



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

February 1, 2011

The Honorable Sherman Packard, Chairman
N.H. House of Representatives
Transportation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 203
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: House Bill 218 – repealing the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Dear Chairman Packard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Department of Environmental Services (DES) regarding HB 218, repealing the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority. The Rail Authority was established to facilitate development of commuter and passenger rail service in New Hampshire. While DES has not been actively involved in the work of the Rail Authority, we are aware, through our relationships with the regional planning commissions and other state agencies, that the Rail Authority has provided a beneficial public forum at which to fully vet issues associated with the future of passenger rail in New Hampshire.

Motor vehicles travel over 42 million miles daily on New Hampshire roadways. Many New Hampshire residents commute daily to their jobs in Massachusetts and over the past decade the number of miles driven by commuters has increased dramatically. Reducing the number of vehicles making that commute by developing transportation alternatives, such as passenger rail and increased bus service, will alleviate congestion on New Hampshire's highways, save commuters money (particularly as we head, once again, toward \$4 per gallon gasoline), and reduce air pollution that negatively impacts the quality of life in the state.

A multi-modal approach to transportation will be more effective at reducing single-occupant vehicle travel and thereby reducing congestion. In New Hampshire, the success of Amtrak's Downeaster service on the Seacoast, in conjunction with expanded bus service, has shown that a multi-modal approach is complementary and synergistic, resulting in greater ridership on both services. The work underway by the Rail Authority can provide the State with valuable information necessary to fully evaluate all multi-modal options and determine if this approach is likely to be successful in other parts of the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HB 218. Should you have further questions or need additional information please feel free to contact Robert R. Scott, Director, Air Resources Division (271-1088, robert.scott@des.nh.gov) or Rebecca Ohler, Transportation and Energy Programs Manager (271-6749, rebecca.ohler@des.nh.gov) of his staff.

Sincerely,

 Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: HB 218 sponsors
Peter Burling, Chair, NHRTA