



Chapter 1

Introduction

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) is developing an implementation plan for commuter rail service between New Haven and Hartford, CT, and Springfield, MA. The Capitol Region Council of Government's (CRCOG) Regional Transit Strategy (RTS) identified the corridor as a key component in meeting the goals of improving and sustaining the regional economic vitality and improving regional livability. This was further recognized by the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board (TSB), which has allocated funding to undertake this implementation study as an important first step in implementing a statewide strategic transit plan. In addition to serving commuters traveling between the towns and cities along the corridor, the service could provide a connection to:

- Bradley International Airport
- Multiple links to Amtrak Intercity service
- Direct links to the existing Metro North and Shore Line East Commuter Rail in New Haven
- Links to the proposed New Britain – Hartford Busway.

This document is the final report for this study. It includes a summary of the existing conditions and alternatives evaluation reports in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapters 4 through 7 describe the vision for start-up and full-build service, the integration of this service with the existing system, the operating plan costs and revenue, and a preliminary identification of the potential environmental impacts associated with the service. Chapter 8 describes potential financing for the service and necessary next steps to implementation.

1.1 Project Team

Wilbur Smith Associates, a transportation planning and engineering firm, is leading the study efforts for ConnDOT. In addition, a team of consultants has been assembled to aid Wilbur Smith, including:

- *Fitzgerald & Halliday* – Environmental and Social Resource Assessment
- *KKO and Associates* – Transit Connections
- *URS Corporation* – Structural and Architectural Elements



- *Washington Group International* – Railroad Signal and Grade Crossing Warning Device Elements

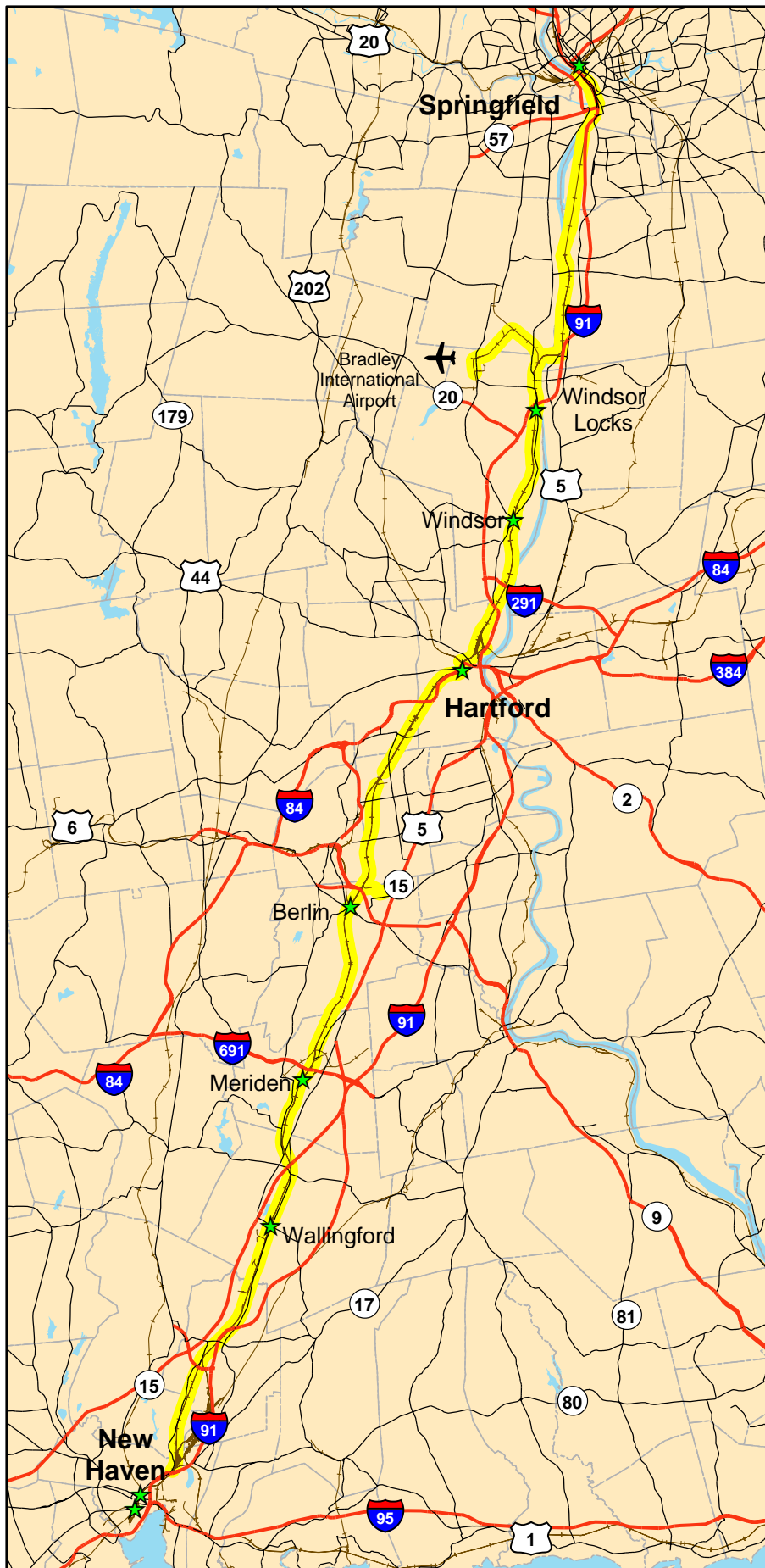
1.2 Study Area Definition

The study area corridor is 62 miles of existing rail line, which is owned and operated by The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak). It begins in New Haven at Union Station and continues through several towns and the cities of Meriden and Hartford, ending at Union Station in Springfield, Massachusetts. This rail corridor line is commonly referred to as the “Springfield Line.” An existing freight spur line to Bradley Airport in Windsor Locks is also included in consideration of passenger connections to that facility. Figure 1-1 illustrates the study corridor location.

1.3 Project Steering Committee

A project Steering Committee (SC) was established to oversee the study's development and provide information to key decision makers throughout the process. In addition to appropriate ConnDOT staff, the following groups are members of the project's Steering Committee:

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Transportation Strategy Board
- I-91 Transportation Investment Area
- South Central Regional Council of Governments
- Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
- Capitol Region Council of Governments
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- City of New Haven
- Town of North Haven
- Town of Wallingford
- City of Meriden
- Town of Berlin
- Town of Newington
- City of Hartford



Study Area

New Haven - Hartford - Springfield
Commuter Rail Feasibility Study



Legend

- Rail Study Corridor
- Highways
- Major Roads
- Existing Rail Stations

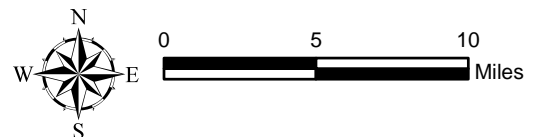


Figure 1-1



- Town of Windsor
- Town of Windsor Locks
- Town of Enfield
- City of Springfield
- Peter Pan Bus Lines
- Connecticut Southern Railroad
- Providence and Worcester Railroad
- Guilford Rail Systems
- CSX Railroad
- Metro North Railroad
- Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation)

All Steering Committee meetings were open to the public and presentations and minutes are available on the project's website, <http://www.nhhsrail.com>. The first Steering Committee meeting took place on October 16, 2002 at Hartford Union Station to introduce the committee to the project goals and schedule and discuss existing conditions. A rail trip for the Steering Committee was held on December 4, 2002 to view the existing conditions and identify potential alternative station locations. The second Steering Committee meeting took place on March 24, 2003 at Hartford Union Station to review the existing conditions report and discuss potential minimum and maximum build scenarios. The third Steering Committee meeting took place on October 16, 2003 to discuss the results of the minimum and maximum build scenarios and determine additional alternatives to evaluate. The fourth Steering Committee meeting took place on June 30, 2004 at the Connecticut Department of Transportation to discuss alternative results and determine a recommended action.

1.4 Public Involvement

To serve the large number of communities and stakeholders associated with this study corridor, public outreach has included meetings in various forms, a website (<http://www.nhhsrail.com>), electronic and printed mailings and advertisements.

Meetings held during the course of the study have included public informational meetings, local official / town meetings, and other interested stakeholder meetings. The purpose of all of these meetings has been to provide information and solicit input into the development of the recommended action.

Public meetings were held twice during the course of the study, with the first set of meetings taking place in April and May 2003 and the second set of meetings taking place in November 2004. The first set of meetings consisted of a presentation and discussion of the existing conditions and the minimum and maximum build scenarios with meetings taking place as follows:

- April 29, 2003 - Windsor Town Hall



- April 30, 2003 - Meriden City Hall
- May 6, 2003 - Hartford Union Station
- May 7, 2003 - North Haven Recreation Center
- May 22, 2003 - Enfield Town Hall

The second set of meetings consisted of a presentation and discussion of the alternatives evaluated and recommended action with meetings taking place as follows:

- November 3, 2004 - North Haven Recreation Center
- November 9, 2004 - Windsor Locks Town Offices
- November 10, 2004 - Berlin Town Hall
- November 16, 2004 - Wallingford Town Hall
- November 17, 2004 - Enfield Town Hall

During the course of the study, a website, <http://www.nhhsrail.com>, has been maintained to provide information and feedback during the course of the study. Initially, the website provided project background and scope information, a map of the corridor, links to related sites, and study team contact information. As the study progressed, meeting announcements were updated, meeting minutes and presentations were added and all technical reports were made available. The website is hosted by Rideworks, the rideshare agency in greater New Haven, and updated by Wilbur Smith Associates.

Two newsletters have been created and mailed out during the course of the study, both in advance of the public meetings. In order to reach out to the public not already on the mailing list, paid public advertisements in local newspapers were used to advertise the public information meetings, as well as flyers and press releases.

The public commented to this report in the form of e-mails, mail, fax, phone and meeting attendance. All written public comments received during the course of the study appear in Appendix A of this report.