

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

RI Department of Administration  
One Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908

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Public Hearing & Comment Period Report  
Rhode Island State Rail Plan

Approved March 13, 2014

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## I. Introduction

In recent years the State has made significant advancements to improve and expand passenger and freight rail infrastructure and service in Rhode Island. Many of the recent accomplishments, including the completion of commuter rail stations at Wickford Junction and Warwick InterLink, and the expansion of segments of the Freight Rail Improvement Project (FRIP), have all expanded opportunities for both passenger and freight rail service in Rhode Island. As rail continues to advance there is a need to have an overarching and broad vision for the State's future rail investment priorities. The last time the State took a comprehensive look at rail was with the 1993 *Rhode Island Freight Rail Plan* and as the title implies was primarily focused on freight with limited attention to passenger rail.

In addition, the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) requires states to have a current and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) approved state rail plan to be eligible for federal rail funding programs under the act. The 1993 *Rhode Island Freight Rail* fails to meet the requirements established under PRIIA. As a result, the State has developed a new State Rail Plan to meet the provisions under PRIIA, as well as to establish a blueprint for the future direction of Rhode Island's passenger and freight rail investments that best utilizes the State's scarce transportation funding resources.

The Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program (RISPP) has worked cooperatively with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), along with stakeholder involvement from the State Rail Plan Advisory Committee to develop the draft State of Rhode Island Rail Plan. The State Rail Plan Advisory Committee assisted throughout the course of the Plan's development and was comprised of representatives from state and federal agencies, public and private passenger and freight rail operators, the rail passenger association, the Transportation Advisory Committee, Rhode Island and Massachusetts regional planning agencies, as well as several other interested parties. Through the Committee's involvement, this planning process to update the State Rail Plan has provided an opportunity to bring together various agencies and organizations that have a stake in rail transportation in Rhode Island and the region. The Rail Plan has been developed to meet and exceed the planning provisions of PRIIA, articulate the vision, goals, and objectives for Rhode Island's passenger and freight rail systems, and to identify and prioritize potential passenger and freight rail projects in Rhode Island. Once adopted, the State Rail Plan will replace the Rhode Island Freight Rail Plan as State Guide Plan Element 661.

There were two public hearings to accept comments on the Rhode Island State Rail Plan. The first public hearing occurred during the morning of January 23, 2014 at 10:00 AM at the Department of Administration, Conference Room A. The second public hearing occurred on January 23, 2014 at 6:30 PM at the TAC meeting.

A legal notice was published in the Providence Journal on December 20, 2013, advertising the Rhode Island State Rail Plan's January 23, 2014 public hearings. The public hearing notice referred interested citizens, agencies, and organizations to Statewide Planning's web posting of the Rhode Island State Rail Plan December 2013 draft which was made available for download. A hard copy of the document was also made available in the Statewide Planning Program office. A copy of the public hearing notice was also direct mailed to over 1,300 interested parties. The public comment period for the draft Plan opened on December 20, 2013 and will close at the conclusion of the TAC's public hearing on January 23, 2014. Comments received at the public hearings, as well as written public comments received within the public comment period, are summarized and addressed in this public hearing report.

## II. Comment Summary & Response

Name	Comment / Question	Response
Aaron Hertzberg, <i>Pawtucket Foundation</i>	Stated that he is encouraged by the idea to create an intermodal hub at the South Attleboro MBTA Commuter Rail Station.	RIDOT has been working with RIPTA, the MBTA, and the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) to provide RIPTA bus service at this station. RIPTA will begin service to South Attleboro in June 2014 with two bus routes (Route 1 and 35). The Plan also cites South Attleboro, MA Station Improvements as a high priority under the Short Range (0-5 years) Investment Program (see page 9-19) for pedestrian and RIPTA bus connections at the Station.
Steven Musen, <i>RI Association of Railroad Passengers</i>	Several grammatical comments and factual corrections were offered.	Changes were incorporated into the Plan.
	Noted that the Plan includes an Investment Program table listing future potential projects, however there are no funding set-aside for steps further action, especially for projects listed in the preliminary engineering / environmental analysis phase. Feels that cost estimates for construction should be included for projects listed in the engineering phase even if they are not implemented at this time.	The outcome of the planning analysis or preliminary engineering/environmental analysis will determine a project's feasibility and therefore the likelihood of advancing to the next phase of development. No project in the Planning Level Analysis phase or the Preliminary Engineering/Environmental Analysis phase is guaranteed to advance into construction.
Bruce Waterson, <i>Waterson Terminal Services at the Port of Providence</i>	Asked that the rail unloading project at the Port of Providence be considered as short-term instead of long term, as it is stated in the Plan. He believes this project will probably advance within the next 12 to 18 months.	The Port of Providence's rail unloading project is now identified as a high priority under the Plan's Short Range Investment Program. See page 9-20.
Peter Brassard, <i>public</i>	Stated that the Plan should place greater importance on the electrification of all tracks including passenger, freight, commuter, and track siding on the Northeast Corridor, especially between Central Falls and Westerly. It would increase connectivity between Providence and Boston and decrease pollution. The MBTA has resisted using electric trains but their policy could change in the future.	Electrification of tracks is dependent upon MBTA's advancement of such technology and use of electric multiple units (EMUs). The State Rail Plan includes support for EMUs and track electrification in the Short Range Investment Program's Commuter Rail Expansion South of Providence project listed on page 9-17.
	Identifies the Pawtucket/Central Falls station as the primary infill station for the MBTA's Wickford to Boston line. In a Providence Foundation Commuter Rail feasibility study, Providence's Olneyville neighborhood was identified as another infill station location. Other potential infill stations including Cranston on Cranston St. and Elmwood at Reservoir St. also have similar potential and not that much vehicle parking would be needed around the stations.	The State Rail Plan cites the following projects in support of advancing commuter infill station development: Additional Track Capacity-Providence to Kingston; Commuter Rail Expansion South of Providence; Pawtucket Commuter Rail Station; and Passenger Service from Woonsocket to Pawtucket/Providence. RIDOT is also currently studying expansion of the current commuter rail service between Providence and Wickford Junction, including in-fill stations. In-fill stations such as Olneyville and Elmwood could only be considered under the in-state shuttle service concept.

Name	Comment / Question	Response
<i>continued, Peter Brassard, public</i>	The current MBTA service is more Boston oriented. Consideration should be given to added service on weekday mornings, afternoons, and evenings, as well as weekends. Trains could also be better linked with RIPTA buses and would be competitive with automobile travel.	The State Rail Plan includes the Commuter Rail Expansion South of Providence project under the Short Range (0-5 years) Investment Program for planning level analysis (see page 9-17). This project is studying the potential for added frequency and span of service by implementing an in-state rail shuttle service.
	The Rail Plan should increase ridership performance targets on commuter trains from 1% to 5%.	The ridership performance target was raised to a 2% ridership increase per year, which is consistent with RIPTA and MBTA targets.
	Proposed that as a low priority, a 4 <sup>th</sup> track between Central Falls and TF Green Airport be considered since it would positively influence land use.	In the State Rail Plan's Short Range (0-5 years) Investment Program, the project labeled "3rd Track Capacity" has been modified to "Additional Track Capacity - Providence to Kingston" as to not exclude from consideration of a fourth track (see page 9-17).
	The current limits/alignment of the Providence Street Car proposal may be too narrow. Consideration to upgrading the track and train standards to light rail standards, and studying expansion to certain routes could include adjacent cities such as Johnston, North Providence, East Providence, Pawtucket, and Cranston.	The original planning study facilitated by RIPTA did consider these intercity connections before choosing a Providence-only preferred alternative. The Providence Street Car alignment is focused on Providence's downtown core as the area where there is the greatest concentration of activities and the highest density development in the city. The proposed first phase is being kept to a relatively short distance (about 2 miles from College Hill to Upper South Providence) to keep the project at a reasonable cost and provide the best chance for implementation. The first phase is also being designed to work within the state's broader transit system, linking to bus, Rapid Bus and commuter rail. Consideration is also being given to how possible future extensions might be incorporated.
	The Rail Plan should include fare coordination between MBTA, RIPTA, and Amtrak.	Fare coordination is included as an Implementation Action on Page 9-8.
<i>Jeffrey Hill, public</i>	Suggested adding to the Rail Plan, the opportunity for State employees to purchase a MBTA pass at the pre-tax level for commuter rail, as is currently done with the RIPTA bus service.	Comment noted. RI Dept. of Administration's Human Resources Division is currently exploring the possibility of providing MBTA commuter train passes, pre-tax for State employees.
	Consider an opportunity for free commuter rail service on air quality alert days, as is offered on RIPTA.	Comments noted. The opportunity for free commuter rail service on air quality alert days will be considered in the 2014 overall funding of the program.
<i>Barry Schiller, public &amp; TAC member</i>	Emphasized the goal and importance of keeping all rail infrastructure in a state in good repair but pointed out that there that dedicated funds for this have not been identified.	For commuter rail track infrastructure, RIDOT has access to FTA funds for repair and replacement when appropriate.

Name	Comment / Question	Response
<i>continued, Barry Schiller, public &amp; TAC member</i>	Since there are little financial resources for transportation, believes that any expansion of passenger rail should depend first on the existing transit system and a structure for marketing of the commuter rail service to increase utilization of the current system.	The Plan contains an Implementation Action to review the needs of commuter rail service including marketing efforts to support ridership (see page 9-8).
	Amtrak currently does not carry bicycles and current service should include bicycle accommodations.	Amtrak's policy at this time is that folding bicycles under a certain dimension are permitted onboard all trains in lieu of a piece of baggage. Bicycles may also be checked in a bicycle container on trains/stations offering checked baggage service.
	There should be a bike path between Wickford Village and Wickford Junction train station.	In 2005, RIDOT completed a feasibility report on the construction of a bike path from Wickford Village to Wickford Junction. At the time there was strong neighborhood opposition however if there is renewed interest in establishing this bicycle connection. The Town of North Kingstown could apply during the next solicitation to include this project in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
	Suggests coordination of employer van shuttles to meet the trains at Wickford Junction Station for improved passenger convenience/ridership.	The Town of North Kingstown is currently working on establishing a shuttle service from Wickford Junction to Wickford Village and the Quonset Business Park to provide better transportation access for workers and during special events such as the Wickford Art Festival and Quonset Air Show.
	Suggested honoring transit passes on both the MBTA train and the RIPTA bus	The Plan acknowledges that convenient intermodal connections can encourage transit use. Fare coordination is included as an Implementation Action on Page 9-8.
	Since the Providence train station is located directly the state capitol, state employee incentives for using the commuter rail should also be offered.	Comment noted. RI Dept. of Administration's Human Resources Division is currently working on providing MBTA commuter train passes, pre-tax for State employees. The State Commuter Task Force is also examining other opportunities to encourage state employees to use alternative transportation modes to get to and from work.
	A regional, inter-agency effort with Massachusetts, etc. regarding the rail system including freight rail is needed.	The State of RI engages in frequent discussions with CT and MA regarding the coordination of cross jurisdiction passenger and freight rail programs and projects. Also the State of RI continues to be an active participant in the Northeast Corridor Commission which brings NEC stakeholders together in a coordinated manner to develop and implement a long-term investment strategy for the NEC and to provide information about the NEC's role in economic growth and development. The Commission seeks to address the inherent challenges of coordinating, financing, and implementing major improvements that cross multiple jurisdictions.

Name	Comment / Question	Response
<i>continued , Barry Schiller, public &amp; TAC member</i>	There are commuter trains from Franklin, MA to Boston however there are no public buses to get from Woonsocket to the station. Need cooperation to go across state lines with the buses.	RIPTA will begin service across state lines to South Attleboro, MA in June 2014 with two bus routes (Route 1 and 35). If this service proves successful RIPTA may consider servicing other potential transportation facilities in MA if there is RI ridership demand.
<i>Eugenia Marks, Audubon Society of RI, Coalition for Transportation Choices</i>	Stated that while the State Rail Plan is very good, suggests that there needs to be improvements to the State's intermodal connections cited in the draft. These include better bus connections and using the bicycle as a way of commuting	The Plan acknowledges that convenient intermodal connections can encourage transit use. The Plan cites numerous Chapter 9 Goals, Objectives, Policies, and/or Implementation actions listed under Infrastructure Condition, System Reliability, Congestion Reduction, Economic Vitality, and Environmental Sustainability in support of advancing intermodal travel opportunities: Also the State is working to develop better intermodal facilities, which would include bicycle accommodations, as part of the Plan's Short and Long Range Investment Program.
<i>Everett Stuart, RI Association of Railroad Passengers &amp; TAC member</i>	Several grammatical comments and factual corrections were offered.	Changes were incorporated into the Plan.
	Page 7-1: Recommends that language be strengthened regarding the role of the tourist and excursion rail operations in RI and their contributions to the state's economy. The RIDOT owned Newport Secondary could be particularly valuable and its continued use as a tourist line, which keeps it active in the public's eye. Recommends including state policy of preserving working rail operations on the Newport Secondary. All three Aquidneck municipalities have this in their Comprehensive Plans.	Text was added to the State Rail Plan regarding the role of the tourist and excursion rail operations in RI (see Section 5.5 - Rail Passenger Excursion Service and Section 7.1 - Economic Impacts).
	Page 9-7: Recommends adding a reference to establishing a mechanism to provide for long term maintenance of RIDOT owned rail stations -- Kingston and Westerly. Explained this is not an issue of federal funding but a significant State responsibility. The station's condition and image projected is important to the State	The State's FY 2014 Budget includes dedicated line item funding for maintenance at Kingston, Westerly, and Woonsocket stations.
	Page 9-8: Performance Measure #1 lists ridership growth of 2 percent a year. Mr. Stuart believes that this is very low for the new Wickford Junction MBTA commuter rail service. The goal should be higher.	The ridership performance target was increased to a 2% increase per year, consistent with RIPTA and MBTA targets.
	Believes that Boston's North Station/South Station rail connection should be included in the long term implementation section of the RI State Rail Plan as a show of regional support.	RI will remain engaged in any discussions to advance a North Station/South Station rail connection in Boston.
<i>George Monaghan, RICE &amp; TAC member</i>	Several grammatical comments and factual corrections were offered.	Changes were incorporated into the Plan.

Name	Comment / Question	Response
<p>Dan Baudouin, <i>The Providence Foundation &amp; TAC member</i></p>	<p>Page 6-11 - Section 6.5, Blackstone Valley Passenger Service is a misnomer because this section also contains information about the report on a potential intrastate transit service between Woonsocket and Warwick. This facility would serve residents beyond the Blackstone Valley. Believes that it should have its own category or, at least, there should be a name change in the title to reflect more the scope of the in-state geographic coverage potential.</p>	<p>Section 6.5 is specific to providing passenger service to the Blackstone Valley however the limited geographic area reference in the Plan does not isolate the Blackstone Valley's link to potential intra-state service connections at Providence, Cranston, and Warwick stations.</p>
	<p>Page 6-14 Section 6.6, Rail Shuttle Service: Believes that the rail shuttle service, with 30 minute frequencies would benefit additional high density development in downtown Providence, particularly in the Capital Center District.</p>	<p>Comment noted. The City of Providence regulates density levels in the Capital Center District. In addition the City, through its land use regulations and approval process regulated the amount of available surface and structured parking provided in new developments, which is often a deterrent to the use of public transportation.</p>
	<p>Page 9-17: The Providence Station project should include more than the rail hazardous material issue. As currently under study by RIDOT, it also should include future capacity issues and the high likelihood for the need to expand the station due to ever growing passenger utilization.</p>	<p>The Providence Station &amp; Tunnel Configuration Improvement project listed in the Short Range Investment Program (Table 9-2) includes preliminary engineering/analysis for station expansion, intermodal/bus connections, additional access/egress, parking etc. Also listed under the Short Range Program is the final engineering/design and construction for the Providence Station - Exterior Improvements.</p>
	<p>Stated that on the long-range investment programs, the rail shuttle service does not appear in the State Rail Plan.</p>	<p>Under the Short Range Investment Program (Table 9-2), a planning level analysis for Commuter Rail Expansion South of Providence includes in-state rail shuttle service.</p>
	<p>Concerned that the Woonsocket service is listed as a low priority in the Long-Range Investment Program. Recommends that a planning level analysis be performed for the Woonsocket and in-state commuter rail service that analyzes both of these potential projects as a combined system perhaps with different implementation schedules.</p>	<p>Commuter rail service to Woonsocket is dependent upon construction of a station in Pawtucket; therefore it can not be a priority until Pawtucket service is established.</p>
<p>Pam Sherrill, <i>RI Chapter American Planning Association &amp; TAC member</i></p>	<p>Page 9-3 and Page 9-20: Stated that Plan's mention of an at-grade-crossing on Pawtucket Avenue in East Providence maybe incorrect and that it should be Ferris Avenue.</p>	<p>Although there is a grade-separated-crossing on Pawtucket Avenue north of Bishop Avenue, an at-grade-crossing exists on Pawtucket Avenue south of Gorham Lane. The Plan includes planned at-grade rail crossing project on Pawtucket Avenue in East Providence.</p>
	<p>The State Rail Plan should include mention of commuter rail service from Connecticut's Shoreline East into Rhode Island as a potential future project/service.</p>	<p>The Plan includes a policy to increase passenger commuter rail service, including connections to service in Massachusetts and Connecticut (see page 9-8). RIDOT also currently maintains preliminary discussions with the Connecticut Dept. of Transportation regarding the possible future extension of Shore Line East commuter rail service in to RI.</p>

Name	Comment / Question	Response
<i>continued Pam Sherrill, RI Chapter American Planning Association &amp; TAC member</i>	Page 9-13: The evaluation goal of Economic Vitality should include more emphasis on port development at both Quonset's Port of Davisville and ProvPort.	The Economic Vitality goal does include RI port's potential to contribute to the State's economy, including a project's potential if it were located within or near the Port of Davisville and Port of Providence.
<i>Tim Pimental, RI Airport Corporation</i>	A factual correction was offered.	The correction was incorporated into the Plan.
	Table 5-7 should be revised to include the arrival times of trains in Boston.	Table 5-7 has been revised to include train arrival and departure times in Boston.
<i>Daniel Geagan, City of Warwick</i>	A factual correction was offered.	The correction was incorporated into the Plan.
<i>Karen Shabselowitz, public</i>	Recommends that commuter rail service be extended to Kingston, Rhode Island. The population in southern Rhode Island including the University of Rhode Island students, tourists, and residents would highly benefit from this service. Another reason to support this move is access to the Boston medical community.	The State Rail Plan includes the Commuter Rail Expansion South of Providence project under the Short Range (0-5 years) Investment Program for planning level analysis (see page 9-17). This project includes studying the potential for adding commuter rail service at Kingston Station.
<i>Steven I. Castiglioni, public</i>	There should be more focus on mass transit (rail) from a Providence metropolitan area perspective including Bristol County, MA. Since Providence is the core/center of the metro region, urged that the focus be on getting commuters to and from – and through Providence.	The RI State Rail Plan does include rail connections into MA, including many potential projects listed in the Short and Long Range Investment Program which are focused to enhance service in and out of the Providence metro area.
	Connecting Providence to its Massachusetts suburbs: In order to leverage the 600,000 residents and the businesses of the Southeastern MA area with the Providence Metro, commuter rail service from Fall River and New Bedford to Providence is a prime ingredient. It is critical to the economic health of the state and metro that this connection be planned, before a Boston connection is established.	The RI State Rail Plan does include rail connections into MA, including many potential projects listed in the Short and Long Range Investment Program which are focused to enhance service in and out of the Providence metro area. In addition, bus transit service between Providence and Fall River/New Bedford could provide other transit option for the commuters.
<i>John Flaherty, Grow Smart RI</i>	Suggests that the State Rail Plan make a noted preference for NEC high-speed rail alignment options that include a stop in Providence which appear to be applicable to alignment options #1 through #13.	Support for the NEC alignment to stop in Providence was added to the Plan on page 3-8. The State of RI also continues to be active in the NEC Future's Study and advocates for continued Amtrak service to Providence.
<i>Peter Moniz, public</i>	Advocated for using the northern section of the Newport Secondary Rail line in Tiverton as a Bike Path since he believes this section of the railroad line will not be used for active railroad service in the future.	The Tiverton Bike Path is listed in the FY 2013-2016 TIP for further Study & Development. As indicated in the TIP, the path would run along the Newport Secondary Railroad right-of-way owned by RIDOT. However future potential rail service on the ROW can also not be excluded at this time.

Name	Comment / Question	Response
Peter Moniz, <i>public</i>	Stated that freight service at Quonset /Davisville should be further developed as a major distribution hub. RI should promote Quonset's location as an international container port and seek other opportunities for the establishment of regional distributions centers.	The Plan identifies the Quonset Layover / Maintenance Facility, Seaview RR Sidings in the Quonset Business Park (QBP), QBP Northeast Corridor Turnout, and Vertical Clearance Restrictions between Pawtucket and Quonsets as projects under the Short and Long Range Investment Program. These projects would support and enhance Quonset's location as an regional distribution node for the movement of freight. Future planning activities for the state including the drafting of the State Economic Development Plan and State Freight Plan will also outline policies and projects to enhance the area in and around Quonset.
	Stated that he feels that the Providence Street Car is not a viable option and further study is not needed. The infrastructure costs for this project will be costly as will its operation. There are simpler and better options such as special wheel trolley buses or double decker buses that present a different look in design and appearance than the traditional bus.	The Providence Street Car Study looked at the impact of operating enhanced bus technologies along the route. While a new bus route would help achieve desired mobility goals and better connect downtown activity centers, the permanent infrastructure investment associated with streetcars has been shown to attract significantly higher levels of economic growth.
Christina L. Valentino, <i>Univ. of Rhode Island</i>	The Plan must include strategies and resources to achieve effective intermodal connectivity. There are too few transportation connections in Kingston especially to the public transit buses. There is also inadequate parking at Kingston Station, and no pedestrian or bicycle paths between campus and the rail station.	RIPTA is studying the potential of providing bus service from the Wickford Junction commuter rail station to the URI Kingston Campus in the Fall of 2014. The FY 2013-2016 TIP identifies the URI/South County Bike Path Connector as a high priority project under the Study & Development Program. This project would provide a bike path connection from Kingston Station to URI's Kingston Campus. RIDOT is currently constructing additional parking spaces on the north side of the station. It is anticipated that another 80-100 spaces will be constructed on the south side of the station in 2015/2016.
Ed Chomk, <i>public</i>	Suggests experimental commuter rail service from Worcester to Warwick/TF Green Airport. If the service is successful at increasing passengers at TF Green Airport the next step should be to extend service from TF Green to Fall River and New Bedford in an effort to capture additional rail and air passengers.	Section 6.5 outlines potential passenger service to the Blackstone Valley. If implemented that service could potentially be extended to Worcester. In addition, bus transit service between TF Green and Worcester and Fall River/New Bedford could provide other transit option for the airport passengers.
Bob Votava, Friends of the William C. O'Neill Bike Path	Advocated for Amtrak to meet the need of bicyclists. Stated that nationwide, most commuter trains have provisions for bikes. Amtrak should equip its cars, either retrofit existing trains or equip new cars as they are produced, with bicycle facilities.	Amtrak's policy at this time is that folding bicycles under a certain dimension are permitted onboard all trains in lieu of a piece of baggage. Bicycles may also be checked in a bicycle container on trains/stations offering checked baggage service.

Name	Comment / Question	Response
James Ball, RI Dept. of Environmental Management	Rail companies such as P&W no long have their own in-house hazmat teams so in the event of an event they would require assistance from an outside contractor. It would be valuable information to know how long it would take for their contractor to get to the scene and the contractors capability levels	Comment addressed with additional details added to the Plan regarding P&W's Hazardous Material Security Plan and emergency response actions. See page 8-5.
	Expressed concern with the security of the rail car sidings when rail cars are left unattended especially overnight or for long periods. These unattended rail cars have the potential to be vandalized or tampered with causing chemicals to be released into the environment thereby effecting public safety	Comment addressed with additional details added to the Plan regarding P&W's attendance and securement of hazardous material trains in response to FRA Emergency Order No. 28. See page 8-7.

### **III. Public Hearing Procedures & Presentation**

The following procedural overview and informational presentation were provided at both the January 23, 2014 10:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. public hearings:

#### **A. Public Hearing Procedures**

Ms. Linsey Callaghan, Supervising Planner of the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program reviewed the hearing procedures at both morning and evening public hearings.

Ms. Callaghan stated that the hearings will be conducted as follows:

- The public hearing will be conducted in accordance with the State Planning Council rules of procedure and the Administrative Procedures Act.
- Comments will first be received from those who have signed-up on the registration forms available at the door, in the order in which they registered and after the customary recognition of elected officials.
- If someone speaks, they should identify themselves and address all comments to Ms. Callaghan.
- To ensure that all who wish to speak may have an opportunity, each speaker will be limited to an initial presentation of five minutes.
- After all who wish to speak have had an initial opportunity, those wishing to make supplemental statements will be recognized.
- After all who have registered have spoken, any others wishing to comment will be recognized.
- Written statements will be given equal consideration. They may be read into or simply submitted for the record prior to the close of this evening's public hearing which will be held before the Transportation Advisory Committee at 6:30 p.m. Comments received at the public hearings as well as written public comments received will be summarized and addressed in a public hearing report.
- Following the public hearings this morning and evening, the Transportation Advisory Committee will be asked at their February 27, 2014 meeting to recommend adoption of *Draft Rhode Island State Rail Plan* to the State Planning Council.
- If the Transportation Advisory Committee recommends adoption of Draft Rhode Island State Rail Plan at their February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the State Planning Council will consider the *Rhode Island State Rail Plan* for adoption at their March 13, 2014 meeting.

Following the close of the hearing, the TAC will consider the proposal and the public comment received in deliberating their final decision.

#### **B. Statewide Planning Presentation**

Ms. Scott provided a PowerPoint presentation on the development and content of the draft *State Rail Plan, State Guide Plan Element 661*:

Ms. Scott first gave an overview of the process of getting to the draft State Rail Plan. She stressed that the plan was still in draft form and open to comments from the public. The stimulus for the formation of this plan was the passage of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), passed by Congress in 2008, with the intent of improving passenger rail service in the U.S. by taking a more balance approach to state rail plans. The approved state rail plans was a requirement if a state wanted

to apply for federal rail passenger funding. As required under PRIIA, the following must be contained in the Plan:

- Identification of rail infrastructure issues
- Review and inventory of all rail lines in the state and analysis of rail within multimodal environment
- Statewide of state's passenger rail service objectives and framework for implementation of initiatives
- Statement of public financing for rail projects service in the state.

Ms. Scott explained that previous state rail plans focused on freight rail and not passenger. Therefore this plan will be a comprehensive analysis of both passenger and freight rail. As part of the development of the Plan, a State Rail Plan Advisory Committee was formed consisting of public and private sector transportation and railroad stakeholders. In drafting the Rail Plan, the goals of MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) the multiyear federal transportation authorization was incorporated into the Plan. These include: safety, infrastructure condition, system reliability, congestion reduction, freight movements and economic vitality, and environmental sustainability.

The chapters of the State Rail Plan are as follows:

- Introduction
- Development of the State Rail Plan
- Public Rail Program Activities in Rhode Island
- Rhode Island's Freight Rail System
- Rail Passenger Service in Rhode Island
- Proposed Passenger Rail Service
- Analysis of Rail Transportation Impacts
- Rail Safety and Security
- Implementation Program
- Appendix A – Inventory of Rhode Island's Rail Lines
- Appendix B – Rail Project Evaluation Score Sheet

Ms. Scott explained that a vision statement, goals, objectives, policies, implementation actions and performance measures were developed in the Rail Plan. In addition criteria for evaluating individual rail projects were developed. While the criteria were built around Rhode Island's goals and priorities for passenger and freight rail, one additional category – financial feasibility and public support was added. However, as projects move forward into full construction, they will be further evaluated according to much more detailed criteria and selected for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Ms. Scott explained the project evaluation further. The potential projects are then listed under a Short Range Investment Program (currently underway or expected within the next 5 years) and a Long Range Investment Program (expected within the next 6 – 20 years). All these projects would need much further evaluation including sources of funding to determine if they advance to construction eventually.

#### **IV. First Public Hearing – January 23, 2014 10:00 a.m. Public Hearing**

##### **A. Attendance**

##### **Speakers (for public comment)**

Mayor Scott Avedisian, City of Warwick

Mayor James A. Diossa, City of Central Falls

Mr. Barney Heath, City of Pawtucket Planning Director (representing Mayor Donald R. Grebien)  
Mr. Aaron Hertzberg, Exec. Director Pawtucket Foundation  
Mr. Steven Musen, Director at Large, RI Association of Railroad Passengers  
Mr. Bruce Waterson, Waterson Terminal Services, Providence Port  
Mr. Paige Bronk, Economic Development Manager, Town of North Kingstown  
Mr. Jeffrey Hill, member of the public  
Mr. Peter Brassard, member of the public  
Mr. Barry Schiller, member of the public

**TAC Members Present**

Mr. Richard Crenca, City of Warwick  
Mr. George Monaghan, RI Consulting Engineers  
Ms. Lillian Picchione, RIPTA  
Mr. Barry Schiller, RI Sierra Club  
Mr. Everett Stuart, RI Association of Railroad Passengers

**Others in Attendance**

Ms. Kimberly Boghossian, Brown University  
Mr. Steve Devine, RI Department of Transportation  
Mr. Andy Koziol, RI Department of Transportation  
Mr. Peter Lapolla, City of Cranston Planning Director  
Mr. Steve Larrick, City of Central Falls  
Ms. Susan Shanley-Szala, RI Department of Transportation  
Mr. Ken Orenstein, member of the public

**Statewide Planning Staff Present**

Ms. Karen Scott, Assistant Chief  
Ms. Linsey Callaghan, Supervising Planner  
Mr. Chris Witt, Principal Planner  
Ms. Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner  
Mr. Benjamin Jacobs, Principal Research Technician

**B. Call to Order – January 23, 2014 10:00 a.m. Public Hearing**

Ms. Linsey Callaghan of the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, called the January 23, 2014 10:00 a.m. public hearing to order at 10:06 a.m. While the morning hearing was not an official meeting of the TAC, there were some members attending (see TAC member attendance listed above).

After the informational presentation by Ms. Karen Scott, Ms. Callaghan asked if there were any elected officials who wished to make comments. There were two elected officials, the Mayor of Warwick and the Mayor of Central Falls, who gave public comment (see below). Ms. Callaghan then asked if there were any others who wished to speak. Below are the speakers for the morning Public Hearing:

## C. Public Comment Summary – January 23, 2014 10:00 a.m. Public Hearing

### 1. Mayor Scott Avedisian, City of Warwick (see written comments attached)

- Speaking for the City of Warwick and also as chairman of the RIPTA Board, Mayor Avedisian voiced his support for the draft Rhode Island State Rail Plan. He stated that more connectivity between rail and bus service is better for the mass transit system as a whole.
- Specifically supports and advocates for the following goals and actions in the Rail Plan:
  - Continued implementation of the Warwick Station Development District Master Plan to create City Centre Warwick and continued investment in pedestrian and rail infrastructure.
  - Continued expansion of MBTA commuter rail service to TF Green Airport.
  - If the three rail stations of Wickford, City Centre Warwick, and Providence with a frequent rail shuttle service that connected to Boston and linked to RIPTA service this would create an efficient transportation system for the state.
  - Strongly supports Amtrak's Northeast Regional service and Acela Express Service to Warwick.
  - Urged adoption of the State Rail Plan.

### 2. Mayor James A. Diossa, City of Central Falls (see written comments attached)

- Mayor Diossa emphasized full support for commuter rail service through the addition of a Pawtucket / Central Falls MBTA stop on the Boston – Providence line. The station is a top priority of his administration as the added rail service would have a transformative impact on Central Falls and Pawtucket. The station would act as a catalyst for necessary transit-oriented development in the area.
- Commuter rail service will provide high-unemployment populations with access to the employment centers of Providence and Greater Boston.
- This new station will also serve northern Rhode Island which has no commuter rail service.

### 3. Barney Heath, City of Pawtucket Planning Director (representing Mayor Donald R. Grebien; see Mayor Grebien's written comments attached)

- Mr. Heath read the letter from Pawtucket's Mayor Grebien indicating his comments on the *Rhode Island State Rail Plan*.
- Mayor Grebien underscored the importance of ranking the proposed Pawtucket / Central Rail Station as a high priority in the Plan.
- A commuter rail station in this location would provide important and immediate economic benefits to both Pawtucket and Central Falls. It would provide an environment for transit-oriented development and much needed transit access to jobs and educational opportunities located to the north and south.
- The station/service would also provide for people from other destinations to come to Pawtucket and Central Falls for the many great amenities available.
- Supports efforts to improve inter- and intra-state commuter rail service. Requests that intra-state service be designated as a high priority in the Plan.

### 4. Aaron Hertzberg, Exec. Director Pawtucket Foundation (see written comments attached.)

- As part of this united front between the two communities, Mr. Hertzberg represents the private sector which is consistently pushing for the Pawtucket/Central Fall rail station project to move forward. Commends the State for making the station a priority in the State Rail Plan.

- The Pawtucket Foundation strongly supports the restoration of commuter rail service to Pawtucket/Central Falls on the Boston-Providence MBTA line.
  - The development of the station will support opportunities for transit oriented development and renovated mill spaces in the Pawtucket/Central Falls area.
  - This station would connect Pawtucket and Central Falls with points south and would service as a northern terminus for intra-state service.
  - Stated that he is encouraged by idea to create an intermodal hub at the South Attleboro MBTA Commuter Rail Station.
  - Looks forward to continued collaboration.
5. Steven Musen, Newspaper Editor & Director at Large, RI Association of Railroad Passengers
- Stated that with limited resources available to the State of Rhode Island, a Pawtucket/Central Falls Station would give the most value compared to a station in the southern part of the state. A Pawtucket /Central Falls Station would also add more passengers going to Boston. With more passengers riding the line, fares can potentially be reduced.
  - Noted that at the end of the Plan, there is an Investment Program table listing future potential projects, however there are no funding set-aside for steps further action, especially for projects listed in the preliminary engineering/environmental analysis phase. Feels that cost estimates for construction should be included for projects listed in the engineering phase even if they are not implemented at this time.
  - Believes it is a good plan and meets all the federal requirements.
6. Bruce Waterson, Waterson Terminal Services at the Port of Providence
- Asked that the rail unloading project at the Port of Providence be considered as short-term instead of long term, as it is stated in the Plan. He believes this project will probably advance within the next 12 to 18 months.
7. Peter Brassard, member of the public
- Stated it would be unfortunate if certain features were not emphasized in the Plan such as greater importance on the electrification of all tracks including passenger, freight, commuter, and track siding on the Northeast Corridor, especially between Central Falls and Westerly. It would increase connectivity between Providence and Boston and decrease pollution. The MBTA has resisted using electric trains but their policy could change in the future.
  - Identifies the Pawtucket/Central Falls station as the primary infill station for the MBTA's Wickford to Boston line. In a Providence Foundation Commuter Rail feasibility study, Providence's Olneyville neighborhood was identified as another infill transit station location. Other potential infill transit stations including Cranston on Cranston St. and Elmwood at Reservoir St. also have similar potential and not that much vehicle parking would be needed around the stations.
  - The current MBTA service is more Boston oriented. Consideration should be given to added service on weekday mornings, afternoons, and evenings, as well as weekends. Trains could also be better linked with RIPTA buses and would be competitive with automobile travel.
  - The Rail Plan should increase ridership performance targets on commuter trains from 1% to 5%.
  - Proposed that as a low priority, a 4<sup>th</sup> track between Central Falls and TF Green Airport be considered since it would positively influence land use.
  - As proposed, the current limits/alignment of the Providence Street Car proposal may be too narrow. Consideration to upgrading the track and train standards to light rail standards, and

studying expansion to certain routes could include adjacent cities such as Johnston, North Providence, East Providence, Pawtucket, and Cranston.

- The Rail Plan should include fare coordination between MBTA, RIPTA, and Amtrak.

8. Page Bronk, Economic Development Manager, Town of North Kingstown

- Supports the State Rail Plan. From an economic standpoint, specifically in North Kingstown the Wickford Station is a tremendous asset.
- The Town of North Kingstown recently had a market analysis completed for Wickford Junction Station area and another one for rail implications. The Town also recently approved a zoning amendment for increased density and there are plans to build 150 dwelling units on the site which would be directly related to rail service as they are small units and geared to younger people. The Town is also working on approving zoning that would enable the area to serve as a receiving zone for transfer of development rights (TDR) for further added density development.
- Stated that the Town supports the following two concepts in the plan:
  - Expansion of commuter rail service in terms of frequency.
  - Commuter rail shuttle service with focus on Wickford Junction, Warwick, and Providence.

9. Jeffrey Hill, member of the public

- Stated that he is a resident of South Kingstown and is a State employee. Stated that he, along with other state employees and riders, is a frequent rail commuter to Providence from Wickford Junction. He appreciates the commuter rail service.
- Stated that the people he rides with come in from Richmond, Charlestown and South Kingstown. He believes there would be strong ridership if MBTA service was provided in Kingston however a parking garage would have to be built to accommodate the increased ridership.
- As a commuter, he has not heard any negative comments from using the service from Wickford Junction. When the highway was congested with commuters because of snow, they were dry and warm inside the train.
- Suggested adding to the Rail Plan, the opportunity for State employees to purchase a MBTA pass at the pre-tax level for commuter rail, as is currently done with the RIPTA bus service.
- Consider an opportunity for free commuter rail service on air quality alert days, as is offered on RIPTA.

10. Barry Schiller, (TAC Member – Sierra Club); member of the public (comments represent his own sentiments)

- Stated that the Sierra Club's meeting to discuss the Rail Plan was cancelled due to weather, the following comments represent his own sentiments.
- Stated that the Rail Plan contains many good ideas and that it should move forward.
- Emphasized the goal and importance of keeping all rail infrastructure in a state in good repair but pointed out that there that dedicated funds for this have not been identified.
- Since there are little resources for transportation, he believes that any expansion of passenger rail should depend first on the existing transit system. A structure is needed for marketing the commuter rail service to increase utilization of the current system.
- Amtrak currently does not carry bicycles and current service should include bicycle accommodations.

- There should be a bikepath between Wickford Village and Wickford Junction train station. Also suggested the coordination of employer van shuttles to meet the trains at Wickford Junction for improved passenger convenience/ridership.
- Suggested honoring transit passes on both the MBTA train and the RIPTA bus.
- Since the Providence train station is located directly the state capitol, state employee incentives for using the commuter rail should also be offered.
- A regional, inter-agency effort with Massachusetts, etc. regarding the rail system including freight rail is needed.
- The Sierra Club supports a North Station / South Station connection in Boston on the commuter rail which we cannot do on our own.
- There are commuter trains from Franklin, Massachusetts to Boston however there are no public buses to get from Woonsocket to the station. Need cooperation to go across state lines with the buses.
- Pleased that the RI Commerce Corporation (former RIEDC) is involved in the Pawtucket/Central Falls station. Agrees that the first new commuter rail service should be a Pawtucket / Central Falls rail station. For the Sierra Club, restoring the core cities is a priority. Other infill stations should be a priority since trains are already going by.
- Stated that he believes it should be a lower priority to extend the commuter rail to Kingston and the Blackstone Valley, and Amtrak service to Warwick.
- In addition, he believes it is not a priority to have a limited Providence street car service. Interested in a Challenge Grant for someone to explore street car or light rail service in Rhode Island. In the western United States voters usually have to approve a tax increase, typically a sales tax, to fund light rail.
- Noted of the need to obtain more revenue for transportation and to work together on all of the rail projects.

#### **D. Public Hearing Conclusion**

Ms. Callaghan asked if there were any other comments. Since there were none, Ms. Callaghan formally closed the hearing at 11:01 a.m. Ms. Callaghan thanked everyone in the audience. She also stated that at the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting this the evening at 6:30 p.m., there will be an additional public hearing on the *Rhode Island State Rail Plan*. Staff will compile all comments received into a public hearing report and will include responses to the issues raised during the public hearings. She added that the report will be distributed to the Transportation Advisory Committee, Technical Committee, and the State Planning Council as *the Rhode Island State Rail Plan* moves towards adoption.

## **V. Second Public Hearing – January 23, 2014 6:30 p.m. Public Hearing**

### **A. Attendance**

#### **Speakers (for public comment)**

Ms. Eugenia Marks, Audubon Society of RI; Coalition for Transportation Choices

#### **TAC Members Present**

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair, Public Member  
Ms. Meredith Brady, RI Department of Transportation  
Mr. Alan Brodd, Town of Cumberland  
Mr. Richard Crenca, City of Warwick  
Mr. David Everett, City of Providence  
Mr. Ronald Gagnon, RI DEM  
Mr. George Monaghan, RI Consulting Engineers  
Mr. Daniel Porter, RI Airport Corporation  
Mr. Barry Schiller, RI Sierra Club  
Ms. Pam Sherrill, RI Chapter, American Planning Association  
Ms. Dinalyn Spears, Narragansett Indian Tribe  
Mr. Everett Stuart, RI Association of Railroad Passengers  
Mr. Michael Walker, RI Commerce Corporation

#### **Others in Attendance**

Mr. Steve Devine, RI Department of Transportation  
Ms. Marsha Garcia, URI  
Mr. Andy Koziol, RI Department of Transportation  
Mr. Ken Orenstein, public citizen  
Mr. John Preiss, RI Department of Transportation  
Ms. Tia Ristano, public citizen  
Mr. Al Romanowicz, public citizen  
Mr. Kevin Viveiros, Pare Corporation

#### **Statewide Planning Staff Present**

Mr. Jared Rhodes, Chief  
Ms. Karen Scott, Assistant Chief  
Ms. Linsey Callaghan, Supervising Planner  
Ms. Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner

### **B. Call to Order – January 23, 2014 6:30 p.m. Public Hearing**

Ms. Fran Shocket, TAC Chair called the public hearing to order at 6:35 p.m. Ms. Shocket explained that Ms. Karen Scott of Statewide Planning would give a presentation.

A Presentation was given by Ms. Scott, see Section III B for summary.

Ms. Scott then turned the hearing over to Ms. Shocket. Ms. Shocket asked if there were any elected officials who wished to make comments. Since there were none, she asked if there were any others who wished to speak. Below is the Public Comment:

### C. Public Comment Summary - 6:30 p.m. Public Hearing

1. Eugenia Marks, Policy Director of the Audubon Society of RI; Coalition for Transportation Choices (see written comments attached)

- Stated that her written testimony includes information on greenhouse gas emissions which is a concern of the Audubon Society. Of course climate change adversely affects wildlife as well as humans.
- She thanked staff for their work in developing the State Rail Plan.
- Supports the concept of getting more people onto rail and the resulting pollution reductions because 29% of the emissions come from the transportation sector. Stated that fuel consumption for vehicles averages 27.7 passenger miles per gallon while heavy rail averages 155.3 passenger miles per gallon, and commuter rail 85.8 passenger miles per gallon (according to a 2007 report for the American Bus Association). Stated that it would be better to get more people on trains to help reduce climate change.
- Stated that while the State Rail Plan is very good, suggests that there needs to be improvements to the State's intermodal connections cited in the draft. These include better bus connections and using the bicycle as a way of commuting.

### D. Public Hearing Conclusion

Ms. Shocket asked if there were any other comments. There were no further comments, therefore Ms. Shocket formally adjourned the Public Hearing at 6:57 p.m. Ms. Shocket stated that a Public Hearing Report will be compiled by the Statewide Planning Program staff and made part of the record of these proceedings.

Following the Public Hearing, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) resumed its meeting and discussed the proposed Rhode Island State Rail Plan (see TAC January 23, 2014 meeting minutes). Ms. Shocket stated that at the next meeting on February 27, 2014, the TAC will be requested to vote on whether to recommend approval of the Rhode Island State Rail Plan to the State Planning Council.

### VI. TAC Member Comments

1. Everett Stuart, Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers

- Page 4-24: Change "Canadian Northern" to "Canadian National."
- Page 7-1: Recommends that language be strengthened regarding the role of the tourist and excursion rail operations in RI and their contributions to the state's economy. The RIDOT owned Newport Secondary could be particularly valuable and its continued use as a tourist line, which keeps it active in the public's eye. Recommends including state policy of preserving working rail operations on the Newport Secondary. All three Aquidneck municipalities have this in their Comprehensive Plans.
- Page 9-7: Recommends adding a reference to establishing a mechanism to provide for long term maintenance of RIDOT owned rail stations -- Kingston and Westerly. Explained this is not an issue of federal funding but a significant State responsibility. The station's condition and image projected is important to the State.
- Page 9-8: Performance Measure #1 lists ridership growth of 2 percent a year. Mr. Stuart believes that this is very low for the new Wickford Junction MBTA commuter rail service. The goal should be higher.
- An important proposed rail infrastructure project that will have significant value to many Rhode Island passengers is a direct rail link between North and South Stations in downtown Boston.

When built, this link will allow commuter trains from our area to pass through Boston with service to the northern suburbs and intercity Amtrak service from our area to New Hampshire and Maine. Rhode Islanders would no longer need to find their way across the city from South Station to get to North Station trains. This deep tunnel project has been in the planning stages for some years but due to other pressing transportation projects has yet to proceed. Although Massachusetts would be the lead on this project, it is important that nearby states that would benefit support this regional project. State that he believes that Boston's North Station/South Station rail connection should be included in the long term implementation section of the RI State Rail Plan as a show of regional support.

2. George Monaghan, Rhode Island Consulting Engineers (RICE)

- Indicated various comments throughout the draft *Rhode Island State Rail Plan 2014*: Suggest adding to page 1-1, 3<sup>rd</sup> line in last paragraph: "to the late 1990s and the rapid expansion of air passenger and cargo operations."
- Page 3-2: Bullet including "Northeast Corridor Commission" – capitalize "C."
- Page 4-8: 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph change "The P & W's rail network is shown in Figure 4-4, P & W Railroad Network." Change to Figure 4-6.
- Page 5-8: Table 5-5: "80 & 81" after Acela Express and Northeast Regional should be in black rather than red.
- Last line on page 5-8 should include Figure 5-3 rather than 5-4.
- Page 5-11: 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph last line reads "10 years, as displayed in Figure 5-5;" should read "Figure 5-4." Last line of page reads Figure 5-6; should read 5-5."
- Page 6-6: 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph take out "likely" on second line after T.F. Green.
- Page 6-14: 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, capitalize "c" in "Northeast Corridor."
- Page 6-15: 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph: second line question mark by "year-round."
- Page 7-9: After 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, suggests adding: "The reduction of truckloads over the state's highway network will not only reduce congestion but will result in a positive impact on the roadway and bridge infrastructure. Heavy truck volumes have an adverse (damaging) impact on the nation's highways and bridges. Reducing heavy truck volumes on highways reduces damage to pavement and bridges, and the savings of energy and resources realized to repair or rebuild the damaged infrastructure can be applied to other needs."

3. Dan Baudouin, Executive Director of The Providence Foundation

- Page 6-11 - Section 6.5, Blackstone Valley Passenger Service is a misnomer because this section also contains information about the report on a potential intrastate transit service between Woonsocket and Warwick. This facility would not only serve Blackstone Valley but also Providence, Cranston and Warwick and thus serve a large portion of the state's population. The power of the service is that the state could have better intrastate rail service than just relying on MBTA and/or Amtrak. Frequencies, times of service, cost, and stations could all be enhanced by this system. Believes that it should have its own category or, at least, there should be a name change in the title to reflect the scope of the in-state geographic coverage potential.
- Page 6-14 Section 6.6, Rail Shuttle Service: The benefits to Warwick Station Development District and the Wickford Junction Plaza are clearly articulated. In addition, believes that the rail shuttle, with 30 minute frequencies would also benefit additional high density development in downtown Providence, particularly in the Capital Center District. Downtown is already a vibrant mixed-use district but there are plans and opportunities for growth. For example, the Capital Center District contains about 7 vacant acres that are programmed for development. Even at a

moderate FAR of 5, which is exceeded in many developed Capital Center properties, this would result in an additional 1,500,000 sq. ft. of development just in Capital Center.

- Page 9-17: The Providence Station project should include more than the rail hazardous material issue. As currently under study by RIDOT, it also should include future capacity issues and the high likelihood for the need to expand the station due to ever growing passenger utilization. The station already serves almost 1,200,000 passengers per year which exceeds original estimates when the station was built.
- Page 9-23: Stated that on the long-range investment program, the rail shuttle service does not appear in the State Rail Plan.
- Concerned that the Woonsocket service is listed as a low priority in the long-range investment program. Recommends that a planning level analysis be performed for the Woonsocket and in-state commuter rail service that analyzes both of these potential projects as a combined system perhaps with different implementation schedules. This could be an opportunity to create a high frequency rail transit service in the state which is needed in the long run.

4. Pam Sherrill, RI Chapter, American Planning Association

- Page 9-3 and Page 9-20: Stated that Plan's mention of an at-grade-crossing on Pawtucket Avenue in East Providence maybe incorrect and that it should be Ferris Avenue.
- The State Rail Plan should include mention commuter rail service from Connecticut's Shoreline East into Rhode Island as a potential future project/service.
- Page 9-13: The evaluation goal of economic vitality should include more emphasis on port development at both Quonset's Port of Davisville and ProvPort.

**VII. Written Public Comment Summary (*Full comments are attached to report*)**

1. Steven H. Musen, Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers

- Pointed out that the Federal Railroad Administration should also be listed in the credits of the Rail Plan.
- Page 1-1: Opening topic sentence should be changed to read that the Boston and Providence was the first railroad into Rhode Island followed by the New York, P & B, and P & W. Believes that freight service was co-established at the same time although cars devoted solely to freight might have occurred at a later date as described in the narrative.
- Page 1-2, corrections include: The four track mainline of the New Haven Railroad was mainly between New Haven, Connecticut and New Rochelle, New York. Rhode Island had a few stretches of three track main line but remained mostly double track. It may have had some continuous four track sections between Providence and Pawtucket.
- Page 1-2: "These laws consolidated the nation's rail system into Conrail" should be changed to: "These laws consolidate most of the region's rail systems into Conrail."
- Page 1-2: The following sentence should be modified from: "The renovations of both Rhode Island's Kingston and Westerly Amtrak stations were also completed in support of this high speed rail service by providing space for other trains to pull off the mainline, allowing Acela trains to travel through at high speeds." The statement should reflect that neither project changed a single foot of track through either station. The renovations did provide for more comfortable conditions for travelers boarding and disembarking at those stations and has led to higher passenger use. A separate project to build a full high level platforms and a third segment of siding at Kingston is currently funded to allow high speed trains to bypass slower regional and freight trains. That project is scheduled to commence construction this spring.

2. Tim Pimental, Rhode Island Airport Corporation
  - Noted that on page 5-11 (bottom): The text references of “Figure 5-6” should be changed to reference “Figure 5.5.”
  - Table 5-7 should be revised to include the arrival times of trains in Boston.
3. Daniel Geagan, City of Warwick
  - Same correction noted by Mr. Pimental above regarding the Figure 5.5 on page 5-11.
4. Karen Shabshelowitz, member of the public
  - Recommends that commuter rail service be extended to Kingston, Rhode Island. The population in southern Rhode Island including the University of Rhode Island students, tourists, and residents would highly benefit from this service. Another reason to support this move is access to the Boston medical community.
5. Dr. Steven L. Castiglioni, member of the public
  - Stated that he was the former Warwick Public Safety Commissioner however with his present job he has traveled to 70 cities over the last two years and uses mass transportation systems regularly. His comments are regarding passenger rail.
  - Providence Metro View: While this is a “statewide” plan, the rail transportation needs are metropolitan, not state, driven. There should be more focus on mass transit (rail) from a Providence metropolitan area perspective including Bristol County, Massachusetts. Since Providence is the core/center of the metro region, urged that the focus be on getting commuters to and from and through Providence.
  - TF Green Airport-Providence (PVD): The real potential and value of the Warwick Commuter Rail Train Station is getting airline travelers to and from TF Green Airport (PVD) to the Providence Train Station.
  - Connecting Providence to its Massachusetts suburbs: In order to leverage the 600,000 residents and the businesses of the Southeastern MA area with the Providence Metro, commuter rail service from Fall River and New Bedford to Providence is a prime ingredient. It is critical to the economic health of the state and metro that this connection be planned, before a Boston connection is established.
  - Priorities:
    - Providence Streetcar System (The failure to secure funding for the Providence Streetcar System was a major mistake and setback)
    - Improvements to Providence Train Station
    - Commuter Rail between Providence and Fall River/New Bedford
    - Pawtucket Commuter Rail Station (to PVD)
    - Blackstone Valley (Woonsocket) Commuter Rail Station (to PVD).
  - In all rail planning and implementation, use a Providence Metro perspective.
7. John Flaherty, Grow Smart RI
  - Explains that although the draft State Rail Plan acknowledges Amtrak’s long-term plan for developing a true high-speed rail in the Northeast Corridor (page 3-7), the U. S. DOT and Federal Railroad Administration’s *NEC Preliminary Alternatives Report (2013)* includes a total of 15 options for the recommended alignment of this high-speed service, which would not necessarily follow the existing NEC alignment. It’s worth noting that options #14 and #15 would appear to completely bypass Rhode Island.

- Suggests that the State Rail Plan make a noted preference for NEC high-speed rail alignment options that include a stop in Providence which appear to be applicable to alignment options #1 through #13.

8. Peter Moniz, member of the public

- Mr. Moniz acknowledges the development of several bike paths by RIDOT and RIDEM throughout the State. He states that in the northern area of RI there exists a freight rail service with a companion bike path.
- Advocated for using the northern section of the Newport Secondary Rail line in Tiverton as a Bike Path since he believes this section of the railroad line will not be used for active railroad service in the long range future.
- Appendix A (Newport Secondary Line) in the draft Rail Plan: “Usage: there is no freight service as indicated [Freight / Tourist]. This point was pointed out in a previous section within the plan.”
- Supports mass transportation, if the results will render feasible and financial sound solutions. However, there is a need for reality planning when it comes to rail passenger service. Only when the automobile has lost its dominance will rail and even bus transportation prevail again. The State must enhance central core areas with smart growth planning strategies prior to planning for rail service.
- Stated that freight service at Quonset /Davisville should be further developed as a major distribution hub. RI should promote Quonset’s location as an international container port and seek other opportunities for the establishment of regional distributions centers.
- Stated that he feels that the Providence Street Car is not a viable option and further study is not needed. The infrastructure costs for this project will be costly as will its operation. There are simpler and better options such as special wheel trolley buses or double decker buses that present a different look in design and appearance than the traditional bus.

9. Christina L. Valentino, Vice President, University of Rhode Island

- Stated that the University strongly supports the proposed commuter rail expansion to Kingston Station. It would help implement the State’s policy of focusing and enhancing transportation infrastructure in designated growth centers.
- The Plan must include strategies and resources to achieve effective intermodal connectivity. There are too few transportation connections in Kingston especially to the public transit buses. There is also inadequate parking at Kingston Station, and no pedestrian or bicycle paths between campus and the rail station.
- URI’s campuses are located in Providence, Narragansett, Kingston, and West Greenwich. The State Rail Plan offers solutions for a more cost-effective and reliable commuter rail plan at Kingston Station to provide connections to the airport and links to the other campuses. There are also plans to convert the South Street Power Station in Providence to a shared nursing education center. This along with a proposed Providence street car service could foster an urban community atmosphere for students and faculty. It is critical that this links to the Providence Train Station.

10. Ed Chomk, member of the public

- Pages 6-11 to 6-17 - Appreciates the efforts made to expand commuter rail service in Rhode Island. Suggests expanding service into Massachusetts sooner rather than later, with the focus on increasing passenger traffic at TF Green Airport.

- Suggests experimental commuter rail service from Worcester to Warwick/TF Green Airport. If the service is successful at increasing passengers at TF Green Airport the next step should be to extend service from TF Green to Fall River and New Bedford in an effort to capture additional rail and air passengers.

5. Bob Votava, Chairman, Friends of the William C. O'Neill South County Bike Path

- Advocated for Amtrak to meet the need of bicyclists. Stated that nationwide, most commuter trains have provisions for bikes. Amtrak should equip its cars, either retrofit existing trains or equip new cars as they are produced, with bicycle facilities. Since the typical space for bikes is combined with space for wheel chairs, the space is already defined on all Amtrak trains.

6. James Ball, Emergency Response Administrator, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

- Provided comments related to Chapter 8 – Rail Safety and Security
  - Rail companies such as P&W no longer have their own in-house hazmat teams so in the event of an event they would require assistance from an outside contractor. It would be valuable information to know how long it would take for their contractor to get to the scene and the contractor's capability levels.
  - Expressed concern with the security of the rail car sidings when rail cars are left unattended especially overnight or for long periods. These unattended rail cars have the potential to be vandalized or tampered with causing chemicals to be released into the environment thereby effecting public safety.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

This Public Hearing Report compiled by the Statewide Planning Program staff will be made part of the record of the Rhode Island State Rail Plan 2014 proceedings.

Appendix A. Public Comment Period Notice

Publication: Providence Journal; Date: Dec 20, 2013; Section: Rhode Island; Page: A11



STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM  
RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908-5870

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**Rhode Island State Rail Plan**

The Rhode Island State Planning Council will conduct two public hearings to accept comments on the draft Rhode Island State Rail Plan.

The Rhode Island State Rail Plan draft is under consideration by the Rhode Island State Planning Council. The Rhode Island State Rail Plan contains goals, objectives, policies, implementation actions, and potential projects for the State's passenger and freight rail transportation system over the next twenty years. The Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning's Statewide Planning Program, working in collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, is responsible for the development of this Plan. This Plan was also developed with public and private rail stakeholder participation, as well as state and federal agency collaboration. This Plan has been prepared to ensure compliance with the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) and Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21).

The Rhode Island State Rail Plan is available for review at the R.I. Statewide Planning Program website at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/transportation/railplanning.php> or at the Program's office, One Capitol Hill, 3rd floor, Providence, RI between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Comments on the Rhode Island State Rail Plan will be accepted at the following two public hearings:

Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.  
Department of Administration  
William E. Powers Building  
Conference Room A, 2nd Floor  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.  
Department of Administration  
William E. Powers Building  
Conference Room A, 2nd Floor  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

All persons may present their views on the draft document in person at the public hearings, through a representative, or by filing a written statement with the Secretary of the State Planning Council. Written statements may be mailed to Karen Scott, Assistant Chief, RI Statewide Planning Program, One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908, or submitted at a hearing. All comments must be received before the close of the public hearings.

This meeting place is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Any individual requiring a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this meeting should contact James A. Pitassi, Jr. at 222-6395 (voice) or #711 (R.I. Relay) at least three (3) business days prior to the meeting. Any individual requiring the services of an interpreter to participate in this meeting should contact Michael Moan at 222-1236 (voice) at least three (3) business days prior to the meeting. Public transit schedule information for the public hearings is available from RIPTA at (401) 781-9400 or [www.ripta.com](http://www.ripta.com).

Kevin Flynn, Secretary, State Planning Council

**Appendix B. Written Comments attached**