

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 189 Session of 2019

INTRODUCED BY PASHINSKI, READSHAW, SCHLOSSBERG, CALTAGIRONE, NEILSON, MURT, FREEMAN, KAUFER, HILL-EVANS, MILLARD, DeLUCA, SCHWEYER, MARKOSEK, MULLINS, TOOIL, BOBACK, KORTZ, DRISCOLL, ROZZI AND BOYLE, APRIL 2, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, APRIL 2, 2019

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 and issue a report of its  
 6 findings and recommendations to the House of Representatives.

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

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

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

1       WHEREAS, After more than two decades, the first phase of  
2 restoring rail service from the Poconos region to New York City  
3 appears to be nearing the engineering and construction funding  
4 phase; and

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

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

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

14       WHEREAS, As of late 2016, New Jersey Transit has cleared  
15 trees and debris from part of the right-of-way and is one  
16 environmental permit away from starting the construction of a  
17 train station in Andover Township, New Jersey; 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 municipalities which  
21 the 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; and

25       WHEREAS, The former Laurel Line commuter train service  
26 between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre operated from 1903 until 1952  
27 and reached peak ridership of 4.2 million passengers a year; and

28       WHEREAS, The Commonwealth would be remiss in not determining  
29 if continuation of this rail service to Wilkes-Barre is feasible  
30 at this pivotal juncture, considering the relatively short

1 distance and minimal expense incurred in doing so; therefore be  
2 it

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

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

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

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

16 (2) Preferred ownership and management structure and  
17 operational requirements to provide such service.

18 (3) Anticipated ridership for Wilkes-Barre to Scranton  
19 passenger rail service;

20 and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the committee issue its report to the Speaker  
22 of the House of Representatives within one year of the adoption  
23 of this resolution.