

# OneRail

America's future is riding on it.

June 11, 2015

## *OneRail Coalition Panel at NASTO Highlights Rail Public-Private Partnerships*

As part of the OneRail Coalition's mission to raise the visibility of passenger and freight rail, the Coalition sponsored a panel on state/railroad partnerships at the recent meeting of the Northeast Association of State Transportation Officials (NASTO) in Wilmington, Delaware. The focus of the panel was to demonstrate how partnerships between public and private sector entities can provide mutually beneficial outcomes for both public citizens and private railroads.

The panel's first presentation was on a partnership between Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) and the Port of Baltimore. Sam Azzarello, the General Manager for Intermodal Logistics at the Port of Baltimore, and Renee Palin, the Manager of Ports & Development for NS discussed the expansion of on-dock capacity at the Port of Baltimore and the upgrade of key NS bridges, which together support the growing international cargo business flowing in and out of the Port of Baltimore. Azzarello and Palin explained that because of the tremendous size and weight of the goods being shipped, NS bridges needed to be modified to support modern heavy-duty 6-axle locomotives, rail clearances needed to be increased, and capacity needed to be added at the Dundalk Marine Terminal to unload the NS trains. Azzarello and Palin stressed that their ability to work together not only benefits both the Port of Baltimore and NS, but also benefits the shippers by providing more efficient service, the customers by reducing the price of transportation, and the local community by creating more jobs and a more a competitive economic environment.

The second presentation was on a partnership between the New York State DOT and NS on the replacement of NS's historic Portageville Bridge, which crosses over the Genesee River in Letchworth State Park. Ray Hessinger, the Director of the Freight & Passenger Rail Bureau for the NYDOT and Howard Swanson, a Structures Engineer for NS, explained that the bridge is one of the top 10 bottlenecks in New York and how the current bridge's weight restrictions limit NS's ability to serve New York and New England. NYDOT and NS have agreed to a public-private partnership to replace the bridge, involving \$12.5m of state and FHWA CMAQ funding and \$60 million in private investment from NS. Both Hessinger and Swanson stressed the importance of the public-private funding agreement, in which the availability of state and federal funds helped spur the decision to replace the bridge and was the key to getting the project from conception to reality.

Key lessons learned from these projects include the importance of funding partnerships, the importance of clearly understanding the public benefits to be achieved, the private sector's need for an acceptable return on investment, and that investing to improve the freight network benefits a broad range of business and communities.

OneRail is looking forward to sponsoring similar panels at WASHTO (July 20-21 in Boise, ID), SASHTO (August 3-4 in Nashville, TN), MAASTO (August 10-12 in Kansas City, KS), and the Council of State Government's Eastern Regional Conference (August 16-18 in Wilmington, DE).

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