## ANN ARBOR

## TO <br> TRAVERSE CITY <br> TRAIN STUDY SUMMARY

It's quite a vision-modern passenger rail service connecting Traverse City to Ann Arbor. A rail would strengthen Traverse City's regional economy and stimulate development along the entire route. Trains would take cars off the highways, with the environmental benefits of cleaner air and less fuel consumption. The line would use an existing state-owned asset-railroad tracks-to offer a new transportation option for those of us who live in the Traverse City area and an appealing new way for visitors to travel.

The Northern Michigan Rail Ridership Feasibility and Cost Estimate
Study is a first step to making regular train service a reality. The study is the first formal evaluation of the potential for passenger rail service running on existing state-owned tracks from Traverse City and Petoskey to Ann Arbor.

You can find the full study at a2tc.org.

## KEY FINDINGS

## Ridership Potential Is Strong-and Growing

Visitor numbers for northwest Lower Michigan are growing, and there's potential for a portion of those visitors to travel by train. Currently the region attracts 6 million visitors a year, and that number is growing at 4\% each year. In fact at that rate, by 2040, the number of Traverse City visitors doubles. Nearly half of the trips to the Traverse City and Petoskey region are coming from the metro Detroit area, so the existing visitors could be a good test market. In other words, what if a percentage of those existing visitors could leave their cars at home?

## Train Travel Times Vary With Level of

 Track InvestmentDifferent train speeds will require different levels of track upgrades. Right now, driving a car from Ann Arbor to Traverse City takes about four hours, 40 min utes if you factor in a stop for food and/or bathroom.

- A $60-\mathrm{mph}$ "special event" train line between Traverse City and Ann Arbor-which requires roughly $\$ 40$ million in track repairs-would bring travel times to five hours.
- A $90-\mathrm{mph}$ train would make the trip in 4.5 hours, but would require an additional $\$ 611$ million in track repairs and replacement.

A 110-mph train would require replacing the tracks and cost an additional $\$ 140-\$ 400$ million, but it would cut the trip to just 3.5 hours. The study predicts that faster travel time would boost ridership in a way that revenue would cover the ongoing operational costs.
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Begin with Low-Cost Startup Train Service and Build Gradually
The study team recommends the following next steps:

- Launch "excursion" or special event trains-such as a Cherry Festival or Film Festival train from Ann Arbor to Traverse City or a University of Michigan ootball game train from Petoskey to Ann Arbor-as a low-cost way to quickly get service started. "Excursion trains" are a way to test the market for rail service along the corridor and can build to daily regular service as interest and demand grows.
- Create a nonprofit management structure that would be responsible for developing the operating plans and schedules, fundraising, and promotion.
- Advance a detailed and extensive feasibility study to more accurately predict how the various train speeds and associated ticket costs (higher speed/higher cost) would affect rider numbers.
$60 \mathrm{MPH}, 90 \mathrm{MPH}$, and 110 MPH Options



## KEY STEPS TO BUILDING A TRAIN LINE

## OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS:

- The line would serve several major colleges and universities, including the University of Michigan, Central Michigan University, Baker College, Alma College, Northwestern Michigan College, and North Central Michigan College. Approximately 90,000 students live along the route.
- Organizers should explore extending the line to Detroit and also explore a connection between Williamsburg and Kalkaska.
- Repairs are needed in a few key areas-Traverse City, Cadillac, Petoskey, and some crossings-for $60-\mathrm{mph}$ service
- Planners should look toward 110 -mph service as a long-term goal, and make near-term investments that also build infrastructure for high-speed rail.
- The study found that $110-\mathrm{mph}$ service could cover its operating costs and that its economic benefits would substantially exceed a high-speed rail's capital and operating costs.


## FIND OUT MORE AT A2TC.ORG

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> City of Traverse City
> Traverse City Tourism
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