

Chapter 5 – Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

MassDOT is committed to engaging all members of the public, including disabled and Environmental Justice (EJ) populations. The SSX project has received public input throughout the planning process to help develop the project in coordination with a range of interests. This chapter summarizes MassDOT's ongoing efforts to involve the public and coordinate with local, state, and federal government agencies and stakeholders.

In May 2013, FRA and MassDOT invited Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to be NEPA cooperating agencies, and in December 2014, invited the USPS to be a NEPA cooperating agency. While no formal acceptance of these invitations were received, FRA and MassDOT have continued to provide the NEPA cooperating agencies with project documents (including the Draft EA) for review as appropriate. Amtrak has been involved in the project since 2013 as an official project stakeholder as well as a cooperating agency for the NEPA process. Amtrak has a significant presence at South Station and the Project Team has engaged them throughout the project via recurring meetings and workshops.

After circulation of this EA to the agencies and individuals on the distribution list, a 30-day public comment period will commence. FRA will issue a Final Section 4(f) Determination and, if appropriate, a FONSI upon completion of the public review period. Public comments will be addressed in the FONSI.

5.1. Public and Agency Involvement Goals

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP), which is posted on the SSX project website, established the following goals:

- To provide an interactive, collaborative, and credible public process that welcomes communities of interest and provides a variety of ways for the public to be involved in, contribute to, and review and provide input to draft project ideas and plans;
- To assist the planning team by presenting ideas and recommendations from the public that would result in a project that is achievable, reflective of public aspirations, and enhances multimodal transportation for the city, region, and NEC;
- To provide methods to keep neighbors, residents, business owners, city, state, and regional officials, and users of South Station involved and updated regularly on development of project plans; and
- To present the alternatives for and impacts of potential layover site alternatives.

As described in the PIP, MassDOT also follows the guiding principles of EJ¹ and Title VI,² part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

- To avoid, minimize, and mitigate disproportionately high and adverse effects on EJ and Title VI populations;
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities, and

¹ Areas with high minority, non-English speaking, and/or low-income populations.

² Provides protection from discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities.

- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

5.2. Stakeholders

The PIP included outreach to the following stakeholders:

- **The traveling audience and regional stakeholders:** MassDOT focused on reaching MBTA commuter rail and Amtrak passengers (using social media, information at the station, email, a display board in South Station, and periodic information sessions at the Station) to identify their concerns and capture information about their current usage patterns at South Station.
- **The abutting neighborhoods:** MassDOT identified two areas for particular focus: the adjacent South Station neighborhood and the group of abutters near the layover sites (Widett Circle and Readville – Yard 2). Targeted outreach in the station area included approximately 14 briefings for community and business groups in the Leather District, Chinatown, Fort Point Channel, and the Financial District, as well as the Waterfront area; business, land use, and transportation organizations; and stakeholders surrounding the proposed layover sites. MassDOT provided customized presentations for the neighborhoods adjacent to the Readville – Yard 2 and Widett Circle layover facilities.
- **Specific constituencies:** MassDOT developed and publicized two online surveys in three languages (English, Spanish, and Chinese) to gather comments from general users of the station on amenities and from pedestrians and bicyclists on use of the station. The project brochure was also available in multiple languages.
- **Agency briefings:** MassDOT conducted more than 40 meetings with city, state, and federal agencies. These briefings included the MassDEP; BWSC; Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport); regional transportation planning organizations; the USPS; FTA; FAA; FRA; FHWA; and many meetings with the BPDA (formerly the BRA), BTD, and other City of Boston departments.
- **Legislative briefings:** MassDOT briefed elected officials in advance of major project milestones (such as the filing of the ENF, DEIR, and FEIR); and held specific briefings for the Boston City Council and for officials representing areas under consideration for layover facilities.

5.3. Methods for Engaging the Public and Agencies

The following sections discuss the methods used to engage interested stakeholders. These strategies applied to South Station and to the proposed layover facility sites.

5.3.1. Public and Agency Information Meetings/Open Houses and Briefings

MassDOT conducted the following general meetings and briefings, in accessible locations in or close to South Station and public transportation (Table 5-1):

- **Open Houses:** MassDOT hosted two public open houses (one in the early morning and one in the evening) in the South Station neighborhood on November 19 and 20, 2012. There were 91 attendees between the two meetings. MassDOT shared project information and gathered input and ideas on project alternatives, as well as community and stakeholders' needs and preferences.
- **ENF Scoping Session:** MassDOT staffed a scoping session on April 1, 2013 for the ENF filing. There were 55 attendees at the Scoping Session.

- **DEIR Public Hearing:** MassDOT hosted a hearing on November 18, 2014, during the extended comment period for the DEIR. The hearing was widely publicized through a postcard mailing, by email, flyers (in English, Chinese, and Spanish), a media release, and newspaper advertisements. There were 57 attendees at this hearing.
- **FEIR Public Meeting:** MassDOT held a public meeting on July 20, 2016, during the public comment period for the FEIR. At this meeting, MassDOT also presented the status of the federal environmental review process, including the preparation of this EA and continuation of the Section 106 review process. The meeting was advertised in major regional print publications (in English and Chinese), in newspapers serving the neighborhoods of the potential layover sites; through the project email list; using a media advisory; and in the MassDOT weekly online news. There were 40 attendees at this meeting.
- **Briefings:** MassDOT conducted more than 40 briefings with residential stakeholders; business owners (large and small); direct abutters and property owners; major employers; and community, transportation, and land use organizations.
- **Information Sessions at South Station:** MassDOT organized recurring sessions at South Station at various points during the project.

Table 5-1 Summary of Stakeholder Meetings, 2012-2016

Meeting Type	Number of Meetings to Date
Institutions and Business Group Meetings	27
Public Meetings/Open Houses/Events at South Station and nearby	10
Neighborhood and Advocacy Groups	14
Public Agencies and Elected Officials	10
Interagency Meetings	82
Total	143

5.3.2. Engaging Environmental Justice (EJ) and Title VI Populations

The SSX project will benefit EJ communities by improving access to public transit, jobs, and other community services. No disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including air quality, visual, social, and economic effects, are anticipated to affect EJ populations due to the SSX project. The analysis was provided in the DEIR, Appendix 3 - *Environmental Justice and Title VI Technical Report*.³ This analysis is included in Section 3.14 of the EA. As part of the project outreach, MassDOT emphasized efforts to reach EJ and Title VI populations. This outreach included:

- Working with the City of Boston’s Office of Neighborhood Services to determine how and where best to distribute meeting information and project notices in multiple languages, including in the adjacent Chinatown neighborhood and near potential layover facility sites;
- Providing information to city, community, and neighborhood groups related to the project, to meetings, and how to participate;
- Developing printed and electronic materials in multiple languages, either upon request or as a regular service depending on the populations engaging in project activities;

³ Massachusetts Department of Transportation. South Station Expansion Project. *Draft Environmental Impact Report, Appendix 3 – Environmental Justice and Title VI Technical Report*. October 2014.

- Providing accessible accommodations upon request at in-person events, such as American Sign Language interpreters for information sessions; and
- Meeting with community groups to present project-related information.

Analyses undertaken as part of the project identified and assessed potential adverse effects; determined whether adverse effects could be avoided, minimized, or mitigated; and assessed benefits versus burdens on the environment and community.

5.3.3. Section 106 Consultation Process

As discussed in Section 3.17, MassDOT and FRA evaluated the potential effects of the project on historic architectural and archaeological resources in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as amended by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s implementing regulations for Section 106 (36 CFR 800). FRA and MassDOT consulted with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in its role as State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and other interested parties. The following stakeholders were invited to participate in the Section 106 consultation process:

- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head
- Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
- Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs
- Boston Landmarks Commission
- Friends of Fort Point Channel
- Amtrak
- Boston Preservation Alliance
- Boston Harbor Now
- Fort Point Channel Landmark District Commission
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Preservation Massachusetts
- Save the Harbor/Save the Bay
- WalkBoston

Amtrak, Boston Preservation Alliance, Boston Harbor Now, and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe accepted the invitation to participate and were provided project materials for review and comment. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has no concerns related to the proposed project. On behalf of FRA, MassDOT has committed to provide project plans of the proposed improvements to the historic and expanded headhouse, and to the Fort Point Channel seawall, to MHC and the consulting parties (Amtrak, Boston Preservation Alliance, and Boston Harbor Now) at the 30% and 60% design phases. The plans will be submitted for review to confirm the design of these project elements is consistent with the SSX Project’s established design principles and Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation regarding new construction, in accordance with FRA’s Conditional No Adverse effect finding. FRA and MassDOT are awaiting MHC’s concurrence of FRA’s proposed finding. Correspondence from the Section 106 Consultation process is provided in Appendix D.

5.4. Communication Tools

5.4.1. Project Website

The project website (<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/southstationexpansion/Home.aspx>) is frequently updated and features meeting notices, project documents, links to media and other services, and ways to contact the project team. Project materials posted on the website meet General Services Administration

(GSA) Section 508 and MassDOT’s web accessibility standards. MassDOT established a quick response (QR) code to facilitate communication, linking directly to the project website via the use of smart phone technology.

5.4.2. Email and Print Notices

The project team used a number of methods for communicating with the public about project meetings, issues, and publications. The project team developed a database that includes abutters to the South Station property and to layover facility sites under consideration, and current users of facilities and services at or near the project site(s) who attended a meeting or signed up at an information session. MassDOT mailed to identifiable site abutters an invitation to join the email database to facilitate frequent communication at the start of the project. Sign-in sheets at meetings and briefings were used to expand the email database, and the website included a link for site visitors to sign up to receive project information.

The project database (of more than 2,400 addresses) also includes public officials and agency representatives; those who attended meetings; people who requested to be added to the database; people who commented on project materials or documents; and other interested stakeholders.

5.4.3. Supporting Materials

MassDOT and the project team produced a project brochure in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Spanish is the top of ten non-English languages spoken in Massachusetts; South Station is located adjacent to Boston’s Chinatown neighborhood and MassDOT offered several presentations to community groups in the area. MassDOT produced a series of seven project fact sheets to coincide with major project milestones. The fact sheets are posted on the project website for easy printing, and they are distributed at project meetings and presentations.

In addition to project documents (such as technical memoranda and reports), key presentations are posted on the project website and made available in print format, large print, or other languages upon request. The results of the surveys conducted to gather opinions from South Station users, commuters, and visitors are also posted on the project website.

5.4.4. Social Marketing

Project meetings and events were publicized through media advisories and the use of other social media by MassDOT. The media list is regional in nature and includes professional industry publications. Diverse media (including non-English language) are incorporated in the list (see Table 5-2).

Table 5-2 Summary of Media Advertisements

Newspaper	Open Houses	ENF	DEIR	FEIR
Boston Globe	X	X	X	X
Boston Metro	X		X	
Sampan	X	X	X	X
Boston Courant	X	X		
Hyde Park Bulletin				X
South Boston Online				X

MassDOT used a variety of social marketing techniques to keep the public engaged in the project. The team posted regular updates through a variety of social media, including the MassDOT blog, Twitter feed, and Flickr account. This included more than 70 blogs, Facebook postings, and Twitter references.

5.5. Coordination with Ongoing Projects

MassDOT coordinated its project planning on a regular basis with Amtrak, the City of Boston (BPDA [formerly BRA] and BTM), the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Massport, FRA, other U.S. DOT agencies (including the Northeast Corridor Commission), existing and potential developers, and state and federal environmental regulatory agencies. FRA is advancing the NEC FUTURE program concurrent and in coordination with the SSX project. Coordination with the I-90 project was undertaken for review of the proposed layover site at BPY (now being conducted as part of a separate environmental process).

5.6. Meeting Summaries and Issues Tracking

The project team kept summaries of all meetings involving this project and tracked meetings and issues. The DEIR and FEIR meeting transcripts, public comment letters, and responses to comments are posted here on the project website: <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/southstationexpansion/Documents.aspx>

Through the public process, there has been general public support for the project including the ability for the station to expand to meet current and future rail needs, re-open Dorchester Avenue as a public space, and improve the passenger experience. Some concerns about the project that have arisen during the outreach process include interest for the North South Rail Link, the siting of the layover facilities, and the need to relocate the USPS facility.