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Construction Ramps up on South Coast Rail

With its two largest construction contracts underway, the MBTA has begun three years of intensive work in southeastern Massachusetts to build Phase 1 of the South Coast Rail project (SCR). Construction began on the Fall River Secondary in June 2020, and the New Bedford Main Line/Middleborough Secondary work started in October 2020. When complete in late 2023, Phase 1 will connect southeastern Massachusetts and Boston, providing riders with a one-seat trip between Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford.

Residents along the right-of-way (ROW) are already seeing signs of construction. One of the first visible steps was for surveyors to flag the ROW to show the extent of the MBTA's property line. Upon completion of the survey, SCR identified encroachments along the MBTA property and worked with abutters to relocate their property off the MBTA ROW. Property owners – not always aware of the limits of their land – have built or placed fences, driveways, dumpsters and sheds and plantings and structures on the right-of-way. The MBTA sent letters to all abutters along the rail ROW, published notices in area newspapers and included information about construction startup activities in its weekly emails. SCR staff have continued to respond to questions and concerns and made site visits to resolve questions about the work.

Once the ROW has been surveyed, a crew follows to clear the right-of-way of trees and brush. Over time, Phase 1 tracks have seen very limited use and overgrowth has occurred, so tree trimming and/or removal along the railroad corridor is necessary for construction and to maintain the safety and efficiency of the operating railway.

Removing this overgrowth sometimes reveals the tracks in back yards in surprising ways. Upon completion of construction and prior to the start of

commuter rail service, fencing will be installed along much of the right-of-way. This will help to ensure the safety of the property owners.

Site Clearing and Preparation

Construction activity is now visible at station and layover sites. Since the Fall River Secondary contract began first, site clearing and preparation of the future Fall River Depot station site and Weaver's Cove Layover in the North End have advanced ahead of the Middleborough Secondary/New Bedford Main Line.

Along the Fall River Secondary, crews are building sheet pile and soldier pile retaining walls. They are also installing and maintaining perimeter erosion controls to prevent impacts outside of the construction area. This protection includes the use of silt fences, hay bales and compost filter tubes.



Platform support foundations at Fall River Station

The contractor is installing below-ground utilities at Weaver's Cove. At Fall River Depot, micro-piles were placed to support the station platform. Next steps include installing concrete pile foundation caps and underground utilities including water, drainage and electric. Micropiles were also installed at Collins St. Bridge. Soldier piles are being installed along the Fall River Secondary (see the photo on page 4).

Along the Middleborough Secondary/New Bedford Main Line, similar activities are underway. Crews are clearing the ROW and installing erosion controls. Over the next few weeks, crews will begin to build retaining walls where they are required and reconstruct track at Pilgrim Junction. This line also includes culvert construction in Lakeville, Taunton and Berkley.

On both lines, contractors will be working on drainage and utility installation. Equipment, material and soil deliveries are occurring at the station and layover sites and along the railroad ROW from Middleborough to New Bedford. The contractor is beginning installation of steel sheet pile retaining walls in the railroad ROW from I-495 in Middleborough to Old Colony Ave. in Taunton.

Each week, the MBTA emails a construction update to everyone in the project database. These weekly updates include the locations, dates and hours of work on each line. The schedule for this kind of infrastructure project is weather dependent and subject to change without notice, but the SCR team does its best to keep stakeholders current with work plans each week. Information on how to sign up for updates is on page 4.

Please note that ongoing MBTA construction work may be disruptive to residents. Crews are using various pieces of heavy equipment and trucks along the railroad right-of-way (ROW). While the project will seek to minimize construction-related impacts to communities, low to moderate noise levels and vibrations will be generated. See the Box below to learn more about construction hours and practices.

Safety during Construction and Operation

The Fall River and Middleborough/New Bedford rights-of-way (ROWs) have largely been unused for decades and only carrying slow moving freight trains. The ROW is now an active construction site and the property of the MBTA. No one should ever trespass - walk on, cross or walk next to the tracks - for their own safety. This includes bicycling or operating an all terrain vehicle on or near the tracks. The only safe place to be near or to cross the tracks is at a designated public crossing.

The MBTA will be providing safety training to every community as the project begins testing and startup of the line in 2023, but the rules of safety apply every day. Operation Lifesaver is a public safety education program currently implemented in more than 40 states across the nation. It's dedicated to increasing visibility and awareness about rail safety. The MBTA will be bringing the program to the region to reinforce its safety message.

What to Know about Construction:

- Typical hours of construction are Monday-Friday, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM or until dark
- The exception is for track outages: these are 24-hour day work periods usually over 4-5 days; communities will be notified in advance of these events
- Construction pest and rodent management are required and ongoing
- Dust control and management are required and monitored
- All contractors and site personnel are complying with health and safety regulations regarding COVID-19

You can visit the project website and sign up for weekly updates and project information at <http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail>

Construction Questions

To report a construction-related issue on the South Coast Rail project, call the hotline at 617-222-4099. It will be answered Monday-Friday, between 7:00 AM and 3:30 PM (except holidays). All voicemails left outside of these hours will be received on the following 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM weekday shift. We will respond to all complaints.

The SCR team is available to talk with or meet with residents, businesses and elected officials during construction to discuss issues and update stakeholders. Write us at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us.



SCR - Grounded on Stone

There's a small mountain growing on Campanelli Drive in Freetown. This mound of material will soon be supporting miles of new track being installed for Phase 1 of South Coast Rail. Up close, the pile is composed of sharp-edged stones that are called ballast. Ballast is an essential element of building a railroad. Track ballast forms the bed that railroad ties are laid on. The ballast is packed between, below and around the ties. It is used to bear the load from the railroad ties and allows water to drain off the tracks. Ballast helps to control plant vegetation that might interfere with or grow over the tracks.

Ballast is hard, durable crushed rock that plays a vital role in supporting the track bed. The rock – granite and quartzite, for example - is blasted from bedrock at a quarry. Then it is crushed to be properly sized and angular, which allows for interlocking and good compaction. Before it is delivered to a storage site, the crushed rock is stockpiled at the quarry and tested for gradation and hardness.

When the ballast is positioned, the spaces between the ballast stones provide a drainage path that sheds water away from railroad ties and track bed. Twelve inches of ballast will be placed on compacted subgrade of the ROW below the railroad ties to provide needed drainage and support. Ballast is also placed and compacted between the railroad ties and on the shoulders of the track bed to provide stability to the railroad ties.

So think about these small but important stones the next time you ride on a train. They keep your ride steady and straight.

SCR News and Notes

How to Learn More: The MBTA is hosting public meetings for SCR communities to provide construction updates. In addition, the project team is posting construction updates on the project website and sending emails with updates as work progresses. See the Contact Us box on page 4 for details on how to sign up for the emails.

Health and Safety Precautions: SCR has a strong safety focus, in the office and on the job site. Effective March 25, 2020, MBTA and its consultants and contractors must maintain full compliance with the

Commonwealth's COVID-19 Guidelines and Procedures for All Construction Sites and Workers at All Public Works Sites until further notice. The guidelines require a site-specific COVID-19 Officer for every construction site. Contractors have to prepare and seek approval for a project Health and Safety Plan (HASP), which requires following and reporting on compliance with COVID-19 safety measures. The COVID-19 Officer must certify that the contractor and all subcontractors are in full compliance with the [COVID-19 Construction Safety Guidance](#). The Field Office in Bridgewater is strictly following the guidelines in Reopening Massachusetts to protect all project staff.



Meet the Team: Scott Kelley

Scott Kelley knew he was about to get very busy when the MBTA awarded two major contracts to build South Coast Rail (SCR) Phase 1. Scott is the Senior Construction Manager for SCR, and he oversees all major construction on the project. He works for AECOM, the Program and Construction Management team (PM/CM), and he reports to Kim Dobosz, the MBTA's Director of Construction. As several SCR Early Action contracts wrapped up, Scott shifted his focus to the contracts that include all elements of main line construction for Phase 1.

Scott joined AECOM's SCR project team in 2018, but he is no stranger to SCR. As an MBTA employee for 23 years, he worked on multiple large infrastructure projects, including SCR. He was also involved in SCR through the environmental permitting process with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).

In 2013 Scott left the MBTA to work for Jacobs, where he continued his record of working on large/complex projects. The Longfellow Bridge Rehabilitation Project and most recently the South Station Air Rights tower are some of the jobs Scott had a hand in before joining the AECOM SCR team.

Scott loves “working in the sandbox.” Problem solving and anticipating and overcoming obstacles are a daily routine for Scott as Senior Construction Manager. His job is to ensure all aspects of construction keep moving, and the ultimate product – a safe, functioning commuter railroad – is delivered on time.

As a Boston native, Scott is excited that SCR is his first major project outside the city. He's looking forward to the start of train service to introduce more people to the communities and natural beauty of the South Coast.


Installing soldier piles along the Fall River Secondary




Contact Us


For more information, contact us at:

 SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us

 617-222-4099

 To learn more about the project and sign up for email updates, visit the website at: www.mass.gov/southcoastrail

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