

Eileen J. Marum
Marion Planning Board
Report of the SRPEDD Board of Commissioners
April 24, 2019

RE: South Coast Rail Program: a finance plan complete and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved the final federal permit; 500-foot cooling towers coming down; Bike share industry changing rapidly and Regional Agricultural Planning

New England Director of Transit and Rail, Rick Carey, gave a PowerPoint presentation showing that the South Coast Rail Program has reached two critical Phase 1 milestones: a finance plan is complete and will be fully funded in the Commonwealth's Capital Investment Plan (CIP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has approved the final federal permit required for the program to advance.

Rail service between the South Coast and Boston will increase access to economic opportunities in both regions. Phase 1 of South Coast Rail will be funded one hundred percent by the Commonwealth and the MBTA will *not* be required to provide any capital funding or issue any revenue bonds that might otherwise impact the MBTA's future operating budget. The funding commitment followed three cost and schedule reviews of the commuter rail project and the development of a consensus cost estimate of \$1.047 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$935 million. Passenger rail service between Boston and Taunton, New Bedford and Fall River is projected to begin in late 2023.

Two massive 500-foot cooling towers in Somerset are scheduled to come down Saturday, April 27th around 8 a.m. and are expected to take 6- 8 seconds to fall. The implosion of the cooling towers is part of a phased demolition and dismantling plan, which is expected to be completed within 3 years, positioning the 300-acre site for redevelopment.

The bike sharing system meeting of Wednesday, April 24th at UMass Dartmouth was canceled; no proposals for the regional no cost bike sharing system were received. The reasons varied depending on the economic model and included the changing nature of the bike share industry, and the increase in prevalence of e-assist bikes and e-scooters due to their higher profit margins vs. traditional push-pedal bikes (e-scooters are illegal in Massachusetts). Also, the proposal appeared suited to recreational riders rather than commuters, which would not generate the revenue needed to make the system financially viable. The bike share industry as a whole appears to be changing rapidly causing an instability in the market.

Agriculture is an important component of the landscape and provides multi-dimensional value:

- **Economic value** in Bristol-Plymouth-Norfolk increased to nearly \$160 M
- **Food security** ensures the local region can access fresh foods in the face of potential shocks from climate change.
- **Climate change mitigation** with a focus on preserving and enhancing soils through regenerative agricultural practices increases the ability of plants to pull CO₂ from the air and into the soil creating improved topsoil.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen J. Marum, SRPEDD Board of Commissioners, SRPEDD Executive Committee
Marion Planning Board