



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB)
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May 24, 2021, via email

Dear Chair Aiello, Vice Chair Tibbits-Nutt, and Members of the FMCB:

I write to offer testimony in support of adopting Agenda Item #21, the South Side Commuter Rail Maintenance and Layover Facility Engineering Contract. This contract will provide for planning, environmental review, preliminary engineering, real estate due diligence, and stakeholder and community engagement for a new Commuter Rail Maintenance and Layover Facility on the South Side of the Commuter Rail system. I strongly support this proposal because it will help reduce Commuter Rail operations costs, increase operational efficiencies, provide for reliability benefits, and support the future growth of the Commuter Rail system.

In addition, as State Representative for the 26th Middlesex District, which includes parts of Cambridge and Somerville such as East Cambridge, Wellington-Harrington, East Somerville, and the Inner Belt area, I know firsthand how having only one Commuter Rail Maintenance and Layover Facility at the Boston Engine Terminal in Somerville's Inner Belt and adjacent to East Cambridge and Cambridge Crossing results in an overburdened, congested, and inefficient operation with outsized impacts on our local community.

Kendall Square is famously known as the most innovative square mile in the world — but at present, the 19th Century Grand Junction Railroad cuts through Cambridgeport, Kendall Sq., and East Cambridge as the only quick way the MBTA can get trains from the southern side of the Commuter Rail system to the current Maintenance Facility in Somerville. Often, these locomotives idle for 30 minutes or more in the middle of the night on the Grand Junction track as they await clearance to approach the facility via the active Fitchburg Line tracks — and this idling typically occurs in a location that directly abuts densely populated apartment buildings and residential streets in East Cambridge and Wellington-Harrington, between Binney Street and Cambridge Street, near an area also known as Linden Park. Once the trains are cleared to proceed, they are often kept idling throughout the evening in Yard 14 at the Maintenance Facility, which I toured on March 22 in response to recent noise complaints from numerous East Cambridge residents.

Clearly, with two-thirds of the Commuter Rail system operating on the southern side of the network, and with the continued absence of a true North-South Rail Link, it makes a lot of sense for the MBTA to advance this proposal to begin the design process for a second Commuter Rail Maintenance and Layover Facility to better balance the current and future needs of the system. Thank you kindly for considering my comments.

Yours in service,

Rep. Mike Connolly