

Danbury Branch Commuter Rail Corridor – Successful Public Scoping Meetings held in June in New Milford, Wilton and Ridgefield

June 30, 2008

The Connecticut Department of Transportation, (ConnDOT), the Federal Transit Administration, the South Western Regional Planning Agency and the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials sponsored a series of Public Scoping Meetings regarding the Danbury Branch commuter rail line study and Environmental Impact Statement.

The Public Scoping Meetings were held on Tuesday, June 17, 2008, at the New Milford Town Hall; Wednesday, June 18, 2008, at the Wilton Town Hall Annex Building and Thursday, June 19, 2008 at the Ridgefield Town Hall. The meetings were attended by the Chief Elected Official from each Town and members of various Town Boards and Commissions. Also present at the meeting were the area State Representatives. Members of the general public, including residents of various towns in the corridor, as well as current commuters on the Branch line, also attended. Total attendance at the three sessions was approximately 140 persons (New Milford: 75, Wilton: 25, and Ridgefield: 40).

Each of the sessions ran from 6:00 to 8:30 pm. The presentation to discuss the project's purpose and need, and the alternatives being evaluated to improve rail service on the Danbury Branch was given twice at each session. The alternatives under review include:

- A. No Build Alternative;
- B. Transportation System Management (TSM), including improvements e.g. new outbound service and express service;
- C. So. Norwalk to Danbury improvements including Electrification, addition of passing sidings, and minor track alignment;
- D. Extension of Diesel Passenger Service from Danbury to New Milford with new stations and minor track alignment;
- E. Partial electrification from South Norwalk to the vicinity of the Merritt Parkway (Merritt 7 Station) with feeder bus/rail service to complement the new service.

Representatives from the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the Consultants Study team were present to discuss the study and address questions from the public.

Questions and comments that were common to each session were regarding;

- the study process and how it might be expedited to implement improvements sooner;
- the poor quality of the existing service and the need for improvements as soon as possible; and
- the proposed Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) signal system project.

In addition to those mentioned above, questions and comments from the specific sessions included:

New Milford - the future expansion of rail service to New Milford, the economic impact of the future service and the impact of having a terminus in New Milford.



(Photo: L. Stegina) - Ridgefield meeting participants discuss the Danbury Branch EIS and possible improvements to the Branch. Approximately 40 persons attended the meeting.

Wilton - the use of electric and diesel trains, the need for and potential physical impact of more stations and more parking, and the economic impact of more service.

Ridgefield - the use of electric and diesel trains, the need for and potential physical impact of more stations and more parking, and the economic impact of both. The public also noted that Alternatives B and C would be the most beneficial to Ridgefield, while E would be the least beneficial to Ridgefield.

Comments on the project scope, purpose and need and alternatives considered for evaluation are being accepted through July 25, 2008 by email: info@danburybranchstudy.com or by regular mail:

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Comment forms are available on the project website at <http://www.danburybranchstudy.com>