

March 20, 2019

Governor Charles Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

RE: South Coast Rail Phase 1 Project Funding

Dear Governor Baker,

We are writing as members of the New Bedford Regeneration Project Committee in support of fully funding South Coast Rail Phase 1.

Our committee is a place where some of our most complex city building challenges are brought to the table for thoughtful discussion, debate, and strong advocacy by a diverse collection of private sector community leaders. Our overarching goal is to advance policies, projects, and investments that will advance the sustainable and inclusionary regeneration of the New Bedford and regional economy.

Our community, institutional, and business leaders on the committee have been planning for the re-establishment of commuter rail service in the South Coast for decades. We understand that such transformative impact in the Commonwealth takes a certain level of sustained effort from all stakeholders, and we thank you and your administration for your work on the South Coast Rail project, and for your commitment to seeing it through to its completion by the target date of 2022.

For the first time in decades, our community can begin to realize the fruits of the labor put forth and see the reality of the project. Indeed, much of the groundwork has already been laid, with all early actions completed within the allocated budget:

- 11 of 12 necessary municipal permits have been obtained;
- Section 401 Water Quality Certification (DEP) for the State-of-Good-Repair culvert and bridge projects has been received;
- Chapter 91 License (required for Weaver's Cove) has been received;
- MESA Conservation Management Permit has been issued;
- Section 404 Permit (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) for State-of-Good-Repair has been received;
- The contract for long-lead track work has been awarded;
- Contract requests for four bridges (the last bridges requiring upgrading or replacement along the New Bedford Main Line) have been advertised, with a bid opening date of March 26th;
- The land acquisition process is well underway;
- The procurement process to secure a new Project Management/Construction Management team to oversee project is underway, and a staffing plan is being developed;

By fully funding Phase 1 of the project in the CIP budget due in March, it would ensure that the momentum your commitment has created will not be lost. Upon receiving funding of this phase, Mass DOT will be able to finalize staffing and begin construction promptly along the Middleboro and Fall River secondary lines and the New Bedford main line.

Gateway cities such as New Bedford, Fall River, and Taunton offer great and cost-effective investment opportunities for new growth and entrepreneurship from which the whole Commonwealth can benefit. At the moment, too many residents in these cities often have limited opportunities to enter into higher paying jobs that can be the key to improving educational, health, and housing outcomes in their home cities. We know that rail service is critical to enhancing two-way commerce and tourism, addressing a portion of the state's housing shortage and improving the quality of life for residents from the South Coast to Boston.

We strongly encourage you to continue your support of a fully funded Phase I of the South Coast Rail project at this most crucial time. With so much of the early groundwork laid, it would be a celebrated milestone to complete this phase moving us closer to the reality of the rail system we need to enhance the economic vitality, population strength and climate resiliency of the Commonwealth.

We also believe that Phase I is the first step in completing a 21st century solution to transportation problems in both Greater Boston and Southeastern Massachusetts. 80% of Phase I funding includes construction that is required for the Phase II South Coast Rail Project. Therefore, we also strongly endorse continued funding for Phase II which would significantly reduce travel time, offer a significant reduction in both noise and air pollution, and is a complete solution to SouthCoast commuting problems.

Thank you again for your thoughtful consideration of this issue and its impact on constituents across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Gerry Kavanaugh
President LStar Investments
LStar Ventures

Anthony Sapienza
President
New Bedford EDC