



TOWN OF EASTON
Planning & Community Development
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January 9, 2009

Secretary Ian Bowles
Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
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Boston MA 02114
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RE: **EOEA #14346**/ Comments on the Scope for the Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office

Dear Secretary Bowles,

The Town of Easton's Department of Planning is writing to provide comments on the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the South Coast rail project, as well as the scope of the federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the state Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Easton's Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Planning & Zoning Board, and Historical Commission are submitting comments under separate cover, and we hereby incorporate these comments by reference.

Restoration of rail service to through the Town of Easton would be severely disruptive. Although the existence of a seemingly ready rail bed makes the Stoughton alternative attractive, we urge the Army Corps of Engineers and EOT to consider that in the decades since rail service ceased, development patterns have sprung up around train in ways that are incompatible with active trains. Emergency service routes, Safe Routes to Schools, and local streets crisscross the rails; homes are built within a few feet of what could be passing trains. Even when rail service was at its peak in this area, trains ran slowly and

but a few times a day. Today, service requirements would dictate higher-speed trains once an hour. At-grade rail would severely impact homeowners who abut the rail.

It is our understanding that under the Clean Water Act, the Army Corps of Engineers *must choose* the project alternative with the least environmental impact that meets project goals. The Rapid Bus alternative clearly has the least environmental impact, since it would primarily run over the existing Route 24 highway. The Rapid Bus alternative has also been shown to meet project goals in terms of cost and travel time.

Although the busses are less glamorous than rail, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems have been successfully implemented all over the world (and recently in Boston as the Silver Line). We urge the EOT and the Corps to carefully consider the Rapid Bus alternative. New-start rail, on the other hand, has frequently proved to be a disappointment in terms of ridership and cost overruns.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Alice Savage
Easton Department of Planning & Community Development

cc: Aisling Eglinton, MEPA Office
Robert Varney, Regional Administrator, EPA
Matt Schweisberg, EPA