



**MBTA South Coast Rail (SCR)
Noise Mitigation Program**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What does it mean to be noise “Impacted”?

A: “Impacted” means that the level of the noise from the trains at your location is such that it is likely to interfere with important activities that occur within the residence, for example a noise level high enough so as to interfere with sleep. It is likely that you hear many noises from outside your house today, but they do not actually interfere with the day-to-day activities in your house. The same is true for the train – just being able to hear the trains is not “impact.”

Q: How is the amount of Impact determined?

A: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which is the federal agency that monitors and regulates public transit systems, developed a series of guidelines that transit systems use to measure, evaluate, and predict noise levels from trains, and also provides guidance on how and when to mitigate those impacts. These guidelines were developed over a ten-year period through an expert peer review system that included the FTA, the EPA, the National Academy of Sciences and many acoustical engineers, social scientists, and health care professionals, and are now used by most major transit systems.

When preparing the noise assessment and determining the amount of impact, the acoustical experts evaluated:

- Distance from the track – noise levels decline quickly with distance
- Speed of the train at your location – trains generate different noise levels at different speeds
- Topography – intervening buildings or “hills” tend to reduce noise levels
- Ambient noise level – the FTA impact criteria compares the noise level from the trains to the existing noise levels in the area: a loud noise introduced into what is normally a quieter area is perceived as a greater impact than when that same noise is introduced into what is normally a noisy, urban environment.

Q: How do I apply to participate in the Program?

A: Potentially eligible properties were identified in the South Coast Rail 2013 Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) conducted by MassDOT. These property owners will be contacted in writing when their properties are eligible to participate in the Program. Accordingly, only properties identified in the FEIS will be able to apply for participation.

Q: Do I have to participate in the Program?

A: No. Participation in the Program is voluntary.

Q: What is a “dwelling unit”?

A: A dwelling unit is an independent, legally established residence. A single-family home has one (1) dwelling unit. An apartment building with four (4) apartments has four (4) dwelling units. The number of dwelling units is not determined by the number of bedrooms, the number of people living the building, or the presence of unpermitted living spaces.



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Q: How much funding will I receive?

A: Impacted homes are eligible to receive funding of up to \$5,000 per decibel of impact per dwelling unit not to exceed \$30,000 per dwelling unit. The final funding amount will be determined on the actual improvements you plan to make and the associated costs.

Q: What can I do with this funding?

A: Each property is evaluated to determine the available treatment options. Treatment options may include:

- Sound Insulation Treatments – installation of acoustically rated products to reduce the interior noise level of line-of-sight rooms
- Property Line Noise Walls – installation of an acoustically rated noise wall on homeowner property to provide noise reduction and visual screening
- Air-conditioning Systems – installation of ductless minisplit systems to allow homeowners to leave windows and doors closed
- Visual Screening/Solid Fencing – installation of landscaping or fencing to provide visual screening

Q: How much noise reduction will the mitigation work provide?

A: The amount of noise reduction will depend on the type of work that you choose to do. Sound insulation improvements such as insulating windows and doors and noise walls can provide significant reductions in the noise levels inside your home. Air conditioning, while not directly reducing the amount of noise in the house, will provide some noise reduction in summer months because you will be able to keep windows and doors closed in the summer.

Out-of-kind mitigation, such as solid fencing and landscaping, may have no actual effect on noise levels, but you may decide that it provides benefits that offset the additional noise. Accordingly, the MBTA will not make any guarantees about the effectiveness of the mitigation in reducing noise levels.

Q: Are there special requirements for historic homes?

A: Yes. In general work on historic buildings must be done in a manner that is consistent with its historic character. For example, new windows should match the existing historic windows as closely as possible in size and shape, should be wood, and should have the same divided light appearance as the existing windows. These requirements are detailed in the SCR Noise Mitigation Policy and Procedures Manual and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Copies of these documents will be provided to each eligible historic property owner. All work proposed on historic properties will be reviewed for compliance with the historic requirements prior to the MBTA approving payment of the mitigation funds.

Q: My property used to be a residence but has recently been converted to a business. Am I still eligible for mitigation funding?

A: No. Impacts that no longer exist because the building is no longer a residence, has fewer dwelling units than previously, is abandoned, or has been demolished are not eligible for mitigation.



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Q: I have recently installed new insulating windows in my house. Will the MBTA reimburse me for the cost of that work?

A: No. There is no reimbursement for previously completed work.

Q: How does the Program work?

A: The Program Team will contact property owners and schedule a site visit to provide a briefing about the Program and to document existing conditions in the residence. A Program Team member will provide a thorough overview of the Program, answer owner questions, discuss product options, when applicable, and review the required Program documents and participation requirements. After development of the work plan, a meeting will be scheduled with the owner to review the work plan and execute the legal agreements.

Q: What do I have to do to participate in the program?

A: Participating homeowners will be responsible for:

- Providing access to your home and property to Program staff for design assessment visits
- Selecting treatment option for your property
- Obtaining three (3) estimates for the cost of the work
- Meeting requirements for Historic Properties when applicable
- Executing a Noise Mitigation Agreement and Declaration of Restrictive Covenant with the MBTA
 - Noise Mitigation Agreement: This agreement outlines the responsibilities of the Program and the owner related to the noise mitigation improvements
 - Declaration of Restrictive Covenant: The covenant will grant the MBTA the operation of trains on the South Coast Rail line; and the owners will hold the MBTA harmless regarding these operations at whatever frequency or time of day they may occur, and at whatever noise level may be caused
- Hiring the Massachusetts licensed contractor of the approved estimate
- Performing the work on your property within the specified timeframe in the Noise Mitigation Agreement
- Notifying the Program when work is completed

Q: Do I need a lawyer to represent me in discussions with the MBTA about this program?

A: An attorney is not required, but you always have the right to consult with or be represented by an attorney, at your own expense, if you so choose. The MBTA cannot give you legal advice. Attorney's fees are not eligible costs for the noise mitigation funding.

Q: When will I receive the funds from the MBTA?

A: The MBTA will provide the funds to you in two payments. Once we have a signed agreement with you formalizing the amount to be paid and the work that you will do, MBTA will issue the first payment of 50% of the bid amount. When the work is completed as outlined in the approved scope of work and verified, the MBTA will issue the second payment of the remainder of the agreed upon bid price.



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Q: How many estimates do I need to obtain?

A: A minimum of three (3) estimates are required. All estimates for construction work must be from Massachusetts licensed contractors. The estimates will be reviewed to ensure the proposal includes the approved scope of work. The issuance of MBTA funding will be based on the lowest, responsive estimate.

Q: Is the cost of building permits required for the work eligible for funding under this program?

A: Yes. Building permits are required and the permit fees must be included in the contractors' estimates.

Q: Do I need an architect to design the improvements for me?

A: An architect is not required; however, you may hire an architect, engineer, or other design professional to help you select or design the improvements if you so choose. You may include reasonable costs for design services in your funding request.

Q: What if I incur unexpected costs after I receive the MBTA funds as I am doing the work?

A: The MBTA funding will include up to an additional 10% for contingencies over the estimated cost. Supporting documentation from the contractor will be required to outline the unforeseen condition prior to approval of the additional funding.

Q: Who will be responsible for inspecting and ensuring the quality of the contractor's work?

A: You, the property owner, are responsible. The MBTA will only inspect the work to verify that the agreed upon work was performed. For example, if we agreed to fund five new acoustic windows, we will verify five acoustic windows were installed. If your home is an historic resource, we will inspect the work to verify it conforms to the applicable requirements for modifications to historic resources. The MBTA will not supervise or inspect your contractor's work, nor will the MBTA guarantee the quality of your contractor's work in any way.

For any additional questions, please contact the SCR Noise Mitigation Program at (617) 449-7387 or email scrnoise@mbta.com.