

The logo features a stylized, gold-colored silhouette of a building's roofline with a central circular element. Below this, the words "SOUTH STATION" and "EXPANSION" are stacked in a clean, sans-serif font, enclosed within a thin gold border.

SOUTH STATION
EXPANSION



Public Involvement Plan

September 26, 2012

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1. Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has begun a planning project to determine how to best expand Boston's South Station, the historic transportation center on the south side of the city. South Station is the principal passenger rail hub in New England, serving passengers from Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) and beyond, as well as MBTA's commuter rail system and intercity bus services. South Station provides connections to regional and local bus and transit services, as well as to Boston's Logan International Airport via the Silver Line.

South Station is one of the most significant architectural structures in the City of Boston. It is also a vital transportation asset.

At present, South Station operates above its design capacity for efficient train operations and orderly passenger queuing. When it opened to the public in 1899, South Station had 28 tracks. That number is now 13, significantly constraining current and future rail mobility not only within Massachusetts but throughout New England and along the NEC. South Station also lacks comfortable, modern facilities for passenger queuing, leaving riders standing in the elements to board their trains. In addition, South Station lacks sufficient ancillary rail vehicle storage capacity (layover facility), constraining operations today and limiting future growth. The overarching project purpose is to facilitate a more efficient and attractive passenger rail service network for the northeastern United States.

This three-year project will develop environmentally appropriate and actionable plans, enable expansion and improvement of intercity and regional passenger rail services, and enhance rail customer services and community needs. The final plans will support future private development at the site, provide for a fiscally and environmentally sustainable multi-modal terminal, and meet the demands and requirements of the next generation of transportation systems to better serve the City of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the United States.

2. Goals of the Project

MassDOT will work with the MBTA, Amtrak, and the City of Boston as well as with adjacent property owners, businesses, neighbors, commuters, and intercity passengers of the station and potential developers:

- to determine how best to expand South Station and create a new layover facility to improve existing rail service in and out of Boston and along the NEC. The expansion of South Station is anticipated to include improvements to tracks, platforms, passenger facilities, and supporting infrastructure;
- to plan for relocation of the U.S. Postal Service General Mail Facility, creating an appropriate adjacent site for expanding South Station;
- to plan and design an enhanced passenger and community environment at South Station through improved streetscape and pedestrian, bicycle, local transit, and vehicular facilities in and around South Station, including the re-opening of Dorchester Avenue for public use and coordination with the Harborwalk; and,

- to consider and plan for opportunities for future private development over an expanded South Station.

3. Public Involvement Goals

Public involvement for the South Station Expansion project has the following goals:

- to provide an interactive, collaborative, and credible public process that welcomes the communities of interest and provides a variety of ways for the public to be involved in, contribute to, and review draft project ideas and plans;
- to assist the planning team by presenting ideas and recommendations from the public that will result in a project that is achievable, reflective of public aspirations, and enhances multi-modal transportation for the city, region and NEC;
- to present the alternatives for and impacts of potential layover site alternatives, and
- 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.

Our team also keeps in mind the guiding principles of Environmental Justice (EJ) and Title VI:

- to avoid, minimize, and mitigate disproportionately high and adverse effects of alternatives on EJ and Title VI populations;
- to ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities, and
- to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

4. Stakeholders

As MassDOT envisions a bigger and more efficient South Station, it will also weigh the costs – broadly defined – that may be the result from the implementation of its planning. These costs can be outweighed by mobility benefits, long-term economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and other factors, but they should be presented fairly and succinctly to all of the stakeholders. This section of the plan addresses some of these stakeholders and how best to reach each of them.

The traveling audience

Expanding the station will enable the MBTA and Amtrak to improve rail transportation options, with the traveling public as primary beneficiaries. This could be a difficult group to capture as passengers and commuters are typically on the move and impatient to get to their next destination. The team will focus on reaching MBTA commuter rail and Amtrak passengers (using social media, information at the station, email, and other strategies) with the goals of identifying their concerns, capturing information about their current usage patterns and impressions of South Station, and ultimately, converting rail passengers into project proponents. A better functioning station will offer these stakeholders more timely and frequent service, moving passengers efficiently and providing amenities and opportunities that aren't available today. These improvements will also enhance service along the entire Northeast Corridor, a factor that will be communicated to this group of stakeholders and in media throughout the region.

Regional stakeholders

Expanding South Station also has potential impacts on Amtrak's short-term and long-term service plans that in turn impact neighboring states and metropolitan areas along the NEC. MassDOT is an active participant in the Northeast Corridor Commission¹, and will lead coordination efforts through this body as appropriate. The project team will support MassDOT in these communications.

The abutting neighborhoods

Because Boston South Station is located in a busy commercial neighborhood, the project may impact stakeholders who may not benefit from the expansion project itself. For example, if construction and streetscape changes result, Silver and Red Line customers may face temporary inconveniences, along with neighboring businesses and offices; the US Postal Service, which has considered relocating its Dorchester Avenue facility in the past, will be asked to re-examine this option; and abutters to potential layover facilities will be drawn into discussions about sites near their neighborhoods. While the regional benefits of the proposals may be positive, change and transition for more local stakeholders may be considered a nuisance. The project team will work with the City of Boston on the potential to reopen Dorchester Avenue and will coordinate with the Harborwalk proponents in an effort to provide local benefits as part of the project. The goal of the process and the plans will be to achieve benefits for the majority of the stakeholders.

Other related projects

There are numerous active constituencies, some large and some small, for transportation projects that may be somehow related to the expansion of South Station but are not within the scope of this project. MassDOT will be open to opportunities that complement the outcomes of the project, while always maintaining focus on the SSX project itself. While the SSX project is primarily a transportation project, there may be opportunities for joint economic development and modal links that may contribute to a dynamic urban landscape and may be linked to the project. However, these efforts will not distract from the goals of expanding South Station and its related infrastructure to meet future regional mobility needs.

The balance

MassDOT and the project team will communicate forthrightly with all project stakeholders; effectively outline the benefits and drawbacks of different project alternatives; and attempt to ensure that the balance of benefits and impacts is equitable among stakeholders. In addition, MassDOT will need to emphasize technical transportation-related constraints and opportunities, and keep those in balance with public expectations for other betterments. MassDOT will consider and explore proposals that fit within, support, or enhance the project's goals and any collaborative efforts will support the result of providing a more efficient and sustainable passenger rail network for Massachusetts and the region.

¹ Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission. This commission includes representatives from eight NEC states, Amtrak, the District of Columbia and freight and commuter service operators.

5. Engaging the Public

The methods for engaging the communities of interest are described in this section. They include public information meetings and open houses; neighborhood and abutter briefings and presentations; institutional briefings; use of a website; production of project fact sheets and information materials; email notices and communication; media outreach and development of a social media campaigns; coordination with ongoing projects; strategies for reaching current and potential users of South Station; discussions with potential developers; and outreach to environmental justice populations. These strategies will apply to both South Station and proposed sites for a layover facility. As appropriate, materials will be prepared and distributed in multiple languages and/or formats.

5.1. Meetings and Events

5.1.1. Public Information Meetings/Open Houses

MassDOT will conduct periodic public meetings and open houses to provide project information and gather input and ideas on topics related to project alternatives development and community and stakeholders' needs and preferences. These events will be noticed via media releases, emails, and on the website (both the project website and the general MassDOT website). Meetings will be held in accessible locations that are reachable by MBTA services and materials will be translated into additional languages on request. For example, the team plans to hold some events in South Station and will seek venues in the neighborhood that offer easy access and are comfortable for the participants. As we work with potential attendees, the team will arrange for interpreters and/or translated materials, as appropriate. Summaries of public meetings, workshops and other events, along with PowerPoint presentations, will be posted on the project website. To the extent possible, the team will use visualization techniques to make information clear and understandable.

The team will incorporate a number of standard practices in noticing meetings, including:

- Developing notices in multiple formats (email, print flyers, website and social media information, and media releases) with the goal of the first notice of a public meeting three weeks before the event;
- Depending on the neighborhood and stakeholders, the team will translate notices and/or materials into alternate languages and/or formats, either because they are anticipated or on request;
- Meeting summaries will be posted on the website within 10 working days of a major public event; presentations will be posted (meeting accessibility standards), along with other visuals, as appropriate.

5.1.2. Neighborhood and Abutter Briefings, Meeting and Presentations

MassDOT and the project team will meet with abutters, neighbors, business owners, and stakeholders. Initially, members of the project team will visit direct abutters and neighborhoods with information about the project, inviting and welcoming their participation in the planning process. This effort will be coordinated with the City of Boston. As the project advances, these interests will continue to be invited to meetings and to provide comments on proposals and concepts.

MassDOT will mail information to direct project/neighborhood abutters at the outset of the project to invite them to sign up for electronic mail, notices, and updates. The team will provide postal mail and/or meet other accessibility needs on request. All meeting venues will be accessible and the team welcomes requests for adaptive equipment, such as assistive listening devices.

5.1.3. Institutional Briefings

The South Station area is home to numerous large and small businesses, the Federal Reserve Bank, Fidelity Investments, and other corporations. MassDOT and the project team have already begun to conduct briefings and discussions with these stakeholders and will invite them to participate in wider outreach as well to assure that they become familiar with wider interests.

5.1.4. Engaging Environmental Justice and Title VI Populations

The South Station Expansion project will benefit Environmental Justice communities by improving access to public transit, jobs, and other community services. As with other transportation projects, the development of a new layover facility as an element of the project has some potential to disproportionately affect Environmental Justice populations through land acquisition or other impacts. (See Section 8 for a discussion of the Layover Facility public process.)

The Project team will emphasize efforts to reach Environmental Justice and Title VI populations. This outreach will include activities to:

- work 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 at South Station and the adjacent bus station, local bus stops and to potential abutters (language approaches are under development and specific requests will be accommodated), and especially near potential layover facility sites;
- provide information to city, community, and neighborhood groups on the project, on meetings and on how to participate;
- provide interpreters, materials, and flyers in multiple languages, either on request, or as a regular service, depending on the populations engaging in project activities;
- translate the fact sheets into Chinese or other appropriate languages, on request, and make these materials available on the website and in print;
- provide accommodations such as taped meetings for the visually impaired and audio equipment at meetings and workshops for the hearing impaired, upon request, and;
- meet with community groups to present information on the project and collect input and comments.

Analyses undertaken as part of the project will identify and assess potential adverse effects; determine whether adverse effects can be avoided, minimized, or mitigated; and assess benefits versus burdens on the environment and community.

5.1.5. Federal Railroad Administration Interface

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the federal agency overseeing the grant awarded to MassDOT to undertake the South Station Expansion planning. MassDOT will coordinate its deliverables and reporting, in accordance with grant requirements. FRA brings a national and corridor perspective to the project.

5.2. Communication Tools

5.2.1. Project Website

MassDOT maintains a website for the South Station Expansion project:

<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/southstationexpansion/Home.aspx>

The project website will include frequent updates and will feature meeting notices, project documents, links to media and other services; and ways to contact the project team. Materials prepared by the team for the project will meet MassDOT's accessibility standards (See 5.2.3: Supporting Materials).

5.2.2. Email and Print Notices

The project team will use a number of methods for communicating with the public about project meetings, issues and publications. The project team is developing 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);
- public officials;
- neighbors, stakeholders, and those who attend meetings or request to be added to the database;
- people who comment on project materials or documents, and;
- agency representatives.

The team will mail an invitation to identifiable site abutters to join the email database to facilitate frequent communication.

A QR code was established for the project to facilitate communication, linking directly to the project website via the use of smart phone technology. As the project planning advances, the team will establish additional means for commuters and visitors to South Station to sign up for project information, participate in open houses or questionnaires, using high visibility materials, signage, or a booth in the station itself.



MassDOT intends to notify the project database at least three weeks before all public meetings. Meeting reminders will also be sent.

5.2.3. Supporting Materials

MassDOT and the project team will produce a series of project fact sheets, approximately quarterly or else to coincide with major project milestones. The fact sheets will provide information on project alternatives being evaluated, decisions or recommendations, and continuing ways to participate in the project. The fact sheets will be in simple and easy-to-read formats. The materials will be translated on request. The fact sheets will be posted on the website for easy printing (in PDF format, so they can be downloaded and/or shared electronically) and distributed at project meetings and presentations. Materials will be produced in accessible formats.

In addition to project documents such as technical memoranda and reports, presentations will be posted on the project website (under Documents) and made available in print format, large print, or other languages on request. Project questionnaires or surveys may be used to gather opinions from South Station users, commuters and visitors, as well as layover alternative site neighbors.

5.2.4. Social Marketing

MassDOT is increasingly using social media to provide information on projects and initiatives. Our team will prepare information for MassDOT to distribute on a regular basis. Use of social media can help incorporate new voices into the project, from young system users to those with low English proficiency to Environmental Justice populations. In particular, the team will use regional media to share information about the project since the expansion of South Station will also improve Amtrak service on the Northeast Corridor.

MassDOT and the project team plan to use a variety of social marketing techniques to keep the public engaged in the project. The team will develop a calendar and post regular updates through a variety of social media, including the MassDOT blog, Twitter feed and Flickr account. The team will also work with the Project Manager to consider other techniques such as live chats and video blogs about the project.

6. Outreach and Coordination Tools and Issues

In addition to the techniques outlined in Section 4.0, the SSX team will be assessing impacts that may affect particular groups or populations and will also coordinate with ongoing or planned projects near the expansion project.

6.1. Technical Coordination

MassDOT will meet regularly with the various departments within the agency (including the MBTA), and Amtrak to coordinate the technical planning, operations and design elements of the project.

6.2. Media

Project meetings and events will be publicized through media advisories and the use of other social media by MassDOT, which has established protocols. Because South Station serves both local and Northeast Corridor intercity passengers, the media list will be regional in nature and will include professional industry publications. Regional, diverse (including non-English language) media will be incorporated in the list. The project database will also include members of the media as an additional way to communicate information about the project.

6.3. Coordination with Ongoing Projects

MassDOT will coordinate its project planning on a regular basis with the MBTA, Amtrak, Commuter Rail operations, the City of Boston (BRA and BTD), the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, MassPort, Federal Railroad Administration, and other US DOT agencies, including the Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission, existing and potential developers, and with state and federal environmental regulatory agencies.

7. Responsiveness

As with many complex and complicated public projects, stakeholders will be asking questions and expressing concerns in a variety of different venues and through various communication tools. It is vital that the project team centralize and respond to these issues in a timely and consistent manner. The team will ensure that issues are addressed and incorporated into project planning.

7.1. Meeting Summaries

The project team has developed a template for meeting summaries, which will be developed for all meetings involving this project. Meeting summaries will be shared by project team members, and staff will track action items and log issues. Meeting summaries for public meetings will be posted to the project website.

7.2. Issues Tracking

The project team maintains an issue tracking system to manage and maintain a list of public issues and concerns about the project. Project staff will use this system to create, update, and resolve reported

concerns, as well as develop resolutions to common problems. These issues will be coded by theme. Common questions will be incorporated into the project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), available on the webpage.

8. Layover Facility Public Process

As part of this project, MassDOT will evaluate and conduct an alternatives analysis to select a site for a mid-day layover facility, a location where trains are stored between trips during the middle of the day between morning and evening rush hours. The public process around this effort will involve the outreach and communication tools outlined above. The siting will be undertaken in five steps:

1. **Vehicle Layover Needs Assessment and Program:** The team will catalogue existing facilities, undertake an assessment of needs for this facility, analyze pertinent railroad operations, and propose a program (set of operating procedures) for the facility.
2. **Layover Facility Alternatives Analysis:** This analysis will include a catalogue of potential alternative sites and an assessment of access to the site. The team will work with the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) to develop evaluation criteria then screen the alternatives against these criteria. The resulting list of sites will be included in an Alternatives Analysis Report.
3. **Review of the Alternatives Analysis:** MassDOT will host meetings with elected officials, neighborhood groups, residents, and abutters in the neighborhoods where there are potential, workable layover sites.
4. **Final Alternatives Analysis Report:** The team will develop a final report summarizing the alternatives, benefits and costs, public input, operational and other key factors. The report will be released for public review and comment.
5. **Preliminary Design of a Preferred Alternative:** After review of the Final Alternatives Analysis Report by relevant stakeholders, MassDOT will announce and begin design of a preferred mid-day layover facility site.

9. Summary

This plan is a flexible and dynamic approach that MassDOT and the project team have identified at the outset of the project. The team will work with the communities of interest to implement a robust public review process. We anticipate updating these strategies as the project advances. The team will regularly assess the efficacy of our outreach and, if required, will develop new strategies in concert with MassDOT. MassDOT welcomes comments on this plan and on its outreach through the duration of the project.