

# Report: impact of train service coming to town

Daniel Jackson | Posted: Monday, June 11, 2012 10:05 am

The Federal Train Administration expects improved train service in Berlin to economically revitalize the downtown and alleviate some the state's future transportation needs. Except for increased noise in the area of Four Rod Road, the Federal Train Administration expects few adverse environmental impacts in Berlin, according to a report released last month.

"Increased human activity (such as pedestrian circulation) associated with a rail station can create a positive economic climate within which businesses want to locate," read the Environmental Impact Report. "Such development and redevelopment can be expected to be stimulated in the vicinity of new or significantly upgraded station locations."

Designers of the rail line plan on installing another line of track through Berlin to create a double track which will carry more trains. These trains will travel at speeds of 100 miles per hour through town and stop at the modernized and renovated Berlin Train Station.

Today, six to eight round-trip trains stop in Berlin a day, traveling 80 mph through town. By 2030, the designers expect the number trains passing through Berlin to triple or quadruple. Plans estimate the line will be finished 2016.

"The train is already here. It's just going to be more service," Berlin's Economic Development Director Jim Mahoney said, noting that the town has been working on several large projects in the downtown to prepare for the train.

Mahoney said the town has received several grants to redevelop several Brownfield sites in and around the downtown. As part of the project, the town has been trying to relocate the police station to Farmington Avenue, mere blocks from the train station.

John Bernick, CTDOT's project manager for the rail line, said the Berlin train station is an important stop along the NHHS line. The station serves many people from the surrounding area. It is also one of the few stations with a ticket operator manning a booth.

He said the plans to add a second track to the line is nothing new—a second track used to exist but was taken out.

The increased service will drive people to the area and could make a large, positive impact on the town, he said, attracting developers.

"You're going to find people that are going to make a decision to live near that station," Bernick said.

The town of Enfield has applied for grants to revitalize the area in which their station might be built. Enfield is one of the four towns that might have a station built with the new line coming in, but

Bernick doesn't know if he can find the money to build additional stations.

A vision for improved rail service in the nation began with President Obama in 2009. In response to the downturn in the economy, he wanted to improve the nation's rail lines with stimulus funds. His goal was to do to passenger rail what Eisenhower did to the superhighway.

"We also have to build a new foundation for our future growth," Obama said in 2009. "Today, our aging system of highways and byways, air routes and rail lines is hindering that growth. Our highways are clogged with traffic, costing us \$80 billion a year in lost productivity and wasted fuel. Our airports are choked with increased loads. We're at the mercy of fluctuating gas prices all too often; we pump too many greenhouse gasses into the air."

Other countries installed high speed rails with great success, he said. Countries like France connected small towns, jumpstarted growth and "remade quiet towns into thriving tourist destinations."

"Imagine whisking through towns as speeds over 100 miles an hour, walking only a few steps to public transportation, and ending up just blocks from your destination," he said.

The train running through Berlin is a spur off the busiest rail line in the nation, the Northeast Corridor. The Connecticut Department of Transportation said the commuter train shipped 38 million riders from New Haven to New York City last year--a new record.

The NHHS rail would feed into that line and Amtrak plans on extending the line from Springfield north, to Boston and as far as Montreal, Canada.

Three public hearings have been scheduled to hear from citizens about the impacts of the rail line and public comments about the proposed line will be taken until June 22.

The first will be held tonight, June 7 at 7:00 p.m., at Torp Theatre, Davidson Hall at the Central Connecticut State University.

The second is scheduled for June 13 at Asnuntuck Community College, Enfield, and the third for June 14 at North Haven High School, North Haven.

The project is also receiving comments through the project's website, [ww.nhhsrail.org](http://ww.nhhsrail.org).