complaints
- Poor communication when service delayed or disrupted – no real time information
- Poor on time performance – average for 2018 was 81.2%, better in 2019 at 90.2% but still lower than main line service
- Excessive delays when buses substituted for service
- Stations are not accessible – low level platforms make boarding and alighting trains difficult for mobility impaired riders
- Limited sheltered waiting areas for riders
- Lack of passenger amenities either on board or while waiting for a train

### Traffic Considerations

- About 80,800 vehicles cross the Commodore Hull Bridge (Derby-Shelton town line) on Route 8 each day
- Morning traffic backs-up from the Commodore Hull Bridge to Seymour; in the evening northbound traffic backs-up through Shelton to about the Merritt Parkway
- About 14,000 people travel to Bridgeport, New Haven or Stamford each day from the Naugatuck Valley; this translates into about 28,000 trips
- More affordable housing in the Naugatuck Valley resulted in a shift of commuting from the NV to lower Fairfield – workers couldn't afford to live near their jobs in Fairfield County and moved to Naugatuck Valley; increased the flow of traffic on Route 8 to I-95

### Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

- All WRL host communities have zoning regulations that would allow and support TOD development
- NVCOG Alternative Modes and TOD Assessment study, working with AECOM and CDM Smith consultants, conducted TOD Visioning and Visual Preference Surveys in each of the Waterbury Rail Line communities (except Waterbury; City is conducting a separate TOD study):
  - Series of two workshops with the public and stakeholders
  - General support for higher density and mix-used development in downtown areas near train stations
  - Determined preferred density, scale layout and character of TODs in each community – identified features and characteristics residents view as appropriate in their downtowns
- Determined TOD opportunity sites near WRL stations (within ½ mile):
  - About 104 opportunity sites identified
  - About 275 acres of land available – infill, vacant and underutilized
- Assessment of TOD potential by CDM Smith indicates the potential increase in commercial development, housing units and population:
  - About 5.2 million square feet of new commercial space
  - About 6,245 new residential units
  - About 16,400 new residents
  - Potential tripling of WRL ridership – about 2,000 new riders

### Economic Development Considerations

- Station areas located in small, compact, historic downtowns with infrastructure available to support higher density land uses
- Former industrial economic bases with numerous vacant or underutilized parcels available for reuse and redevelopment
- Current economic trends indicate that younger workforce wants to live in vibrant, walkable areas where convenient transit available and they don't have to rely on driving
- Investment in the WRL will revitalize downtown areas and spur private development; recent experience:
  - About \$375 million has been invested near *CTfastrak* line stations
  - About \$400 million has been invested along the Hartford Line

### Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Act (RRIFA)

- Possible financing option
- Created in 1998 – authorized US DOT to provide direct loans and loan guarantees; total of \$35 billion available
- Administered by the Build America Bureau in the US DOT; loans executed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Initially intended to assist small private, freight railroad implement infrastructure improvements:
  - As of 2016, FRA had executed 35 loans – 29 for freight railroad projects and 6 for public passenger projects
  - Passenger rail projects were valued higher – accounting for 69% of total RRIF loans
  - Recent projects:
    - 2019 – Dallas Area Rapid Transit = \$908 million (rail extension project, convert freight lines to passenger service and double track the line)
    - 2019 – Port of Everett, Washington = \$5.9 million (expand on-terminal rail connections)
    - 2018 – MBTA = \$220 million (Positive Train Control)
    - 2016 – AMTRAK = \$2.450 billion (28 new train sets, station improvements (Union Station, DC and Moynihan Station, NYC), and improvements to Acela service) Note: Moynihan Station also was funded under TIFIA
- Length of time of application process (average time is 582 days), the uncertainty of the outcome and upfront costs to prospective applicants have been cited as reasons why the program is not as popular as expected:
  - Applicants required to pay the cost of “Credit Risk Premiums” – could be up to 5% of the loan request
- RRIFA loans available to fund railroad infrastructure improvements and projects
- Eligible activities:
  - Acquire, improve or rehabilitate rail equipment and facilities
  - Develop new rail facilities
  - Refinance debt on projects listed above
- Loans can fund up to 100% of railroad project

Waterbury Rail Line Improvement Program  
Fact Sheet

- Repayment schedule up to 35 years – don't have to identify a dedicated fund for repayment, but ability to repay is a factor in determine credit worthiness of the application
- Low interest rates – typically slightly less than market rates; tied to Treasury rates
- Railroad assets can be used as collateral
- Repayment can be deferred up to 5 years after the project is substantially complete
- Interest accrues as loan funds are expended – not from date of issue as is the case with bonds
- Issues
  - Length of application and approval process
  - Buy American requirements – currently no rail equipment manufacturers located in US; can request a waiver
  - Applicants responsible for paying administration costs of the loan, as well as for USDOT to evaluate the application
  - May need to pay "Credit Risk Premiums"