

Berkshire Flyer

Working Group

February 13, 2018

Agenda

- Report Content
- Next Steps

Report Outline

- **Introduction and Background**- Study goals; Overview
- **Alternatives**- Potential routes -description of route from Pittsfield to NYC and service options
- **Capital Cost Estimates**- Assessing capital needs for each option
- **Operating Cost Estimates**- Information from Amtrak
- **Last Mile Connections**- Sponsored services and transit availability
- **Fare Analysis**- Examined fare structure
- **Market Analysis**- Tourist market, Second home owners, etc.; Peer comparisons on ridership; Travel demand; Regional benefits (material provided by Working Group)
- **Next Steps**- Recommendations: State, Regional, and Local actions

**Final report contents still dependent on what Amtrak can get us*

Framework for Berkshire Flyer Service

- Provide a one-seat-ride from New York to Pittsfield.
- Rely on Amtrak to negotiate access with CSX.
- Provide service from July 4th weekend to Labor Day weekend, with potential to extend service to weekends in the fall through Columbus Day weekend.
- Develop service schedules that focus on bringing weekend travelers from New York to Berkshires.
- Optimal service schedules would allow passengers to arrive in Pittsfield by 4 PM on Fridays and depart Pittsfield in the late afternoon on Sundays.

Potential Berkshire Flyer Customers

1. Trips to Berkshires from Manhattan

- 435,000 Annual Trips by all modes (*not limited to tourism*)

2. Hotel/Motel Stays

- 52,000 Bookings estimated during July & August (*all visitors, excludes B&Bs*) *assuming 2.5 days stayed/booking
- 227,500 Bookings Estimated Year-Round (*all visitors, excludes B&Bs*)

3. Tourism Data (from visitor data shared with MassDOT)

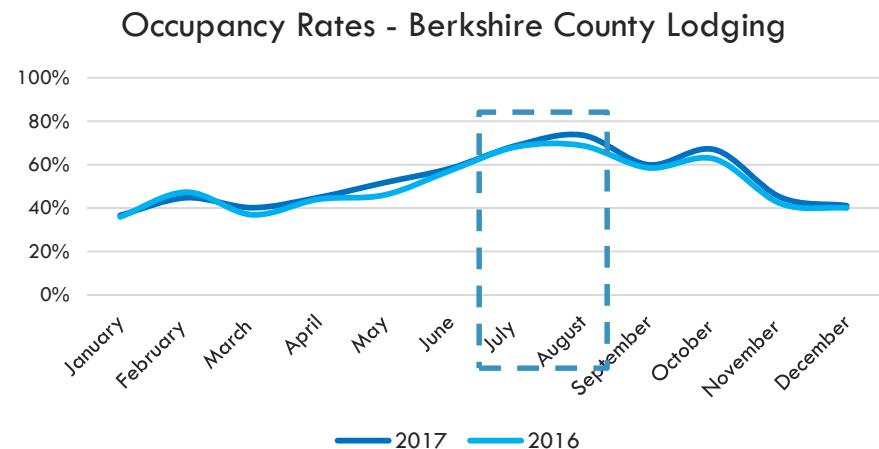
- 12 – 18% Attraction Visits From New York Metro Area

Top Reasons People Visit

- 79.5% See museums/historic site
- 59.2% See performing arts
- 36.9% Engage in outdoor recreation

4. Tourism Season

- July and August are the peak



Note: excludes small establishments, including inns, B&Bs, and those with under 10 rooms






What is now offered? Existing Travel Options

Fridays

Operator	Transfer	One-Way Cost	Scheduled Travel Time*
 Bonanza	None	\$47	4 hrs 5 min
 Fox Bus/ Bonanza	@ ALB	\$41	4 hrs 30 min
 Amtrak	@ ALB	\$54	4 hrs 40 min
 Peter Pan	@ SPG	\$47	4 hrs 40 min
 Greyhound	None	\$53	5 hrs 40 min

**Excludes traffic impacts on service*

Sundays

Operator	Transfer	One-Way Cost	Scheduled Travel Time*
 Peter Pan	None	\$50	4 hrs 5 min
 Bonanza/ Adirondack	@ NY	\$51	5 hrs 10 min
 Amtrak	@ ALB	\$72	5 hrs 11 min
 Fox Bus/ Greyhound	@ ALB	\$32	5 hrs 35 min
 Greyhound	@ NJ	\$51	5 hrs 50 min

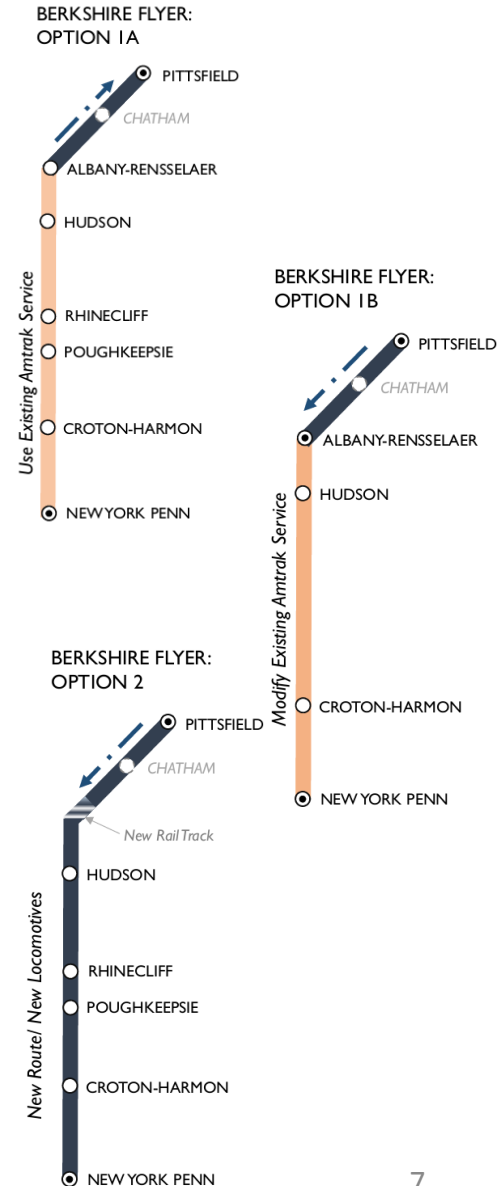
**Excludes traffic impacts on service*

Roundtrip Price Range: \$73 - \$126

What possible rail services were studied?

Rail Alternatives

- **Option 1A**
 - Train #255, *Dep. 2:20PM NYP Arr. 6:10PM Pittsfield*
 - Operating costs: awaiting Amtrak pricing
 - No capital costs found (pending Amtrak's information)
 - Builds on availability of existing Amtrak service to/from Albany
- **Option 1B**
 - Express; assumes that Amtrak can skip existing stops or add new express service.
 - Not known if station skips would be acceptable
 - If new express, depends on equipment and Penn Station capacity, both highly limited
 - Desired slot around 12:00 PM
- **Option 2**
 - Implementation challenges
 - Requires new track and use of CSX route not now used for passenger service
 - Requires large capital investment for a new 0.6 mile track to be added (excavation, drainage, signal system will comprise majority of cost)
 - Difficult for Amtrak to price or analyze this route
- **Working Group agreed to focus on Option 1A as most immediately viable.**



Travel Demand Data

New York County to Berkshire County (with existing Amtrak service)

Mode	Annual Trips	Percentage of Total Trips
Auto (non-business)	334,000	77%
Auto (business)	66,000	15.5%
Bus	26,000	6%
Rail	7,000	1.5%
Total	435,000	

Source: Traveler Analysis Framework, 2008

- FHWA data suggests rail service currently captures **1.5%** of market annually
- In Amtrak surveys, 8% of Amtrak riders state they would not make the trip if rail was not available
- How large is the seasonal latent demand that can be captured by a Berkshire Flyer service?

Capacity Information from Amtrak

- Are there seats available to fill through Option 1A?
- There is some capacity on the existing trains:
 - **Capacity is most limited from May to June**
 - Late night trains have greatest capacity available, but not a preferred option
 - 2:20 PM train averages 255 passengers | **79.9% occupied**
 - *Indication that 50+ seats will be available on weekends in July – September*
 - **FFY 2017 data suggests that seat capacity would exist if service operates in July or later**

Last-Mile Connections are Needed

- Need to connect visitors to cultural attractions, dining, lodging without needing their own personal vehicle
 - Train to destination links
 - “Car free” stays
 - Range of options: shuttles, TNCs, BRTA, etc.
- CapeFlyer addressed need by promoting the following:
 - Shuttles to the ferries to Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard
 - CCRTA bus connections to the trains to the Cape cities and towns
 - Connections to Inter-city bus carriers
 - Between Inter-city and CCRTA buses - connections to all Cape communities
 - Free local Hyannis trolley
 - Pilot Programs with TNC companies
 - Connections to Rental Car companies and Taxi/Limo services
 - Special dedicated bike coach
 - Bike travel has been very popular in conjunction with the region’s bike infrastructure investment

Concepts for Moving Forward

- Form a tourism working group that could:
 - Investigate and support last-mile options
 - Private shuttles, fully funded BRTA service, bike rentals, etc.
 - Build marketing strategies (packages, joint ticket sales, etc.)
 - Target marketing to identified audiences
- Reach out to similar areas (ex: Rutland, VT; Lake George/Fort Edward-Glens Falls, NY; Freeport, ME; Williamsburg, VA) to identify successful methods used to gauge and support other tourist rail services.
- Continue to work with Amtrak to refine capacity estimates and access requirements.

Report Schedule – Subject to Change

- **February 15/16** – Cost information expected from Amtrak
- **February 20** – Working Group comments – to extent possible. Comments received after February 20 will be incorporated to extent that time allows.
- **March 1** – Report due to Legislature

Final report contents will depend on Amtrak information.