



February 27, 2018

The Honorable Stephanie Pollack, Secretary
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Reference: Comments on the Draft Massachusetts State Rail Plan

Dear Secretary Pollack:

I am writing on behalf of the New England Knowledge Corridor (NEKC) Partnership, an interstate economic coalition comprised of business, higher education and public sector leaders, to provide you with feedback on MassDOT's recently-released *Massachusetts State Rail Plan*. More specifically, this letter is to convey that at a NEKC Steering Committee meeting which was held on February 20, 2018, the members unanimously voted to express their full support for advancing a proposed east-west passenger rail project which would interconnect Boston-Worcester-Springfield-Hartford and New Haven consistent with what was recommended in the MassDOT-sponsored "Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI)" final report that was issued back in June of 2016. We understand, however, that in the recently released, draft version of the *Massachusetts State Rail Plan*, this east-west passenger rail link is classified as needing "further study" coupled with a feasibility analysis of a high speed rail connection between Boston and Springfield that has long been advocated by Massachusetts State Senator Eric Lesser. Although we agree a study of high speed rail makes eminent sense, we respectfully request and urge that the conventional speed passage rail link, as was carefully considered and recommended in the final NNEIRI report, be re-classified as a Tier 1 project so that it can be advanced into an early stage of implementation comparable to how other significant passenger rail projects of the Commonwealth have been addressed such as the South Coast Rail project, which is intended to restore rail service between Boston and southeastern Massachusetts. MassDOT is presently advancing Phase 1 of the South Coast Rail project that is expected to deliver service by late in 2022. Phase 1 of the South Coast Rail project has substantial funding allocated to it over at least the next five years and, thus, it's an approach we are asking MassDOT to emulate for the proposed Boston-New Haven passenger rail project in the final version of the *Massachusetts State Rail Plan*.

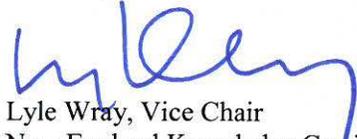
As you know, in addition to the strong support that has been voiced by Massachusetts Congressmen Neal and McGovern for the NNEIRI-recommended eight daily round trips between Boston and New Haven, Connecticut Governor Daniel Malloy has likewise written to Governor Baker and in a letter dated January 30, 2017, strongly advocated that Massachusetts advance the Boston-Springfield-New Haven rail link using a renovated "Inland Route" based on the substantial economic and mobility benefits to be gained in both states. Our Knowledge Corridor Partnership members fully concur with Governor Malloy's advocacy position especially given its strategic importance to the Interstate Knowledge Corridor area which stretches from New Haven northward to Springfield and Greenfield Massachusetts encompasses a population in excess of 2.7 million. Longer term, the NNEIRI recommendations also envision the rehabilitated and upgraded east-west rail corridor as a way to reconnect Boston, as well as the Knowledge Corridor cities and metropolitan areas, to our Canadian neighbors in Montreal.

For all of the detailed and compelling reasons outlined in the final NNEIRI report, as well as those outlined above, we respectfully request you and applicable Mass DOT leaders to seriously and favorably consider reclassifying the east-west rail connection project with Boston as a Tier 1 project so it can be advanced into the initial stages of implementation while recognizing this is an interstate rail connection that will require a decade or more to fully realize. Nevertheless the members of the Knowledge Corridor Partnership are convinced it is a project that is cost effective, environmentally sound, yields significant passenger and freight benefits and can produce major sustained economic benefits in both Massachusetts and Connecticut. This makes us confident it is a project of high merit and one that should move beyond the study phase as soon as possible.

The Honorable Stephanie Pollack
February 26, 2018
Page 2

Thank you for the opportunity to offer the Knowledge Corridor comments and recommendations relative to the final version of the *Massachusetts State Rail Plan*.

Sincerely,



Lyle Wray, Vice Chair
New England Knowledge Corridor Partnership

cc: J. Slesinger, MassDOT
NEKC Partnership Steering Committee

I-Comments on draft Massachusetts State Rail Plan/admin/NEKC/Letters_Memos