

SOUTH COAST RAIL PHASE 1 CONSTRUCTION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



QUESTIONS ABOUT SOUTH COAST RAIL PHASE 1

What is the difference between Phase 1 and Full Build?

South Coast Rail will be built in phases. Phase 1 will extend Commuter Rail service on the Middleborough/Lakeville Line to New Bedford, Fall River, and Taunton, with revenue service scheduled for late 2023. Phase 1 is fully funded with \$1B in State revenue bonds, and construction has commenced.

The Full Build Project will extend Commuter Rail service on the Stoughton Line to the New Bedford and Fall River lines, connecting more communities, including Easton and Raynham, to Boston. In 2021, the design team will begin conceptual design work and preliminary engineering for permitting. The South Coast Rail Project has funding to continue this preliminary engineering design; however, funding is not yet secured for construction of the Full Build program.

For more details, see the Phase 1 and Full Build [corridor maps](#).

In preparation for the larger construction contracts, MassDOT and the MBTA undertook a number of early action projects that included culverts, bridges, and the demolition of structures. Construction on the first two large Phase 1 construction packages, the Fall River Secondary Line and the New Bedford/Middleborough/Systems packages, will be underway in 2020 (see more on these below).

Where are the stations that Phase 1 will serve?

Phase 1 will continue service to nine existing stations on the Middleborough/Lakeville line and will add six new stations including:

- Middleborough

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- East Taunton
- Freetown
- Fall River Depot
- Church Street in New Bedford
- New Bedford

See the exact locations of each station on the [Interactive Corridor Map](#).

All stations will comply with MBTA standards and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, which include high-level platforms for "all-doors" boarding. Other amenities will include benches, canopies, bicycle storage and parking.

When will Phase 1 Commuter Rail service begin?

The MBTA is scheduled to deliver Phase 1 service to Southeastern Massachusetts by the end of 2023.

What is the Commuter Rail schedule for Phase 1 going to look like?

The MBTA plans to operate three morning peak trains and three evening peak trains to both New Bedford and Fall River. There will be up to six morning and evening trains to Taunton and Middleborough because all the trains will pass through these communities. During off-peak periods, three trains will likely operate on a 3-3 ½ hour frequency. However, these schedules are subject to change as the MBTA begins operations and continues to assess the Commuter Rail needs for this region

QUESTIONS ON CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

What is the construction timeline? When will construction begin in my neighborhood?

Early Action Construction

MassDOT began Early Action construction projects in 2019 on South Coast Rail to prepare for the larger Phase 1 main line rail construction contracts. The first

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visible active construction projects were drainage culvert replacement and a major railroad grade crossing update in New Bedford. This work also includes the construction of 5 wetland mitigation areas in the corridor, scheduled for completion this summer. Additional work to replace four railroad bridges is underway, with an anticipated November 2020 completion date. The Early Action work has been taking place in Berkley, Fall River, Freetown, Lakeville, Middleborough, New Bedford, Raynham, and Taunton.

More information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/south-coast-rail-construction-activity>.

Early Demolition Contract

The Early Demolition contract was awarded to DW White Construction of Acushnet. This work involves the demolition of buildings and other structures located on MBTA controlled property at nine separate locations in Middleborough, Taunton, Berkley, Freetown, Fall River, and New Bedford. Demolition site work includes asbestos and lead abatement; cutting/capping utilities; disposing of debris; backfill/grading/loam and seeding; and fencing. November 2020 is the projected completion date.

Fall River Secondary Line Construction

This construction contract was [awarded to Skanska DW White JV on May 11](#). Work on the Fall River Secondary will include track, stations, bridges, and a layover facility. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer and take about 30 months to complete. Work will take place in Fall River, Freetown, and Berkley.

New Bedford, Middleborough, and Signal and Communications Contract

Work on the New Bedford Main Line to the Middleborough Secondary will include track, stations, bridges, a layover facility, and the signal and communications systems for all of Phase 1. Construction is scheduled to begin in early fall 2020 and continue through 2023. Crews will be in Berkley, Fall River, Freetown, Lakeville, Middleborough, New Bedford, Raynham, and Taunton.

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Will trees be cut down? Will they be replaced?

To ensure safe and unobstructed service, the MBTA needs a cleared right-of-way. Because the Phase 1 tracks have seen very limited use, overgrowth has occurred. Tree cutting along the railroad corridor will be necessary for construction. Contractors will be responsible for planning all necessary tree and vegetation removal. The schedule will be shared with the corridor communities as the project progresses. To maintain the safety and efficiency of the railway, trees and heavy brush obstructing the right-of-way will not be replaced.

What steps will be taken to mitigate against construction impacts such as dust, noise, vibration and rodents?

The contractors will be required to prepare plans to manage and mitigate dust, noise, vibration and rodents during construction. If you should experience any of these issues during construction, please contact the project team at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us.

Where do I direct a construction-related concern?

Please email the project team with concerns at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us.

For any noise issues associated with the ongoing Early Action construction work, please call the hotline at (508) 397-4858. This line will be answered Monday-Friday, between the hours of 7:00 AM and 3:30 PM (except holidays). All voicemails left outside of these hours will be received the following weekday. We will respond to all calls.

As the major South Coast Rail contracts get underway, similar communications plans for reporting issues will be established and shared with the public.

Will there be roadway impacts?

As with all major construction projects, roadway impacts will occur throughout project construction, particularly at grade crossings. The project team will work with the cities and towns to maintain vehicle and pedestrian access through roadway work zones to the extent possible and to limit impacts on access to local businesses.

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Will there be overnight work?

To expedite construction and avoid prolonged inconvenience, overnight work may occur. The project will provide full coordination with the community and abutting neighbors for nighttime work. Overnight construction will be limited to isolated areas where freight service must be maintained or if such work can serve to minimize construction duration affecting regional transportation.

The MBTA and project team will work to ensure all project updates and notices on construction impacts are communicated as soon as possible. The team will continue to work with the cities and towns to share the information and maintain open lines of communication.

[You can also sign up for project-related email updates.](#)

What meetings are planned for outreach to the public and to neighborhood groups?

The South Coast Rail team plans to continue to hold public meetings across the Phase 1 project communities. The project team meets regularly with the cities and towns to identify opportune times for the project team to present key information and updates to the public and neighborhood groups.

The South Coast Rail team anticipates meeting with a broad range of community organizations throughout construction. If you know of a neighborhood group that would benefit from an update from the team, please send us an email at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us.

As of the March 2020 COVID-19 state of emergency, all briefings and meetings are being held through remote platforms such as conference calls and on-line meetings. The South Coast Rail team looks forward to continuing in-person briefings and meetings at the appropriate time.

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QUESTIONS ON PROPERTY IMPACTS

When will the MBTA begin to acquire property for stations or right-of-way takings?

All required Phase 1 property acquisitions and easements have been identified by the MBTA. The priority has been to acquire the properties needed for the stations and for construction. This process began in 2018 and will continue to move forward in 2020.

Is my property eligible for noise mitigation for noise from the Commuter Rail trains?

MassDOT evaluated noise levels anticipated from South Coast Rail trains according to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines and detailed the results in the [2013 Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report](#) and the [2018 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report](#). While freight trains currently operate along the existing railroad corridor, they are infrequent. The Commuter Rail trains will run multiple trips every day beginning in late 2023, which creates additional noise. The MBTA has developed a noise mitigation program based on the FTA standards.

Based on this program, the MBTA will provide funding for a set of alternative noise mitigation measure to owners of properties that are affected by noise above the impact level. The details of this program for affected homes and apartments are under development. Property owners will be contacted directly when the program is implemented.

Will there be fencing along the railroad right-of-way?

Yes, the project will be installing fencing in certain areas across the rail corridor right-of-way to ensure safety. Fencing is generally placed in developed areas of the railroad right-of-way to minimize trespassing on the right-of-way and to enhance safety. In wooded areas where there is no development, fences are typically not installed. This allows for wildlife passage. All right-of-way fencing is evaluated in coordination with the MBTA Safety Department.

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QUESTIONS ON COMMUNITY IMPACTS

How will the MBTA engage communities and raise train safety awareness?

In addition to specific railroad safety measures, education is a key factor in addressing community safety. MassDOT and the MBTA work regularly with [Operation Lifesaver](#), a national program sponsored by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Operation Lifesaver provides railroad safety education programs through an outreach program in schools, at town meetings and whenever a request is made by a community. In the past, outreach for similar commuter rail projects included distributing rail safety posters, pamphlets and videos to schools and civic groups; instituting training seminars for school bus operators; and training local police to teach rail safety at local schools.

As part of the Greenbush Commuter Rail Project, the MBTA and Operation Lifesaver worked with South Shore fire departments and medical personnel to implement an emergency response program. The MBTA is committed to conducting similar community outreach as part of the South Coast Rail Project.

More information on Operation Lifesaver is available at www.oli.org.

What warning devices will be in place for South Coast Rail at-grade crossings?

Freight trains currently operate along the South Coast Rail right-of-way. These trains already travel through numerous at-grade crossings at very slow speeds. Some of these crossings have no gates, and others use outdated equipment. Older signal systems cause gates to close earlier than required for advanced warning. As part of the South Coast Rail project, the MBTA will update these at-grade crossings with modern automatic electronic signaling that will enhance safety and shorten the time that cars, bikes and pedestrians have to wait before proceeding across the tracks.

The MBTA's commuter rail system deploys electronic signaling known as Automatic Highway Crossing Warning systems. Each crossing is equipped with clear signage, gates, flashing lights and a bell to provide a high level of warning.

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This standard arrangement may be supplemented in some locations with additional gates and cantilevered flashing lights. In coordination with the overseeing agency, Department of Public Utilities, the grade crossing and signal equipment to be installed on South Coast Rail will be state-of-the-art and monitored regularly.

What environmental impacts will this project have, and what mitigation is being proposed?

The South Coast Rail Project will increase transit access for an underserved area of the state, increase transit ridership, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support economic development and smart growth.

- Phase 1 will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7,121 short tons per year (6,460 metric tons).
- Phase 1 will ensure that many of the benefits to Environmental Justice communities in Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton will be realized sooner than with the Full Build; the cities of Fall River and New Bedford are expected to experience improved accessibility to jobs.
- The Phase 1 Project will upgrade the existing Middleborough Secondary's drainage system, providing a benefit to overall water quality over existing conditions.
- The project provides an opportunity to improve connectivity for wildlife in the region by adding wildlife passages
- Reducing travel on roadways through shifting trips from automobiles to trains has several environmental benefits including cleaner air and fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Phase 1 service will achieve a daily reduction of approximately 66,400 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) from automobiles and would result in an increase of approximately 714 VMT from transit.

For more information on these benefits, please see the [Executive Summary for the Phase 1 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report \(DSEIR\) issued in January 2018.](#)

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As with all major infrastructure projects, the South Coast Rail team has looked at ways to minimize or avoid any environmental impacts. Where impacts can't be avoided, appropriate mitigation has been proposed. Mitigation proposed for this project includes items such as wetland replication, traffic and intersection improvements, stormwater management best management practices, and construction phase erosion and sedimentation control. The various types of impacts and mitigation for those impacts for SCR were evaluated through the MEPA process. For specific impact and mitigation details, please look at the [Phase 1 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report \(FSEIR\) issued in April 2018](#).