

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

March 6, 2007

Summary

No agency in New Hampshire is currently authorized to operate passenger rail service within the state. Re-establishment of passenger rail service in NH will require the formation of a rail authority. The primary responsibility of this authority will be to establish and oversee the actual operation of passenger rail service in the state. Specific responsibilities include working with local governments to establish station sites, setting fares, and creating operating schedules that will respond to local needs. Given the operational nature of this authority, the board of directors is proposed to include local government representatives for all municipalities that either currently have passenger rail service or are in the planning process of establishing passenger rail service.

Rail Transit Authority Governance

The New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority will be governed by a board of directors made up of the following:

- Member appointed by the Governor who resides in the service area.
- The Commissioner of the Department of Transportation or designee.
- Representatives of municipalities and regions currently receiving passenger rail service. These include Dover, Durham, and Exeter, as well as the Strafford Regional Planning Commission and Rockingham Planning Commission.
- Representatives of municipalities and regions to be served by the proposed Manchester-Lowell passenger rail service. These include Manchester, Bedford, Merrimack, and Nashua, as well as Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission and Nashua Regional Planning Commission.

The board of directors can be expanded at any time to add representatives of other municipalities or regions that are proposed to receive passenger rail service.

Responsibilities of Rail Transit Authority

- Establish passenger rail service throughout New Hampshire to the extent practicable.
- Seek and expend funding to implement passenger rail services.
- Set reasonable fares for passenger rail service.
- Establish passenger rail schedules.
- Establish policies guiding passenger rail services within the service area.

The New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority would not have responsibility for the Downeaster service, as it is operated by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority.

Funding for Rail Transit Authority

SB 75 does not designate a funding source for the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority. The authority may accept funds through grants or loans from other government agencies or receive funds through fares, fees, rents, royalties, or contracts as necessary to operate passenger rail service in New Hampshire.

SB 75 will authorize the establishment of the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority. This special purpose agency is needed to undertake actions necessary to actually establish and operate passenger rail service in the state. The passage of this authorizing legislation will not commit the state to either operate or fund passenger rail service.