



The State of New Hampshire  
**Department of Environmental Services**



**Clark B. Freise, Assistant Commissioner**

January 25, 2017

The Honorable Steven Smith  
Chair, House Transportation Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 203  
Concord, NH 03301

**Re: House Bill 267 – An Act repealing the rail transit authority**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) regarding House Bill 267, repealing the New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority (NHRTA). NHDES opposes this bill.

The NHRTA was established in 2007<sup>1</sup> to encourage and oversee the redevelopment of passenger rail services throughout New Hampshire with an initial emphasis on the New Hampshire Capitol Corridor project to connect communities from Concord south to major employers in Massachusetts. Motor vehicles travel approximately 40 million miles on New Hampshire roadways every day, and are the largest source of air pollution in the state, contributing to local and regional ground level ozone (smog) and other pollutants. Increased use of passenger rail by New Hampshire commuters would result in air quality benefits throughout the state. Toward that end, the NHRTA has provided a beneficial public forum in which to fully vet issues associated with the future of passenger rail in New Hampshire. In concert with evaluation of passenger rail comes the added benefit of gaining the information necessary to improve the movement of freight by rail as well, thus offering our businesses a lower cost, and lower emission, form of freight movement versus on-road trucks.

A multi-modal approach to transportation is 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 recommendations of the New Hampshire State Rail Plan<sup>2</sup> support development of a multi-modal transportation approach, including implementation of the recommendations of the New Hampshire Capitol Corridor Study for passenger rail service. The work underway by the NHRTA, funded entirely with federal and other non-state dollars, is vital to the development of multi-modal transportation options in New Hampshire. If the NHRTA is abolished, progress made on the NH Capitol Corridor project and other rail

---

<sup>1</sup> Revised Statutes Annotated Chapter 238-A

<sup>2</sup> New Hampshire State Rail Plan, 2012 - <https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/aerorailtransit/railandtransit/rail-plan.htm>

[www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)

29 Hazen Drive • PO Box 95 • Concord, NH 03302-0095  
(603) 271-3503 • TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

initiatives will likely be lost. We encourage the committee to allow the NHRTA to continue their work.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HB 267. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact either Craig A. Wright, Director, Air Resources Division (271-1088, [craig.wright@des.nh.gov](mailto:craig.wright@des.nh.gov) or Rebecca Ohler, Administrator, Technical Services Bureau (271-6749, [rebecca.ohler@des.nh.gov](mailto:rebecca.ohler@des.nh.gov)).

Sincerely,



Clark B. Freise  
Assistant Commissioner

cc: HB 267 sponsors: Rep. Kurk