



May 27, 2016

BY U.S. MAIL

The Honorable Charles D. Baker, Jr.
Governor of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: The North-South Rail Link – Better Connections for Boston, Massachusetts, New England

Dear Governor Baker:

We need to recognize a critical issue that the previous administration did not acknowledge when it formulated its plans for the South Station Expansion project (SSX). As currently proposed, the SSX not only fails to fulfill its purported mission, but also precludes a superior alternative and limits a substantial economic opportunity for Boston and the region. For these reasons, the Sierra Club is grateful you are revisiting the proposal for a direct rail connection between North and South Stations.

The Massachusetts Sierra Club believes that the SSX is an unsound investment. It would divert well over a billion dollars to achieve only a short-term gain, and the capacity problems now affecting South Station would simply recur in another decade or two. North Station also faces similar capacity constraints. The SSX would neither accommodate the anticipated growth in MBTA and Amtrak passenger volumes, nor would it alleviate the increasing automotive congestion that undermines the Commonwealth's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals. It would provide *no* benefits to the gateway communities north of Boston, as Congressman Moulton has noted—and only temporary relief for the communities to the south. Also, it would require the taking of yet more valuable land for train yards.

The Sierra Club has long supported the North-South Rail Link (NSRL). Enclosed is the Chapter's Resolution on South Station Expansion, endorsed by our Executive Committee in May 2014. The Commonwealth now has a rare opportunity to create a better transportation system for Boston and New England by linking these two terminals and providing through passenger service. And most importantly, the Rail Link will greatly contribute to MassDOT's GHG reduction requirements under the Global Warming Solutions Act, gradually electrifying the system. This will not only retire polluting diesel locomotives, but also eliminate at least 54,000 daily auto trips.¹

The current SSX stub-end proposal would significantly limit development opportunities around South Station, since much of the land in the area is now consumed by equipment, operations and layovers. The lucrative potential of this area is confirmed by the conversion and development of the nearby former New Haven Railroad Summer Street yards.² The real estate opportunities created by connecting the two terminals could then be leveraged to help finance the project. The NSRL frees up land now dominated by rail for office and residential use, also increasing the value of existing real estate near both stations. The NSRL is much more beneficial than the SSX, and if the SSX were to proceed, the project needs to be one that includes and enhances the NSRL, with platforms underneath South Station that could be extended north at a later date.

¹ "NSRL Major Investment Study / DEIR / Executive Summary," EOE #10270, June 2003, pp. ES-33, 34

² "USPS Site More Valuable Without SSX Than With It," Banker & Tradesman, January 17, 2016



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With the NSRL, commuter and Amtrak trains running through instead of standing by will greatly reduce air and noise pollution from idling diesel locomotives and eliminate congestion caused by wasteful backup moves. Labor productivity will be increased substantially by elimination of the existing 30-minute turnaround time for trains at each terminal. The serious commuting overload on the Green and Orange lines will be reduced by more efficiently distributing riders throughout downtown, as well as by enabling many to walk to their destinations. Eliminating the need to transfer to the subway system will make the commuter trip more convenient and will attract substantially more riders.

The NSRL will also support statewide and regional rail integration and cooperation with current extension plans in New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont. Building on the work of the Federal Railroad Administration's current *NEC Future*³ study, it will knit together Massachusetts and Northern New England, extending Amtrak's Northeast Corridor electrified service beyond Boston, and attracting commerce and tourism throughout Massachusetts. With the newly inaugurated "Heart-to-Hub" service between Worcester and Boston as well as Amtrak service in western Massachusetts, the entire Commonwealth will enjoy much improved rail connections.

Thank you for your recent decision to use the \$2 million designated by the General Court for the NSRL in the current Massachusetts Transportation Bond Bill. We look forward to working with Secretary Pollack to help ensure that the work scope is comprehensive, and to the eventual completion and publication of all required environmental documents for this project.

The Commonwealth's constrained fiscal circumstances, the need to reduce greenhouse gases, the delays and congestion endured by our commuters, and our neighboring states' new regional transportation plans together demand greater vision and more effective use of resources than a stub-end expansion could ever provide.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Cathy Ann Buckley in blue ink.

Cathy Ann Buckley
Chair, Massachusetts Chapter

Handwritten signature of John Kyper in blue ink.

John Kyper
Chair, North-South Rail Link Subcommittee

Enclosure:

May 2014 North-South Rail Link Resolution, Massachusetts Sierra Club Executive Committee

cc: Hon. Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of Boston
Hon. Stephanie Pollack, Secretary & Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Transportation
Hon. Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Hon. Members of the 189th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (by email)

³ <http://www.necfuture.com>



Chapter Resolution on South Station Expansion.

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club is opposed to the expansion of South Station as a stub-end terminal as currently proposed. Completely absent from the present plan is any recognition that building yet more dead-end tracks into South Station is, at best, a temporary solution—a “billion dollar band-aid”—that will be eclipsed, once again, by the anticipated growth in rail passenger traffic.

Instead, MassDOT must revisit its long-shelved plans for a direct rail connection between South and North Stations that will allow for the through running of Amtrak and commuter trains, eliminating the wasteful backup moves that are now a major cause of congestion at both terminals. A first step is to build underground station platforms at South Station as Phase 1 of the North-South Rail Link, thereby accommodating service on Amtrak’s electrified Northeast Corridor while allowing the tracks to be extended north at a later date.

The current proposal, moreover, fails to address the issues of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, the central challenge of our time. We must make bold moves that had heretofore seemed beyond our means, which would maximize reduction of these emissions while creating more efficient transportation options. According to its DEIR Summary written a decade ago, the Rail Link would result in over 55,000 auto trips diverted daily onto public transportation. An expanded South Station *with* a connection to North Station would be more efficient—and less polluting—than the current plan.

Approved by Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter Executive Committee

May 18, 2014.