

# URS

## MEETING SUMMARY

**Client:**CTDOT  
**Job Number:** 171-366  
**Project Name:** Central Connecticut Rail Study  
**Issue Date:** December 5, 2014  
**Location:** CTDOT (Newington, CT)

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### **Results of Central Connecticut Rail Study (CCRS) Freight Workshop**

December 2, 2014 / 8:30AM to 3:00PM

CTDOT, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT

The purpose of this workshop was to review and discuss the work completed to date for the CCRS with a panel of invited freight rail experts. The following is a summary of this workshop. A more detailed report of the meeting has been prepared separately.

### **Project Overview**

- CCRS was conceived from a discussion with Governor Malloy in order to analyze the potential for providing a possible missing link in the state's rail passenger system (Waterbury to Berlin).
- The study began in 2012 and added a substantial freight component in 2013/2014.
- There is a need to determine whether investment makes sense from a cost-benefit perspective rather than just considering the desire for freight growth in the corridor.
- Travel times and ridership are still being prepared, but preliminary results indicate long travel times and limited ridership.

### **Current and Potential Freight Market**

- Current customers are concerned about service reliability.
- The corridor handles 1,300 carloads annually, with the potential for an additional 1,000.
- Higher track speeds are more expensive to maintain and offer limited benefits.
- Upgrades to 286k would likely be more cost effective than increased track speeds but would also require higher maintenance costs. Also, upgrading one corridor is irrelevant if 263k bottlenecks exist all around it. Upgrades must be done as part of a larger vision.
- It likely makes more sense to focus funds on the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) mainline – otherwise funding is spread too thin. Once the core arteries are upgraded, then it will make more sense to work on the secondary lines.
- The rationale for public investment is based on regional economic benefits and the reduction of highway impacts. There isn't strong potential for these improvements through CCRS upgrades and passenger service
- It will be important to be sure that public investment doesn't deter or substitute for private (PAS) investment. What is the minimum investment needed to get decent or just acceptable service?
- Maybe 286k is not the greatest benefit, but perhaps an extended siding to eliminate split shifts would create more of a benefit. It is important to keep customers happy and do what is economically feasible to maintain these businesses in Connecticut.

### **Infrastructure Assessment**

- Overall the corridor features overgrown vegetation, obstructed drainage, wood ties in poor condition, some fouled ballast, and no signalization. The Terryville Tunnel also needs substantial investment.

- The cost of upgrading the corridor to different levels of service would be as follows:

Item	Cost	Cost w/ Contingency
<b><i>Class II State of Good Repair (TOTAL)</i></b>	<b><i>\$97,890,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$137,046,000</i></b>
Class III Freight ( <i>Incremental Cost</i> )	\$22,253,000	\$31,153,000
<b><i>Class III Freight (TOTAL)</i></b>	<b><i>\$120,143,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$168,199,000</i></b>
Class III w/ Passenger Upgrades ( <i>Incremental Cost</i> )	\$86,867,000	\$121,614,000
<b><i>Class III w/ Passenger Upgrades (TOTAL)</i></b>	<b><i>\$207,010,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$289,813,000</i></b>

- There was concern about whether the Positive Train Control (PTC) cost estimate is sufficient given recent experience on the Danbury Branch. The cost difference is due to Metro-North Force Account rates (double the rates typically charged elsewhere) not being required on the PAS line.
- Connecticut needs to consider what the policy is regarding assisting freight railroads in getting to 286k. What are the priorities? How can the State target investments strategically?

### Key Themes

- *Freight Market*
  - This is a low density corridor with a relatively weak rail freight market. The potential for market growth is also limited.
- *Current Infrastructure*
  - The rail infrastructure in the corridor is in poor condition, but the infrastructure might not be a major factor in customer retention or expansion.
- *Location in Rail Network.*
  - The location of the corridor within the larger state and regional rail network is problematic and could be a hindrance to market growth.
  - The PAS Line is an ‘end of line’ corridor that cannot compete with mainline corridors.
  - Access to a mainline corridor from the PAS corridor is inadequate, which limits its market potential. All access routes to/from the PAS line to mainline corridors are limited by weight restrictions of 263k and/or frequent passenger services.
  - It may be more important to address the access to the PAS Line rather than making major improvements within the PAS corridor.
- *Local Economic Development*
  - We still need to consider options to retain existing customers and their jobs due to their importance to the local economy.
- *Strategy to Help Customers*
  - The primary concern of customers seems to be reliability (and perhaps frequency) of service. The corridor’s poor rail infrastructure might not be the primary cause for these problems. The primary factors are *more* likely the: (1) low density of customers, and (2) PAS operations practices and business priorities. Options to improve service and reliability should be explored, but the focus should be on the customer needs rather than the rail infrastructure.

### Action Items/Next Steps:

- The Study Team will:
  - Hold a conference call with panelists in 2-3 weeks:
    - The focus will be a discussion of the draft set of conclusions and recommendations that resulted from the workshop. These will be distributed ahead of the call.

- The call will also give panelists an opportunity to share any new ideas they have come up with since the workshop.
- Edit the draft Freight Market Analysis Report and the draft Infrastructure Assessment Report based on CTDOT comments, workshop participant comments, and additional review by our team.
- Refocus the CCRS in the context of a statewide rail strategy:
  - Evaluate effectiveness of upgrade to 286k in the CCRS corridor in the context of statewide freight rail opportunities
  - Identify targeted investments necessary to retain and attract freight rail customers on the CCRS
  - Identify passenger potential for rail connections to NHHS or *CTfastrak*
- Supporting technical efforts:
  - Perform additional review of customer needs based on follow-up with those interviewed and results of Infrastructure Assessment Report.
  - Develop a cost estimate supporting the most essential actions (infrastructure or other related investments) needed to demonstrate support of existing customer base.
  - Refocus DMU study to cover evaluation of Waterbury Branch commuter service as a “demonstrator” program to determine viability of equipment on CTDOT Branch Lines (or NHHS). Discuss with MBTA current RFI for potential purchase of 30 DMUs for Fairmont Line service.
  - Meet with select group of informed stakeholders from CCRS corridor following finalization of Freight Workshop conclusions (results to be confirmed from follow-up call with panelists) to explore most realistic investment for CCRS corridor over the short-medium term.