

# Purpose and Need

This chapter establishes the purpose of, and need for, a new commuter rail station on the New Haven Line in East Bridgeport, between Bridgeport and Stratford, Connecticut. The chapter includes a summary of prior studies and the key transportation issues that support the Build Alternatives.

## Project Purpose

The purpose of the Project is to construct a new commuter rail station to enhance regional access to and from East Bridgeport and support anticipated future growth. Rail service in East Bridgeport would supplement the existing Bridgeport Station's critical role by serving neighborhoods that lack convenient access to the existing station. A station in East Bridgeport would also complement planned transit-oriented development (TOD) by enabling new residents and workers to commute via rail and avoid vehicle use. One of the purposes of the project (which is more "opportunity-driven" than "deficiency-driven") is to allow more flexibility in commuter and intercity rail services on the New Haven Line between New Haven and Stamford (and potentially into Grand Central Terminal). The project is expected to provide the following benefits:

- Enhance service flexibility by enabling express service and permitting two-track local and two-track express service on the mainline;
- Improve access to commuter rail for current and future residents of East Bridgeport;
- Enhance transit access to places of employment in East Bridgeport, including the Bridgeport Hospital and businesses in the Mill Hill, East Side, and East End neighborhoods;
- Support future TOD as envisioned in the *Bridgeport 2020 Master Plan of Conservation and Development* and the *BGreen 2020 Sustainability Plan*; and
- Meet state and regional transportation planning objectives.

## Existing Railway Operations and Infrastructure

Bridgeport is the largest city in the state of Connecticut with approximately 146,680<sup>1</sup> residents, and is supported by one downtown rail station serving both commuter and intercity rail. In contrast, the neighboring Town of Fairfield has less than half the number of residents as Bridgeport<sup>2</sup> but offers three rail stations along the same New Haven Main Line. The City of Norwalk is just over half the size of Bridgeport<sup>3</sup> but offers four rail stations, and various other municipalities in Connecticut<sup>4</sup> provide their residents with access to multiple rail stations to ensure their mobility. The Bridgeport Station is served by the Metro-North Commuter Railroad (MNR) and Shore Line East (SLE) commuter rail trains as well as Amtrak's *Northeast Regional* and *Vermont* intercity routes. The Metro-North Commuter Railroad

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<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey, 2010-2014 5-Year Population Estimate. U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>2</sup> Town of Fairfield 2014 population of 61,347. American Community Survey, 2010-2014 5-Year Population Estimate. U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>3</sup> City of Norwalk 2014 population of 88,145. American Community Survey, 2010-2014 5-Year Population Estimate. U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>4</sup> Town of Greenwich, Town of Westport, City of Milford, City of New Haven, and Town of Wilton

service runs from New Haven (north of Bridgeport), to Grand Central Terminal (GCT) in New York City, NY. The current Bridgeport Station began operation in 1975, and is located in the downtown district.

Bridgeport Station provides access to track platforms on an elevated viaduct. The elevated station waiting room spans the six-lane Water Street and opens to the west (south-bound) high-level side platform. The east (north-bound) high-level side platform is reached by an under-track tunnel. Approximately 375 long term<sup>5</sup> and 375 short term<sup>6</sup> parking spaces are available at a nearby parking structure.

Bridgeport Station is also part of the Northeast Corridor (NEC), a 457-mile long rail corridor that extends from Boston MA to Washington DC, connecting major cities in the northeast region of the United States. The NEC supports over 260 million passenger trips annually through a combination of service provided by Amtrak and eight commuter rail agencies, including Metro-North and SLE. Amtrak anticipates overall NEC ridership to grow in the future as a result of population and employment growth throughout the corridor. Within the NEC, Amtrak expects population growth of approximately 13 percent, with matching employment growth of approximately 12.5 percent by 2014.<sup>7</sup> In the same timeframe, total annual intercity trips on all NEC services are projected to roughly double, raising total annual ridership to approximately 520 million.<sup>8</sup> Amtrak provides service at the Bridgeport station with 14 *Northeast Regional* trains per day and two *Vermonters* trains per day. Bridgeport Station ranks 106 in annual Amtrak boardings of the more than 500 stations served by Amtrak nationally, with over 80,000 passenger “on offs” in 2015.<sup>9</sup> Bridgeport Station has a high volume of daily boardings, particularly during peak hours<sup>10</sup> and weekends, and Amtrak expects the NEC ridership numbers to grow in the future.

Metro-North currently operates 26 weekday commuter trains (combined inbound and outbound) on the New Haven Line stopping at Bridgeport Station during morning peak hours, with approximately eight to ten cars per trainset.<sup>11</sup> An additional 56 weekday trains (combined inbound and outbound) stop at Bridgeport Station during off-peak hours, and 19 weekday trains (combined inbound and outbound) stop at Bridgeport station during afternoon peak hours.<sup>12</sup> According to ticket sales and data collected by Metro-North, Bridgeport Station is the fourth busiest station on the New Haven Line, averaging 3,000 daily weekday boardings; 1,900 boardings during peak (morning) hours, and 1,100 during off-peak hours.<sup>13</sup> The Station also averages 3,120 total weekend boardings. Of the 48 stations on the New Haven Line, Bridgeport Station has the fourth highest number of peak hour boardings after Stamford Station,

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<sup>5</sup> Spaces available for passengers to park overnight. [https://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station\\_Page&code=BRP](https://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station_Page&code=BRP). Accessed April 05/2016.

<sup>6</sup> Spaces available for passengers to park during the day only, not overnight. [https://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station\\_Page&code=BRP](https://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station_Page&code=BRP). Accessed April 05/2016.

<sup>7</sup> *NEC Future Tier 1 Draft EIS*. Amtrak, 2015. Page 3-8.

<sup>8</sup> Amtrak, North East Corridor Facts and Data. <https://nec.amtrak.com/content/growing-demand-rail-services-northeast>. Accessed February 17, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Amtrak, North East Corridor Facts and Data. <https://nec.amtrak.com/facts-and-data>. Accessed February 17, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Defined as: “weekday trains that arrive in GCT between 5 AM and 10 AM or that depart GCT between 4 PM and 8 PM”. Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

<sup>11</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New Haven Line schedule. April 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> 2014 New Haven Line Inbound Station Boardings (2014), Metro-North. Received from CTDOT February 16, 2016.

Larchmont (NY) Station, and New Rochelle (NY) Station. Bridgeport Station also has the fourth highest number of weekend boardings.

Between New Haven and Grand Central stations, the New Haven Line typically provides four separate tracks (except for a four-mile segment from Woodmont [MP 65] to Devon [MP 61] with three tracks) served by stations with outside platforms (except at the New Haven and Stamford stations which utilize island platforms). This layout means that every train stopping at a station has to use the outside tracks, often crossing over from the inside to outside tracks to access the platform. This requires lower train speeds, and effectively means that one train occupies two tracks during the crossover movement. The result is sub-optimal commuting times and lower system capacity. With this configuration, it is difficult to run express trains. The current Metro North commuter service schedule uses an informal zone express system to limit the number of required crossovers; in this informal system, some trains stop at specific blocks (sequential groups) of stations, and other trains stop at other blocks of stations. These trains utilize the outside tracks for stops then either cross over to an inside track or continue in express mode along the outside track. CTDOT also extends some of its Shore Line East commuter service (New London – New Haven) west to Bridgeport and Stamford.

Amtrak has stops for intercity service at New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford along the New Haven Line in Connecticut. The current downtown Bridgeport Station has only outside platforms so the Amtrak trains either have to operate along the outside tracks or crossover from the inside to outside tracks as they approach Bridgeport. With an island platform configuration, the two inside tracks (1 and 2) would provide express service for Amtrak, Metro North and Shore Line East trains, while the outside tracks can serve local trains. This would create the opportunity for new express service stopping at New Haven, Barnum, and Stamford. The island platforms would allow for easy cross-platform transfers between local and express trains at these three key stations. By eliminating the need for cross-overs, train speeds would be able to increase (or trains could maintain speed), reducing commuter trip times even on local trains. This also means that system capacity could potentially be enhanced through the reduction in the number of crossover movements.

Bridgeport Station is centrally located in the downtown district of Bridgeport, but it does not provide convenient service to the employment and growth area of East Bridgeport. East Bridgeport encompasses the eastern portion of the city, and is separated from the downtown district and Bridgeport Station by the Pequonnock River. East Bridgeport includes the neighborhoods of Mill Hill, East Side, and East End. To access the intercity rail network, residents located in a 3.5-mile stretch in East Bridgeport must travel west to the Bridgeport Station or further east to the Stratford Station. Figure 2-1 shows the existing Bridgeport Station's location relative to the neighborhoods of East Bridgeport.

**Figure 2-1 East Bridgeport Context**

## East Bridgeport Employment

The City of Bridgeport faces significant challenges in ensuring its residents have access to employment opportunities. The City of Bridgeport's job market fell by 27 percent between 1990 and 2005, despite a two percent job market growth in the greater Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk region during the same period. Bridgeport has a 12.7-percent unemployment rate compared to the 8.5-percent statewide average<sup>14</sup>. The impact of high unemployment is reflected in the estimates of household income. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, Bridgeport's median household income is only 50 percent of the median household income of Fairfield County. It is likely that income is much lower in the study area, estimated at \$23,956<sup>15</sup>. Median household income in the state is \$67,740 (ACS 2010). Table 2-1 presents unemployment statistics and income data for East Bridgeport and the greater region, and Table 2-2 identifies the major employers in the vicinity of the proposed project.

As a result of the challenging local job market, Bridgeport residents must turn to regional employment opportunities beyond the city limits. To compound this challenge, over 20 percent of households in Bridgeport do not have access to a vehicle for transportation<sup>16</sup>, significantly higher than the 9 percent of households statewide. Vehicle access in the study area is even lower than that of the City, with some census tracts in East Bridgeport reaching 30 percent of households without vehicle access.<sup>17</sup> Figure 2-2 shows the surrounding development and major employment centers in the vicinity of East Bridgeport.

East Bridgeport serves as a primary employment center for the city, with approximately 15 large employers (over 30 full-time employees) in the vicinity of the proposed station site.<sup>18</sup> The Mill Hill and East Side neighborhoods (Figure 2-1) are recognized for their medical services industry and are home to Bridgeport Hospital and various other health and doctor's offices. The hospital and other health offices and institutions in the neighborhoods are critical to employment in East Bridgeport, with 74 percent of Mill Hill residents, and 40 percent of East End residents employed in the health and education sector.<sup>19</sup> Employees of businesses in these neighborhoods do not have convenient commuter rail access from the existing Bridgeport Station; commuting by rail to these neighborhoods requires that employees disembark and walk distances ranging from 0.5 to 2 miles or transfer to a local bus route before arriving at their destination.

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<sup>14</sup> The City of Bridgeport. *BGreen2020 A Sustainable Plan for Bridgeport, Connecticut*. 2010.

<sup>15</sup> A weighted mean of household median income (weighted by the population of each census tract) was used to calculate median household income for the study area.

<sup>16</sup> American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate 2010-2014, Table DP04. U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>17</sup> American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate 2010-2014, Table DP04. U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>18</sup> *Solicitation PEB716169 RFP Barnum Station TOD*. Barnum Station TOD RFP, City of Bridgeport. 2015.

<sup>19</sup> *Bridgeport Master Plan of Conservation and Development*. Bridgeport 2020, City of Bridgeport. 2008. Page 140.

**Table 2-1 Unemployment and Income in the Study Area and Region**

Area	# Unemployed	Unemployment %	Median Household Income
Study Area	1,715	7.92%	\$23,956.19
Bridgeport	9,018	8.22%	\$41,047.00
Fairfield County	36,207	5.14%	\$81,268.00
Connecticut	145,356	5.15%	\$67,740.00

SOURCE: Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Research, 2012, 2011, & 2010, Connecticut Labor Force Data by Place of Residence.

NOTE: Estimated Population – People (over 16) & Households.

NOTE: The Study Area consists of a ½ mile radius around the proposed project site.

**Table 2-2 Top Employers in the Vicinity of the Proposed Project**

Employer	Employees	Sector
Bridgeport Hospital	2,600	Health Care
Prime Line Resources*	310 FT/150 PT	Specialty Items
Moore Tool Company	280	Precision Tools
Lacey Manufacturing	258 FT/46 PT	Medical Products
Harding High School	123	Educational
Bridgeport Health Care Center*	49	Health Care
Rotair Industries	46	Helicopter Parts
Valley Container	45	Packaging Material
Munoz Elementary School	40	Elementary School
Optimus Health Care, Inc.	35	Mental Health

SOURCE: City of Bridgeport 2011 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Updated via <http://www.manta.com>, accessed July 2012.

NOTE: \* Business that is outside, but adjacent to the study area.

NOTE: The table lists employers within a ½ mile radius around the proposed project site.

## Businesses and Employers

Bridgeport Hospital (Figure 2-2) is a regional hospital that serves over 18,000 annual inpatients and 277,000 annual outpatients, and employs 2,600 employees from all over the region. The hospital, which has operated from the same site for over 131 years, is part of the Yale-New Haven health system affiliated with the Yale School of Medicine and employs over 200 medical residents and fellows<sup>20</sup>. Bridgeport Hospital is recognized as a leader in education and health in the community and regionally.

Bridgeport Hospital is currently only accessible by passenger vehicle and by bus. It is served by the Greater Bridgeport Transit (GBT) bus routes 13, 15, and 23, or by personal vehicles. It is not convenient for patients and employees to reach the Hospital by train as it is approximately 1.9 miles by foot from Bridgeport Station, requiring a taxi, bus ride, or other means as a last-mile solution. This distance also exceeds the 0.25-mile to 0.5-mile walking distance standard (and approaches the 2-mile cycling distance) typically used in TOD and neighborhood planning.

There is also a ridership demand from hospital employees shuttling between Bridgeport Hospital and Yale-New Haven Hospital. Shuttle service is provided between New Haven Station and Yale-New Haven Hospital to provide rail accessibility to hospital employees and patients; Bridgeport Hospital does not currently have such a service. Lacking a commuter rail station in East Bridgeport, employees of Bridgeport Hospital and other East Bridgeport businesses are not able to capitalize on the existing commuter rail network due to the distances from the existing Bridgeport Station.

<sup>20</sup> Bridgeport Hospital. [www.bridgeporthospital.org/about](http://www.bridgeporthospital.org/about). Accessed January 27, 2016.

Bridgeport Hospital is working with the City of Bridgeport to review potential future hospital expansion opportunities on the current site of Harding High School immediately adjacent to the hospital.<sup>21</sup> The City plans to demolish and relocate Harding High School, and in late 2015 broke ground for construction of the new school facility.<sup>22</sup> The City worked with General Electric to locate the new school facility to a nearby parcel previously owned by General Electric (Figure 2-2)<sup>23</sup> and donated to the City; the new school facility will continue to serve East Bridgeport and would be well served by a commuter rail station. After the relocation of the high school, Bridgeport Hospital may pursue expansion opportunities on the former site; expanding the hospital would provide a needed boost to regional and local employment, but would further increase the transportation demands in the area.

In addition to the medical services industry, East Bridgeport has a number of educational institutions that serve as occupational and social fixtures in the community. There are seven elementary schools in the vicinity of the project in East Bridgeport, and two high schools. There are also two public charter schools run by Achievement First, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization focused on bringing educational opportunities to disadvantaged areas in Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island. These educational institutions constitute the second highest employment sector in East Bridgeport; four of the 11 schools are within 0.5-miles of the proposed project site, and all 11 are within one mile of the site. Educators and administrators at this cluster of institutions in East Bridgeport cannot easily take advantage of the existing rail network due to the location of Bridgeport Station.

A new station in East Bridgeport would enhance transportation access to a substantially underemployed community and maintain the critical existing employment centers in East Bridgeport. East Bridgeport has a high concentration of health and educational institutions that drive people to and from the city and which employ a large portion of city residents. These employment centers are especially important to the community as it has struggled to keep pace with the employment rates of the larger county. A station in East Bridgeport is needed to protect and grow the existing East Bridgeport businesses, and open additional employment opportunities to residents through enhanced transportation access.

## Future Growth

East Bridgeport is a priority growth area identified in both the Bridgeport *2020 Master Plan of Conservation and Development* and the *BGreen 2020 Sustainability Plan*. These plans focus specifically on enhancing multi-modal transportation infrastructure, and emphasize mixed-use and TOD. Several major development projects are underway in the vicinity of East Bridgeport which will produce additional transportation demands within the area; adequate access to public transportation will be critical to ensuring these new development projects advance the City's TOD goal and do not increase reliance on personal vehicles.

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<sup>21</sup> Discussions with Bridgeport Hospital, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> *Groundbreaking for new Harding High campus*. CTpost, August 28, 2015.

<http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Groundbreaking-for-new-Harding-High-campus-6472100.php>. Accessed February 12, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> *New high school to replace 90-year-old Harding High School*. Bridgeport News. March 6 2015.

<http://www.thebridgeportnews.com/11321/new-high-school-to-replace-90-year-old-harding-high-school/>. Accessed March 15, 2016.

Steelpointe Harbor is an ongoing 52-acre mixed-use development south of the proposed project site, along the Yellow Mill Channel, as shown in Figure 2-2. The development abuts the channel, and consists of a network of walkable streets, open space, waterfront walkways, and residential, retail, and commercial development. When completed, the development will provide 800,000 square feet of retail space, 200,000 square feet of commercial/office space, 300,000 square feet of hotel/meeting space, a marina with supporting infrastructure, and up to 1,500 new residential units.<sup>24</sup> In late 2014, the Steelpointe Harbor developer was also selected in a public bidding process for development of Seaview Plaza, a site adjacent to Steelpointe Harbor. The developments emphasize connecting and complimenting pedestrian amenities, neighborhood building scale and block sizes, and a stimulating streetscape.

The former 38-acre Father Panik Village site continues to provide development potential in the area directly south of the proposed project location. Since its demolition in 1993<sup>25</sup>, the site has been redeveloped with single family housing on the west side, the Waltersville School and Upchurch Park to the south, James Brown (Waterview) Park to the east, and ongoing construction of the Crescent Crossing Housing Development in the center. The Crescent Crossing Housing Development is a multi-phase development initiative in the East Side neighborhood. The project broke ground in 2015, and will add over 170 additional housing units to East Bridgeport directly south of the proposed station location.<sup>26</sup>

The City of Bridgeport is coordinating with the City of Stratford on a business park located in both East Bridgeport and in Stratford. The 422-acre “Lake Success Eco Business Park” straddles the two cities and occupies the formerly contaminated Remington Woods site (344 acres in Bridgeport). In anticipation of the business park, Bridgeport has started design for the Seaview Avenue Corridor project. The City plans to redesign, realign, and extend Seaview Avenue, beginning as far south as Barnum Avenue. The new extension north of Stewart Street will serve as a primary access way for the business park. The entire project will include pedestrian and bicycle improvements along the roadway.

Bridgeport has a parallel project underway to build a new high school facility fronting the realigned Seaview Avenue; the existing Harding High School will be relocated to a modern facility. Both the realignment and the construction of the new Harding High School are in design phases and are anticipated to be completed in 2018.<sup>27</sup> The new school facility will be located on property previously owned by General Electric and donated to the City.

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<sup>24</sup> Steelpointe Harbor. <http://www.bldsteelpointe.com/about-us/overview/>. Accessed April 05, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Rierden, Andi. “The Last Farewell to Father Panik Village.” *New York Times* [New York City] 17 October 1993.

<sup>26</sup> *Massive housing project in new mayor’s hands*. Lockhart, Brian. CTpost, October 28, 2015.

<http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Massive-housing-project-in-new-mayor-s-hands-6593824.php>. Accessed April 05/2016.

<sup>27</sup> *Preliminary plans unveiled for Remington Woods site*. Ocasio, Keila Torres. CTpost, April 20, 2015.

<http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Preliminary-plans-unveiled-for-Remington-Woods-6212557.php>. Accessed February 12, 2016.

**Figure 2-2 Surrounding Development and Major Employment**

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In 2015, the City of Bridgeport released a public solicitation for a TOD plan, structural analysis, and adaptive reuse strategy adjacent to the proposed Barnum Station. Currently underway, the project has three parts; it will produce a TOD plan for the ½-mile radius around the proposed station, conduct a structural building analysis for the former Remington Arms Ammunition facility located at 889 Barnum Avenue, and produce an adaptive reuse strategy for the same site. The site is located directly across Barnum Avenue from the proposed project site (Figure 2-2).

The city is pursuing TOD and mixed-use development as a means to reduce private vehicle use and associated emissions. Of all regional trips in the greater Bridgeport region, 96.6 percent involve the use of private vehicles, with the majority of these in the drive-alone category. Only 3.4 percent of all trips are made by a form of public transportation (bus or train). Based on CTDOT's travel demand model, total vehicle trips in the region are expected to grow by about 12.7 percent from 2010 to 2040.<sup>28</sup> The heavy use of passenger vehicles produces high vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) and associated vehicle emissions for the region. Fairfield County, including Bridgeport and neighboring cities, is a "marginal non-attainment area" for ozone emissions<sup>29</sup>.

## State and Regional Objectives

The Proposed Action is consistent with transportation planning objectives established at the state and regional levels, as discussed below.

### State-Level Objectives

*Let's Go CT!* an initiative of Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy that outlines a series of transportation investments across the state with the purpose of improving safety, reliability, and responsiveness. This effort is accompanied by a 5-year ramp-up plan that details the existing condition of the transportation system in the state, and initial steps to implement the plan.

The proposed Barnum Station is a specific action under *Let's Go CT!*, which emphasizes the expansion of high frequency and high capacity rail service to and from New York City, the addition and modernization of stations, and upgrades to tracks to support local and express services. The proposed station is identified in the 5-year ramp-up plan as an initial step in achieving the plan's overall goals; the proposed station would enhance overall service flexibility along the New Haven Line, enabling express service flexibility across the proposed station and Bridgeport Station and permitting two-track local and two-track express service on the mainline through center island platforms. The track work associated with the proposed station would improve service flexibility to and from New York City, a primary goal identified in *Let's Go CT!*

### Regional Objectives

The Proposed Action meets goals established in various regional planning documents, and is identified as a development objective in documents prepared by the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) and the City of Bridgeport.

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<sup>28</sup> LRTP 2015-2040, Greater Bridgeport Regional Council (GBRC), 2015.

<sup>29</sup> (8-hour Ozone 2008 Standard) United States Environmental Protection Agency. *The Green Book Nonattainment Areas for Criteria Pollutants*. October, 2012.

Released in 2015, *Reconnect 1 Region* is a comprehensive plan for development and policy intended to guide land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, and sustainability. The plan was developed by MetroCOG in coordination with member cities, and identifies specific regional goals that the proposed Barnum Station project would help achieve. The plan highlights TOD strategies and zoning as an important mechanism and identifies the proposed Barnum Station as an ideal location for implementing such strategies. *Reconnect 1 Region* identifies Barnum Station as Goal 6.2E, a transformative project that compliments the ongoing and anticipated growth in East Bridgeport.<sup>30</sup> The plan notes that the project would increase the region's overall transit use, and support a transit-oriented pattern of future development.

*BGreen 2020*, developed in 2010 by the City of Bridgeport in coordination with the Bridgeport Regional Business Council, outlines a ten-year strategic sustainability plan for the City of Bridgeport. The Plan established goals and identifies opportunities that will help improve the quality of life, social equity, and economic competitiveness of the city, at the same time also reducing carbon emissions and increasing the community's resilience to the effects of climate change. Recognizing that the transportation sector contributes approximately one-third of the city's total greenhouse gas emissions, *BGreen 2020* adopts a "Transit First" policy to prioritize bus operations expansion, enhanced bus corridors, and construct a new transit station where needed. The Plan identifies the construction of a Metro-North Railroad station in the East Side and East End as a strategy to sustain development in the area and compliment the Seaview Avenue realignment project.

Will reference GBT Long Term Regional Plan upon public release.

Barnum Station Feasibility Study (2013)

The City of Bridgeport completed a feasibility study for a commuter rail in East Bridgeport. The City worked with MetroCOG to evaluate the value of constructing and operating a second commuter rail station in Bridgeport compatible with existing Metro-North Railroad and Amtrak services. The Feasibility Study provides a detailed assessment of East Bridgeport's history, demographics, environmental conditions, land use mix, businesses, transportation patterns, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and development potential; it clearly demonstrates the feasibility and benefits of a new station in East Bridgeport.<sup>31</sup>

The study identifies specific development projects in the vicinity of East Bridgeport that a commuter rail station would support, including downtown Bridgeport, Seaview Avenue corridor, Steelpointe Harbor, and the Lake Success Eco-Business Park. Though the station would primarily serve East Bridgeport, the study also demonstrates how a second station in Bridgeport offers enhanced mobility and transportation access along the entire rail corridor in the Greater Bridgeport region.

## Project Need

The Project is needed to support East Bridgeport employment opportunities and businesses, improve the capacity and efficiency of the MNR and Amtrak service, and support anticipated growth in population and employment associated with planned TOD and growth initiatives.

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<sup>30</sup> *Reconnect 1 Region*. MetroCOG. 2015.

<sup>31</sup> *Barnum Station Feasibility Study*. City of Bridgeport, Greater Bridgeport Regional Council. 2013.

East Bridgeport is an employment center and a focus area for growth and development for the City of Bridgeport, but the area lacks regional public transportation options. Without convenient access to the intercity rail network, employment among East Bridgeport residents will continue to decline or remain stagnant, employees of existing businesses in East Bridgeport must commute by passenger vehicle or bus and increase regional vehicle-miles traveled (VMT), and the potential for future development in the East Bridgeport area will be constrained by the limited transportation options. The relatively high percentage of East Bridgeport residents without access to a vehicle will remain disconnected from regional employment opportunities and suffer from a general lack of transportation alternatives.

With the current track and platform configuration, trains must routinely switch tracks to serve stations. These crossovers require reduced train speeds and dual-track occupancy through the duration of the crossover move, inhibiting overall line capacity and speed. A new station in East Bridgeport with two island platforms would provide more opportunity for express service, enhance line capacity, and reduce commuter trip times. The increased system capacity could potentially reduce delays, improve the efficiency of overall system operations, and allow a possible increase in MNR and SLE service.

Walkable, mixed-use, TOD will not be possible in the East Bridgeport area without convenient access to the intercity rail network. East Bridgeport does not have the rail access needed to achieve the dense, pedestrian-oriented land use characteristics that residents of the area desire and that the city aims to achieve.

A new station is needed in East Bridgeport to support to the anticipated growth in population and economic activity. As a focus area for growth and development, East Bridgeport will have increasingly demanding transportation requirements; new residents and workers in the area must currently commute by car or bus, contributing to regional VMT and localized air pollution. The city is seeking to pursue development projects that would reduce reliance on vehicles, but currently the only alternatives to private vehicles are buses, cycling, or walking. Providing convenient commuter rail access would provide a robust transportation alternative, and it would advance the city's stated objectives of enhancing multi-modal infrastructure and supporting TOD.