



Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) Summary of Public Meetings

MassDOT filed a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) on South Coast Rail Phase 1 on January 31, 2018. MassDOT hosted two public meetings on the document. The purpose of the meetings was to present the DSEIR and collect public feedback on the proposed Phase 1. Although the presentations were very similar at both meetings, for clarity, the issues are summarized for each date, March 6 (#1) and March 19 (#2).

DSEIR PUBLIC MEETING #1

Location: UMass Dartmouth, Claire T. Carney Library, Dartmouth, MA

Date/Time: March 6, 2018, 6:30 PM

PRESENT

Elected and City Officials

Kirsten Bryan, *City of New Bedford*
Allin Frawley, *Middleborough Selectman*
Holly McNamara, *Somerset Selectman*

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

James Eng
Jean Fox
Rick Colón

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)

Kim Dobosz
Holly Palmgren

Project Team

Meredith Avery, VHB
Ken Caputo, VHB
Rick Carey, VHB
Charlie Passanisi, VHB
Jason Ross, VHB
Christopher Barnett, WSP
Bob Golledge, Golledge Strategies &
Solutions
Nancy Farrell, RVA
Sarah Paritsky, RVA

MEPA

Purvi Patel

Public Attendees: see page 10

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETING PRESENTATION ON MARCH 6

Hugh Dunn, SouthCoast Development Partnership, welcomed the audience and said the Partnership supports the phased approach to South Coast Rail (SCR). He introduced James Eng, MassDOT Rail and Transit. Mr. Eng thanked the attendees for participating in the DSEIR meeting. He said Governor Charlie Baker's promised in his State of the State address that there would be "no more lip service" about SCR. He explained that MassDOT has filed a DSEIR with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) office, which he thinks is the best he has seen in his 40-year career. Agencies and the public have until March 23 to submit comments on the DSEIR. Mr. Eng explained that MassDOT has to finish the project and begin Phase 1 service by November 2022.

Nancy Farrell, meeting moderator from RVA, reviewed the meeting guidelines. She explained that a summary of the meeting will be posted on the project website and submitted to MEPA. Ms. Farrell encouraged each person to submit written comments (forms were available at the meeting) to be on the record and to be included in a Response to Comments document. She introduced members of the project team. At a previous SCR public meeting, public comments did not begin until 90 minutes into the meeting due to extensive comments from elected officials. At this meeting, Ms. Farrell said she would recognize one elected official followed by a member of the public and continue alternating between the two. She asked attendees to keep their remarks to two minutes and noted that members of the team would stay afterwards to answer questions. Ms. Farrell began the presentation (which can be reviewed on the project website, www.mass.gov/southcoastrail) by outlining the agenda.

Jean Fox, MassDOT Project Manager, reviewed the history of the phased approach. She reiterated that the goal is to begin service by November 2022. The Full Build would have, at the earliest, a start date of 2030, and an estimated cost of \$3.2 billion, which is not currently available. Phase 1 service would provide a one-seat ride from Fall River and New Bedford to Boston years before Full Build service would begin. While significant resources are currently dedicated to Phase 1, MassDOT is obligated to complete the Full Build project. The environmental permitting is much simpler for Phase 1 since MassDOT owns the right-of-way and no wetland variances are required.

Ms. Fox reviewed the elements included in Phase 1:

-

- diesel trains - because they currently operate on the Middleborough Line and system-wide;
- reconstructing tracks common to both Phase 1 and the Full Build;
- upgrading the existing Middleborough Secondary track;
- two new layover facilities; and six new stations.

Ms. Fox explained the Southern Triangle refers to the area from Cotley Junction south to Fall River and New Bedford, and is a central element of both Phase 1 and the Full Build. She

identified the stations that were studied in the 2013 Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/R), and two new stations (the relocated Pilgrim Junction station in Middleborough and the relocated station in East Taunton). Ms. Fox explained that the bottom line cost of the full project will be \$3.2 billion; at a cost of \$935 million, MassDOT will construct 56% of the track miles required for the Full Build project at about one-third of the cost. There are escalation cost savings achieved by building the Southern Triangle elements now, which pay for the Middleborough Secondary improvements.

Rick Carey, VHB Project Manager, described how the Phase 1 preferred alternative was selected. Service alternatives were screened based on various factors, including: a one-seat ride to Boston; minimal environmental impacts; operational efficiencies; and the ultimate goal of having the project designed, permitted, constructed and operating by 2022. He said a secondary goal was not to preclude commuter service to Cape Cod, though studying increased service to Cape Cod is not part of the SCR project.

Mr. Carey summarized the Phase 1 proposed weekday service, which will be an extension of the existing Middleborough service. There are currently 24 trains per day (12 inbound, 12 outbound) that run to Middleborough/Lakeville. Phase 1 will include an extra train in each direction, totaling 26 trains per day (13 to Boston, 14 to New Bedford and 12 to Fall River). There will be three morning peak trains inbound (from Fall River and New Bedford) to Boston and three evening outbound peak trains. Taunton and Middleborough will receive six morning peak trains and six evening peak trains since the service to/from Fall River and New Bedford will pass through those communities.

Mr. Carey stated that the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) used a ridership model approved for Federal Transit Authority (FTA) projects to estimate ridership. CTPS also updated its initial ridership model for the Full Build. The analysis shows an estimated 3,220 daily one-way trips (837,200 one-way trips per year), which is about 41% of the ridership anticipated for the Full Build. The cost of Phase 1, \$935 million, is about one-third of the cost of the Full Build. He noted that any ridership is a reduction in vehicle miles traveled because transit removes cars from the road. The reduction in vehicle miles traveled is the equivalent of a vehicle driving 2.67 times around the earth each day. Mr. Carey said that between the start of Phase 1 service in 2022 and Full Build service in 2030, more than 7 million trips will be undertaken with Phase 1.

Mr. Carey said that said from a rider perspective, about 1 hour of travel time savings is estimated daily when compared to a typical drive from Taunton, New Bedford, or Fall River to Boston.

Meredith Avery, VHB, provided a summary of each major topic area of the DSEIR. The document summarizes the changes involved in providing Phase 1 service, focusing on the Middleborough Secondary rail line, that were not addressed in the FEIS/R.

- Land alteration – Most of this rail line already has freight service, so there is not a significant change to the land footprint. The DSEIR includes details about the changes to land around the stations.
- Traffic – The team understands that this is a concern for many communities. The document looks at changes to traffic with regard to grade crossings and stations. It analyzes intersections, new traffic entering stations, and how to mitigate impacts through turn lanes, signals, signal timing, bicycle and pedestrian access, and more. MassDOT continues to work with Middleborough and other communities to assess traffic effects. MassDOT is also reaching out to Taunton to make sure there is adequate bus service to the East Taunton station.
- Climate change – This topic was not previously included in FEIR/S. The document looks at more flooding incidents (anticipating the need to accommodate the 500-year flood zone instead of the 100-year flood zone), increased high heat days, and how to mitigate these effects. Phase 1 service will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 7,000 tons per year.
- Endangered species – There are several locations where there are habitats for state-listed species in proximity to Phase 1 project elements. The team is working with Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Protection agency (NHESP) on permitting and opportunities to increase wildlife passages across the active freight corridor. The team does not expect to have an effect on any species of concern.
- Hazardous Materials – The team does not anticipate moving high volumes of hazardous materials, and MassDOT is working under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan to comply with state regulations.
- Environmental Justice (EJ) – This section looks at the effect of SCR on minority, low income, and/or Limited English Proficiency populations. The project will not have a disproportionate effect on those communities. An EJ community in Middleborough along the existing Commuter Rail line is included in the document even though it is not part of the study area. The project also aims to bring transit service to EJ communities in Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford to help residents access other parts of the region and state. These benefits will begin to be realized in 2022 with Phase 1 service, much earlier than the Full Build.
- Wetlands and waterways – The permitting process is very lengthy for a wetlands variance. The team worked very hard to minimize impacts by selecting a route and modifying the design. There has been a dramatic reduction in estimated impacts. This means the project can work with individual communities (and has already coordinated with eight communities) on wetlands mitigation, instead of working at the state level.
- Noise and vibration – This is an important topic for residents who live near the rail lines. FTA and the MBTA have guidance for analyzing and mitigating for noise and vibration impacts. A noise specialist, Jason Ross, was available to address any specific concerns or policy. Ms. Avery noted electric trains that will operate during the Full Build will be noisier because they travel at faster speeds, so mitigation for the Full Build will incorporate a higher level than what is required for Phase 1. However, MassDOT will build all mitigation required by the start of Phase 1 service in 2022.

- Smart growth – New transit service in a community creates pressure for growth. Smart growth is a way for communities to make up-front decisions about how that growth will be made. MassDOT has provided \$1.7 million in technical assistance to communities to help with planning and zoning, and those commitments will continue through Phase 1.
- Air Quality – National air quality standards set limits on safe emissions. The analysis has been modified from the FEIS/R based on diesel engines. Phase 1 will achieve a 7,000-ton greenhouse gas reduction with more people using transit. The project will meet all other air quality standards.
- Cultural Resources – This refers to both historic and archaeological resources, including historic districts and buildings. The team is working with the State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, as well as federal agencies, to be sure there are no negative effects on historic resources. This will require more intensive archaeological surveys in some locations.

Ms. Avery reiterated that state and federal agency coordination is continuing on permitting processes. Four coordination meetings have been held so far to facilitate decision-making. Meetings will continue throughout final design phase.

Ms. Fox reviewed the benefits of Phase 1: service in 2022; air quality, economic, and smart growth benefits will happen much sooner than with the Full Build; active rail lines owned by MassDOT will be upgraded for commuter rail and will have Positive Train Control; a major reduction in wetlands impacts; and a solid foundation for the Full Build project. Ms. Fox said that funding for the Full Build has not yet been identified but building the Southern Triangle will facilitate construction of the Full Build.

Ms. Farrell reviewed the next steps and noted that the comment period expires on March 23. While the permitting and design processes advance, early construction will continue as needed. Ms. Farrell reviewed where to access the DSEIR: on the project website (www.mass.gov/southcoastrail), and print copies are available at 36 local libraries. Copies of the Executive Summary are available at the meeting and also in Spanish and Portuguese on the website. The document on the website is also available for the visually impaired. This presentation will also be posted to the website. She outlined how to comment on the document.

Ms. Farrell invited elected officials and public attendees to provide comments and ask questions on an alternating basis. The project team will prepare a summary of the comments submitted at the meeting, as this is not a public hearing. She encouraged commenters to submit written comments formally to MEPA so they will be formally considered and included in any response document. Following the public comment session, the moderator thanked the participants for attending, reminded them of the comment period deadline and the March 19 public meeting in Taunton, and concluded the meeting.

COMMENTS FROM MEETING #1

Selectman Allin Frawley, Middleborough Board of Selectmen, said the Board of Selectmen voted to oppose Phase 1 service. He said that Middleborough was excluded from the process and his requests were ignored. He read a letter and indicated it would be submitted as part of the MEPA process. The SCR Task Force has not met in over two years. There is no traffic mitigation, and people will not drive south to board a northbound train. He said SCR is reducing parking spots from 800 at the current station to 500 at the new station. He said the project reduces the number of communities that can access transit. He noted there are no opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD) at the new station location. His additional concerns included the evaluation of the intersection of Routes 28 and 105, the intersection at the entrance to the Pilgrim Junction station site, impervious materials, potential for stormwater impacts to the Town's wellhead protection area (Zone II) at the proposed Pilgrim Junction Station, and assurances and identified resources for completing the Full Build.

Paul Chenard, an Easton resident, provided comments about amenities for SCR through Stoughton and Easton. He is supportive and would like the prospect of walking to a station. He would like to see the inclusion of bike and multi-use paths along the Phase 1 and Full Build routes. He would like a multi-use path to be built sooner than later.

Holly McNamara, a Selectman in Somerset, provided comments on behalf of herself, not the Board of Selectmen, because there has been no official vote. She is supportive of expanding rail service to the South Coast. She is also President and Chair of Hyperloop Massachusetts. She explained what Hyperloop technology is, and sees it as a supplement to, not replacement for, SCR. Hyperloop would transmit cargo and passengers from the South Coast to Boston, door to door, on-demand, autonomously, and can travel underground. She said her team was chosen as a winner in a recent competition and received support by elected officials. She has had great conversations with MassDOT and the Governor but has not received any official support. She hopes to continue the conversation in parallel with SCR.

Robert LaTrémouille requested a copy of the DSEIR on a USB/thumb drive. He said the team is doing a bad job of communicating with Middleborough and Lakeville. He suggested that MassDOT add access to the station from Route 28 as well. He suggested studying whether this would help reduce impacts on Route 105. Mr. LaTrémouille suggested using the overflow parking area as shared parking for nights and weekends. He said Lakeville could benefit from taxes by replacing tax exempt parking lots with taxable housing. He encouraged MassDOT to sell the existing station site to Middleborough and Lakeville.

Scott Bernard, a resident of Middleborough, said he agrees with Chairman Frawley. He and his wife ride the Commuter Rail to Boston daily and spend over \$400/month. He described regular delays due to deficiencies of the rail line, and not just for extreme weather. He said during normal days it is hard to achieve a 55-minute travel time. By adding more service, he worries the MBTA would double the deficiencies of the track and provide inferior service with only one additional train. The new Pilgrim Junction station would be the fifth station headed inbound. He encouraged the team to visit Montello station (currently the fifth station) during weekday

rush hour. Standing for an hour and five minutes will not be doable. He said this project increases his inclination to drive to Quincy Adams and take the MBTA Red Line.

Ms. Fox said she recognizes that there are issues with crowding. She said the MBTA is looking at bilevel cars and potentially adding a car to the trainset to help accommodate additional passenger demand from Phase 1. Ms. Farrell added that there could be express trains to help with this issue, too.

Larry Pare, of Fall River, said many drivers from Fall River sit in traffic on Routes 24 and 44. Many Fall River representatives and residents are supportive of the train. He suggested making improvements where they are needed. He said he does not expect MassDOT to come up with billions of dollars to build the Stoughton Electric alternative. He has reached out to community groups with Ms. Fox and other elected officials to build support. He said service should start soon and then improvements can be made as necessary. He added that if Fall River does not get Phase 1, it will have nothing for a very long time.

Paul Chasse, Realtors Association of Southeastern Massachusetts and Rail to Boston Coalition, said he will formally submit testimony. He thanked the Baker-Polito Administration for a fair and equitable project. He said there is no magic wand, but this project can be done more quickly and far less expensively. He said there are impacts, but there are positives for the whole region, including Middleborough (reduced congestion, less parking because residents of the Southern Triangle will not need to drive north to Middleborough). He said the South Coast needs options and service sooner. The Rail to Boston Coalition will push the Baker Administration and local cities and towns to continue to work with MassDOT to get this through to fruition.

LaVar M. Williams is a “super commuter” from Washington, DC, to the South Coast. He thanked the Coalition and supports the project. He asked what he can do at the local level to help legislative efforts to move this forward. He supports transparency and said he will submit his formal comments.

Steve Voluckas, of Fairhaven, offered some recommendations and said he would submit a comment letter. He has previously suggested service to Providence, but this is not part of the current study. He thinks Taunton has been eliminated from the Phase 1 service area. He suggests reconstructing the Attleboro line and said service could be started sooner than 2022. He said the 6:18 train from Attleboro could continue to Boston instead of turning around, and it would serve Taunton. Connections west would also be beneficial; Amtrak connects Providence to New York in three hours. He thinks Taunton residents would prefer service to Providence instead of Boston. He asked why Pilgrim Junction station has no mention of Cape service.

Mr. Carey said the purpose of SCR is to bring service from the South Coast region to Boston. On Cape Flyer service, he said the team has been meeting with the Town of Lakeville to discuss using the existing station for Cape Flyer service or adding a platform at Pilgrim Junction.

Selectman Frawley asked if the Middleborough Secondary would be at capacity with 26 trains, and how the Cape Flyer could be added to that line. Mr. Carey said SCR service does not preclude Cape Flyer service.

Norm Orrall, a resident of Lakeville, said he feels that the second entrance at Pilgrim Junction should be investigated, at least for pedestrian access. He also asked to confirm that funding would be provided to all towns with stations. He would like Lakeville to receive funding for smart growth. He asked if service would benefit the Middleborough EJ population since the new station would be closer? Ms. Avery said the Middleborough EJ community already has access to service today; she will look to see if there are added benefits. Mr. Orrall asked if engines parked at the end of the line now will move elsewhere. Ms. Fox said there would be two new layover facilities at the end of each line, and she added that any diesel engine is required to be turned off and plugged in so it cannot idle all night. Ms. Fox said she has begun working with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), a partner for technical assistance, to have funding available for open space planning, housing production planning, TOD, and more. This Technical Assistance (TA) will begin again soon.

Former Mayor Scott W. Lang thanked the team for its hard work over the past few years, and he thanked the Governor and Lieutenant Governor and Secretary for looking at phased service. He said he is 1,000% supportive of Phase 1. He believes that residents near the Stoughton route are happy that trains won't come through their towns. He believes the Full Build will never happen because of the public opposition and money required to complete the project. He provided some comments to enhance the plan. He suggested thinking of SCR as part of a regional train system, instead of just service to the South Coast. He believes Cape Cod should be part of this project, and the Cape Cod Flyer should be used on a regular basis to reduce the number of cars on the road and as an experiment for ridership. He thinks the South Coast includes Wareham, Buzzards Bay, and Hyannis. He expressed his disappointment that Middleborough and Lakeville don't feel they have had sufficient input and suggested adjusting the location of the Pilgrim Junction station by a quarter-mile. He believes the people who live adjacent to the existing station moved there so they could walk to the station. He said there should be a downtown Taunton component in Phase 1 in case the Full Build does not happen. He said the MBTA should re-look at the constrained track section at JFK. He believes the Attleboro line is a key component and thinks this train system can easily attach to connect to Providence and points east (New York). He does not believe a one-seat ride is a requirement and supports changing trains. He said Route 24/I-93 is dead on arrival – it does not work anymore. He said he will submit his comments in writing. He encouraged the team to have better communication with Middleborough and Lakeville.

Alex Silva, of Fall River, thanked the team for its efforts. He said he hears comments that people won't use SCR. He graduated from UMass Dartmouth six years ago and had trouble finding a job in the region, as most entry level opportunities were in Boston. With an inefficient and unreliable vehicle, he had to move to have access to Commuter Rail.

Bill Reidy, a resident of Westwood, grew up in Wareham and previously lived in Easton. He asked some questions about the Old Colony Rail line between Braintree and South Station. He said it is largely a single-track railway and asked if anywhere else in the Commuter Rail system there are four lines (Greenbush, Kingston, New Bedford, Fall River) that go through a single track. Ms. Fox said no, and staff refer to it as “the pinch point.” He asked what the standard service is. Mr. Carey said three peak period trains, and one train per hour during the off-peak. Mr. Ready said he does not support Phase 1 unless the Full Build is guaranteed. He mentioned development in Quincy and asked if there is any consideration for building another line. Ms. Fox said there is not at this time. Mr. Ready suggested that a solution is needed for Braintree and Quincy. He added that he is concerned about impact on potential Buzzards Bay service, and he noted that the CTPS studies assumed an extension of Buzzards Bay service from Middleborough. He said the shuttle service at Middleborough Station does not have a commitment (the platform is optional). He said smart growth and TOD is a goal and mentioned that Middleborough has a 40R-designated community. He suggested looking at shuttle service from Buzzards Bay to Middleborough. He said he supports SCR overall but Phase 2 (Full Build) is necessary. Ms. Fox said the 40R designation for Lakeville will not change.

Ian Tompkins, a Fall River resident, said he has been following the project over the past year. He said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recommended the Stoughton Electric Route as it is best, except for cost. He said he is elated that rail service will start soon, but he does not think it is fair and equitable that the South Coast cannot get a few billion dollars.

Remy Nikka said she previously commuted from Dartmouth to Back Bay for college and an internship. She said it was faster for her to drive to Holbrook to get reliable parking rather than drive to Middleborough and then take public transit. She asked that if Governor Baker says we are done with lip service, what commitments does the region have that the Full Build will actually happen. She is concerned that if Phase 1 is built, the motivation will go away.

Steve McNamara moved to Freetown three years ago. The original study was done before his neighborhood was built along the right-of-way. He has concerns about safety for his children and noise and vibration. He expressed concern about having 26 trains pass so close to his house and noted that only two go by today. Ms. Fox said she and Mr. Ross met with Mr. McNamara and reviewed criteria for noise and vibration mitigation. She confirmed that Mr. McNamara’s home was built after the initial analysis was conducted so additional work is required. She said safety near the tracks is very important and clarified there will be 13, not 26 trains. Ms. Fox said the MBTA does a very thorough safety analysis and will update prior studies. She reminded the audience that no one should ever be in a right-of-way ever; it is illegal. She described Operation Lifesaver, which educates children and communities about safety.

Tom Lowney, a resident of Fall River, said he has commuted to Boston on and off since 1985 by bus, train, and automobile. He thanked the team for its efforts to get SCR done as soon as possible. He said it might not be best for every community, but it is better than the current

situation and it is time to make this happen. He described challenges with accessing Logan airport from the South Coast. He said that Phase 2 needs to happen and should be guaranteed. He asked for support from officials. He said all of the environmental studies have been the Achilles heel to this project, and cited USEPA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Selectman McNamara said her background is in civil engineering. She said there is no way to capture all of this work to make this come to a reality. She said whether Phase 2 happens or not, there is a reason for every decision that has been made about Phase 1 and that each decision has been carefully thought through. She said nothing is ever perfect, but it is a huge start and is supported by the Governor. She supports the project.

Public Attendees at Meeting #1:

K. Alden	Robert Coutts, <i>Skanska</i>	Norm Orrall
Alan R. Anacheke-Nasemann, <i>USACE</i>	Hugh Dunn, <i>SouthCoast Development Partnership</i>	Amira Patterson, Boston MBTA
Kelly Andrade, <i>Office of Senator Rodrigues</i>	Tim Dunn, <i>WBSM News</i>	Larry Pare
Jennette Barnes, <i>Standard Times</i>	Rene Fleurent	Victor Perginin
Scott Bernard	Deasiah Gresham	Bill Reidy
Rudy Botros	Freeman Hill	Anthony Sapienza, <i>New Bedford Economic Development Council (NBEDC)</i>
Priscilla Chapman, <i>Taunton River Watershed Alliance</i>	Scott W. Lang	Alexander Silva
Paul Chasse, <i>Realtor Association of Southeastern Massachusetts</i>	Robert J. LaTrémouille	James Anthony Silveira
Paul Chenard, <i>Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)</i>	Phil Logan, <i>SMART</i>	Daniel B. Smith
Timothy Cole, <i>Rail to Boston Coalition</i>	Anne Louro	Steve Smith
Skylar Cowley, <i>Office of Rep. Paul Schmid</i>	Thomas Lowney	Patrick Sullivan
	Christine MacNeil	Ian Tompkins
	Joe McCarthy	Steve Voluckas
	Mary McCarthy	LaVar Williams
	Nancy McCarthy	
	Steve McNamara	
	Paul Mission, <i>SRPEDD</i>	
	Allen Monteiro	
	Remy Nikka	
	Roland Normandy	

DSEIR PUBLIC MEETING #2

Location: Martin Middle School, Taunton, MA

Date/Time: March 19, 2018, 6:30 PM

PRESENT

Elected and City Officials:

Senator Marc Pacheco
Mayor Thomas Hoyer, *Taunton*
Allin Frawley, *Middleborough Board of
Selectmen*
Stephen McKinnon, *Middleborough Board of
Selectmen*
David Pottier, *Taunton City Council*
Jeanne Quinn, *Taunton City Council*

MassDOT:

Jim Eng
Jean Fox
Jacque Goddard

MBTA:

Kim Dobosz
Trish Foley
Holly Palmgren

Project Team:

Meredith Avery, VHB
Rick Carey, VHB
Charlie Passanisi, VHB
Jason Ross, VHB
Lars Carlson, VHB
Mike Stoffel, HNTB
Christopher Barnett, WSP
Bob Golledge, Golledge Strategies &
Solutions
Nancy Farrell, RVA
Sarah Paritsky, RVA

MEPA:

Purvi Patel

Public Attendees: see page 20

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETING PRESENTATION ON MARCH 19

Mayor Tom Hoyer welcomed the meeting participants to Taunton. He said that the City has worked with MassDOT on several iterations of proposed South Coast Rail service, but he believes the City has been cut out of the equation with the elimination in Phase 1 of the downtown station and the move of the East Taunton station to a location on the edge of Berkley. The decision affects economic development in the City. Mayor Hoyer said this is particularly disappointing since he does not believe there will ever be a Phase 2.

Mayor Hoyer suggested that limited access to transit will mean it is not available from downtown Taunton, the TOD district will not develop, and this is a blow to the City. The Myles

Standish Industrial Park has contributed to local employment but is a 20-30 minute drive from the proposed station, and limiting better transit access will affect future economic development.

Mayor Hoyer suggested that Phase 1 will serve half the ridership of the Full Build. Phase 1 will not address social justice issues by providing equal access to transportation. Phase 1 is a second-rate plan for Bristol County. It is not likely to take cars off the road since Taunton residents will not drive south to a station to travel north. The Stoughton route is superior on every criteria. MassDOT should do it once and do it right. Bristol County does not get a fraction of the infrastructure funding of the communities closer to Boston.

Nancy Farrell, meeting moderator, introduced James Eng, MassDOT Rail and Transit. Mr. Eng said he spoke to the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) about a potential shuttle to bring people from Downtown Taunton to the proposed East Taunton station in response to the city's concerns. MassDOT will continue to work on this concept.

Ms. Farrell said that the presentation would be very similar to the March 6 meeting information, with some additional information regarding the City of Taunton.¹ Ms. Farrell reviewed the meeting guidelines. She explained that a summary of the meeting will be posted on the project website and submitted to MEPA. Ms. Farrell encouraged each person to submit written comments (forms were available at the meeting) to be on the record and to be included in a Response to Comments document. At a previous SCR public meeting, comments from members of the public did not begin until 90 minutes into the meeting due to extensive remarks from elected officials. At this meeting, Ms. Farrell said she would recognize one elected official followed by a member of the public and continue alternating between the two. She asked attendees to keep their remarks to two minutes and noted that members of the team would stay afterwards to answer questions. Ms. Farrell began the presentation (which can be reviewed on the project website, www.mass.gov/southcoastrail) by outlining the agenda.

Jean Fox, MassDOT Project Manager, reviewed the history of the phased approach. She reiterated that the goal is to begin service by November 2022. The Full Build would have, at the earliest, a start date of 2030, and an estimated cost of \$3.2 billion, which is not currently available. Phase 1 service would provide a one-seat ride from Fall River and New Bedford to Boston years before Full Build service would begin. While resources are currently dedicated to Phase 1, MassDOT is obligated to complete the Full Build project. The environmental permitting is much simpler for Phase 1 since MassDOT owns the right-of-way and no wetland variances are required.

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layover facilities; and six new stations. Ms. Fox explained the Southern Triangle refers to the area from Cotley Junction south to Fall River and New Bedford, and it is a central element of service for both Phase 1 and the Full Build. She identified the stations that were studied in the 2013 Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/R), and two new stations (the Pilgrim Junction station in Middleborough and the relocated station in East Taunton). Ms. Fox explained that the bottom line cost of the full project will be \$3.2 billion; at a cost of \$935 million for Phase 1, MassDOT can construct 56% of the track miles required for the Full Build project at about one-third of the cost. There are escalation cost savings achieved by building the Southern Triangle elements now, which offset the cost of the Middleborough Secondary improvements.

Ms. Fox explained that the proposed East Taunton station better aligns with the Phase 1 route. (The Middleborough Secondary crosses into East Taunton at Cotley Junction; the Full Build will incorporate a downtown Taunton Station.) The proposed East Taunton Station is 2.9 miles from the Full Build Downtown Station. She noted that the proposed Pilgrim Junction Station is 0.7 miles from the existing Middleborough/Lakeville Station.

Ms. Fox provided information about the cost of South Coast Rail and comparable project costs. She said the Greenbush line, which opened ten years ago, was built with approximately \$553 million in state funding. SCR is also being proposed with state funds, as federal funds are largely unavailable (excluding limited funding for three bridges).

Rick Carey, VHB Project Manager, described how the Phase 1 preferred alternative was selected by reviewing the Summary of Alternatives chapter of the DSEIR. Service alternatives were screened based on various factors, including: a one-seat ride to Boston; minimal environmental impacts; operational efficiencies; and the ultimate goal of having the project designed, permitted, constructed and operating by 2022. He said a secondary goal was not to preclude commuter service to Cape Cod, though service to Cape Cod is not part of the SCR project.

Mr. Carey summarized the Phase 1 proposed weekday service, which is essentially an extension of the existing Middleborough service. There are currently 24 trains per day (12 inbound, 12 outbound). Phase 1 will include an extra train in each direction, totaling 26 trains per day (13 each way, with 14 to/from New Bedford and 12 to/from Fall River). There will be three morning peak trains inbound to Boston from Fall River and New Bedford and three evening outbound peak trains to each city. Taunton and Middleborough will receive six morning peak trains and six evening peak trains since the service to/from Fall River and New Bedford will pass through those communities.

Mr. Carey said the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) used a ridership model approved for Federal Transit Authority (FTA) projects to estimate ridership. CTPS also updated its initial ridership model for the Full Build. The analysis shows an estimated 3,220 daily one-way trips (837,200 one-way trips per year), which is about 41% of the ridership anticipated for the Full Build. The cost of Phase 1, \$935 million, is about one-third of the cost of the Full Build. He noted that any ridership is a reduction in vehicle miles traveled because transit removes cars

from the road. The reduction in vehicle miles traveled is the equivalent of a vehicle driving 2.67 times around the earth each day. Mr. Carey said that between the start of Phase 1 service in 2022 and Full Build service in 2030, more than 7 million trips will be undertaken with Phase 1.

Mr. Carey said that said from a rider perspective, about 1 hour of travel time savings is estimated daily when compared to a typical highway drive from Taunton, New Bedford, or Fall River to Boston.

Meredith Avery, VHB, provided a summary of each major topic area of the DSEIR. The document summarizes the changes involved in providing Phase 1 service, focusing on the Middleborough Secondary rail line, that were not addressed in the FEIS/R.

- Land alteration – Most of this rail line already has freight service, so there is not a significant change to the land footprint. The DSEIR includes details about the changes to land around the stations.
- Traffic – The team understands that this is a concern for many communities. The document looks at changes to traffic with regard to grade crossings and stations. It analyzes intersections, new traffic entering stations, and how to mitigate impacts through turn lanes, signals, signal timing, bicycle and pedestrian access, and more. MassDOT continues to work with Middleborough and other communities to assess traffic effects. MassDOT is also reaching out to Taunton to make sure there is adequate bus service to the East Taunton station.
- Climate change – This topic was not previously included in FEIR/S. The document looks at more flooding incidents (anticipating the need to accommodate the 500-year flood zone instead of the 100-year flood zone), increased high heat days, and how to mitigate these effects. Phase 1 service will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 7,000 tons per year.
- Endangered species – There are several locations where there are habitats for state-listed species. The team is working with Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Protection agency (NHESP) on permitting and opportunities to increase wildlife passages across the active freight corridor. The team does not expect to have an effect on any species of concern.
- Hazardous Materials – The team does not anticipate moving high volumes of hazardous materials, and MassDOT is working under the Massachusetts Contingency Plan to comply with state regulations.
- Environmental Justice (EJ) – This section looks at the effect of SCR on minority, low income, and/or Limited English Proficiency populations. The project will not have a disproportionate effect on those communities. An EJ community in Middleborough along the existing Commuter Rail line is included in the document even though it is not part of the study area. The project also aims to bring transit service to EJ communities in Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford to help residents access other parts of the region and state. These benefits will begin to be realized in 2022 with Phase 1 service, much earlier than the Full Build.

- Wetlands and waterways – The permitting process is very lengthy for a wetlands variance. The team worked very hard to minimize impacts by selecting a route and modifying the design. There has been a dramatic reduction in estimated impacts. This means the project can work with individual communities (and has already coordinated with eight communities) on wetlands mitigation, instead of working at the state level.
- Noise and vibration – This is an important topic for residents who live near the rail lines. FTA and the MBTA have guidance for analyzing and mitigating for noise and vibration impacts. A noise specialist, Jason Ross, was available to address any specific concerns or policy. Ms. Avery noted electric trains that will operate during the Full Build will be noisier because they travel at faster speeds, so mitigation for the Full Build will incorporate a higher level than what is required for Phase 1. However, MassDOT will build all mitigation required by the start of Phase 1 service in 2022.
- Smart growth – New transit service in a community creates pressure for growth. Smart growth is a way for communities to make up-front decisions about how that growth will be made. MassDOT has provided \$1.7 million in technical assistance to communities to help with planning and zoning, and those commitments will continue through Phase 1.
- Air Quality –Phase 1 will achieve a 7,000-ton greenhouse gas reduction with more people using transit. The project will meet all other air quality standards.
- Cultural Resources – This refers to both historic and archaeological resources, including historic districts and buildings. The team is working with the State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, as well as federal agencies, to be sure there are no negative effects on historic resources. This will require more intensive archaeological surveys in some locations.

Ms. Avery reiterated that state and federal agency coordination is continuing on permitting processes. Four coordination meetings have been held so far to facilitate decision-making. Meetings will continue throughout final design phase.

Ms. Fox reviewed the benefits of Phase 1: service in 2022; air quality, economic, and smart growth benefits will happen much sooner than with the Full Build; active rail lines owned by MassDOT will be upgraded for commuter rail and will have Positive Train Control; a major reduction in wetlands impacts; and a solid foundation for the Full Build project. Ms. Fox said that funding for the Full Build has not yet been identified but building the Southern Triangle will facilitate construction of the Full Build.

Ms. Farrell reviewed the next steps and noted that the comment period expires on March 23. While the permitting and design processes advance, early construction will continue as needed. Ms. Farrell reviewed where to access the DSEIR: on the project website (www.mass.gov/southcoastrail), and print copies are available at 36 local libraries. Copies of the Executive Summary are available at the meeting and also in Spanish and Portuguese on the website. The document on the website is also available for the visually impaired. This presentation will also be posted to the website. She outlined how to comment on the document.

Ms. Farrell invited elected officials and public attendees to provide comments and ask questions on an alternating basis. The project team will prepare a summary of the comments submitted at the meeting, as this is not a public hearing. She encouraged commenters to submit written comments formally to MEPA so they will be formally considered and included in any response document. Following the public comment session (summarized below), the moderator thanked the participants for attending, reminded them of the comment period deadline and concluded the meeting.

COMMENTS FROM MEETING #2

Selectman Frawley² shared comments similar to his March 6 meeting remarks. He stated that the Middleborough Board of Selectmen had voted to oppose the project, and invited Taunton, Berkley, and Lakeville to join Middleborough in opposing Phase 1 of SCR. He said he sees no public transit benefits and expressed concern about traffic accidents and a reduction in the size of the parking lots at the proposed Pilgrim Junction Station. He said there is no plan for transit-oriented development or smart growth at the site of the Pilgrim Junction Station. He thinks the project harms his community and puts the Full Build at risk of ever being completed.

Selectman Steve McKinnon, Vice Chairman of the Middleborough Board of Selectmen, asked for MassDOT to complete traffic studies. He does not think the study that MassDOT completed is sufficient. He expressed concern about paving impervious materials over a parcel in a Water Resources Protection District (WRPD) zone. He referenced an EJ population between the Rotary and Route 28, and said he believes it will be impacted by increased vehicle traffic in violation of Executive Order 12898. Four of the most dangerous intersections in the state are on the Route 105 corridor. He said if MassDOT constructs the flyover project at the Rotary, it will take some pressure off Route 105 and the Town of Middleborough could tolerate the Pilgrim Junction Station and open up some land for commercial development. He said he will submit his comments.

- Ms. Fox explained that MassDOT did two traffic counts initially and is about to launch a complete traffic study. She acknowledged the concern about traffic in that location. MassDOT will also look at pedestrian and vehicular access at a possible Route 28 station entrance.

Ms. Farrell then reviewed next steps, and provided directions on where members of the public can obtain the DSEIR documents.

Robert Newhall said traffic studies at Old Colony Ave., Middleborough Ave., and Route 24 are his primary concern. He said there are already backups and they will be worse, particularly if traffic lights are added. He asked about ownership of the tracks and Ms. Fox said MassDOT has owned the tracks since 2010. Mr. Newhall complained about the state of the grade crossings, and singled out the Old Colony Avenue crossing as having potholes that can cause vehicle damage. He said he and other abutters just heard about the SCR project a month ago and

² Two Middleborough Selectmen had to leave the meeting quickly and were recognized first by the moderator.

comments are due very soon. He said he is not in support of diesel because of diesel fuel spills and other problems and supports electric trains.

Andrew Jennings said he is disturbed by how the options were selected. He said he does not think it would take 15 minutes to reverse a train [which would have to be done at the existing Middleborough/Lakeville Station, should it be part of Phase 1]. He cited examples in the MBTA system and in Spain, where it does not take very long to reverse a train. He doubts if Phase 2 will be built if Phase 1 is built. He suggests installing electric infrastructure and using a dual mode where trains can switch from diesel to electric. He asked why the added daily train makes all stops between Middleborough and South Station; he thinks it should only stop at key stations. He said he is skeptical about the anticipated travel time and time savings.

- Mr. Carey said the project must conform with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) rules, including a Level 2 brake test that is required when a train reverses direction. The MBTA Railroad Operations team suggests scheduling 15 minutes, which is about average for the MBTA system (12 minutes at Kingston and up to 20 minutes at South Station). The 15 minutes include a buffer, which is required from a schedule planning standpoint.
- Ms. Fox said the team is looking at efficient scheduling. It may be possible for selected trains to skip some stations to reduce travel time. The team will continue to look at that and will need to be careful when selecting stops to remove.

Timothy Cole, Rail to Boston Coalition, and Fall River resident, said he is looking forward to 2022. Phase 1 will bring access to jobs, local development, and open up new housing markets. The Rail to Boston Coalition asks everyone to share their project concerns so they can be addressed. He said Secretary Stephanie Pollack encouraged everyone to work together to develop consensus for SCR. He provided examples of concerns from other communities and said MassDOT will work to resolve these concerns. He said the project will not eliminate the possibility for Cape Service. The Rail to Boston Coalition understands the frustration about the Full Build but encourages Taunton to work with GATRA to run a shuttle to the East Taunton Station. Phase 1 does not slow down progress on the Full Build. In the meantime, neighbors to the south can take trains to Boston.

Bill Reidy said the Middleborough/Lakeville station has hundreds of residential units for TOD. He said the DSEIR says there might be a bus or van shuttle to bring those residents to the proposed Pilgrim Junction Station. He said this is a severe reduction in service and will impact the people who chose to live in that development. On the Old Colony Main Line, from Quincy to Savin Hill and Boston/South Station, there is largely a single-track railroad. Many communities on SCR would be underserved when compared to other places in the system, largely due to the single-track railroad, which would be tremendously expensive to fix. He said he is concerned about impacts to commuter rail service to Buzzards Bay and Wareham and thinks it is an EJ issue. He referenced CTPS and Cape Cod Commission studies that said commuter rail service to the Cape would provide higher ridership at one tenth the cost of SCR.

- Ms. Fox said the team studied TOD at the Middleborough/Lakeville station. Even if the station is not used in Phase 1, the community would keep its 40R designation and remain a TOD, and the Town would continue to receive the 40S benefit. There were two-three studies of the number of people who boarded the trains from the housing development adjacent to Middleborough/Lakeville Station and the count was under 20.
- Ms. Fox said SCR does not add a new line through the Savin Hill area – just one additional train each weekday. The project will not degrade service on the Old Colony lines, and will not preclude commuter rail to the Cape, nor service to Wareham and Buzzards Bay.

Steve Higgins is the Executive Director at Independence Associates, an independent living center that serves persons with disabilities. He said that people who have disabilities have been left out of this project and this is a civil rights issue. He thinks the MBTA has done a poor job of maintaining projects it has built. Elevators are scary for people who use mobility devices because they are often not working. This limits people with disabilities who want to utilize public transit to access jobs and healthcare. He said the potential shuttle with GATRA must allow time for people to use a lift and access the train. He said his organization has consistently filed federal complains for access to people with disabilities, and mentioned the Boston Center for Independent Living settlement agreement with MBTA.

Bob Lincoln said he is a big proponent of mass transit. He said a flaw of the project is comparing ridership, revenue, and profit. SCR proposes spending \$1 billion to put in a line, and another \$2 or \$3 billion to put in a second line which is essentially a duplicate. He thinks much of the ridership of Phase 1 will transfer to Phase 2 due to better service. He said there is no environmental impact study for five railroad crossings, and he has concerns about traffic, quality of life, and health. He said traffic patterns will converge and in 2022 there will be major construction by MassDOT to reconfigure the Route 24/Route 140 interchange. He is worried that traffic at the stations will destroy ridership.

David Littlefield said people won't take a bus south to get on a train to go east and then north. He said SCR Phase 1 does not benefit people in Taunton. He would prefer to drive to Lakeville. He said the project inconveniences his neighborhood while it benefits New Bedford and Fall River. He would prefer to see economic benefits for the City of Taunton, which he does not see with Phase 1. He said there are legal issues with the Town of Stoughton and he does not believe Stoughton will get built if Phase 1 is built.

Tom Lowney, a Fall River resident, has been following the project since 1984. He said he would like to see the project get done. He drives to Lakeville and deals with the Middleborough/Lakeville traffic. He said adding stations along the line to the south will relieve traffic at Middleborough/Lakeville and benefit Taunton, Middleborough, and Lakeville. He described the challenges of accessing Logan Airport. He believes he won't need to park at Lakeville because he can park in Fall River. Ms. Fox confirmed that many people who park at Lakeville drive up from the South Coast. Mr. Lowney said he used to drive from Fall River and

it is very difficult. He anticipates some traffic relief. He described community benefits for the region and said Phase 2 needs to move forward.

Scott Bernard commented on the choke point near Quincy Center. He said increased traffic will increase stress that exists in the system. He said his wife compiled tweets from @MBTA_CR and determined that between March 7 and March 17, excluding the dates of the two major weather events, there were 36 alerts on the Middleborough/Lakeville Commuter Rail Line for signal issues, mechanical problems, and train traffic issues. There were 105 alerts for the three train lines put together. He said adding a fourth line will make it worse, unless a large amount of investment improves the trains and signals. He said he thinks the plan is unworkable and will provide very little service to these communities. He provided copies of the Tweets. Ms. Farrell clarified that Phase 1 adds one train in each direction, not a whole new line.

Clint Richmond, Sierra Club, said he would like the project to offer a connection to Taunton. He thinks a two-seat ride through Attleborough would be no longer than the Middleborough option. He supports electrification to reduce diesel impacts, upgrading the Attleborough Secondary as a complementary project, and the idea of a shuttle to the Cape. He is concerned about how Phase 2 would impact Cape service and would like a commitment to the Cape. He said infrastructure projects need to be done at an increased capacity and speed for the entire commuter rail system.

State Senator Marc Pacheco thanked Mayor Hoyer for complaining about not having a meeting in Taunton. He said the goal is to provide service to southeastern Massachusetts, not just the South Coast, and reminded everyone that Taunton is the county seat of Bristol County. He said he will provide written comments, but wanted to put his thoughts on the public record for the public and the press, and make requests to Secretary Pollack. At a previous public meeting with the Senate Climate Change Committee more than five months ago, he requested a response from Secretary Pollack and still has not received a response in writing. He also represents Wareham and believes that Wareham and the Buzzards Bay area will be adversely impacted by Phase 1. To get the most cars off the road, MassDOT should invest in train service to the Cape. He is suspect of the ridership predictions for Phase 1. Phase 1 relies on the Middleborough/Lakeville line, which has too many tracks coming in, and a delay of a few minutes for one train will affect the rest of the rail line. He expressed concern that his comments would not be recorded and hopes the public hears them and the press documents them. He said the comparison of the cost of Phase 1 and the Full Build makes it seem like MassDOT will choose to do one as opposed to the other. He thinks that substandard ridership will come in during Phase 1 and support will be lost for Phase 2. He would like a legal commitment that Phase 2 will take place. He believes that the civil rights of the 15,000- to 20,000-person environmental justice population in the Greater Taunton area are being violated by not using the Dean Street station. He said MassDOT should be concerned about the potential legal issues that are outstanding with Taunton, as he knows the agency is concerned about the Stoughton legal issue. A delay of a few minutes for one train will affect the rest of the rail line.

He reiterated his request for a response from the Secretary and asked MassDOT to consider potential legal issues, unless there is a guarantee that Phase 2 will be done as well as Phase 1.

Public Attendees at Meeting #2:

Janis Akerstrom	Christopher Markey
Alan Anacheke-	R Maz
Nasemann, <i>USACE</i>	Paul Moreira
Gerald Barton	Bill Napolitano, <i>SRPEDD</i>
John Beach	Robert Newhall
Scott Bernard	Roland Normandy
Joe Callahan, <i>Berkley</i>	Jeff Pagliuca, <i>South Coast</i>
<i>TRWA</i>	<i>Chamber</i>
Paul Chasse, <i>Rail to Boston</i>	Michael Patenaude
<i>Coalition</i>	John Pearson, <i>Saltine</i>
Maria Civil, <i>Jack Conway</i>	<i>Warrior Inc</i>
<i>Realtor</i>	Victor Pereira
Timothy Cole, <i>Rail to</i>	Kevin Perfiner
<i>Boston Coalition</i>	Dan Raposa
Sandy Conaty, <i>SRPEDD</i>	William Reidy
Jen Cote	Clint Richmond, <i>Mass</i>
Joshua Davidson, <i>ANR&P</i>	<i>Sierra Club</i>
Michael Delaney, <i>Stantec</i>	Bill Shink
Gregory DeMelo	Lynne Vasconcellos
Jordan Deschenes, <i>Taunton</i>	Marty Vicky
<i>Gazette</i>	Jeffrey Walker, <i>SRPEDD</i>
Bill Grossman	Robert Wood
Alyssa Haggerty, <i>Office of</i>	2 Illegible Names
<i>Mayor Tom Hoyer</i>	
Steve Higgins, <i>MA</i>	
<i>Statewide Independent</i>	
<i>Living Council</i>	
Richard Hill, <i>Town of</i>	
<i>Stoughton</i>	
Donna Horvath	
Fayssal Hussein	
Andrew Jennings	
Tom Lawney	
David LeClair	
Bob Lincoln	
David Littlefield	
Louis Loura	
Thomas Lowrey	