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MBTA Awards Major Construction Contracts for South Coast Rail

The MBTA has awarded two major contracts that signal the beginning of Phase 1 construction of South Coast Rail (SCR). On May 11, the MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) approved a nearly \$159 million contract with Skanska DW White JV to build the Fall River Secondary, the first major construction package. On August 24, the FMCB approved the award of a \$403.5 million construction package to SCR Constructors to build the New Bedford Main Line and the Middleborough Secondary, along with the signal and communications systems for the entire line. When complete in late 2023, Phase 1 will connect southeastern Massachusetts and Boston, providing riders with a one-seat trip from Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford to Boston.

Elements of the Contracts

Fall River Secondary

The Fall River Secondary joint venture contractor, Skanska DW White, will build two new Commuter Rail stations in Freetown and Fall River. The new Freetown Station and Fall River Depot Station will include accessible high-level side platforms. Amenities include a drop-off area and bicycle parking. Freetown will feature 107 parking spaces and Fall River Depot will have 220. Freetown access will be from South Main Street. Both stations will offer designated accessible parking and parking for electric vehicles.

The contract package also includes a layover facility for train storage in Fall River at Weaver's Cove. The layover provides six tracks where trains will be stored before beginning service and after ending service each day. Vehicles will be cleaned daily at the layover, with maintenance taking place at other MBTA facilities. The secure site will also have an 1,800-square-foot crew building and parking areas for employees.

The Fall River Secondary contract also includes upgrades to twelve miles of track, including new rail, ballast and ties and installing vibration mitigation where necessary. The contract will rebuild eight railroad bridges in Lakeville, Freetown and Fall River, one under-grade bridge, ten grade crossings, four interlockings, ten culverts, and preparations for systems infrastructure.

The MBTA has obtained all required permits to begin construction, which is expected to take 30 months and be completed by the end of 2022.

New Bedford Main Line/Middleborough Secondary

With the August 24 contract awarded to SCR Constructors, mobilization for work on the New Bedford Main Line and Middleborough Secondary will move forward. The contract for this Line was advertised in early May 2020 and bids opened on August 13, 2020.

This contract includes the construction of four new stations: Middleborough, East Taunton, Church Street (formerly North New Bedford) and New Bedford Station. There will be a new layover facility in New Bedford at Wamsutta Street, next to an existing layover site. The contract includes rebuilding more than 24 miles of track, 18 grade crossings, 14 interlockings, ten culverts, and additional systems and infrastructure.

This package includes procuring equipment and installing fiber optic cable, signals for the entire right-of-way and Positive Train Control (PTC), which is a system that helps improve train safety. This scope provides for testing and commissioning the entire new Phase 1 system to ready it for passenger service. Once underway, this work is anticipated to be accomplished in 39 months.

How to Learn More

The MBTA will be hosting public meetings for SCR communities before construction begins. In addition, the project team will post construction updates on the project website and send emails with updates as work progresses. See the Contact Us box on page 4 for details on how to sign up for the emails. Future issues of this fact sheet will also cover construction topics and progress.

SCR News and Notes

Early Action Project Update: Two construction projects began in 2019 to prepare the railroad right-of-way for main line construction. They included culvert repairs and construction, grade crossing improvements and railroad bridge reconstruction. All of the culvert work has been completed, with 46 culverts replaced and 16 cleaned. Work continues on four existing railroad bridges to bring them up to Commuter Rail standards. Five wetland mitigation areas are also nearly complete. All of the Early Action projects will be completed this fall.



Completed segment of rail over a culvert.



The Station, Fall River, MA

A Look Back in Time

Commuter rail service to the South Coast region is not a new idea. In the 1830s, railroad networks began criss-crossing Massachusetts and became a popular way to travel. The South Coast was originally connected to Boston with rail service via the Fall River Branch, the Taunton Branch and the Easton Branch railroads, built in the mid-1800s, and ultimately operated by the Old Colony Railroad. The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad leased the Old Colony Railroad system beginning in 1893 and operated successfully for decades. Look for more information on the region's transportation history in future fact sheet stories as the MBTA builds a system to reconnect the region.



All Aboard: Middleborough

The Middleborough station will serve as the gateway to Phase 1 service. This new station will be located at 161 South Main Street next to Pilgrim Junction, adjacent to CSX property. Vehicles will enter the parking lot using a new entrance road from South Main Street/Route 105. The station entrance will be opposite the Route 495 ramps, where there will be a new traffic light. Pedestrians will be able to walk to the end of the platform to reach a ramp or stairway connecting them to West Grove Street/Route 28.

The station includes a high-level, accessible side platform with three canopies. The site includes an area for pick-up and drop-off. There will be 500 parking spaces, including accessible and electric vehicle (EV) parking, and bicycle parking.

The site retains space for a platform for potential future service to Cape Cod. Such service would head south through Lakeville.

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.

Virtual Public Meetings: The MBTA will be working with communities to schedule virtual public meetings as construction work begins later this year. The meetings will highlight the work that will take place and introduce project contacts and information on construction. Please be sure to sign up for email updates at www.mass.gov/southcoastrail.



The abutment walls for the new Fall Brook Railroad Bridge in Freetown are installed (July 2020).



Holly has completed three Marathons, including Boston in 2016. She currently runs 5ks, 10ks, and half marathons and is also a competitive powerlifter.

Meet the Team: Holly Palmgren, Manager of Environmental Construction

Holly Palmgren is Manager of Environmental Construction for South Coast Rail (SCR). It's a position that combines her interests and talents and she brings deep experience to the project as major construction begins.

Holly may be the team member with the longest direct connection to South Coast Rail. She was hired by the MBTA in late 2000, pleased to be combining her interest in law and public policy. Early assignments were practical: Holly remembers pit trap testing in the Hockomock Swamp – that's counting critters who end up in a five-gallon bucket. She also worked on one of the first environmental reviews of the project, then called Fall River/New Bedford.

In the intervening years, Holly worked on development of the Greenbush Line, which opened for service in 2007. She recalls tracking turtles in wetlands and other adventures on that project. She also earned her

MS from UMass Boston and worked on a Superfund site in New Bedford. Oh, and Holly also had three children, neatly bookended by South Coast Rail as she was pregnant when she started at the MBTA and her youngest child turned 19 last fall.

Holly was pleased to return to SCR, "because it's a good public service project, providing access to jobs and other opportunities for people in the region." Holly's role includes training and working with the Environmental Inspectors in the field, ensuring that contractors keep the commitments made as part of designing and building South Coast Rail.

Holly and the team first developed a training program for Resident Engineers and Field Inspectors from the MBTA, the Program Management/Construction Management (PM/CM) team and the contractors' superintendents, field staff and consultants.

The environmental staff will monitor compliance with permits and confirm that resource areas are protected. This team has an impressive list of responsibilities:

- Protecting wetlands delineations and limits of work
- Implementing plans and protection of endangered species
- Checking stormwater controls and dewatering
- Protecting Cultural Resources

Holly noted that there are hazardous materials and soil to be removed at the layover sites in New Bedford and Fall River and at the Fall River and New Bedford Station locations, and the contractors will follow strict protocols for these activities.

Compliance isn't just inspectors looking around. Holly said that Environmental Inspectors fill out reports each day in the field, and the project's permits require monthly reporting and identifying corrective actions, if necessary. "Local Conservation Commission permits can have strict limits," she added, "and it's up to our environmental team to assure we are meeting them." The MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can also make site visits to ensure compliance with project commitments.

What's the bottom line for environmental compliance? "Our field staff are the eyes and ears of the project," Holly explains, "and our work combines a commitment to environmental policy with its implementation on the ground. I couldn't ask for a better way to use my experience."

Contact Us

For more information, contact us at:



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(857) 368-8853



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

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