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SURVEY SHOWS STRONG SUPPORT FOR PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

(NASHUA, NH) - A recent survey of NH residents, conducted by the UNH Survey Center, found overwhelming demand for passenger rail service into southern NH. Nearly nine out of ten NH adults (87%) favor extending rail service into NH, while 64% strongly favor it.

Support for passenger rail service is strong across the state and is not limited to the Manchester/Nashua Rail Corridor (Bedford, Goffstown, Hooksett, Hudson, Litchfield, Londonderry, Manchester, Merrimack, and Nashua). Of those living in the Manchester/Nashua Rail Corridor, 91% stated they would favor the expansion of rail service into NH, with 78% strongly favoring it. Outside of the Corridor, 87% stated they would favor rail service and 60% reported strongly favoring it.

The survey also demonstrates the large potential market for passenger rail in NH. Of those individuals who currently travel to Boston once a month or more for work, shopping, or to access Logan Airport, almost all indicated they would take passenger rail if available. Among those living in the Manchester/Nashua Rail Corridor, 12% said they would use the rail service at least 2 times per week and an additional 28% reported they would ride once or twice per month. Even those living outside of the Manchester/Nashua Rail Corridor indicated they would utilize the service; 18% stated they would ride the rail at least once per month.

Additionally, the survey indicated that 73% of NH adults believe the state should create a Rail Authority to oversee the project. On Wednesday, the Senate Transportation and Interstate Cooperation Committee will hold a public hearing on SB75, introduced by Senator David Gottesman of Nashua. SB75 would authorize the formation of a Rail Authority that would be charged with implementing rail service in southern NH. Specific responsibilities would include establishing schedules and fares for the proposed Manchester to Lowell rail service.

Finally, the survey addressed the issue of a proposed \$75 million liability cap for damage claims from employees, passengers, and others who could potentially suffer loss during the operation of the rail service. Survey results indicate that 61% of NH residents favor the \$75 million liability cap while 33% strongly favor it.

“We always thought there was strong public support for the reintroduction of passenger rail in NH,” says Steve Williams, Executive Director of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission. “Based on this survey, we can say that the level of support among members of the public is even stronger than we thought.”

The UNH Survey Center compiled this survey data as part of its Granite State Poll, which included a series of questions designed to gauge the attitude of NH residents regarding the possibility of expanding passenger rail service into NH. Interviews were conducted over the phone with 538 randomly selected NH adults during February 2007. The study’s margin of sampling error is +/-4.2%.

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