



ANN ARBOR — TO — TRAVERSE CITY 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

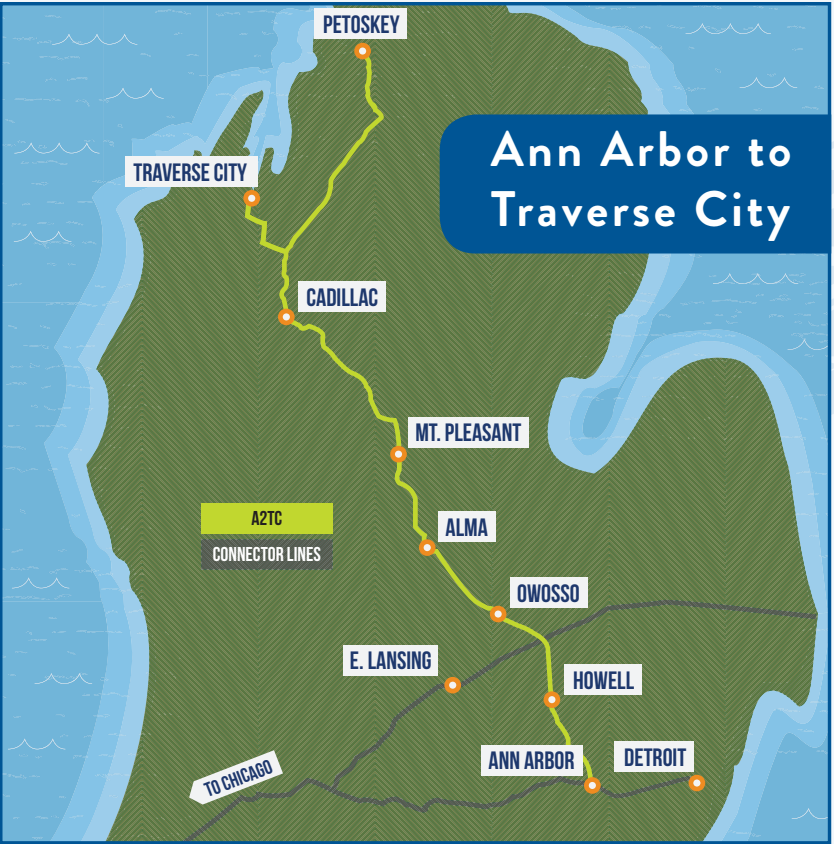
Ridership Potential Is Strong—and Growing

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 Investment

Different 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 minutes if you factor in a stop for food and/or bathroom.

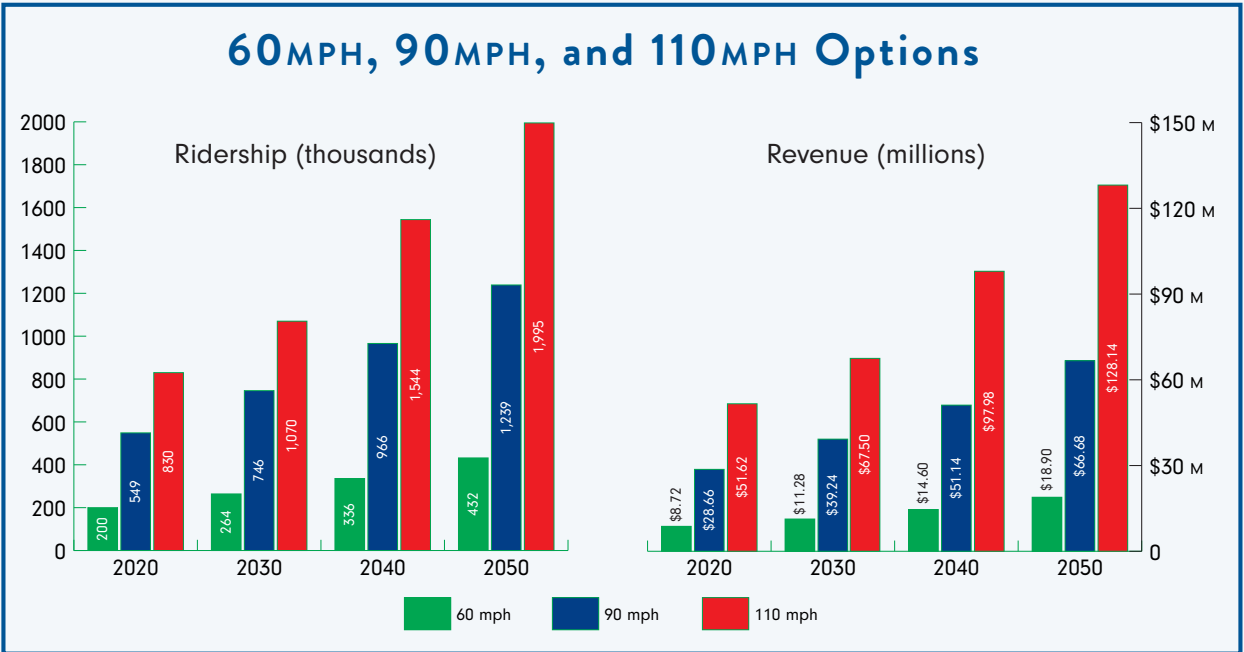
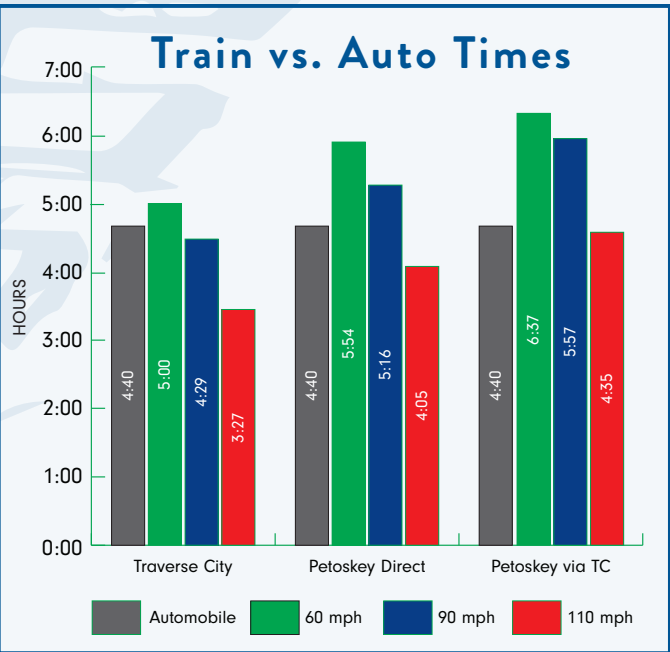
- A 60-mph “special event” train line between Traverse City and Ann Arbor—which requires roughly \$40 million in track repairs—would bring travel times to five hours.
- A 90-mph train would make the trip in 4.5 hours, but would require an additional \$611 million in track repairs and replacement.
- A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



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 football 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.



KEY STEPS TO BUILDING A TRAIN LINE

2–3 years

- ☒ Project launch
- ☒ Initial cost estimate and ridership study
- ☒ Traverse City track repairs
- ☐ Demonstration train ride to Traverse City (scheduled fall 2019)

3–5 years

- ☐ Management company created
- ☐ Special event trains to Traverse City
- ☐ Weekend summer service begins

5–10 years

- ☐ Environmental studies
- ☐ High-tech safety system installed
- ☐ Upgrades/improvements
- ☐ Regular 60 mph service (5 hour travel time) begins

10–15 years

- ☐ Expand service directly to Detroit
- ☐ Upgrades/improvements
- ☐ Regular 90 mph service (4.5 hour travel time) begins

15–20 years

- ☐ Regular 110 mile per hour (3.5 hour travel time) service begins

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-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-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](https://a2tc.org)

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City of Alma
Washtenaw County

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