

[<<Back](#)



A new commuter rail service may be headed toward Springfield

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SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (WWLP) The state of Connecticut is moving ahead with a commuter rail line starting in New Haven and ending in Enfield. There are plans to extend the line right into Springfield, if the public and state leaders support it.

Connecticut has invested \$140 million on the line so far. But Massachusetts lawmakers have yet to approve the \$30 million expenditure to bring the line in and out of Springfield.

Rebecca Townsend is urging support for the New Haven Hartford Springfield (NHHS) rail link. She is collecting signatures and attending events trying to move the project forward. "The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission estimated conservatively it would bring in \$154 million in new economic activity to the Greater Springfield region for the next ten years," said Townsend.

Amtrak trains currently travel the same proposed route. They charge \$48 one way from Springfield to New Haven. Peter Pan Bus lines charge \$23. The cost for the rail line is projected to be \$9.50.

Bob Schwarz, spokesman of the Peter Pan Bus lines, said taxpayers shouldn't favor the project. He said they will ultimately pay the price.

"It looks like it's going to be about \$28 a ticket subsidized and that means only ten per cent of the fare is being paid for by the fare box that means 90 percent is being paid for by the taxpayer," said Schwarz.

But supporters said the government subsidizes the roads we drive to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. They said the money to bring the line to Springfield is a bargain.

There is an odd feature of the plan as it is being developed. Even if Massachusetts does not agree to spend the money to bring the line to Springfield, the trains are coming here anyway. That means they will be making the trek to and from Springfield, but no one would be able to get on or off.

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