

ELEMENT 661: RHODE ISLAND STATE RAIL PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island State Rail Plan was approved by the State Planning Council on March 13, 2014, and as of that date it replaces the 1993 Rhode Island Freight Rail Plan as State Guide Plan Element 661.

The State Rail Plan addresses Rhode Island’s passenger and freight rail transportation needs over the next twenty years. It describes the state’s existing rail systems, assesses future needs, and includes prioritized short and long-term investment programs. The plan was prepared to ensure compliance with the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) and the federal transportation authorization, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21).

The State Rail Plan has nine chapters.

Chapters 1 and 2 Introduction and Development of the State Rail Plan

Chapter 1 describes the history of rail in Rhode Island and its role in the state’s economy. It also describes federal goals and requirements for rail and state rail plans. Chapter 2 provides a description of the process used to develop the State Rail Plan.

Chapter 3 Public Rail Program Activities in Rhode Island

The chapter discusses the administrative structure of rail planning, policy, and management in Rhode Island. It also describes federal and state funding for rail, past rail studies conducted in the state, and the regional rail context.

Chapter 4 Rhode Island’s Freight Rail System

Chapter 4 describes Rhode Island’s freight rail system, including active and inactive freight rail lines, intermodal system, freight traffic and goods movement, and significant freight rail issues facing the state.

Chapters 5 and 6 Rail Passenger Service in Rhode Island and Proposed Passenger Rail Service

Chapter 5 provides a description and analysis of Rhode Island’s existing intercity rail passenger service, including commuter rail and excursion services. It also discusses existing and projected passenger rail issues. Chapter 6 describes proposed passenger rail service in the state including South County rail service, Providence Street Car, new stations in Cranston and Pawtucket, and intrastate rail shuttle service.

Chapter 7 Analysis of Rail Transportation Impacts

The chapter presents descriptions and analyses of the economic, environmental, energy, and land use impacts of rail in Rhode Island.

Chapter 8 Rail Safety and Security

Chapter 8 describes the state of rail and grade crossing safety, hazardous materials, positive train control, rail security, and the Strategic Rail Network in Rhode Island.

Chapter 9 Implementation Program

Chapter 9 presents the vision for rail in Rhode Island, a summary of the needs presented in the previous chapters, goals, objectives, policies, implementation actions, and performance measures for the State Rail Plan, and a program of projects that the State will strive to undertake in the short and long term to implement the rail vision.

2 VISION

The State Rail Plan vision statement describes the desired future for Rhode Island's rail system.

The Rhode Island rail system provides safe, reliable, efficient, and effective mobility for people and goods. It contributes to a more balanced transportation system, contributes to economic development, and enhances environmental quality. It efficiently links Rhode Island passengers and goods to national and global markets to cost effectively meet freight and passenger market demands.

3 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The State Rail Plan describes goals, objectives, policies, implementation actions, and performance measures in six topic areas: safety and security, infrastructure condition, system reliability, congestion reduction, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability.

- **Goal 1 Safety and Security**
The rail system will be a safe and secure means of transporting people and goods.
- **Goal 2 Infrastructure Condition**
The rail system will efficiently serve the long-term needs of Rhode Island businesses and residents.
- **Goal 3 System Reliability**
The Rail system will provide for the effective and efficient mobility of goods and people as an element of an integrated multi-modal transportation system.
- **Goal 4 Congestion Reduction**
The rail system will provide a vital transportation mode that accommodates travel and commerce and reduces congestion within the overall transportation system.
- **Goal 5 Economic Vitality**
The rail system will support a vigorous economy by facilitating the movement of people and freight within Rhode Island and the region.

Maintain a well-integrated and sustainable rail system that operates as an integral and coordinated component of the multimodal transportation system and has the supporting land use designations that provide access to intermodal facilities and to compact, mixed use centers to accommodate Rhode Island's growing population and economy.

- **Goal 6 Environmental Sustainability**

The rail system will protect and enhance the quality of the state's environmental resources and the livability of its communities through well-designed rail projects and operations.

4 RAIL INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The Rail Investment Program is comprised of a list of short-range capital projects supported or under consideration for advancement by the state within the next five years and a list of long-range rail capital projects under consideration for advancement within the next six to twenty years. Projects in the investment program were evaluated and prioritized according to seven criteria: safety, infrastructure condition, system reliability, congestions reduction, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and financial feasibility and public support. Passenger and freight projects have separate evaluation criteria. In some instances where projects provide improvement and benefit to both passenger and freight, projects received a score from both sets of criteria.

The highest scoring projects were as follows.

Passenger and Freight

- Preliminary engineering and environmental analysis of the Providence Station and Tunnel to address operational and safety concerns regarding the movement of hazardous materials.
- Planning level analysis of adding a third track from TF Green Airport south to add capacity to accommodate intra-state commuter and freight rail movements.

Passenger Rail

- Preliminary engineering and environmental analysis of the Providence Street Car project.
- Planning level analysis of added Amtrak intercity service at the Warwick Interlink.
- Final design and construction of exterior improvements at the Providence Station.
- Engineering and environmental analysis of the proposed Pawtucket commuter rail station.

Freight Rail

- Final engineering design and construction of five bridges over the Blackstone River in Massachusetts.
- Preliminary engineering and environmental analysis of new sidings for the Seaview Railroad in the Quonset Business Park.
- Preliminary engineering and environmental analysis of bridge structures in Rhode Island to increase the vertical clearance to 21' 6".
- Construction of internal rail lines within the Port of Providence.