



[www.mass.gov/southcoastrail](http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail)

## Fourth Round of Technical Assistance Awarded

MassDOT and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) announced the award of \$275,000 in grants to 18 South Coast communities for technical assistance (TA) to implement the South Coast Rail Corridor Plan on November 2. The grants range in size from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The Corridor Plan identifies areas for protection and development in 31 communities. The Technical Assistance Program provides cities and towns the resources to realize the goals they developed.

Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Gregory Bialecki met with the Commuter Rail Task Force early in November to outline his agency's economic development work and announce the awards. This is the fourth round of assistance offered to 31 cities and towns

with an approximate value of nearly \$300,000 annually. The funds are divided between the regional planning agencies serving the South Coast, SRPEDD, OCPC and MAPC. Cities and towns can apply for up to two projects, which must be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

The grants cover a wide range of local issues, including work on housing production plans in Dartmouth and Lakeville; an open space plan in North Attleboro; a bicycle and pedestrian path for Acushnet, Fairhaven and New Bedford; and zoning and bylaw work, including a new TOD Bylaw for the Town of Mansfield. MassDOT and EOHED consulted with the regional planning agencies in making the awards and emphasis was placed on proposals to advance the Corridor Plan, its PDA/PPA designations and the state's Sustainable Development Principles and proposals that demonstrated a clear and achievable outcome. A full list of the grants is posted on the project website ([www.mass.gov/southcoastrail](http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail)).

*Acushnet, Fairhaven and New Bedford will use Technical Assistance to continue work on a regional walkway system along the Acushnet River.*



## Environmental Certificate Advances South Coast Rail

On June 30, 2011, the South Coast Rail project reached a significant milestone with the issuance of a Certificate by the MA Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The Certificate set out a scope of work for the next planning step: preparation of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Stoughton alternative. MassDOT concluded that the Stoughton route will provide the greatest transportation benefits and fully meets the project purpose.

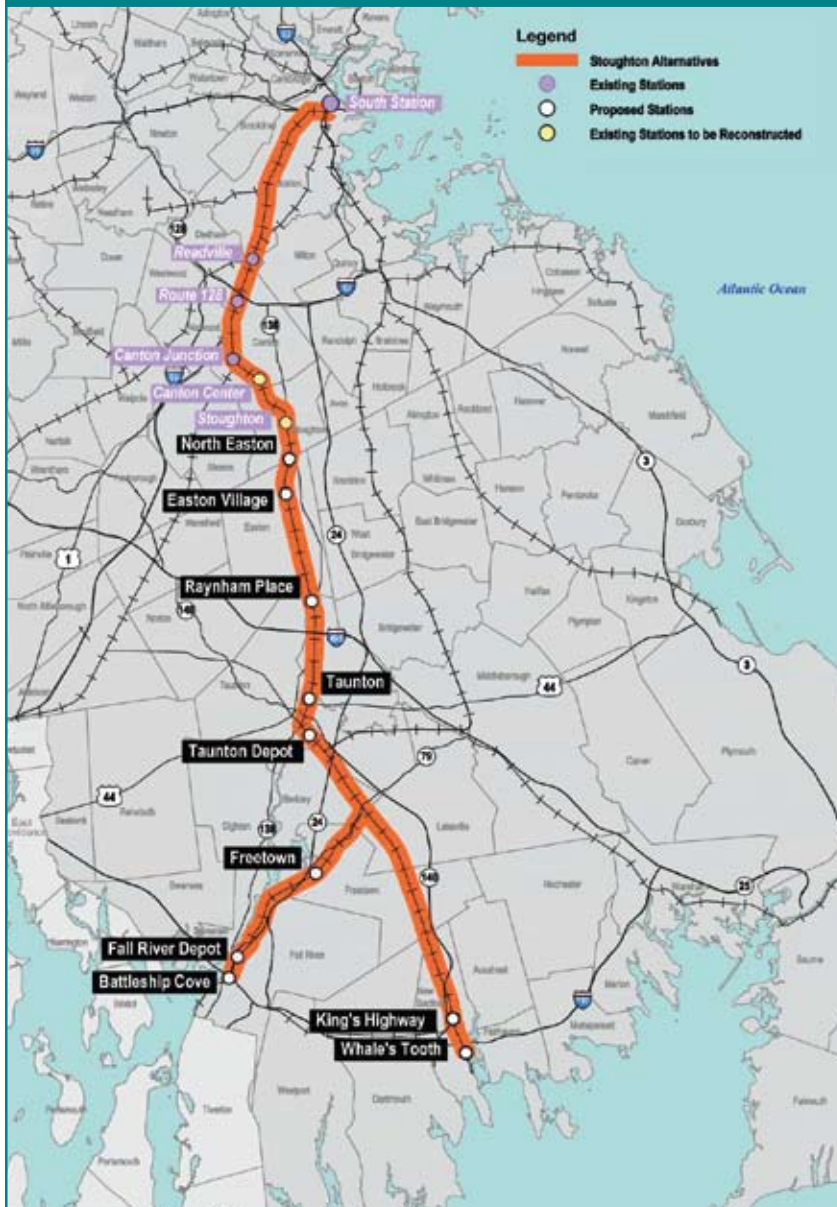
Richard Davey, Secretary of Transportation, said that “MassDOT is pleased with the decision that the Stoughton

route will best serve the people of the South Coast.” He added that the project team will continue to work closely with regulatory agencies and the public to design the best possible project, which will be a model for how to build green infrastructure and catalyze smart growth.

MassDOT will develop extensive data and reports for the FEIR to provide the information agencies will need to issue final permits. The Certificate outlines a detailed scope of work to be undertaken. MassDOT is required to closely examine the environmental benefits of the rail line and to examine, minimize and mitigate any environmental damage to wetlands and rare species, as well as noise and any other significant impacts. The Certificate is available on line at [www.mass.gov/southcoastrail](http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail).

MassDOT will also report on the implementation of the smart growth blueprint that will accompany the rail project investment. The Economic Development and Land Use Corridor Plan has already resulted in several communities adopting new zoning to cluster development around stations and preserve valuable natural areas.

### Stoughton Alternative



### Next Steps

The draft environmental document was a combined federal and state effort. Under the state process, the document was reviewed by the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act Office (MEPA) and a Certificate was issued with a scope of work for the final environmental document. MassDOT and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expect to continue coordination of the state and federal review.

Over the next few months, MassDOT will be developing a series of technical reports that will provide the basis for the final environmental documents. MassDOT will continue to meet with the agencies participating in project reviews and with the Commuter Rail Task Force. The project's broad civic engagement process will remain an important part of the work leading up to publication of the final environmental impact report.

### Reviewing the Process

The Corps published the combined federal/state environmental impact document on March 21, 2011. The document was available for public comment for an extended period of time. MEPA received more than 100 comment letters from individuals; elected officials; communities; nonprofit, business and environmental

organizations; state and federal agencies; and planning and economic development agencies. The Corps held Public Hearings during the comment period in Mansfield and New Bedford.

The first section of the Certificate summarizes the key points in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/ Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/DEIR). The narrative highlights key conclusions in the document, including the analysis that the Attleboro alternative fails on operational grounds, and both the Whittenton and Rapid Bus alternatives are less effective than the Stoughton alternative in meeting the project purpose. The Rapid Bus would use the Zipper Lane on I-93 approaching Boston, but congestion in the Zipper Lane by 2030 (the planning horizon year) will fail to provide a travel time benefit over driving a car. Future traffic congestion would result in longer travel times from the South Coast Region to Boston, resulting in lower bus ridership, increased vehicle miles traveled and negative effects on air quality.

Compared to the Stoughton route, the Whittenton alternative draws fewer riders from Fall River and New Bedford. The Whittenton variation would also result in disproportionate noise impacts to Environmental Justice communities in Taunton, as well as public safety concerns due to the number of at-grade crossings it requires.

The Certificate acknowledges many of the concerns raised in the comment letters and directs MassDOT to develop additional plans in response to these issues. For example, the FEIR should contain more details on how South Coast Rail stations will support pedestrian and bicycle access. The Certificate outlines detailed mitigation plan requirements for wetlands restoration, stream crossing improvements, specific locations for wildlife crossings, and much more. Other mitigation will address potential noise and vibration impacts. Traffic impacts and public safety – also raised in comment letters – will be evaluated and addressed. (Details of the scope are covered in pages 36-51 of the Certificate.)



## New Project Manager Guides South Coast Rail

On September 8, 2011, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Secretary Richard Davey announced Jean Fox as the new manager of the South Coast Rail project. A Freetown

resident, who serves on the Board of Selectmen, Fox previously worked at the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board (WIB). She has started meeting with communities around the South Coast and managing the final environmental phase of the project.

“We have built positive state and local partnerships during the planning process for South Coast Rail and with Jean’s strong connection to the community, we anticipate these will continue,” said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. “South Coast Rail is a priority that will deliver real economic benefits for the region for decades to come and I look forward to working with Jean as we move this project forward.”

“Jean is the right person at the right time for this project,” said Davey. “Her energy, attention to details, and close ties with the community will serve the project well as we work hard to deliver passenger rail service to southeastern Massachusetts.”

At the WIB, Fox has worked closely with many community leaders and elected officials. She has developed

strong relationships with civic organizations and other community-based groups in southeastern Massachusetts.

Fox assumed her role as manager of the project to bring commuter rail service to Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton on September 12. Her responsibilities include securing funding for construction and operation of the lines, shepherding the project through the environmental review and permitting process, and keeping the public fully engaged throughout the design phase.

“South Coast Rail is a priority for the Patrick-Murray Administration and the communities in the region,” said Fox. “My predecessor, Kristina Egan, made great strides during her tenure in catalyzing public engagement and enthusiasm for commuter rail service that will build on the region’s many assets. I look forward to working with the Task Force, communities and agencies to advance this important project.”

Fox earned her B.A. from the University of New Mexico and M.B.A. from George Washington University. She lives in Freetown with her husband, Lou, and has three grown children. In addition to the Freetown Board of Selectmen, she serves on the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women, the South Coast Education Compact, as well as a number of school and education advisory boards in New Bedford.

## New Bedford Bridges

Early in 2010, MassDOT learned that Massachusetts had won a major federal stimulus grant to fund reconstruction of three rail bridges in New Bedford. The \$20 million TIGER grant, known as Fast Track New Bedford, provided for extensive rebuilding of freight bridges that are more than 100 years old over Deane Street, Sawyer Street and Coggeshall Street.

Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray broke ground on the construction in October 2010. The project was the first approved TIGER grant in the country to move forward into construction. The project was competitively bid and was awarded to A.A. Will Corporation of Stoughton, MA. Work to rebuild the bridges and widen the roads below is nearly complete. Signals are being added at the Coggeshall and Deane Street intersections with Purchase Street. The project was expanded to include new retaining



*Sawyer Street bridge before reconstruction.*

walls – about 2,800 feet – based on cost savings in the construction. Coggeshall Street was widened from 24 to 38 feet, which will improve traffic operations and pedestrian safety along this busy corridor, which parallels I-195. The project is also enhancing freight operations, while supporting future passenger rail. Completion is expected early this winter.

*New Sawyer Street bridge.*



### Contact Information

If you would like more information about the project or to be added to the project distribution list for email notifications of meetings and other updates, please contact Jean Fox, Manager of South Coast Rail, by email to [Jean.Fox@state.ma.us](mailto:Jean.Fox@state.ma.us) or phone at 617-973-7463. Project information and updates, including information on what's new with the project and upcoming meetings, are posted on the project website at [www.mass.gov/southcoastrail](http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail).

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