



Charles D. Baker, Governor
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor
Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary & CEO
Astrid Glynn, MassDOT Rail & Transit Administrator



To: MassDOT Board
From: Astrid Glynn, Rail and Transit Administrator
Re: Current Activities
Date: January 19, 2018

Transit:

- Technical assistance: Technical assistance was one of the initiatives that was discussed at the Program Preview meetings that MassDOT recently held with each Regional Transit Authority (RTA). As a follow up, MassDOT asked all RTAs to submit their requests for technical assistance grants that could help them frame service improvements and cost savings or establish facts that would be useful in their decision making. Three RTAs (the Pioneer Valley Regional Transit Authority, the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority, and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority) have submitted requests for projects that include an equity analysis of service changes, an operational review of the paratransit system, and an examination of possible new terminal locations.
- BusPlus Reallocation: The Rail and Transit Division issued a Request for Responses inviting providers of commuter and intercity bus service to submit proposals to lease one or more over-the-road coaches that are to be re-allocated by MassDOT and used in intercity or commuter service. The three over-the-road coaches that are being reallocated are part of MassDOT's BusPlus program and became available after TrueNorth Transit ceased regional intercity bus services and terminated their agreement with MassDOT. Public entities, private for-profit operators, and private non-profit organizations are eligible recipients. One of the provisions for any lease under this program is agreement that the operator will provide data to MassDOT and National Transit Database (NTD). Data submitted to NTD can increase the share that Massachusetts receives from Federal Transit formula funds. The deadline for submitting responses is February 2nd, 2018 at 3:00 PM.
- Recent Discretionary Federal Grant Awards: The Martha's Vineyard Regional Transit Authority (VTA) was recently awarded two discretionary grants - a LowNo grant (\$1.2M) and a grant for Energy Storage (\$545K). VTA also partnered with the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head in its successful pursuit of a

\$250,000 grant to upgrade electrical infrastructure at the Operations & Maintenance Center.

Rail:

- Rail Plan: The draft Massachusetts Rail Plan will be issued on January 29. The public comment period will begin with a public meeting in Worcester that evening. There will also be a legislative briefing. The Rail Plan is required by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). It is intended to provide an overview of the role of rail in the state, a description of the rail system and state support for rail, an outline of proposed passenger and freight rail investments, and an explanation of how the state coordinates with other states. Because Focus 40 and the Commuter Rail Vision studies are underway through a separate process, the Massachusetts Rail Plan does not focus on commuter rail but concentrates on intercity passenger rail, freight rail, and particular projects that MassDOT is advancing with the MBTA.
- Western MA Service: Mass DOT and Connecticut DOT continue to meet to explore ways to increase passenger rail options in Western MA, particularly between New Haven and Springfield and on the Knowledge Corridor.
- Berkshire Flyer: An outside section of the FY18 budget instructed MassDOT to form a Working Group to examine the concept of a Berkshire Flyer that would link Pittsfield and New York and be patterned after the seasonal weekend service provided that the MBTA now offers as the Cape Flyer. While there are significant differences between the rail options in the two areas (ex: MassDOT owns the Cape right of way; CSX owns the line that the Berkshire Flyer would likely use between Pittsfield and Albany) the Berkshire Flyer Working Group has been meeting monthly and anticipates submitting a report by March 1 as required by the budget provision.