



THE PROVIDENCE
FOUNDATION

GREATER
PROVIDENCE
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

February 3, 2016

Rebecca Reyes-Alicea
NEC Future
U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration
One Bowling Green, Suite 429
New York, NY 10004

Dear Ms. Reyes-Alicea:

Enclosed please find the statement, regarding the Tier 1 Draft EIS, of The Providence Foundation and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.

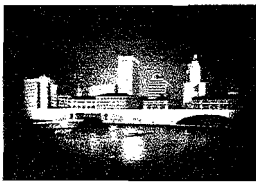
We have submitted the identical statement electronically to comment@necfuture.com.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

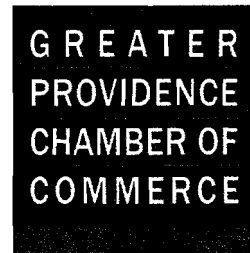
Sincerely,

Daniel A. Baudouin
Executive Director
The Providence Foundation

Janet Raymond
Senior VP of Economic Development
Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce



THE PROVIDENCE
FOUNDATION



STATEMENT

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

The Providence Foundation and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce appreciate this opportunity to support the efforts of the Federal Rail Administration to improve and upgrade the Northeast Rail Corridor.

The Providence Foundation is a private sector, not-for-profit organization whose core purpose is *“to create an environment that is conducive to growth and sustained investment making Providence, particularly downtown, the premier mid-size city in the country.”* The Foundation is supported by 140 leading companies and institutions.

The Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce is Rhode Island’s leading chamber of commerce with over 1,500 business members.

The Foundation and the Chamber are in support of the following:

1. More frequent regional and Acela Amtrak service.
2. New dedicated tracks for true high-speed rail along the corridor. The high speed rail should serve downtown Providence, one of the busiest stations in the Northeast Corridor, with the new high speed rail service between Boston and New York. **Regardless of the selected alternative, Providence should be the major station that accommodates all high speed rail service between New York and Boston because of the high, growing demand in Providence.**
3. More reliable, frequent and faster commuter service between Providence and Boston.
4. Short-term improvements to improve and enhance tracks and service between Providence and Boston should be a priority.
5. Table 7, NEC Population Forecasts and Table 8, NEC employment forecasts seriously underestimate population and jobs for the Providence area. The 2014 Census states that the Providence MSA has a population of 1,300,000. If we were to include New Bedford area, the population is about 1,600,000. Combining Providence MSA and New Bedford follows the same principle as combining Hartford with Springfield on the tables; both cities are about 30 miles apart. Similarly, the jobs figure on Table 8 should be about 649,000 including New Bedford.
6. Unrestricted freight service along the corridor. In Rhode Island, there are 43 customers employing 5,700 people that use rail for freight services.
7. The expansion or possibly the construction of a new train station in downtown Providence to accommodate the expected significant increase in ridership in the next several decades. The new and expanded station should be an intermodal transportation center served by local buses, and interstate buses, and trolleys and bicycles.
8. The covering of the tracks from the existing station to Smith Street should be evaluated and incorporated. The covering of these tracks are part of the long standing Capital Center District Plan for which the train station is a part.

The downtown Providence station is Amtrak’s 15th busiest nationwide and together with MBTA accommodates more than 1,000,000 travelers a year. This is partially due to the increase in the number of jobs, residences, hotels, universities, and commercial space within walking distances. As downtown continues to develop, train station usage will increase.