

16. THE COMMISSION AGAIN STRONGLY ENDORSES THE REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION OF THE RAIL LINE EXTENDING THE MIDDLETOWN/ CROMWELL LINE TO HARTFORD (MP 15 TO MP 2.2). THE COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DATE IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT, INCLUDING CONNDOT'S PROVISION OF TIES AND RAIL, AS WELL AS THE REBUILDING OF CERTAIN CROSSINGS ON WHICH IT HAD PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED THE REMOVAL OF TRACK.

A proposal was submitted to ConnDOT to complete the restoration of this line to FRA Class III standards. This proposal provides for joint financial participation by ConnDOT and the Providence and Worcester Railroad Company, the holder of the freight service rights on this line.

The Commission believes that the restoration of this line is an important economic development and transportation initiative. The combination of rail freight service and possible passenger service, either commuter or excursion, makes the restoration of this line a timely investment.

Several alternative schedules have been proposed to accomplish this work, based on the availability of ConnDOT funding and the Providence and Worcester's financial resources. While we cannot comment knowledgably on either of these factors, we recommend that the restoration this line be accomplished in the most expeditious fashion practical.