



SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

August 5, 2016

Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs  
Attention: MEPA Office – Holly Johnson, MEPA #15028  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

RE: South Station Expansion Project, MEPA #15028

Dear Secretary Beaton:

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) regularly reviews proposals deemed to have regional impacts. The Council reviews proposed projects for consistency with *MetroFuture*, the regional policy plan for the Boston metropolitan area, the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles, the GreenDOT initiative, consistency with Complete Streets policies and design approaches, as well as impacts on the environment.

The South Station Expansion Project (SSX project) consists of a 49-acre site located in and around the existing South Station Transportation Center. The purpose of the SSX project is to expand rail capacity and related layover capacity in order to meet current and future high-speed, intercity, and commuter rail service needs. The SSX project will improve the efficiency of public transportation, support forecasted increases in ridership, and provide multi-modal connections – investments that are all vital to sustaining and improving the Boston area's economy and quality of life. This complex project is a critical component of both the Commonwealth's regional transportation network and the long term growth and viability of the Northeast Corridor.

The SSX project includes four primary elements:

- Expand the South Station Terminal facilities by adding seven tracks and four new platforms for a total of 20 tracks and 11 platforms, constructing a new expanded headhouse, and adding a major station entrance along Dorchester Avenue;
- Reopen Dorchester Avenue and extend the Harborwalk resulting in the addition of more than one acre of open space for a continuous public walkway for pedestrians and cyclists along the Boston waterfront; and
- Acquire and demolish the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Facility located on Dorchester Avenue adjacent to South Station, to provide an approximately 14-acre site on which to expand South Station; and
- Provide adequate rail vehicle layover space by expanding or constructing facilities at one or more sites in proximity to South Station to meet existing and proposed layover facility program needs and railroad operational requirements.

MAPC has a long-term interest in alleviating regional traffic and environmental impacts, consistent with the goals of *MetroFuture*. The Commonwealth also has established a mode shift goal of tripling the share of travel in Massachusetts by bicycling, transit and walking by 2030. Additionally, the Commonwealth has a statutory obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 25% from 1990 levels by 2020 and by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. As currently proposed, the SSX project is likely to make all of these goals attainable.

While MAPC has strongly supported this project for many years, we would like to highlight that there are some key project components that will require continued land use and transportation coordination with the City of Boston, the US Postal Service, and other property owners and stakeholders. These components include:

Layover Facilities

MAPC recognizes that MassDOT has selected three candidate locations for layover facilities: Beacon Park Yard in Allston, Widett Circle in South Boston, and Readville Yard 2 in Hyde Park. However, a decision has yet to be reached regarding which site or sites will be utilized. There will be a need to carefully coordinate the use of these sites with the potential for redevelopment.

USPS Facility

Plans to acquire and demolish the adjacent USPS Facility have been longstanding. The complexities of attaining this property, which is integral to the SSX project, could affect the project's overall timeframe.

Coordination with North-South Rail Link Study

MassDOT's 2017 – 2021 *Capital Investment Plan* (CIP) has \$2.0 million programmed for a North-South Rail Link corridor and area planning study. The continued planning of the SSX project should take into account the findings of the North-South Rail Link study.

MAPC respectfully requests that the Secretary underscores the need for this coordination in the Certificate. Doing so will help ensure that the Commonwealth will advance a project that improves local and regional accessibility along with opportunities for transit-oriented development.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important project.

Sincerely,



Martin Pillsbury  
Environmental Planning Director

cc: John Barros, Chief of Economic Development  
Gina Fiandaca, BTD  
David Mohler, MassDOT