



DRAFT: Alternative 6b – Local Commuter Rail Service

Operated by Amtrak and managed by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, the current commuter rail service in Maine is the Downeaster. Commuter rail service in the region is provided from Portland south to Boston and from Portland north to Freeport/Brunswick. However, opportunities exist to establish local commuter rail service that can run along existing or previously operated rail lines. Based on current projects and studies, the following local new routes were analyzed as part of this alternative:

- **Alternative 6b-1: New Commuter Rail Service: Mountain Division** with local service from the Portland Transportation Center to Westbrook utilizing the Mountain Division rail line;
- **Alternative 6b-2: New Commuter Rail service: West Falmouth** with local service from the Portland Transportation Center to the Exit 53 area in West Falmouth utilizing the existing Pan Am rail line ; and
- **Alternative 6b-3: New Commuter Rail Service: Biddeford/Saco** with service from the Portland Transportation Center to Biddeford and Saco utilizing existing Amtrak rail.

In this alternative, the rail system will be evaluated to determine the effects of:

- Commuter rail ridership associated with the rail line extensions mentioned above and practicable system improvements including more available parking and track improvements; and
- Change in vehicular demand on the Maine Turnpike in the Portland Area.

Findings: New commuter rail service as defined for this alternative yielded a substantial increase in rail ridership. This is summarized by each commuter rail line as follows:

- Portland to Westbrook via Mountain Division (**Alternative 6b-1**) – approximately 356 riders per weekday.
- Portland to West Falmouth (**Alternative 6b-2**) – approximately 82 riders per weekday; and
- Portland to Biddeford (**Alternative 6b-3**) – approximately 35 riders per weekday

The estimated total number of vehicles that could be reduced from the peak hour traffic on the Maine Turnpike in the Portland area with new and expanded commuter rail service is 55 – about 2% of the peak hour traffic between Exits 46 and 47. With this reduction, the volume to capacity ratio would still be greater than one in 2040 (1.35). Therefore, this alternative does not address identified capacity issues on the Maine Turnpike.

This alternative was evaluated against several Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs), which are summarized in the Alternatives Evaluation Matrix dated May 31, 2018. The key findings from that matrix for this alternative are as follows:

Key Benefits: The key benefits of Alternative 6b – Local Commuter Rail Service - are the following:

- Anticipated crash rate reduction of 1.0% on the Maine Turnpike;
- An expected reduction of approximately 55 vehicles during the peak hour;
- 0.4% reduction in regional vehicle mile traveled (VMT);
- 0.3% reduction in regional vehicle hours traveled (VHT);
- 47% increase in transit ridership; and

Key Impacts: The key impacts and challenges of Alternative 6b – Local Commuter Rail Service - are the following:

- A volume to capacity ratio (v/c) that is still greater than one (1.35) on the Maine Turnpike;
- Potential wetland impacts; and
- Potential for lost revenue on Maine Turnpike.