

Maine State Rail Plan

Rail Advisory Committee Meeting #2

9:30-11 AM ET, 6/30/2022

Attendance

- *SRP PM and Technical Team: Nate Howard, Nate Moulton, Andreas Aeppli, Lisa Destro, Leah Pickett, Patricia Quinn*
- *Railroads: Arielle Giordano, Robert Rohauer, Steve Corcoran, Jonathan LaBonte, Maruice O'Connell, Charles Hunter,*
- *Regional Planning: Sara Devlin, Jennifer Williams*
- *Economic Development: Jay Kamm, Wade Merritt*
- *Trade and Industry: Tony Cameron, Dana Doran, Maria Fuentes, Brian Parke*
- *State Agency: Lana LaPlant-Ellis, Lynne Cayting*
- *Federal Agency: Rachel LeVee*

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Update on State Rail Plan Technical Activities
- Overview of Existing Conditions of the Rail System
- Stakeholder Outreach Overview and Findings
- Discussion and Input on Needs and Opportunities
- Next Steps

Meeting Notes

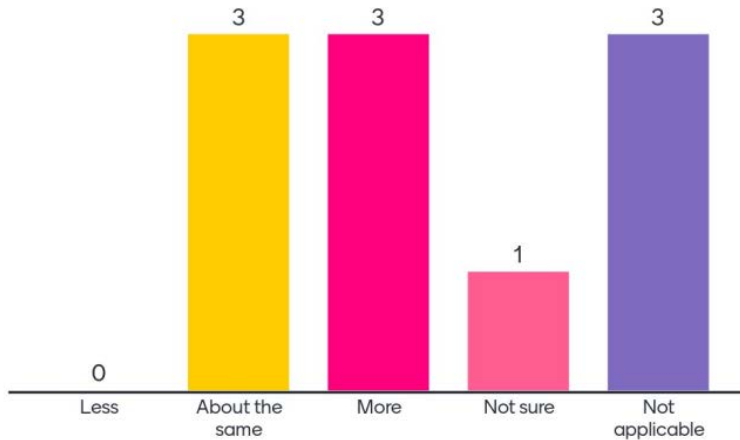
- **Welcome and Introductions**
 - *Nate Howard* (MaineDOT) – opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.
 - MaineDOT, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), Cambridge Systematics (CS), RAC Members provided introductions via webcam.
- **Update on State Rail Plan Technical Activities**
 - *Lisa Destro* (CS) provided a status update on the state rail plan tasks, scope and schedule.

- **Overview of Existing Conditions of the Rail System**

- Rail System Use: Passenger and Freight Rail Profiles
 - *Andreas Aeppli* (CS) presented on Downeaster current and historical trends (pre/post COVID19) on total and station ridership, OTP, and financial performance. Additionally commodity flow industry profiles were presented, as well as the approach and key results from the rail shipper diversity analysis.
 - *Jonathan LaBonte* (re Downeaster ridership data): Trip purpose has become more recreation/leisure and less commute to work?
 - *NNEPRA*: There has been a travel pattern shift – fewer traveling to and from work. Quite an interest in people going to activities in greater Boston area. Lots of people moving around for intermittent appointments (e.g., visiting friends and relatives, medical appointments). Greater number of people using the train now for intermittent travel.
 - *Leah Pickett* (CS) provided an overview of historical and recent rail safety statistics and trends for Maine.
 - *Lisa Destro* (CS) presented on historical and 30-year projected population trends, including aging population, population decline and sluggish growth, and projected growth in southern urbanized areas of the state. Additionally CS provided historical and 2050 projections on employment by industry and county, and presented preliminary results of the rail freight forecast through 2050, including directional split, commodities, trading partners, and regional rail freight generation in Maine.
 - *Jonathan LaBonte*: With respect to population trends, the centuries old county boundaries likely don't provide for an effective planning framework on population changes. I do hope we become a bit more granular if we are looking at passenger service frameworks. What are the goods behind this forecast? Is it just a general multiplier or does the S&P Global provide specificity?
 - *Andreas Aeppli*: For the passenger rail ridership modeling we typically are working with Census tracts or community-level populations for these reasons.
 - *Lisa Destro*: S&P Global provided the freight forecast. County-to-county commodity shipments are forecast at the four-digit STCC commodity code level by leveraging proprietary services from within S&P Global: U.S. Macroeconomic Service, U.S. Agricultural Service, Energy Service, Automotive Service, World Trade Service, Business Transactions Matrix (BTM contains forecasts of the BEA's I/O tables), and Business Markets Insights provide key inputs into their forecast process.
 - *Jonathan LaBonte*: Lewiston Auburn to Portland study is underway. The demographic and housing info they had was outdated, particularly around housing. Wants to make sure these things are aligned – the world in 2019 is very different from the world in 2022.
 - *Dana Doran*: What is the source or revelation around such big growth in the forest products industry referenced on the last slide?
 - *Lisa Destro*: Has to do with shifts in the pulp and paper industry. The industry is now producing/shipping a lot of cardboard.

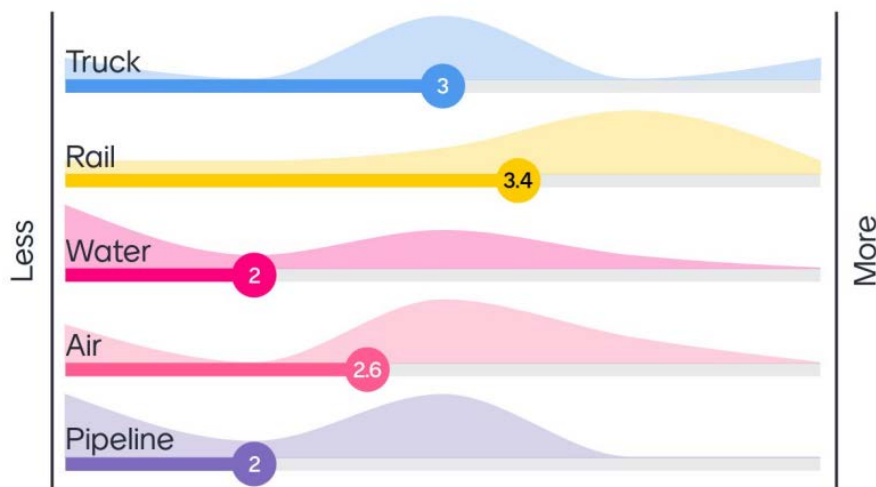
- *Andreas Aeppli*: National or global demand drives this given how the S&P macroeconomic model works. Supply and demand on both a national and local scale.

Figure 1 Poll: How much volume do you project your industry/business/region will be shipping by rail in Maine over the next 10 years?



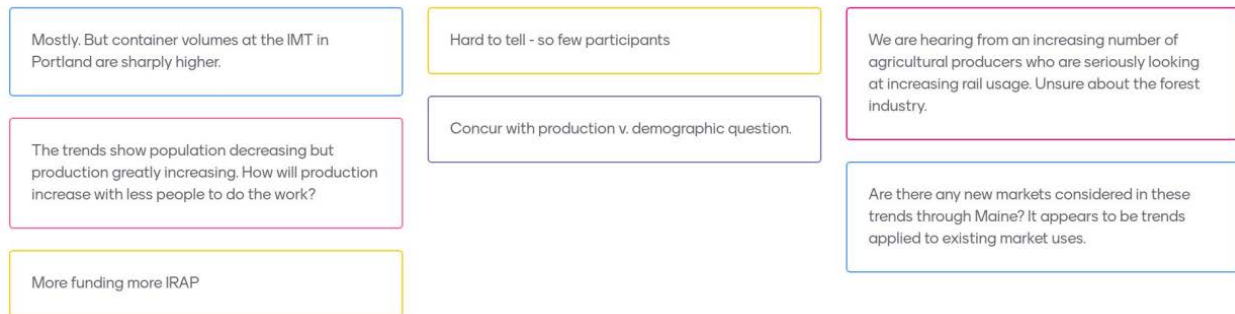
Zero respondents anticipated that their industry, business, or region would be shipping less by rail in the coming decade, though equal numbers (3 each) reported thinking that this volume would remain “about the same” or be “more.”

Figure 2 Poll: Do you see a change in what transportation modes your business/industry/region uses in the future?



Respondents anticipated the growth in their business, industry, or region’s use of rail compared to other modes, with truck usage remaining approximately the same. Respondents indicated an expectation that pipeline, water, and air transportation would decline somewhat in use in the future.

Figure 3 Poll: Do these trends make sense to you? How so?



This question was intended to gauge participants' response to the trends offered in the existing conditions assessment. One response indicated agreement on "the production vs. demographic question," while another questioned the premise of "production increasing with fewer people to do the work." Others indicated several additional trends including:

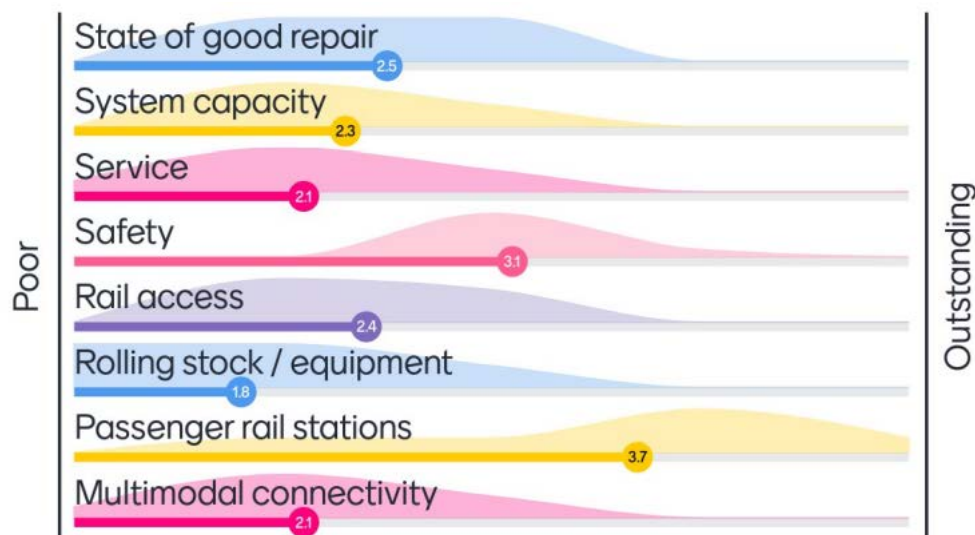
- The need for more funding (IRAP).
- Container volumes at the IMT in Portland being sharply higher.
- Agricultural producers looking seriously at increased rail system usage.
- Consideration of new markets; the trends discussed focus on existing market uses.

• Stakeholder Outreach Overview and Findings

- *Leah Pickett and Lisa Destro* (CS) provided an overview of the outreach activities conducted to date and some of the key findings from the stakeholder engagement efforts with respect to industry trends, needs/issues, and opportunities

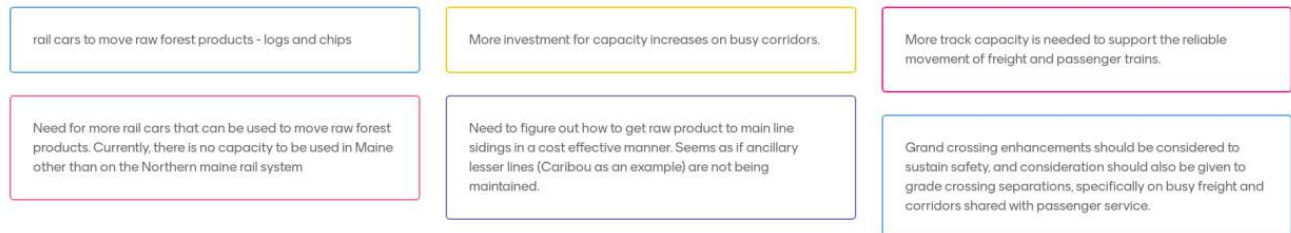
• Discussion and Input on Needs and Opportunities

Figure 4 Poll: How is the rail system and rail service performing?



Participants expressed passenger rail stations to be performing at above average, with safety the second top performer with average performance. Rolling stock/equipment garnered the lowest rating of 1.8, reflecting comments received in open-ended questions and in discussion. Other areas with below average performance ratings were service, multimodal connectivity, system capacity, and state of good repair.

Figure 5 Poll: Please specify rail needs and/or opportunities



Answers highlighted needs for more rail cars to move raw forest products (e.g., logs and chips); investment for capacity increases on busy corridors; track capacity to support the reliable movement of freight and passenger trains; determining how to get raw product to main line sidings in a cost-effective manner; and grade crossing enhancements, including potential grade crossing separations.

We need your input! Link was provided to ArcGIS online map tool to collect input on the rail system needs/opportunities through July 31: [Maine Rail System Stakeholder Comments \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com).

• Next Steps

- *Lisa Destro* (CS) summarized the next steps in the plan development through the end of the year.
- Reach out to *Nate Howard* (MaineDOT) and/or *Lisa Destro* (CS) or if you have any additional questions or comments.

Next RAC Meeting – Fall 2022