

The Boston Globe

Talking Points

Presented by



Good afternoon. Here's Talking Points for Thursday, June 7 [2018].

Chesto Means Business



Boston's missing link: Governor Charlie Baker may have to make a decision about the North South Rail Link after all.

The Legislature sent a [bonding bill](#) today to Baker that includes a long wish list of earmarks. Among them: \$10 million for the controversial project that would connect the North Station and South Station via a tunnel below downtown Boston.

Don't get too excited, Rail Link fans.

This bill just authorizes borrowing for the costs of environmental permitting work. It's up to Baker's administration -- or his successor's -- to decide whether to spend the money. [Many public officials](#) in Massachusetts, particularly those from cities north of Boston, [endorse](#) the tunnel link. But Baker, like Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, is taking a wait-and-see approach.

We should know more later this month, when the state is expected to release the results of a Rail Link feasibility study. But the [report from consultant Arup](#) probably won't quell the debate about the project's multibillion-dollar

cost, or whether it would be a smart investment in the first place.

Senator Jamie Eldridge says he secured the earmark with the hope it can better position the project should the federal government start spending big money again on large train projects. He sees the tunnel as a crucial missing link, one that could give North Station commuters better access to the Seaport and provide more flexibility for the entire system.

At the very least, the earmark could provide Rail Link supporters with more political leverage in their quest. Until Baker and Walsh climb on board, the proponents will need all they can get.

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