

MAKING THE CONNECTION

MOVING FORWARD ON REGIONAL RAIL

The Case for Regional Rail

presented by

IRUM *The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc.*



4

4 passenger railroads

3

Serving 3 States

2

Operating from 2 great stations

1

Can be forged into 1 regional rail network

FOUR RAILWAY OPERATORS – Amtrak, plus the LIRR, Metro-North and NJ Transit commuter rail lines – host a network of priceless, but underperforming assets for regional mobility. **THREE STATES** - (Connecticut, New York, New Jersey) - that provide funding to operate and preserve these lines, are guided by their own needs and perspectives, and find it difficult to reach a consensus on common plans to make better use of these railway lines. **TWO GREAT RAILWAY STATIONS** in Manhattan, one splendidly restored and the other soon to be, are the hubs of these rail lines, yet traveling between them is a real challenge. **ONE COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL RAIL SYSTEM**, operated in a way that reaches a host of new travel markets, could ease the burden on the region's overcrowded highways, bridges and tunnels. To make this work a new mindset must be put into place that extends beyond the current focus of these rail lines, which they do reasonably well, of carrying suburban commuters to the Manhattan business district.

Advocates for better transit, reduced car use and more sustainable and economically viable development call this expanded mission Regional Rail. Key features are more frequent service, fully integrated fares and thru running.

FREQUENT SERVICE is critical to attracting riders who now choose to drive, or who avoid traveling to denser parts of the region. When intervals between trains drop to 20 minutes or less, passengers can avoid consulting timetables and just head to the station. This should be the standard for all main routes. On the very busiest lines, ten minute headways are desirable.

INTEGRATED FARES permit travelers to choose the routes that are in their best interest. When MTA permitted travelers in New York City to use buses and subways without paying a second fare, ridership skyrocketed. Further increases occurred with the introduction of unlimited ride passes. Similar gains can be expected if city residents could use regional rail lines, and if suburban riders could transfer to buses and subways without paying extra fares.

THRU RUNNING AT MAJOR STATIONS avoids conflicts between arriving and departing trains, increasing capacity and improving efficiency. Thru running could begin quickly at Penn Station, where the layout already permits this operation. Making a connection between existing platforms and tracks at Penn Station and Grand Central, and operating trains from the new Hudson River rail tunnel through this link, will not only facilitate train flow, it opens a wealth of new travel opportunities.