



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Dear East Cambridge Planning Team:

Thank you for your recent letter that outlined concerns regarding the unbearable noise emanating from the direction of the MBTA Commuter Rail Maintenance Facility in Somerville.

Over the course of the past month, my office has received several complaints regarding a “low, rumbling noise” that appears to be getting worse at night and is impacting East Cambridge residents in an unacceptable fashion. As you know, East Cambridge has too often borne the brunt of construction, development, transportation, and infrastructure impacts, and this appears to be the latest egregious example. I’m sorry that you are being made to endure this untenable situation, and my staff and I, in conjunction with Senator DiDomenico and his staff, are committed to doing everything we can to seek a resolution.

On February 26, myself, my legislative aide, and staff from Senator DiDomenico’s office conducted a virtual meeting with our liaison to the MBTA as well as several other members of the MBTA and Keolis operations staff and leadership teams, including one member who Zoomed in to the meeting to provide live video from the exterior of Maintenance Facility. Other participants in the meeting included the MBTA’s Assistant General Manager of Commuter Rail and Water Transportation, the MBTA’s Chief Railroad Officer, the CEO and General Manager for Keolis Commuter Services, the Senior Director for Public Relations and Government Affairs at Keolis, the Vice President for Asset Management for Keolis Commuter Services, the Chief Mechanical Officer at Keolis Commuter Services, the Senior Manager for Government Affairs at Keolis, and an additional Keolis consultant. I was glad we were able to get so many relevant people to participate in this initial meeting because it is important to ensure this issue gets the attention it deserves.

During the meeting, we reiterated our view that this noise issue is untenable and must be resolved to the satisfaction of the East Cambridge neighborhood. We also highlighted the noise log that was compiled by the Kobeks, and we discussed the Acentech, Inc. report from December 1999.

In turn, the MBTA/Keolis team advised that they had conducted a preliminary analysis of operations at the facility, which, according to them, showed no spike in activity that would correlate with any increased vibration or noise. They suggested that the high number of active construction projects in the area might be part of the problem. The

MBTA/Keolis team also asserted that much of the context of the Acentech report has changed, as the so-called “screecher” trains that were being used at the time of the report are no longer in service today.

I pushed back against their preliminary analysis, and I requested that they provide us with their data so that we can all review it. I relayed to them the narratives that East Cambridge residents have shared with me and my staff and the results of local fact finding expeditions which indeed tie the increased noise to operations at the Maintenance Facility. I further outlined the urgency and severity of the situation. In turn, the MBTA/Keolis team indicated that they wanted to have a chance to review the data compiled by the Kobeks (and when presented with these findings, they did seem a little less sure of their initial conclusions).

I asked that they agree to meet with the East Cambridge Planning Team and any other concerned residents, but for now, the MBTA/Keolis team said they would prefer to have an opportunity to review the information we conveyed to them at the meeting, and they have promised to do a follow up meeting with myself and Senator DiDomenico after they have had a chance to consider this information as provided by the neighborhood. I reiterated to them that ultimately, we need the noise to stop, and I further encouraged them to come meet with ECPT if they are unable to resolve the matter quickly.

The Keolis and MBTA staff also agreed to conduct multiple site visits and neighborhood/area walkthroughs, including in the middle of the night, so that they could better appreciate our concerns, and I plan to join them for these visits. I will continue to keep you posted as we follow up with them on these action items.

Thank you, once again, for your advocacy on behalf of the East Cambridge neighborhood and its residents. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me about this or any other matter, and for my part I will continue working with my colleagues in government to push for a resolution to this issue.

Yours in service,



Rep. Mike Connolly

cc: Sal DiDomenico, State Senator
Cambridge City Council
Louis DePasquale, Cambridge City Manager
Andrea Boyer, Chief Licensing Investigator, Cambridge License Commission
Claude Jacobs, Chief Public Health Officer, Public Health Department
Anthony Wilson, Cambridge City Clerk