



THE TRAIN CAMPAIGN

Summary Information

S. B2096 and H. 3110, An Act Funding a Study of Passenger Service on the Housatonic Rail Line

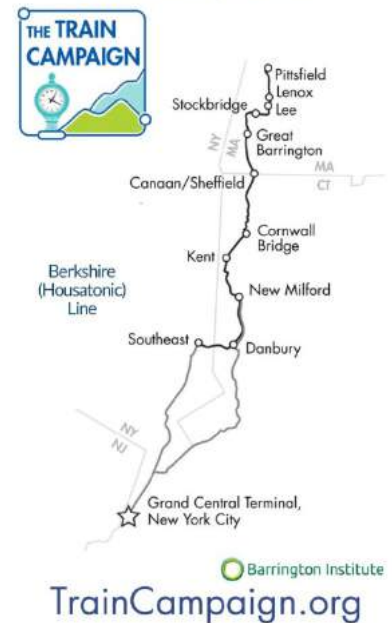
The Housatonic Line—also known as the Berkshire Line—was the route to the Berkshires from 1842 until 1971, when service stopped along with similar closures across the United States. It operates today as a freight line run by Housatonic Railroad Company.

The Massachusetts portion of the track was purchased in 2014. From the agreement: “MassDOT’s acquisition of the Railroad Assets is intended to facilitate the Commonwealth’s long-term plans to restore regional passenger train service linking the New York City metropolitan area and the Northeast Corridor megalopolis generally with the Berkshire region of western Massachusetts. The acquisition of the subject Railroad Assets is one step in what MassDOT anticipates will be an involved, multi-step process that ultimately will lead to the establishment of a new railroad passenger service route in the Northeast.”

Restoration of passenger service will be consistent with the Administration’s commitment to meet the needs of all regions of the Commonwealth as set out in Choices for Stewardship, the 2018 report of the Governor’s Commission on the Future of Transportation.

Of the 2.6 million (2017) tourist visitors to Berkshire County, the majority travel from New York City. A survey in 2018 found that 40% of the interest in passenger rail to and from New York came from county residents. These residents and visitors travel by car or by train to Hudson or Wassaic, NY. The restored Housatonic Line will be compatible with existing travel patterns and serve (and attract) county residents as well as tourists.

A project of the Barrington Institute, a 501(c)3 corporation.



Upgrades, Repairs, and Research

- \$43+ million: Housatonic (Berkshire) Line upgrade in Massachusetts (from the CT border to Pittsfield, MA). In Q4 2019, 45,000 new ties were installed. Installation of new 136-pound welded rail will begin in 2020.
- \$8.6 million: Repairs to four railroad bridges on the Housatonic (Berkshire) Line in the New Milford area.
- \$1 million: Feasibility study funded by New York Metropolitan Transportation Council for fast-track passenger service on the Maybrook portion of the line, from Danbury to Metro-North’s Harlem Line in Southeast.



Background

- The line was ranked #1 in the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's 2020 Regional Transportation Plan.
- The Berkshire County Selectmen's Association stated in 2018, "The Massachusetts Rail Plan should pursue upgrades to the Housatonic Line that would sustain freight service and facilitate future implementation of passenger service."
- Three major studies have been done, two in 2010 and one in 2014, providing a valuable foundation for the research called for in S. B2096 and H. 3110, An Act Funding a Study of Passenger Service on the Housatonic Rail Line.

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The Train Campaign is the rail advocacy organization for Berkshire County and Litchfield counties, sharing a vision for passenger rail as the essential framework for efficient, sustainable transportation in the 21st century. Our mission is to foster a robust network of rail transportation options. The Train Campaign is a project of Barrington Institute, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, EIN 20-1670260, and a founding member of the Western Mass Rail Coalition. Contact: thetraincampaign@gmail.com.

