ALLEGHENY VALLEY RAILROAD PASSENGER FEASIBILITY STUDY SUMMARY

The Allegheny Valley Railroad (AVR) is a shortline freight railroad located between the Strip District in the City of Pittsburgh and the City of Arnold in Westmoreland County. Given its nighttime operations, the AVR presents an opportunity to provide commuter passenger service in the corridor. The *AVR Passenger Feasibility Study* investigated the market potential of a commuter service, assessed track conditions for operating commuter rail, proposed station locations, estimated capital and operating costs for implementing the service, projected potential passenger fare revenue, and evaluated management structures, among others.

Alternatives

The study reviewed three options for providing commuter rail services, including the following:

- **AVR1:** Provide commuter rail service along the entire length of the AVR line from Arnold to the Strip District. This alternative would require operating a shuttle bus from approximately 16th Street in the Strip District to the heart of Downtown Pittsburgh.

- **AVR2:** Provide commuter rail on AVR track from Arnold to the junction with the Brilliant Branch (near Washington Boulevard and Allegheny River Boulevard). The train would follow the Brilliant Branch south to the junction with the Norfolk Southern line (near Fifth Avenue and Frankstown Road). It would operate over the Norfolk Southern line for the remainder of the trip into downtown Pittsburgh. The alternative requires less improvement to the AVR trackage, however, it would require the cooperation of Norfolk Southern in allowing AVR trains to operate on their mainline and receive dispatching priority in order to operate the commuter rail on time.

- **AVR3:** The third alternative proposed to operate commuter rail on AVR track from Arnold to the Brilliant Branch and the train would use the Brilliant Branch to travel to the junction with the East Busway near East Liberty. There, passengers would be required to transfer to the East Busway to complete their trip to downtown Pittsburgh. This alternative also requires less rehabilitation of AVR track but it requires a transfer to bus. A transfer to the East Busway could be difficult given the current configuration of the East Busway at that location.

The feasibility study also reviewed opportunities for operating an excursion service on the AVR line.

The following table shows the projected ridership, revenue, operating costs, and capital expenses for the commuter rail and excursion service alternatives.

Conclusion

The feasibility study found that with a capital investment of between $7.5 million and $17 million, a commuter service could be feasible. It noted that alternatives AVR1 and AVR2 would both generate enough revenue to cover operating and maintenance expenses. However, it identified an number of issues that must be further reviewed and assessed prior to moving forward with implementing commuter rail in the Allegheny Valley including:

- Discuss with Norfolk Southern and others to investigate the practicality of using the NS mainline for access to the AMTRAK Station at 11th Street.
- Refine analysis of ridership potential, including relationships with Port Authority bus routes.
- Conduct a more detailed study of the prospects of extending the AVR to 16th Street in the Strip District.
- Investigate equipment availability and cost.
- Refine certain operating cost estimates.
- Coordinate with affected communities and conduct public involvement.
- Make decisions regarding project sponsorship and the provision of funding for capital improvements.

AVR Alternatives Comparison Table

Annual Values	Commuter Alternative One	Commuter Alternative Two	Commuter Alternative Three	Excursion Service	Commuter Alt. One + Excursion
Ridership	**700,000**	**600,000**	**300,000**	**65,000**	**765,000**
Revenue					
Passenger Revenue	$1,319,600	$1,276,700	$385,000	$433,900	$1,753,500
Other Revenue				$228,500	$228,500
Total Revenue	**$1,319,600**	**$1,276,700**	**$385,000**	**$662,400**	**$1,982,000**
Operating Cost					
Train Operating Cost	$897,200	$887,500	$573,000	$320,700	$1,217,900
Shuttle Van Cost	$350,000	$130,000	$0	$0	$350,000
Trackage Rights Pmts. to AVR	$53,000	$43,700	$43,500	$11,600	$64,600
Trackage Rights Pmts. to NS		$7,000		$0	$0
Amtrak Station Usage Charge		$20,000			
Total Operating Cost	**$1,300,200**	**$1,088,200**	**$616,500**	**$332,300**	**$1,632,500**
Facilities Capital Cost					
Track Rehabilitation Cost	$4,190,000	$2,355,000	$2,355,000	$2,408,000	$4,190,000
Grade Crossing Upgrade	$3,229,000	$1,130,000	$1,130,000	$3,229,000	$3,229,000
Cost of Stations	$1,950,000	$1,050,000	$900,000	$400,000	$1,950,000
Cost of Parking	$4,970,000	$3,050,000	$2,800,000	$500,000	$4,970,000
Passenger Transfer Facility			$500,000	$0	$0
Total Facilities Capital Cost	**$14,339,000**	**$7,585,000**	**$7,685,000**	**$6,537,000**	**$14,339,000**
Equipment Capital Cost					
Locomotives	$675,000	$675,000	$450,000	$450,000	$675,000
Passenger Coaches	$1,982,000	$1,982,000	$1,118,000	$500,000	$1,982,000
Other Equipment	$30,000	$30,000	$20,000	$20,000	$30,000
Total Equipment Capital Cost	**$2,687,000**	**$2,687,000**	**$1,588,000**	**$970,000**	**$2,687,000**
Total Capital Cost	**$17,026,000**	**$10,272,000**	**$9,273,000**	**$7,507,000**	**$17,026,000**
Feasibility: Revenue Minus Operating Cost	**$19,400**	**$188,500**	**($231,500)**	**$330,100**	**$349,500**