



THE FUTURE OF

THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR





History of the Northeast Corridor

The Northeast Corridor (NEC) was originally built by the Pennsylvania and New Haven Railroads between 1850 and 1917. Original infrastructure, which included electrification between Washington, D.C. and New Haven, CT, was built to a high standard for the time. Following the bankruptcy of Penn Central—the dominant railroad in the Northeastern United States—in the early 1970s, the Federal Government assumed control of assets and intercity passenger service operations under a hybrid public-private entity, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, doing business as Amtrak. Amtrak began operations on May 1, 1971.

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE A VALUABLE REGIONAL ASSET

The dense population of the Northeastern United States makes the Northeast Corridor (NEC) the most heavily traveled portion of America's passenger rail system. Surging ridership levels characterize Amtrak's popular Acela Express—which operates between Washington, D.C. and Boston, via Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York City along the Northeast Corridor. Yet despite growing demands, there has been no major investment in the NEC since the electrification of the north end of the Corridor in preparation for Acela Express service in the late 1990s to expand capacity and reduce trip times.

With President Bush's recent signing of the Rail Safety Enhancement Act of 2008, which includes a multi-year authorization for increasing funding to Amtrak and States

to expand and improve intercity rail service, the time is right to remedy years of neglect. Securing annual appropriations for Amtrak and the NEC will bring the corridor back to a State Of Good Repair (SOGR), improve the reliability of Amtrak and local commuter services, and lay a foundation for growth.


This funding for NEC is sorely needed, and will help restore to optimal operation this critical regional transportation resource that serves more than 750,000 commuter and intercity passengers every day. 



RAIL: A VITAL ECONOMIC STIMULANT

The Northeast megaregion, which is served by Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC), had a \$2.4-trillion economy in 2005—one-fifth of the nation's gross domestic product. Future economic growth in this area, which extends from Southern Maine to Northern Virginia, depends on the ability to move goods and people quickly and reliably between the region's urban centers.

Central business districts, and research and development clusters around universities, are the engines of the economy in the Northeast. These research and industry hubs are powered by face-to-face communication, which, in turn, depends on efficient and reliable people movement. Intercity and commuter rail expand the scale of these networks, extending them beyond individual metropolitan areas to adjacent and outlying communities. *The result:* increased synergy and innovation.

Bottom line: the continued stability and growth of rail service on the NEC is of vital economic importance. 



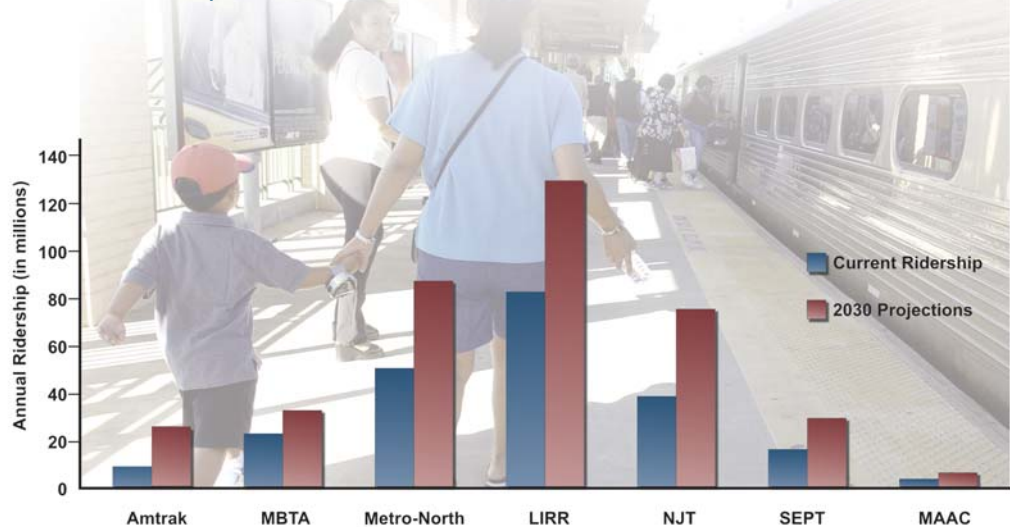
CHALLENGES FACING THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

To envision the future of North East Corridor (NEC) rail passenger service, you first have to have a clear view of its current condition—including the issues and constraints impacting its operation. A major concern: balancing soaring ridership with diminishing capacity, including severe constraints in major terminals such as Boston, New York and Washington. The numbers tell the story:

Skyrocketing Ridership

- In FY 2008, Amtrak system-wide ridership was 28.7 million, an 11% increase over 2007. Compare that to Acela service, which experienced a 6.5% increase in passengers to 3.4 million and a 16% increase in revenue. Due to equipment shortages, at present Acela can no longer accommodate additional ridership.
- Yet Amtrak predicts ridership on the NEC will double by 2030—from 13 million to 26 million riders.

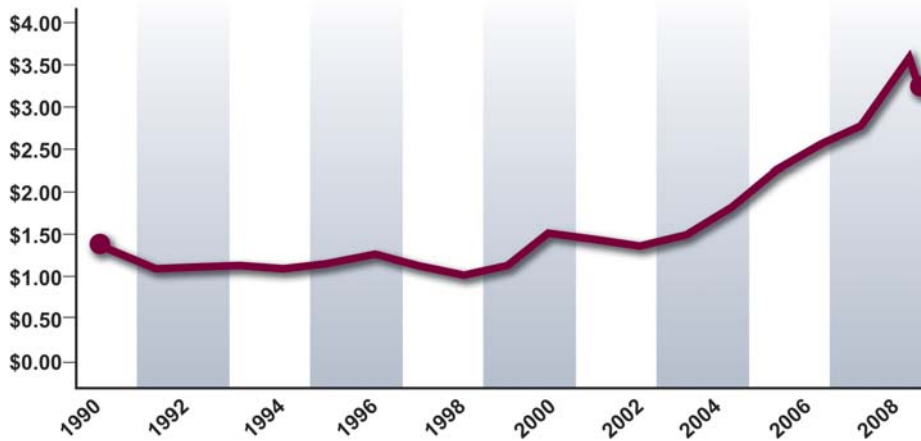
Annual Ridership in the NEC



Ridership growth and projected rise in ridership demand juxtaposed with capacity ceiling in NEC

Source: NEC Infrastructure Master Plan

Average National Retail Price for One Gallon of Gas*



*2008 data through September 8, 2008

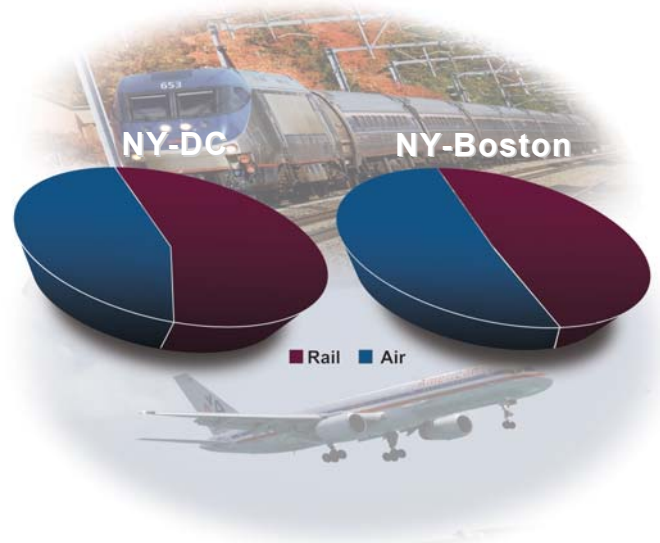
Source: Energy Information Administration



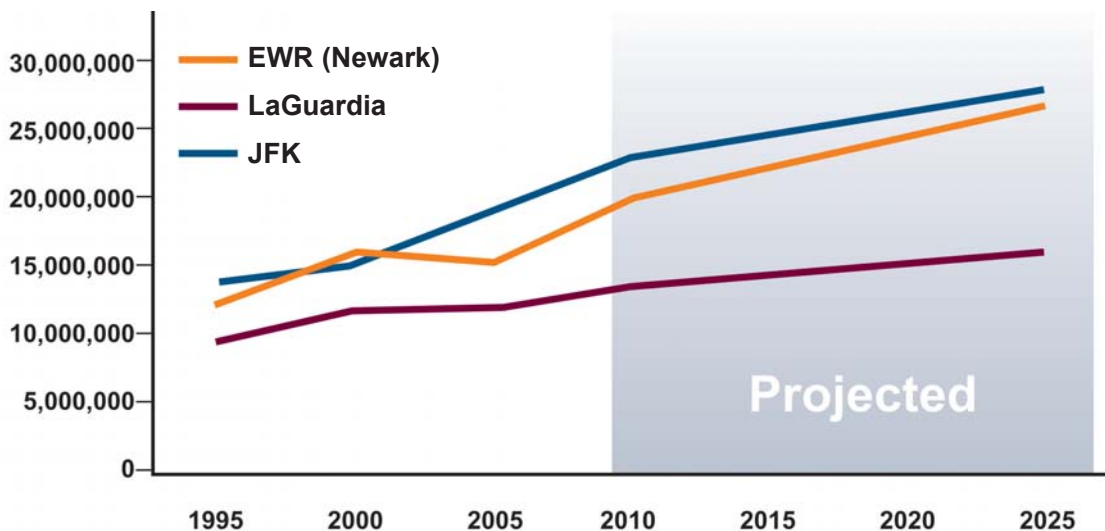
Rail vs. Car vs. Plane

- Congestion, concerns over rising carbon emissions, and the rising cost of gasoline have contributed to increased rail passenger ridership.
- Airports are nearing capacity, made worse by the growth in short-haul air travel within the megaregion. Rail has gained in market share; however, significant upgrades to the corridor must occur to relieve capacity issues if rail is to take an even larger share of the combined intercity rail/air market for travel within the megaregion. For the first half of fiscal year 2008:
 - Market share for rail was 63% vs. 37% for air travel between New York City and Washington, D.C., and
 - Market share was 49% for rail, vs. 51% for air travel between New York City and Boston. ↻

Rail/Air Market Share



Number of Enplaned Passengers at New York City Airports





WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Funding aimed at bringing the NEC up to a State Of Good Repair (SOGR) would be spread over numerous initiatives. “Must do” targets for investment include:

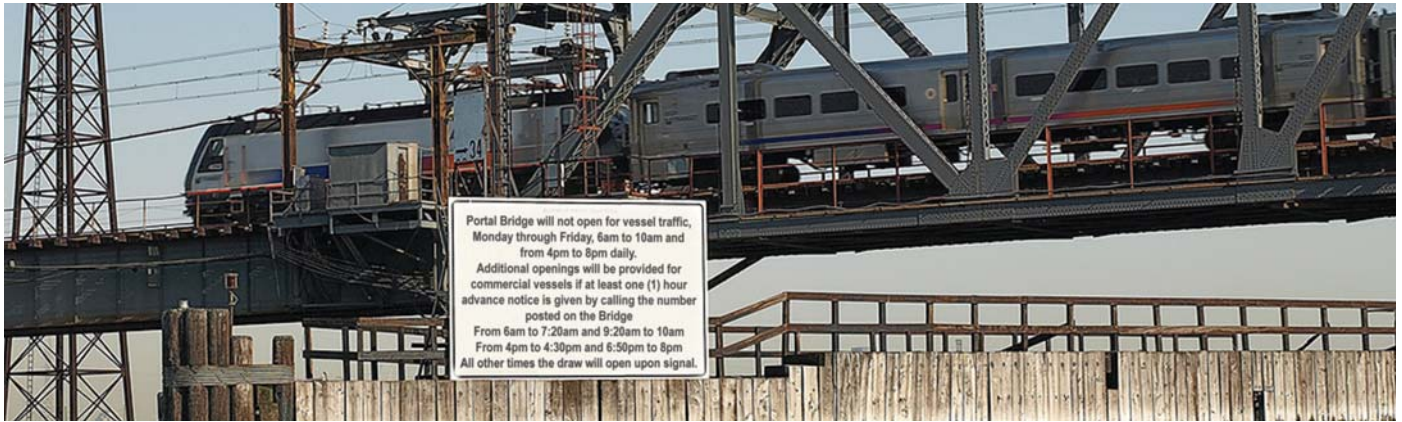
Basic Infrastructure Repairs

Approximately \$5 billion (in 2007 \$s) in improvements to the Washington-to-Boston rail corridor, including:

- Hundreds of bridges more than a century old, including major movable bridges in Connecticut and Maryland;

- The B&P Tunnel in Baltimore dating to the 1870s;
- Track and switch upgrades from wood to concrete to ensure reliable service;
- Full installation of Automatic Stop Train Control for monitoring and controlling train movements to provide increased safety, including on-board cab signals, on all locomotives;
- Replacement of electric converters and transformers installed in the 1930s;
- Signal system upgrades.





Improvements to Safety, Capacity, and Trip Times

In addition to \$5 billion in basic infrastructure work, the following improvements are proposed to enhance safety, expand capacity and improve trip times in the corridor:

- \$1 billion for improvements to the Portal Bridge in New Jersey;
- Station track upgrades at six stations, in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York and Connecticut;
- Speed improvements to allow 15- to 30-minute reductions in trip times between Boston and New York and New York and Washington;
- Installation of “constant tension” catenary between New York and

Washington to permit speeds of up to 150 mph;

- Capacity improvements currently being proposed in New York, potentially including the addition of station tracks in New York’s Penn Station and a new high-speed tunnel.

Equipment and Facilities Investments

In addition to infrastructure improvements, Amtrak’s intercity fleet and support facilities require renewal, as follows:

- Lengthening and expanding the number of existing trains sets to meet increased demand;
- Beginning replacement of Amtrak regional trains, which average about 40 years in service;
- Modernization and expansion of maintenance facilities. ↻



THE COST OF NEGLECT

When rail lines aren’t maintained in a “State of Good Repair,” there are major repercussions: for systems, operations and performance—and, inevitably, for rail passengers.

Rail systems, such as Amtrak’s NEC service, that are not kept to

state of good repair standards experience:

- Declining reliability and on-time performance
- Increased maintenance and labor costs
- Additional rolling stock breakdowns
- Track work delays

- Electrical system problems (catenary, third-rail, signal)
- Reduced track speeds due to Federal Railroad Administration inspections that increase trip times
- Reduced track capacity due to variations in grades and track curvature



NEC SERVICE THAT MEETS TODAY'S NEEDS AND FULFILLS TOMORROW'S PROMISE

Investments in Amtrak's NEC that bring the line up to a "State of Good Repair" (SOGR) would boost reliability and lay the groundwork for increased capacity and improved trip times. For example:

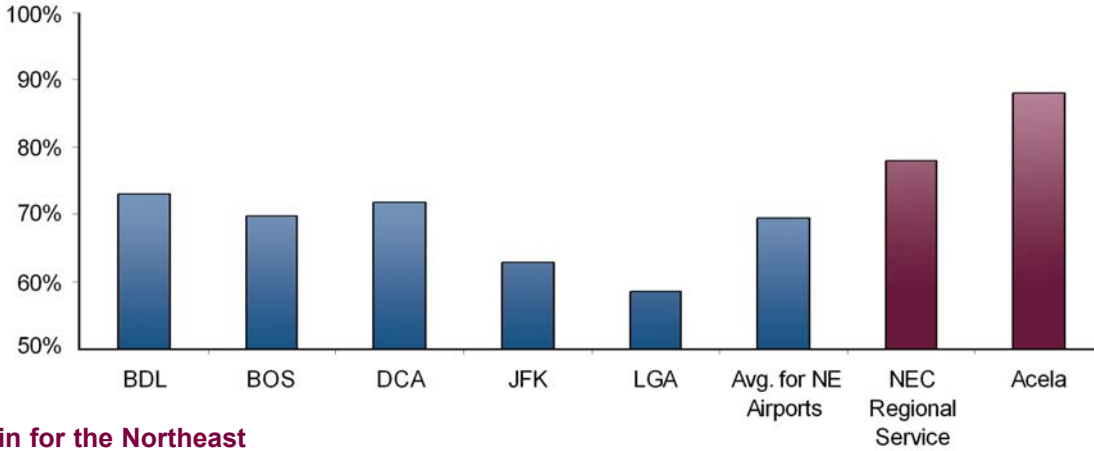
- A near-term goal for Acela service between Washington, D.C. and New York would be to reduce travel time by 15 minutes from 2 hours, 45 minutes to 2 hours, 30 minutes; for Acela service between New York and

Boston, cutting the current 3 hours, 35 minute travel time to 3 hours, 15 minutes, an improvement of 20 minutes.

- On-time performance—at 85% for Acela and 76% for regional service on the NEC in fiscal year 2008—would be targeted to rise to 90% for all services over the next five years.



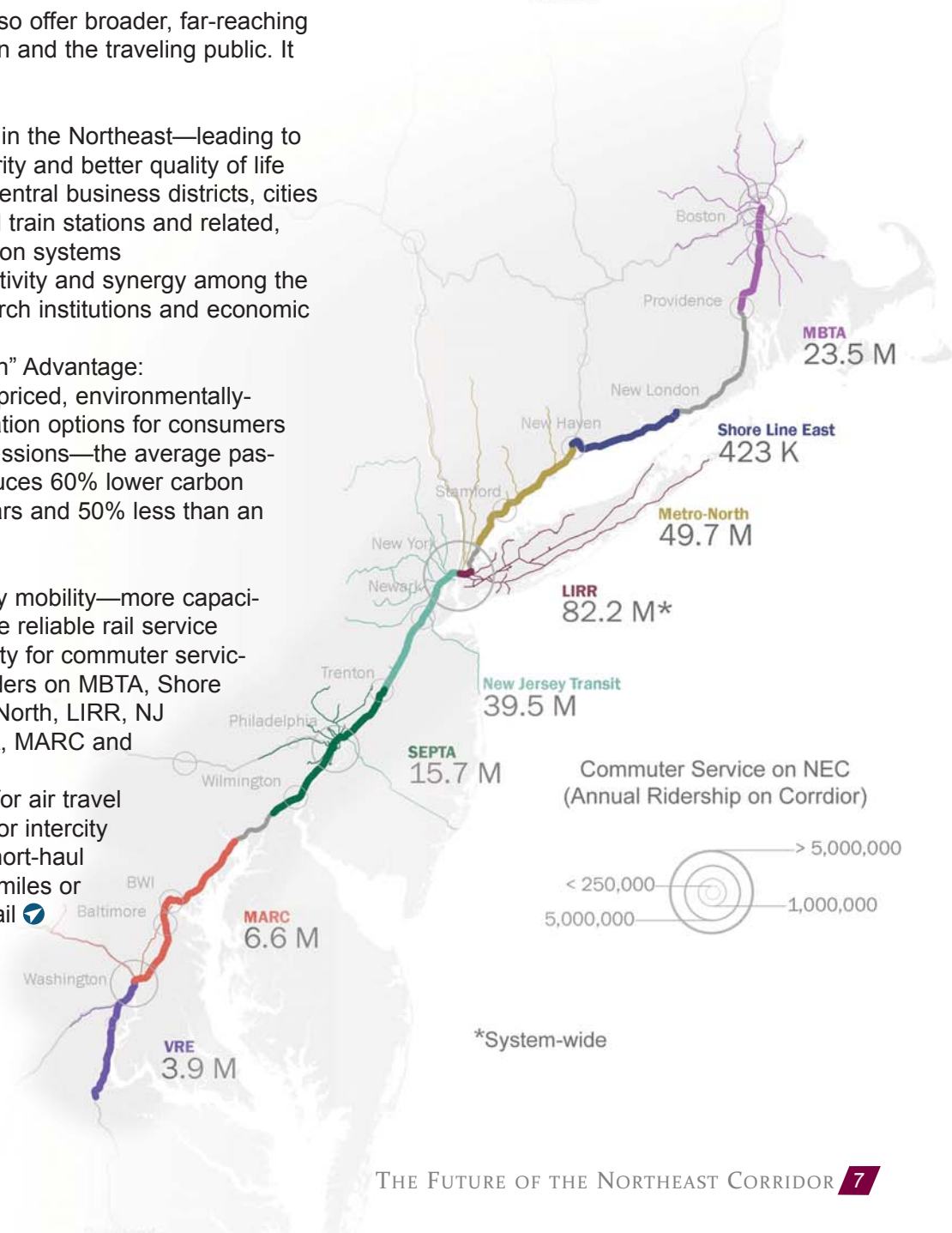
On-Time Performance For Major Northeast Airports (2007) and Amtrak NEC Service (FY2007)



A Win-Win for the Northeast

Improving NEC service will also offer broader, far-reaching advantages, both to the region and the traveling public. It will promote:

- Economic Advantages:
 - Economic growth in the Northeast—leading to increased prosperity and better quality of life
 - Revitalization of central business districts, cities and towns around train stations and related, linked transportation systems
 - Increased connectivity and synergy among the Northeast’s research institutions and economic hubs
- An Environmental “Green” Advantage:
 - More reasonably priced, environmentally-friendly transportation options for consumers
 - Lower carbon emissions—the average passenger train produces 60% lower carbon emissions than cars and 50% less than an airplane
- Transportation Benefits:
 - Enhanced intercity mobility—more capacity and faster, more reliable rail service
 - Enhanced reliability for commuter services—benefitting riders on MBTA, Shore Line East, Metro-North, LIRR, NJ TRANSIT, SEPTA, MARC and VRE.
 - Greater capacity for air travel and redundancy for intercity trips by shifting short-haul passengers (400 miles or less) from air to rail





A CALL TO ACTION

The passage of the Rail Safety Enhancement Act of 2008 provides real hope that years of gridlock in Washington on intercity passenger rail—resulting in serious neglect to Amtrak’s NEC service—is finally coming to an end.

The Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility looks forward to continual engagement with Northeastern governors and state officials, the NEC Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission, and other decision-makers and stakeholders to secure adequate funding to ensure the fast, reliable intercity rail service the region needs.

The long-term potential for the Northeast Corridor is enormous. The initial focus, however, must be on returning the NEC to a State of Good Repair through implementation of a NEC Master Capital Plan. That plan would include broad-based investments in everything from tunnels, new train sets and catenaries to signal and communications upgrades.

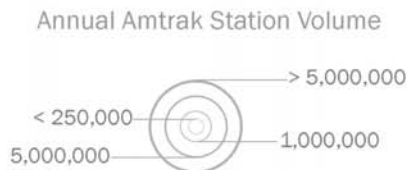
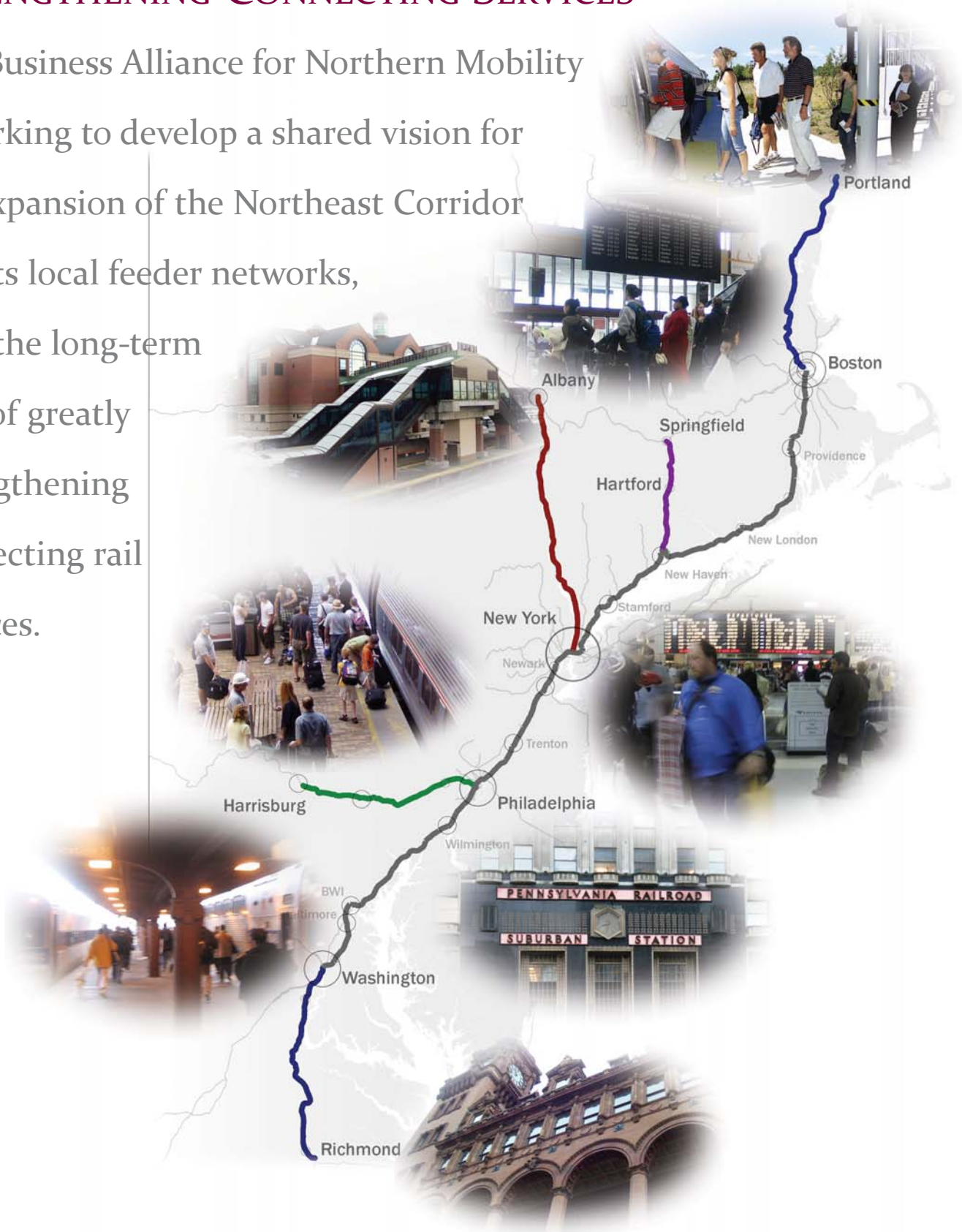
Next Steps

A longer-term priority is expanding the reach of true high-speed service on the Northeast Corridor to fast-growing areas of the region such as Richmond, VA, rehabilitating and extending branch and feeder lines, and adding new and improved services. Destinations that could potentially benefit from improved services include Springfield, MA; Hartford, CT; Albany and Binghamton, NY; Scranton, Allentown, and Harrisburg, PA; Atlantic City, NJ; Dover, DE; Ocean City, MD, and Bristol, Lynchburg and Newport News, VA.

These improvements could pave the way for exciting future transportation options, including opportunities for true high-speed rail, a premium service with high appeal for business travelers that will further enhance economic competitiveness in the Northeast. [➤](#)

STRENGTHENING CONNECTING SERVICES

The Business Alliance for Northern Mobility is working to develop a shared vision for the expansion of the Northeast Corridor and its local feeder networks, with the long-term goal of greatly strengthening connecting rail services.



The
**Business
Alliance**
for **Northeast
Mobility**

**The Business
Alliance for
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**About the Business Alliance for Northeast
Mobility**

The Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility is a coalition of more than 30 of the Northeast's leading business and civic groups, established to promote improved transportation links in the Northeast megaregion—an interconnected network of metropolitan regions stretching from Portland, ME to Richmond, VA. The Alliance seeks to bring the region's political and intellectual resources together to address the threat to future economic growth posed by the deterioration of aging infrastructure and worsening congestion.

Business Alliance Members

Mark Schweiker, *Chair*
Robert Yaro, *Vice-Chair*
A Better City
American Institute of Architects, NY Chapter
The Boston Foundation
The Business Council of Fairfield County
The Business Council of New York State
The BWI Business Partnership, Inc.
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Staten Island Chamber of Commerce
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