



Lehigh Valley Transportation Study

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LVTS PASSENGER RAIL MEETING Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at 10:00 am Virtual Meeting Agenda

Roll Call

Old Business

1. *PRESENTATION ITEM:* Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis
www.lvpc.org/passenger-rail (WSP)
2. *DISCUSSION ITEM:* Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis Q+A

Adjournment

Next LVTS Meetings:

LVTS Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee Meeting
June 12, 2024, at 9:00 am

Special LVTS Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee Meeting
June 27, 2024, at 9:00 am

LVTS Technical Committee Meeting
July 17, 2024, at 9:00 am

Meetings will be held virtually. Meeting participation information can be found here:
<https://lvpc.org/lvts-committee-meetings>

The LVPC/LVTS website, www.lvpc.org, may be translated into multiple languages.
Publications and other public documents can be made available in non-English
languages and alternative formats, if requested.

Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis Comments: March 27 - April 16, 2024

Date	First	Last	Comment	Response
27-Mar	Sabrina	McLaughlin	Do the 9 historic corridors identified include routes which have since been converted from rails to trails?	Yes, the corridors identified include routes which have been converted from rails to trails.
27-Mar	George		Are the trains that were programmed for the 3 round-trips assumed to be separate trips (e.g. Amtrak) or extensions of NJT trips?	This would need to be determined in future studies.
27-Mar	Matthew	Baysinger	If accepted, would the lines be secured by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and how would that look like on a local level?	TSA involvement in a future rail service will be determined as part of future planning processes if an alternative is chosen and advanced.
27-Mar	Blaise	Richburg	Is buying out tracks from Norfolk Southern a possibility?	No outside organizations were contacted for this planning study. Consideration of this question would be undertaken in future studies, should the region decide to move forward with a passenger rail project.
27-Mar	Jeff	Barber	I am concerned that 2:30 hours of travel time does not work for passengers. The rail needs to be a High Speed Line that saves time and money. We need to look at what is being done in Europe and Asian countries. They are light years ahead of the USA.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Kathy	Fox	Will there be any discussion about high-speed trains?	Consideration of this question would be undertaken in future studies, should the region decide to move forward with a passenger rail project.
27-Mar	Blaise	Richburg	Will electrification be considered in lieu of dual mode trains? It is a smarter choice in the long run and makes SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) compatibility much easier.	Consideration of this question would be undertaken during the identification of equipment needs, should the region decide to move forward with a passenger rail project. The cost structure of this feasibility study is based on dual mode trains, and electrification of trains would be an additional expense.
27-Mar	Benjamin	She	Between Bethlehem and Allentown, the Norfolk Southern Lehigh and Reading Lines run concurrent on either side of the Lehigh River -- I would think the south side Reading Line which doesn't connect to Allentown Yard could be turned over for pax	Thank you for your comment. No outside organizations were contacted in connection to this feasibility study.
27-Mar	George		For Reading, can it be tied into the New York rail service? (So a one-seat ride is available from NYC to Reading at least on some trips)	This will depend on the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority's decisions on the Reading area's service plans.
27-Mar	Brett	Webber	The historical precedent is clear. Yes it could be tied into New York rail service. This should be part of a more comprehensive, inclusive assessment.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Tony	Klapatch	It seems like a significant point of ridership demand analysis in this report is geared towards commuters. There are way more trips that people take than just commuting such as visiting family and tourism. Has the study taken these sorts of non-work related trips into account?	This study does not take non-work-related trips into account, and this work would be done as part of a more detailed ridership demand analysis, should the region decide to move forward with a passenger rail project.
27-Mar	Brett	Webber	There was a logic historically for all of the communities to be connected - this is important to assess again. Agree with the comments about transport for OTHER reasons other than traditional commuting. 1. Cultural Tourism, 2. Education, 3. Healthcare	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Trevor	Pinho	I totally agree with the speaker, in that I'd hope that a main purpose of this project would be to access economic opportunities that they aren't accessing now (i.e. opening up New York to more people, rather than making Reading easier to get to when people are already getting there in large numbers).	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	George		Was there any consideration given to how much ridership would be generated from commuters to points other than NYC? (For example, Plainfield to Allentown or Dover to Allentown). Same for the Philadelphia alignments. Intermediate riders are also important to consider.	The high level potential ridership analysis in the study does show some of the intermediate locations. Should the region choose to move forward with a project, a more detailed analysis would need to be conducted to answer this question more fully.
27-Mar	George		Thank you for the clarification on commuter movements. Have intermediate stations been roughly proposed (e.g. between Allentown and High Bridge or Allentown and Hackettstown)? I would assume that those new intermediate stations were factored in when the rough schedules were created, correct?	While some assumptions were made to generate trip times, no specific assumptions about stations were made for the feasibility study. Capital and operating costs in the study do not include station costs.
27-Mar	Unknown	User	Would the rails to trails be reclaimed and converted back if any of these plans move forward?	Some of the potential routes could involve using rails to trails rights-of-way, but that would all depend on what route was chosen. It's one of the many decisions that have to be made.

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27-Mar	Unknown	User	Just a comment - the 2h 20m for rail service can always be improved in the future. Of course, it'd be great to have higher speed service, sure. Driving to NYC or taking the bus on a good day can be quicker, however that conveniently ignores regular traffic issues and roadway construction on the Interstate 78 corridor and the tunnel into NYC - and not everyone has a car. It's also easier to work and do other things on a train. And taking the TransBridge bus from Port Authority Bus Terminal with their extremely high fares (\$86 round trip from Downtown Easton), frequently canceled runs, no late night service, and poor communication can be an awful experience.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Joyce	Marin	As this idea moves forward, could LVPC provide technical assistance to impacted municipalities on coordinated Transit Oriented Development best practices?	The LVPC provides technical assistance to municipalities in regards to the deployment of the LANTA Enhance Bus/Bus Rapid Transit System.
27-Mar	Benjamin	She	Just a comment that I am in full support of this plan, and I encourage the project team to work with SEPTA to pursue reversionary rights to the Upper Bucks + Saucon Rail Trails, while working with the community to implement rails with trails wherever possible. Thanks.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Charles		It seems that right-of-way (ROW) acquisition cost of \$500,000 to \$1 million was low. What did this study include and not include?	The cost estimates in this study are planning-level, rough order-of-magnitude costs based on many general assumptions; more refined cost estimates will be developed should the project be advanced. To estimate ROW acquisition costs for the purposes of this study, WSP calculated the miles of new mainline track required for each corridor, as well as the miles of new sidings, which was assumed to be 1 mile of siding per 10 miles of track (new or existing). That mileage was converted to acres, with 20% of the acreage assumed to be developed land and 80% or the acreage assumed to be undeveloped land. Different cost factors were applied to the developed and undeveloped acreage, and these two costs were summed to arrive at a total order-of-magnitude ROW acquisition cost for the given corridor. Some of the corridors investigated had higher ROW costs using this method (as high as \$7M), but ROW costs for the corridors recommended as the most feasible alternatives fell somewhere in the \$0.5-\$1M range based on this methodology.
27-Mar	Bill	Umbenhaur	Regarding the length of trip and tying into New Jersey Transit's Raritan Valley Line, it will be interesting to understand the benefit from the Gateway Tunnel program with additional access to New York/Penn [station] assuming Gateway is actually completed in the future??	Thank you for the comment. The scope of this study did not include analysis within the Gateway Program area, however if a route to New York is pursued for further advancement coordination with Gateway will be important.
27-Mar	Brett	Webber	Could WSP please provide some commentary on economic incentive for pursuing passenger rail - both in terms for jobs for the region for construction, operations, the Commonwealth, and associated economic development through enhanced urban development. When we think about impediments to passenger rail, please keep addressing the potential for economic health of the region and the Commonwealth to review in concert with challenges.	Numerous studies have examined how passenger rail investment affects local economies, from both short-term, construction period effects to longer term impacts on jobs and income and reduction in pollution costs and travel costs. The scope of work for this feasibility study did not include a benefit-cost analysis specifically for the Lehigh Valley. Other recent studies that have looked at the economic effects of passenger rail investment are available online. https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/HSIPR-v1-Guide-June2021.pdf ; https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-Public-Transit-2020.pdf ; https://cura.vcu.edu/media/cura/CURA-MSS-Economic_Impact_Study_FINAL.pdf ; https://crcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CRCOG_Final-Report_V6_042921.pdf
27-Mar	Joyce	Marin	How can the effort to restore passenger rail be included in the LVPC Climate Action Plan?	If the region chooses to move forward with plans to re-establish passenger rail, the long-term impact on greenhouse gas emissions would likely be part of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan being done by the LVPC.
27-Mar	Brett	Webber	Commitments to thinking about funding need to include the GOAL which is what will this potentially result in terms of economic investment and development for the citizens and businesses that pay taxes in this region.	If the region chooses to move forward with plans to re-establish passenger rail, those considerations would be part of future studies that would have to be done as part of the process.

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27-Mar	David	Alan	Where will the slides from the presentation be posted? Has any outreach been conducted or planned with passenger rail advocacy groups? Why is the project timeline 10-12 years when some of the rail was in good condition? Does the study include considerations for increased trips?	The slides for the presentation will be posted at www.lvpc.org . The LVTS will follow its recently adopted public participation plan for all outreach efforts. Interested parties should contact Hannah Milagio at hmilagio@lvpc.org . The project timeline is dependent on the alternative, and the study created a conservative timeline that included the interim steps for a potential project. The study does not include considerations for increased trips.
27-Mar	Sean	Ziller	As a former commuter who drove from the Lehigh Valley to Lansdale to get the train to Philadelphia, I know there is a demand for this connection. Why were conversations with other organizations, including SEPTA and NJ Transit, not a part of this feasibility study?	Reaching out to other organizations would be appropriate when a decision has been made to move forward with a potential passenger rail project.
27-Mar	Scott	Slingerland	Has there been consideration to locate train stations within the downtowns, which would strengthen walkability and pedestrian connectivity, instead of along highways?	The study does not include considerations for stations or station locations and that, regardless of location of potential stations, new construction would likely be required. Any stations, whether new construction or existing infrastructure, would require that stations are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
27-Mar	Megan	Lysowski	Is there any data in the report that outlines carbon emission reductions as a result of passenger rail service, in light of the data presented on carbon emission reductions in the Lehigh Valley Priority Climate Action?	This study does not include that data.
27-Mar	Shana	(Guest)	As a former Lehigh Valley resident and a current resident of Portland, ME, I recommend that the Lehigh Valley look to the Portland area's bus and passenger rail systems as examples of what not to do with a potential passenger rail project.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Brett	Webber	I want to remind participants that the feasibility study examines a return to passenger rail for the Lehigh Valley. I echo previous statements on the carbon reduction impact of passenger rail, the Federal Rail Administration's website for more information. Working in partnership with freight rail operators is possible for a potential passenger rail project, and should not be seen as an impediment. The economic development impact of passenger rail should be examined further, including jobs and tax revenue, as they could outweigh the impediments to a passenger rail project.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar		James	What is included in the right-of-way costs? Will a transcription of the meeting be available?	Right-of-way costs were not included in the capital and operating cost estimates, but were based on estimated mileage of siding, right-of-way needed, and other factors. There was data generated on a per-mile cost for right-of-way costs used to create this estimate. A transcript of the meeting will not be available, but minutes of the meeting will be available.
27-Mar	Peg	Church	Planning for electrification of trains would be in line with the current federal priorities that aim to cut carbon emissions in half by 2030. Was electrification of passenger rail considered in this study?	Consideration of this question would be undertaken during the identification of equipment needs, should the region decide to move forward with a passenger rail project.
27-Mar	Scott	Slingerland	Is there consideration to locate train stations in our downtowns, which would strongly strengthen walkability/pedestrian connectivity instead of along highways? Former Banana Joe's in Allentown, Union Station in Bethlehem, and Easton's Lehigh Valley Railroad Station are all strong locations. The report indicates that new construction would likely be required for stations (page vi), but again, hoping for sensible locations that coordinate with downtowns and LANTA Public Transit to improve overall sustainability?	Station locations were not considered as part of this feasibility study. That work will be done in a future study should the project be advanced; such a study would include a detailed station location analysis that would take into account factors like passenger access to stations, intermodal connections, opportunities for transit-oriented development, potential environmental and community impacts and opportunities, rail operations, and cost.
27-Mar	Scott	Slingerland	There is one big factor that disadvantages cars, that is traffic congestion on highways, which is largely variable and increasing annually. Any time a train trip might be advertised as a little slower than driving a car, we must consider increasing congestion on highways, and what traffic on highways will look like in 10 years with population growth, etc. Please consider rail, and high-speed rail is all the better!	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	Scott	Slingerland	Where multi-use/bike trails are currently on former rail corridors, new rail can be co-located adjacently! i.e. Saucon Rail Trail and South Bethlehem Greenway.	Thank you for your comment.

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27-Mar	Scott	Slingerland	How long will freight trains be running diesel? Any plans to electrify Norfolk southern or New Jersey Transit lines in 5-10 years? (It appears that Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) is already full electric (unconfirmed). How will current and near-term PennDOT projects around potential rail lines in the Lehigh Valley consider this study? Passenger rail has really synergized with certain communities outside of Lehigh Valley and I support the environmental and economic benefits, i.e. Lancaster (PA) and Summit (NJ)	Although this preliminary analysis did not include coordination with Norfolk Southern or NJ TRANSIT, there are no known efforts for additional electrification of freight or passenger lines in the area. Future PennDOT highway projects would coordinate with passenger rail corridor advancement, if a corridor is chosen and advanced.
27-Mar	Phillip	Doherty	If passenger rail service was already running for an example in the lehigh valley then I would totally use it. So yes I would like to see the area move forward with the passenger rail plan. The high bridge line would I think be the best alternative. 2 hours and 20 minutes thanks. Please take my comment into consideration on to bringing back passenger rail	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	John	Zamper	The region can't afford to reconstruct Route 22 to accommodate the growth of traffic. Where is the money going to come from for this laurel filled train to New York City for the wealthy to take in a show? The right track is to be to Philadelphia, but that involves taking out trails, good luck with that train aficionados.	Thank you for your comment.
27-Mar	John	Marquette	Pick something - *anything* - and in the meantime: Four or five express buses a day from either Trexlertown Park & Ride or the Lehigh Valley service area on the NE [Turnpike] Extension (yes buses have stopped there in the past) to Norristown Transportation Center. Two ways to Philly from there - train or light rail to El. 50-min to 1-hr trip time. Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) can design it and contract out the service to Trans-Bridge (avoids complaints from private sector). Fares can be lower per mile than to NYC. Best part: it could start a lot faster than 12-14 years from now. Hidden bonus to this if the senior citizen fare was same as on LANTA and SEPTA - nothing. The lottery would help subsidize the service for everybody by getting boomers out of the house for day trips.	Thank you for your comment.
28-Mar	Matt	Hoyer	I think that a combination of options would be most feasible for bringing passenger rail back to the Lehigh Valley. First, any passenger rail consideration should include Reading in the conversation, due to both the close socioeconomic and demographic ties between it and the Lehigh Valley, but also its own ongoing passenger rail project connecting it to Philadelphia. That way, even if a direct connection doesn't work out for the Lehigh Valley, there will still be a way for residents to get to and from Philadelphia (not to mention strengthening demographic and economic ties between the two regions). With that in mind, I believe that one of the LV-NYC routes should be prioritized for Lehigh Valley passenger rail. This is because of strong historic commuting ties between the two, and also to just generally improve access to NYC from the valley, meaning people can live here for Lehigh Valley housing costs and work there for NYC wages. I believe that the Valley should prioritize NYC for this planning, but also plan to implement an LV-Philadelphia connection as a phase II should the NYC connection work out - I understand that there will only ever be so much money available for transportation projects, so it is best to pick and choose which to prioritize. Here, both an NYC connection and a Philly connection would be important for us.	Thank you for your comment.
28-Mar	Bruce	McIntosh	Ridiculous.... The proposed rail projects for Lehigh Valley are not a good idea. Too much cost for too little benefit for too few. Restoring rail service eliminating "rail trails" is unacceptable. Just the idea of commuters spending more time on rail compared to bus service should stop this nonsense of re-establishing trains to NY, Philadelphia or Reading	Thank you for your comment.

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28-Mar	Joe	Felix	I would love to see rail service between the Lehigh Valley and NYC but I am against what is proposed in the report. What is the justification for spending \$500M+ of taxpayer money for service which will make the commute longer than the current Trans-Bridge Bus service? In order for this to be worth the money being spent, service between the Lehigh Valley and NYC would need to be less than a 90-minute commute. This holds true for service between Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia. The commute time needs to be less than bus service. The committee needs to set this condition as one of the overall objectives if the project is to move forward. Otherwise, what is being accomplished?	Thank you for your comment.
28-Mar	Paul	O'Neill	I grew up with passenger train service living outside of Philadelphia. I miss riding in a train, and I think it is embarrassing that Europe has us bear on this mode of transportation. We need to bring it back as soon as possible. The cost for repairing our highways will be just as expensive with repairs in the future. Compromise is the key element we seem to have lost in our culture. Make it happen Lehigh Valley!	Thank you for your comment.
1-Apr	Colton	Schrettner	I firmly believe that active commuter rail connections between the Lehigh Valley and either New York City or Philadelphia would provide a significant benefit to the residents of the Lehigh Valley for multiple reasons. Simplified commutes to employment hubs in the suburbs and inside of these metropolitan areas would add to the sustainability of living in the area while providing access to a wider employment market, easy connections to wider rail transit networks as well as air travel networks both represent strong benefits for locals. Based on the information provided in the study shown, I believe the Allentown to Philadelphia via Norristown line would provide the best profitability and flexibility for the operator (33% more potential passengers than via Lansdale direct) with only a 16% increase in cost and 6% increase in operating costs. Routes to New York afford better initial capital investment at roughly 63% of the cost but show nearly 2-4 times the annual operating costs with only 31% the potential passengers. The Reading route combines low capital expenditures and low operating costs, but pays strongly in terms of convenience, with nearly 3 hours of total travel to get to Philadelphia, which would prove too much additional time for many potential passengers.	Thank you for your comment.
1-Apr	Colton	Schrettner	Overall, I believe that these routes show significant promise for connecting the Lehigh Valley to nearby metropolitan areas, and opportunities for federal funding make now and excellent time to begin the long process of going from idea to reality.	Thank you for your comment.
1-Apr	Richard	Cuff	I read the recently-completed study, and none of the studies mentioned potential new technologies that could reduce the need for significant new rail infrastructure. One such example is the potential for Bus Rapid Transit or a mixed BRT-passenger rail alternative for any of these scenarios. In such a scenario I could see a vehicle capable of traversing both railways and highways as utilizing the infrastructure in place with less investment in greenfield railway corridors. What leapt out to me is that, especially for the Philadelphia corridors, is that we'd have to undo the significant effort that went into creating the rail-trail network that has been built using formal rail rights-of-way. Conversely, there is an active effort to increase capacity on the Pennsylvania Turnpike Northeast Extension. I saw no effort to visualize a solution that might include a BRT component for the miles between a potential Upper Macungie connection point from an east-west rail line originating in Allentown to the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and connection between I-476 and the Conshohocken SEPTA station, or I-276 and the Norristown SEPTA station. Another road-to-rail connection point would be Fort Washington, PA -- the rail station is perhaps 1 mile from the existing Turnpike Exit 339.	The scope of this study was to look specifically at options for restoring passenger rail service to the Lehigh Valley; it did not consider other modes. However, Bus Rapid Transit, and the enhancement of transit service are key elements of the LVPC's <i>FutureLV: The Regional Plan</i> and the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority's long-term business plan.

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1-Apr	Richard	Cuff	The routes to Philadelphia also serve to decrease the future costs of Allentown to New York lines by connecting Allentown to Bethlehem by rail. Seems to me that, for the NYC corridors, particularly service via the existing Raritan Valley Line, advancement in signaling and rail line capacity utilization scenarios would obviate the need for significant development of new trackage. Again, these solutions would be solutions demonstrating innovative technology; such technology might, in the long run, make such an investment more palatable. While these initiatives might not bear fruit in my lifetime, it's exciting to consider reconnecting the Lehigh Valley to its big-city neighbors via rail.	Thank you for your comment.
1-Apr	Sharon	Wiles-Young	Thank you for preparing and undertaking this important work to restore passenger rail service to the Lehigh Valley. As you enter the new phase of feasibility studies, I hope there is some research and discussions with other regions of the US that share tracks with freight trains and have restored passenger service. As far as establishing potential partnerships one could think about links to regional airports, links to Amtrak (east corridor is the most profitable) and currently New York City is instituting a larger fee to drive into NYC. If NYC would like regional day commuters not to drive into NYC then more regional train service would assist in their efforts. Work with local transportation to build links from train stations to city areas. I am hoping there will be other potential partners as train service is one step to helping with addressing alternative transportation solutions. There are opportunities and this report is a great start and I think the potential partnerships for investment could be explored. My question is: will there be research done on other US regional models and how they are building partnerships to resolve infrastructure questions (sharing track and working with freight lines) and finding investment partners in passenger service?	Yes, researching other U.S. models (and talking to other project sponsors working to establish or restore passenger rail service) would be an important next step should the region choose to advance the project.
3-Apr	Jan	McIntosh	Train plan is too much cost for too few passengers. Should support more public bus lines. Could buy a few more bus's for less than \$400 million. Help existing bus company's to expand service.	Thank you for your comment.
10-Apr	Jerry	Steward	I am not interested in rail service to cities outside our area. We have plenty of work and entertainment here in the Valley, including the beauty of nature seen on the railtrails such as the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Saucon Rail Trail & others. Home values will take a tremendous hit if train noise and dangers suddenly ruin our peaceful neighborhoods.	Thank you for your comment.
10-Apr	Chris	Luczkowiak	As a resident of the Lehigh Valley, I wholeheartedly support the initiative to restore passenger rail service in our region. The proposals to establish train service between Allentown and Philadelphia or Reading, as outlined in the recent feasibility analysis, are a significant step forward. However, I believe that any comprehensive passenger rail service should include Easton in its route, alongside Bethlehem and Allentown. Expanding rail service to Easton would not only enhance connectivity within the Lehigh Valley but also provide crucial access to neighboring regions. This would also contribute to economic development and regional growth.	Thank you for your comment.
10-Apr	Chris	Luczkowiak	It would facilitate easier access to employment opportunities, educational institutions, and cultural attractions across the Lehigh Valley and beyond. Additionally, it could alleviate traffic congestion on our highways, reduce carbon emissions, and promote sustainable transportation practices. Furthermore, incorporating Easton into the proposed rail service aligns with the broader goal of fostering regional connectivity and prosperity. It would strengthen ties between communities, promote tourism, and stimulate economic activity along the entire route. In conclusion, I urge policymakers, transportation authorities, and community leaders to prioritize the inclusion of Easton in any plans to restore passenger rail service in the Lehigh Valley. By doing so, we can create a more accessible, sustainable, and vibrant region for residents and visitors alike.	Thank you for your comment.

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10-Apr	Brandi	Panbach	The Lehigh Valley needs rail service restored to both New York City and Philadelphia. Restoring rail service will create an alternative to driving the congested corridors to the jobs and entertainment opportunities in two of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States. This will create economic activity, create jobs, increase mobility, and reduce carbon emissions. Both corridors should be submitted to the FRA for the next round of Corridor ID planning grants so that we can work towards restoring rail service to the Lehigh Valley. For both corridors, either of the proposed alternatives would work, and it would be best to select whichever is cheaper and easier to operate. As part of either project, it would be great if the historic Allentown Central NJ train station be restored and utilized as a terminal and redevelopment opportunity.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Jason	Hoffman	I am a pilot for JetBlue and my wife is a flight attendant. We would use this rail link to NYC and Philadelphia all year. I hope we can push this through and have frequent service.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Harmita	Sidhu	We desperately need rail/train service back in Lehigh Valley, with individuals commuting to Philadelphia/New York. The dynamics and demographics have drastically changed with I-78/I-80 flooded with trucks and cars that do not belong together from a visibility standpoint. We have seen the rate of accidents increase drastically over the last 20 years since I moved from New York City. In Long Island where I lived 30 yrs ago, they have the Long Island Expressway built for commercial traffic and Northern State/Southern State Parkway that do not allow it! This is also true in Connecticut with the Merritt Parkway, and in the vicinity outside of DC with the Baltimore D.C Expressway, essentially separating two class of drivers and making it safer.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Harmita	Sidhu	I also do not think the work at home philosophy will last as collaboration, amongst coworkers in large cities is much more effective, as it's not efficient and as humans we work in packs, unless it's a pandemic, a once in a hundred year event! There are also plenty of retirees that do not want to drive into big cities either that would prefer to mass commute in . Public transportation is more energy efficient, less taxing on the body psychologically from a stress perspective, and forces one to walk more at point of destination. It a win-win for all, humans in general, and especially our earth. Let's bring the commuter train back to Lehigh Valley. It will also bring in more tax revenue as people relocate westward and northward for cleaning spaces. Let our federal taxes work for us!	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Mark	Garger	1. Can the corridors mentioned in the report be added to the Transportation Plan Geographic Information Systems (GIS) site for easy viewing (or some other GIS source) to publicly view? This would make the line easier to understand than just the graphic in the report. 2. While not explicitly covered in the report, page 18 alludes to a station location in Bethlehem east of the Wind Creek Casino to avoid potential freight conflicts. This would however place the station in an area primarily surrounded by warehouses and logistics centers, thereby eliminating any chance of a transit oriented development. Any future station location should have transit oriented development in mind as it makes best use of surrounding land. I suggest any future discussion of station locations instead use the sites proposed in the 2010 New Jersey Transit Raritan Valley study, which places the stations in locations conducive to transit oriented development and integrate better into existing urban fabric.	1. We had the same thought. We're already in discussions with our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team to consider doing that. Thanks for your interest. 2. Station locations were not considered as part of this feasibility study. That work will be done in a future study should the project be advanced; such a study would include detailed consideration of opportunities for transit-oriented development, along with other station siting criteria like passenger access, intermodal connections, potential environmental and community impacts, rail operations, and cost.

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12-Apr	Mark	Garger	3. While more expensive and possibly time consuming, the future alignment should try to own its own track and not share with Norfolk Southern. This may not be immediate, but given Norfolks Southern's recent publicity problems, now may be a good time as any. Having a dedicated track would allow for more enhanced service such as electrification, faster travel times, or a shuttle line running only between Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton all day, providing express service across the valley. Some portions of the corridor appear to have more space for additional tracks, so potential Public Private Partnerships may be able to provide a method where investment into new and existing tracks is provided in exchange for using some of the right of way for a new passenger only alignment. 4. The study states that the Norristown corridor would avoid the Philadelphia Center city tunnel, but the current Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) Norristown Line does run through the Center City tunnel. Is a different route proposed after Norristown to reach 30th St Station? 5. While all corridors are important, please focus on NYC and Philadelphia routes above Reading, despite it being the cheapest.	3. Should the region choose to advance the project, discussions with Norfolk Southern and any other private freight owners in a selected corridor would be a key next step. 4. Yes, the Allentown to Philadelphia via Norristown alternative would use a track connection between the Norristown Line and the Northeast Corridor near North Philadelphia Regional Rail Station/16th Street junction. 5. Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Vanessa	Barrera	We want electrified, own right of way rail between here and Philadelphia and NYC. Using unelectrified freight right of ways will make the train incredibly slow and impractical. The Lehigh Valley deserves better.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Philip	Jonat	I have lived along the New Jersey Transit Raritan Valley line for many years. It is the only alignment that really makes sense. Help to rebuild the alignment with faster electric trains and it will bring major benefits to the Lehigh Valley region.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Blaise	Richburg	The Lehigh Valley deserves better than unelectrified, freight right of ways. I know federal dollars need to be matched, which is hard to come by, but this will be an investment that will greatly benefit the Lehigh Valley in the long run. Commuter rail simply cannot run if it doesn't have its own right of ways, a method of transportation that riders' jobs rely on cannot be subject to delays because Norfolk Southern, who is notorious for putting as little money into maintenance as possible, is having problems. Going forward on borrowed tracks will not cater to any crowds; there will be no reason for the people who take the bus to switch to a much slower route just to save \$10, and the people who drive these routes won't even give the train a thought. Electrification needs to be pursued on the Philadelphia route - it would make things so much easier in the long run if this route could be incorporated into Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) schedules without having to worry about special equipment needs, like dual-mode locomotives; not to mention electrification is much more efficient and environmentally friendly.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Blaise	Richburg	Electrification is not necessary for the NYC and Reading routes, but an electrified line from NYC to Harrisburg, turning the Keystone service into a loop, would help the area so much. The current plan simply is not enough and feels like a complete injustice for one of the fastest growing regions in the US - all routes need their own right of ways, and the Philadelphia route must be electrified. The demand is there, there is no reason the cost isn't justified, and not making the proper investments now will only mean more money down the road when these upgrades are inevitably needed. This is the future of transportation for the Lehigh Valley- it will pay for itself if it's done right the first time.	Thank you for your comment.
12-Apr	Sheila	Archer	Passenger rail is desperately needed in the Lehigh Valley. It's absolutely insane that we are forced to drive everywhere or take the stinky and expensive bus with lousy schedules. I know these are tough words, but it a little ridiculous we don't have this option yet. Please. Do something about that. Now.	Thank you for your comment.

Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis Comments: March 27 - April 16, 2024

Date	First	Last	Comment	Response
12-Apr	Barbara		<p>Rail will force us to trade dwindling open space and affordability (for the LV natives) for a temporary increase in jobs, more congestion, higher taxes, and subsidized commuting costs of a small percentage of residents. • How much will the Lehigh Valley population rise, once a rail commute becomes available? How much more development/sprawl will that involve? • How much will real estate costs rise and affordable housing decrease, together with other costs of living, making the area less affordable to young families and elderly residents on fixed incomes? • How much will our taxes rise to educate the additional children at an average between \$15,000 and more than \$20,000 per child per year, depending on the district? • How much will our taxes rise to pay for widening and repairing our highways to accommodate increased traffic congestion to and from the rail stations, shopping centers, health care centers, entertainment, and schools?</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Those are questions we have also heard from some of municipal partners. Potential answers to many of your questions could be answered by further studies, should the region choose to move forward with a passenger rail project.</p>
12-Apr	Barbara		<p>• What will the impact be on police, fire, and ambulance services, with a greater demand and dwindling number of applicants and volunteers? Will health care availability and space increase accordingly or will we have to wait even more months for appointments for essential care? • What will be the impact on air pollution in a Valley already noted for some of the worst air quality in the state, once the population expands even more? And on wildlife? And on flooding? • Why should our long-standing population subsidize the commuting costs of residents who CHOOSE not to live in or near the communities in which they are employed? How could this opportunity for capital instead be used to make the communities in New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, and Reading more livable – more affordable, safer, more enriching - so that the Lehigh Valley community isn't depleted by an influx of long-range commuters?</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Those are questions we have also heard from some of municipal partners. Potential answers to many of your questions could be answered by further studies, should the region choose to move forward with a passenger rail project.</p>
12-Apr	Barbara		<p>Your study notes that workers are less likely to use rail transportation if their place of employment is greater than one mile from the corridor and their residence is more than five miles from the corridor. Also note many commuters will be discouraged because rail service time will take longer than buses and personal vehicles, and/or they will require use of their vehicles during the work day, and/or their schedules will not conform to the rail service schedule. (“More than 70,000 people commute to work from the Lehigh Valley southwest to the Reading and Philadelphia areas, including to communities along the planned rail route between Reading and Philadelphia. In addition to commuting from the Lehigh Valley to Reading and Philadelphia, many people also commute to the communities surrounding Reading.” p.28) With the access to commuter rail and the increase in population and development, we can kiss the Lehigh Valley we know and love goodbye.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
12-Apr	Deirdre	Malacrea	<p>I am in favor of connecting the train system from High Bridge through to Allentown. I live in Westfield, NJ and commute daily to Bethlehem, PA. This is a 120 mile roundtrip and consumes 6 gallons of gas each day. I see many cars commuting along this Route 78 corridor so this option could be very efficient for numerous people, especially given the Lehigh Valley's growth.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
12-Apr	Jeff		<p>Please don't invite anymore crime or violence to the Lehigh valley!</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>

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12-Apr	Tom	Ickes	It seems to me, the most salient takeaway from your study is how much is not known, and how many stakeholders have not been included. It is way too early in the process to do anything but fill in the admitted (and not-admitted?) gaps, some of which could turn into show-stoppers. Who will take the train? If commuters who work in destination cities are the target audience, why should Lehigh Valley taxpayers help fund their transportation, when they are making higher salaries in the big cities? Regarding taking back the right of way for the Rails-to-Trails paths, that would not only be extremely unpopular, it would degrade the quality of life that residents of the LV treasure. Trying to retrofit passenger trains into infrastructure and systems built up around automobiles may just be too much of a force fit. Fully autonomous cars and hybrid "trackless tram" systems will compete with passenger trains and possibly put them out of business. [https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-trackless-trams-gain-traction-in-the-u-s/]	Thank you for your comment.
13-Apr	Vincent	Yeakel	Passenger Rail Service problem. It may be time to bypass all the problems associated with Norfolk Southern and passenger rail service and think of alternatives, such as Monorail or Germany's Hanging Trains. As the population increases, there will be an increasing need for mass transportation. If we continue to depend on the automobile for our transportation, it will require the cost of adding more lanes and bridges to our overcrowded interstate highways. Continuing to widen our highways with new lanes will also negatively impact the area surrounding the added lanes. Adding passenger rail service with a less-than-enthusiastic Norfolk Southern track owner is doomed to failure. The Lehigh Valley Monorail or Hanging Train system could tie into existing normal rail service in New Jersey. We must think of the future and be open to new ideas. The cost of solving the problem will only increase with time—Google Los Vargos Monorail, Sydney's Monorail or Hanging Train in Germany for more information.	Thank you for your comment.
13-Apr	Jennifer	Cunningham	I so think this is a case of build it and we will come. Highly support this so much more than expanding roadways. And it sounds like a long timeline, but the road building / widening takes just as long, and even longer if you count the total wasted hours of all the drivers delayed bc of construction. Well done, I hope this comes to fruition.	Thank you for your comment.
14-Apr	Didi	Ortiz	The Lehigh Valley desperately needs public transportation options, especially with the influx of transplants from NYC and New Jersey. Easy access to New York and Philadelphia would be an added boon to the region. Additionally, it would help offset some of the pollution from the increased warehouse traffic. As more and more land is being overdeveloped and sold for industrial and warehouse use in the region, vehicular traffic will be unbearable. You also have to take into account aggressive tolling and other regressive actions by NYC to punish commuters. A train would be a wonderful solution and a sound investment in our future here in the Lehigh Valley.	Thank you for your comment.
15-Apr	Christina		I feel very strongly that we should open up lines that allow us to get to Philadelphia and to New York from ALLENTOWN. Reading can happen or not- but especially from Philly you can catch a way to go down to Baltimore on the two main places that I would like to be able to travel to from home or New York and Baltimore	Thank you for your comment
15-Apr	Barbara	Haver	Passenger rail in the Lehigh Valley is long overdue. Let's get it done.	Thank you for your comment
15-Apr	Jacquelyn	Chovanes	This is an excellent idea, would be wonderful to have passenger rail service from LV to NYC and Philly	Thank you for your comment

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16-Apr	Frank	Anuszewski	I am very excited at the potential to return passenger rail service between Philadelphia and Allentown. Connecting the two largest population centers in eastern PA with high capacity transit is essential to the economic health of the state. My preferred alternative would be Philadelphia via Norristown. It is likely to be the fastest Philadelphia route to start up as it can get to 30th Street with diesel only, it would have the simplest transfer to Reading (at Norristown) once the SRPRA Reading route is up and running, and it reactivates the Stony Creek branch, which is a valuable passenger rail corridor on its own.	Thank you for your comment