



January 31, 2018

Secretary Matthew Beaton
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street
Boston MA 02110

Re: EEA No. 14346

Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, South Coast Rail Project Phase 1

Dear Secretary Beaton:

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is pleased to submit the attached Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR) for Phase 1 of South Coast Rail Project. As you know, MassDOT is proposing to adopt a phased approach to provide service to the South Coast region beginning more than eight years earlier than would otherwise be possible with the Stoughton Straight Electric Alternative (the "Full Build Project") alone. As described in the attached DSEIR, the Phase 1 service will provide a one-seat ride from Fall River and New Bedford to Boston using the Middleborough Secondary to connect South Coast passengers with service on the existing Middleborough Lakeville commuter rail line.

MassDOT believes that the attached document not only fully complies with the Certificate on the Notice of Project Change (NPC) issued on May 26, 2017, but also demonstrates both the feasibility and value of the phased approach. The proposed Phase 1 can achieve passenger service by the end of 2022, provides over 40% of the ridership benefits of the Full Build Project, constructs 56% of the rail miles needed for the Full Build and presents far fewer environmental impacts and permitting challenges. For example, NO wetland variances are required for Phase 1.

This DSEIR analyzes new project elements associated with Phase 1 Service that were not previously studied, including improvements to track infrastructure on the Middleborough Secondary, an active freight line; a new station at Pilgrim Junction in Middleborough; a new station in East Taunton, south of Cotley Junction; and modifications to previously studied stations at Freetown and Fall River. Due to the depth of the analysis in the DSEIR and the high degree of public interest in this project, MassDOT requests that the MEPA office extend the public comment period to 45 days to ensure that stakeholders have ample time to ensure that the DSEIR fully addresses their questions and concerns about Phase 1 service.

Given the extensive planning, analysis and MEPA review that has already occurred on South Coast Rail during the past two decades, and the thorough documentation provided in the DSEIR, MassDOT respectfully requests that you find the DSEIR adequate and proceed to "roll over" the DSEIR into a final EIR, pursuant to 301 CMR 11.08(b)(2)(b). Use of this process, specifically recognized in the May 2017 Certificate on the Notice of Project Change, will help ensure that MassDOT can provide the South Coast with the long-awaited, long-promised rail service that the region needs and deserves by the target date of November 2022.

South Coast Rail Phase 1 Project
Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EEA File #14346)

The DSEIR has been circulated to agencies, elected officials, municipalities, and commenters as required by MEPA regulations. Copies of the document are available at public libraries throughout the study area, and a limited number are available on request. The DSEIR is also available in electronic format on MassDOT's SCR website (www.mass.gov/southcoastrail).

Please publish notice of availability of the DSEIR for public review in the February 7, 2018 edition of *The Environmental Monitor*. We look forward to continuing to work with EEA to implement this important public transportation and economic development project.

Respectfully,



Stephanie Pollack
Secretary of Transportation and CEO
MassDOT

Cc: See Distribution List