

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 169 Session of 2015

INTRODUCED BY PASHINSKI, HARKINS, ROZZI, MILLARD, KOTIK, BOBACK, HELM, DRISCOLL, HENNESSEY, SIMS, THOMAS, McNEILL, D. COSTA, SCHWEYER, CALTAGIRONE, READSHAW, FLYNN, KIRKLAND, COHEN, MATZIE, MURT, DONATUCCI, DeLUCA, MAHONEY, RADER, MARSHALL, SCHREIBER AND KORTZ, MARCH 13, 2015

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, MARCH 13, 2015

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to  
 2 conduct a study of the feasibility of providing passenger  
 3 rail service between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton in conjunction  
 4 with the proposed restoration of passenger rail service  
 5 between Scranton and New York City.

6 WHEREAS, In a letter to the President of the United States  
 7 dated April 21, 2009, United States Senators Robert P. Casey,  
 8 Jr., and Arlen Specter, together with Senators Charles E.  
 9 Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, announced their support to  
 10 restore passenger rail service from Binghamton, New York,  
 11 through Scranton, to New York City; and

12 WHEREAS, Amtrak has agreed to conduct a feasibility study of  
 13 the Scranton to New York City link, known as the Lackawanna  
 14 Cutoff project; and

15 WHEREAS, In June 2009, the United States Environmental  
 16 Protection Agency declared a finding of no significant impact  
 17 for a new passenger rail line between Morris County, New Jersey,  
 18 and Scranton, a vital section of the Lackawanna Cutoff; and

1       WHEREAS, This more than two-decades-long effort to restore  
2 rail service from the Poconos region to New York City appears to  
3 be nearing the engineering and construction funding phase; and

4       WHEREAS, Several extensions of service have already been  
5 proposed and are being seriously considered, including north to  
6 Binghamton, New York; and

7       WHEREAS, A previously commissioned, federally funded study  
8 conducted by the Redevelopment Authority of Luzerne County  
9 determined that the physical track alignment is already in place  
10 to do so, thus requiring no additional right-of-way; and

11       WHEREAS, New Jersey Transit has already begun construction to  
12 restore a portion of the Lackawanna Cutoff; and

13       WHEREAS, As of the beginning of 2015, New Jersey Transit has  
14 laid approximately 4.25 miles of track, cleared part of the  
15 right-of-way of trees and debris, and put out to bid the  
16 construction of a train station in Andover Township, New Jersey;  
17 and

18       WHEREAS, Luzerne County residents deserve the same  
19 consideration and opportunity for employment, as well as the  
20 other economic opportunities afforded to the municipalities the  
21 passenger line would serve as is now proposed; and

22       WHEREAS, Establishing passenger service between Wilkes-Barre  
23 and Scranton would benefit economic development efforts in the  
24 greater Hazleton area should service eventually be extended to  
25 the region; and

26       WHEREAS, The Commonwealth would be remiss in not determining  
27 if continuation of this rail service to Wilkes-Barre is feasible  
28 at this pivotal juncture, especially considering the relatively  
29 short distance and minimal expense incurred in doing so;  
30 therefore be it

1       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the  
2 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study of  
3 the feasibility of providing passenger rail service between  
4 Wilkes-Barre and Scranton in conjunction with the proposed  
5 restoration of passenger rail service between Scranton and New  
6 York City; and be it further

7       RESOLVED, That the study determine if the benefits outweigh  
8 the costs related to providing passenger rail service from  
9 Wilkes-Barre to Scranton in conjunction with the Lackawanna  
10 Cutoff project; and be it further

11       RESOLVED, That the study include a review of the:

12           (1) Alignment and trackage necessary to provide  
13 passenger rail service between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton.

14           (2) Preferred ownership and management structure and  
15 operational requirements to provide such service.

16           (3) Anticipated ridership for Wilkes-Barre to Scranton  
17 passenger rail service;

18 and be it further

19       RESOLVED, That the committee issue its report to the Speaker  
20 of the House of Representatives within one year from the date of  
21 adoption of this resolution.