



## Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce Opposition to HB 100

January 27, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Milz and Members of the House Public Works and Highways Committee:

My name is Wendy Hunt, President and CEO of the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce. Our Chamber has consistently and strongly gone on record in support of the Capital Corridor Project, and I am here today to emphasize our continued support for rail expansion of the Nashua-Manchester corridor in New Hampshire. The Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce represents over 450+ businesses across Southern New Hampshire that employ thousands of our state's residents and generate hundreds of millions in economic activity.

The Nashua-Manchester corridor serves as the economic backbone of our entire state; as goes the economic output of our region, so goes the rest of New Hampshire. Therefore, economic growth along the Nashua-Manchester corridor is important to the overall growth of our entire state's economy. The NH Capitol Corridor rail project has the potential to have a transformative impact on New Hampshire's economy by positively impacting the Nashua-Manchester corridor.

We hear consistently from our business members that they want rail expansion and that it is vital to the Southern tier of the state. During the 2022 legislative session, an identical bill to HB 100, HB 1432, died. During the 2023 legislative session, an identical bill to HB 100 went to Interim Study, where this committee's 15-0 decision was that the bill NOT be considered for future legislation because, as stated, "The committee avoids appropriating transportation funds outside of the Ten-Year Transportation Plan

Here's why we believe this NH Capitol Corridor Project is so critical, and why we are in opposition to HB 100:

- NH is aging –population-wise we are one of the oldest states in the country. This means a smaller workforce as workers retire, and increased pressure as businesses look to hire and retain employees in the years to come.

- We need to attract new, younger employees into our State so our businesses and our economy can continue to prosper and grow. As we look at those younger employees we want to attract, public transportation is one of the most important factors to them. In fact, people under 30 are far more likely to ride public transportation and to express positive feelings about it than older people, regardless of what part of the country they live in or what kind of neighborhood they grew up in.

- Opening up the possibility of train travel from New Hampshire to other states in the Northeast and beyond is highly attractive to the younger demographic we are trying to retain and attract to our workforce needs.

- When we think of cross-state employment, we always think of NH residents commuting into Boston for jobs, and not vice versa. In Merrimack Valley, Massachusetts, there is much higher unemployment than in NH. The Greater Nashua area has thousands of unfilled jobs in manufacturing, healthcare, construction and other industries. Rail expansion into Southern NH from Massachusetts has the potential to bring thousands of daily commuters each day into our state to fill those jobs.

- Finally, on the NH Department of Transportation's Rail and Transit page, it states, "The state is the largest railroad owner with over 200 miles of active line, purchased to preserve freight service industry or promote tourism and economic development."

- Now let's talk about the specifics as to why HB 100 "Prohibiting the use of state funds for new passenger rail projects" should not be enacted:

- The current Project Development Phase (PDP) of the Capitol Corridor Project report has not been released to date, and even though it is only approximately 80% complete it will answer many of the cost questions requested by the Legislature including "how to pay for the project," engineering, environmental and other vital information;

- As written, the "No state funds" language of HB100 applies to *all* passenger rail projects and could negatively impact the Downeaster and Vermonter Amtrak routes;

- HB 100 may be in violation of the November 16, 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, and other US DOT regulations due to its singular focus on one mode of transportation;

- It limits the ability of future legislators to provide passenger rail transportation as an option to the citizens of New Hampshire (NH) and enacting legislation that limits or impacts future legislative efforts is generally bad policy.

On behalf of the 450+ businesses and the thousands of their employees that we represent, we ask that this committee recommend that HB 100 be found "Inexpedient to Legislate." Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy Hunt". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed contact information.

Wendy Hunt, President & CEO  
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