

REGIONAL RAIL NEWS

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PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY ANALYSIS VALIDATES CORRIDORone REGIONAL RAIL PROJECT

Cumberland County Public Perception Survey Findings Support Rationale for Regional Rail

HARRISBURG, Pa. (June 8, 2005) — Pennsylvania State University's (PSU) Pennsylvania Transportation Institute (PTI) study validates the CORRIDORone planning process — affirming that the project is systematic and based on sound methodology. The conclusion is based on PTI's third-party analysis conducted for Modern Transit Partnership (MTP) and the Community Action Commission to determine the viability of a regional rail system in southcentral Pennsylvania.

According to Dr. Evelyn Thomchick, associate professor of supply chain management, PSU, and faculty associate, PTI, "Our assessment confirms that the research and studies conducted by MTP over the last 10 years are appropriate for CORRIDORone and are compliant with federal requirements." PTI is an interdisciplinary transportation research organization that is part of PSU.

Thomchick and a team of five researchers — all of whom are faculty members at PSU — conducted the third-party analysis from September 2004 to April 2005. The analysis included review and critique of reports and data conducted and compiled for the CORRIDORone project; literature review on regional transportation planning with an emphasis on regional rail transit; development of a white paper on regional transportation planning and regional rail transit; and discussion of the proposed benefits and costs of the CORRIDORone rail transit project.

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“CORRIDORone provides an alternative passenger mode of transportation consistent with federal and state policy directions,” Thomchick said. “With rail transit as an option, the region can benefit from a slower rate of increase in highway congestion.”

The team’s analysis also found rail to be more efficient and cost-effective than bus rapid transit.

“Because of the existing rail infrastructure and rights-of-way, the cost of CORRIDORone is still modest relative to the costs of acquiring rights-of-way and building completely new infrastructure,” Thomchick added. “Use of existing rail rights-of-way between Harrisburg, Hampden/Sporting Hill and Carlisle can be modified to accommodate passenger service operation throughout its entire length and more quickly than if a bus rapid transit infrastructure option were selected.”

Other key observations and conclusions from the analysis include:

- CORRIDORone will realize the benefits of rail transit systems, including managed growth; a slower rate of increase in highway congestion; improved transportation safety and energy-efficiency; and improved air quality from reduced auto emissions.
- CORRIDORone will encourage economic development and improve quality of life in the southcentral Pennsylvania region by improving overall mobility, promoting transit-oriented development and making the region an attractive place for businesses and residents.
- The number and location of the 11 proposed rail station stops from Hampden/Sporting Hill to Harrisburg to Lancaster are appropriate.

“We are delighted that CORRIDORone planning has been independently validated by PTI’s highly qualified and respected experts,” Capital Area Transit (CAT) Board Chairman Dick Miller said. “The PTI team affirms that CORRIDORone will serve as a vital resource to support expected long-term growth and transit management.”

To further gauge the level of Cumberland County residents’ awareness of and support for regional rail, Messiah College and Shippensburg University student volunteers conducted an informal public perception survey in Cumberland County. A total of 525 surveys were completed in Cumberland County mall and retail store locations. The survey findings parallel the public opinion consistently expressed through previous surveys and community input sessions held throughout the CORRIDORone region.

The percentage of survey respondents “very likely” to use rail for business commuting is nearly 10 times the national and state averages of those using rail as a primary means of transportation to and from work.* Safety, longer commuting times and lack of alternative transportation choices are residents’ top three concerns regarding traffic congestion. Finally, more than 87 percent of survey participants believe that reducing traffic should be a priority for elected officials.

“The public perception survey findings demonstrate Cumberland County residents’ continued support for implementing regional rail,” Modern Transit Partnership President John Ward said. “Most residents agree when rail is here, they will ride it for business and/or leisure travel.”

CORRIDORone represents the initial leg of a regional rail system in southcentral Pennsylvania. Trains will run between Cumberland County — through Harrisburg — and Lancaster County, with 11 rail station stops. The CORRIDORone regional rail system will use existing freight and passenger tracks in the area, and passenger trains similar to those used by AMTRAK. Service between Harrisburg and Lancaster is slated to begin in 2008, with Hampden/Sporting Hill to Harrisburg service to follow in 2009.

The MTP is a non-profit organization that serves as the leading advocate, facilitator, promoter and visionary for regional, integrated, multi-modal transit featuring regional rail. Launched in 1997 by the Capital Area Transit board of directors, this partnership is made up of business, community and government leaders who are striving to develop a regional congestion management plan that will meet tomorrow’s transportation and infrastructure needs in southcentral Pennsylvania. CAT is the Cumberland-Dauphin-Harrisburg Transit Authority, providing public transportation with 28 bus routes and 17 park-and-ride locations throughout the region. CAT also provides paratransit service to citizens of Dauphin County.

For more information about CORRIDORone, visit www.corridorone.info.

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* Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000 Census; MTP Cumberland County Perception Survey