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## South Coast Rail Shows Visible Progress

There's excitement along the South Coast Rail right-of-way (ROW) as communities see stations rising and completed, parking lots striped, tracks laid and grade crossings that are signalized and gated. The 36 miles of track, bridges and stations are being built in two contracts. Here are the key progress figures as of late summer 2023:

- The Fall River Secondary contract (FRS) is substantially complete, which is a significant milestone. It includes the Fall River Depot and Freetown Stations and Weaver's Cove Layover. While these stations look like they are expecting a train to pull in, they also await signal connections and tie-ins to ready them for operations. The stations are not yet open to the public.
- The Middleborough Secondary/New Bedford Line/Signals contract (MS/NBML) is now 85% complete. Middleborough, Church Street and New Bedford stations will be complete by year's end. East Taunton will follow in January. Work continues on the Wamsutta Layover Facility near the end of the line.
- Signal and communications work for the entire corridor is being performed under the ongoing MS/NBML contract. Signal instrument houses are appearing along the ROW. Essential equipment in these facilities manages signals, operations and track switches.

The Off-site Traffic Mitigation contract is forecast to complete construction by the end of 2023. This contract includes improvements outside of the railway to roadways, intersections, traffic signals, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings and signage in Middleborough, Lakeville, Taunton, New Bedford, and Fall River. This work will help to connect South Coast Rail to the communities and improve pedestrian and vehicular access around station areas.

The New Bedford Pedestrian Bridge Contract began construction in spring 2023. The bridge will bring pedestrians across Route 18 and Acushnet Avenue, connecting to the station parking lot and platform access on the east side and to New Bedford's historic Downtown on the west side. The bridge creates an accessible path to and from the station, featuring ramps and stairs on the west side, and elevators and stairs on the east side.

As the contractors begin to complete work on stations and the Wamsutta Layover, these facilities will appear to be ready for service. Yet key activities will continue even if they are not visible. These include completing installation of the signal and communications systems and testing and commissioning all of the new equipment by contractor crews, the MBTA and Keolis. Training for SCR train crews will also be underway. There will also be a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirement for a Simulated Service Demonstration, like a full dress rehearsal for service.

East Taunton Station takes shape



At every step, the MBTA will be putting Safety First for passengers and crews. To learn more about safety, download the [Safety First Fact Sheet](#) and share the information with your family and community.



Accessible EV parking at Freetown Station

## Looking Ahead: Riding SCR

As area residents look forward to restored South Coast Rail (SCR) service, they have questions about riding the trains. The most common questions relate to schedule, safety and accessibility as people ask about when and how to ride to their destinations.

Schedule details about revenue service, such as the number of trains running daily, are currently being finalized. SCR's Phase 1 is an extension of the existing [Middleborough Commuter Rail service](#). The MBTA establishes all Commuter Rail schedules and will update them to reflect new stations as the project gets closer to revenue service. The start of revenue service is currently expected to be in summer 2024.

The MBTA's Safety First program addresses safety for riders, abutters and those who may currently use the right-of-way (ROW) for dog-walking, exercise or sports. MBTA outreach, operations and safety teams are providing presentations, materials and videos on every element of being near or by a train or the ROW. The first rule is never to walk on or next to the tracks! Track safety rules and basics will be highlighted throughout the region as construction is complete and testing of the system begins. After all, high-speed trains have not been seen in the region for about 60 years. Everyone has to know – when you see tracks, think trains – and always stay alert.

Questions about access to parking, platforms and boarding trains are also common. The MBTA consistently follows Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards in state and federal law for South Coast Rail. There are accessible routes to all elements of the SCR stations. Starting in the parking lot, there are accessible parking

spots near the station platforms as well as EV (electric vehicle) accessible parking. Both ramps and stairs lead to and from the platforms.

All SCR platforms are high-level and full length (800 feet long). They feature an overhead platform canopy of at least 150 feet that also covers the platform ramps. The new platforms reduce gaps to train boarding. Yellow tactile warning strips mark the platform edge along the length of the platforms. Auditory and visual announcements will let riders know when trains are due and arriving.

Have more questions about your future train ride? Write the SCR team at [SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us).

## MBTA Holds Successful South Coast Rail Emergency Response Exercise

On July 27, the MBTA partnered with community emergency groups to stage a successful emergency response exercise in support of South Coast Rail Phase 1 service. The exercise provided hands-on training for responders and the opportunity to become familiar with Commuter Rail equipment. "First responders hope they never need to implement this training, but if a call comes, they won't hesitate. Exercises on actual trains are important as familiarity can save lives," said MBTA General Manager and CEO Phillip Eng. "Working in partnership supports the safety of passengers, crews and communities, our highest priority."

The MBTA and SCR team thank the dozens of volunteers and responders who were part of the staged emergency: Freetown Fire, Police and EMS; MBTA Transit Police and Keolis personnel; with mutual aid assistance from Berkley Fire, Lakeville Fire, Rochester Fire and Fall River Fire. Another full-scale drill and dress rehearsal train operations exercise is scheduled for November 19 in the New Bedford area.

Emergency responders participating in the response exercise



## South Coast Rail Holds First Safety First Presentation

South Coast Rail is conducting a Right-of-Way (ROW) safety education program with the goal of teaching all residents and stakeholders in southeastern Massachusetts about the importance of putting Safety First near tracks and trains. Thanks to a grant from Operation Lifesaver and the MBTA's commitment to safety, there are many ways to learn about safety do's and don'ts.

In June, the team gave the first presentation on this program to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), specifically the Southeastern Residential Services (SRS). The Department provides support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by establishing connections and providing opportunities. The Department aids both adults and children with living active, engaged lives as valued community members. In addition to connecting people with family support, programs for day support and employment, supplemental education services, community living and residential aid, the Department takes an individualized approach to plan and provide services.

Deirdre Halpin and Treasa O'Neil spearheaded this collaboration, requesting a Safety First presentation and coordinating with the South Coast Rail team. The SRS staff provided valuable insight on information that would be relevant to the people the department serves. The SCR team tailored the presentation to include station features

and accessibility as well as general rail safety. SCR coordinated a delivery of print materials, including Operation Lifesaver brochures, posters, and books.

Jean Fox, Director of Public Engagement, led the virtual presentation with SRS staff members as panelists. In addition to individual attendees, individuals supported by SRS gathered to view the presentation. Afterwards, the teams coordinated responses to follow-up questions, including information about parking and access. SCR would like to sincerely thank the Massachusetts DDS for this opportunity to share our Safety First message.

**What's coming to keep you safe?**



- Watch for more information on train safety coming soon in schools, libraries, city and town halls and more
- Share [Track Safety Basics](#) with your family
- Let us know if you have suggestions, questions or would like our team to present to your school or group

Please remember to think **Safety First!**

## SCR PROJECT SCHEDULE UPDATE

On September 28, the SCR team updated the MBTA's Board of Directors on the schedule for completion of construction and start of service. Sam Zhou, Chief Engineer, and Ryan Coholan, Chief Operating Officer, presented key information on construction accomplishments, safety elements and next steps.

- **Progress:** Final track, civil and station work are expected to be substantially complete by the end of 2023. East Taunton station will be complete in January 2023; it is the largest and most complex station.
- **Next steps:** prepare a safe system for riders and crew. This includes significant testing of the system to ensure it's ready. Automatic Train Control (ATC) testing (2,000 tests) and Positive Train Control (PTC) software and locomotive testing will take place along all three lines. Fire/Life/Safety Training and Safety Certification of the System – certifying more than 200 elements – will follow. Operational Qualification Field testing of crews and equipment follows and Federal Railroad Administration requires simulated service along the lines and at each station. This work will be taking place during spring 2024.

The MBTA is committed to beginning service as soon as possible without sacrificing safety. Residents should be prepared for, and be safe around, test trains. Full-scale drills and dress rehearsal train operations are starting soon and throughout the year to prepare for trains traveling up to full speed (79 mph). Local messaging to be safe around grade crossings – do not go near the rails – is of critical importance. Join our Safety First program and share the message.

Safety First is aimed at promoting safety throughout the railroad corridor. Presentations, brochures, videos, and conversations emphasize ROW safety for every age, occupation, and resident. For more information or to request a presentation, send us an email at [SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us) with "Safety First" in the subject line. Watch our [safety videos](#) and [Safety Basics vignette](#), and please think Safety First.



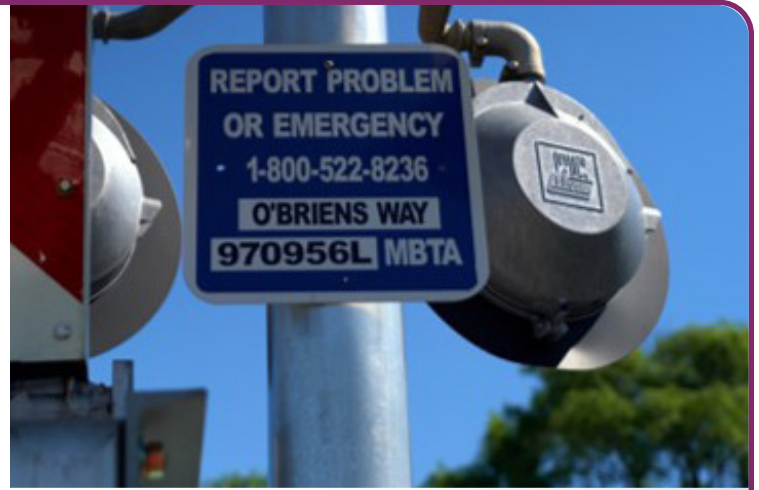
Reed and Barton, a silver manufacturer was located in Taunton  
(Photo credit: Marc N. Belanger)

## Tracking Taunton's Railroad History

*From time to time, South Coast Rail revisits the history of the region's cities and towns. The cities and towns of Massachusetts' south coast have rich histories, many including a tradition of rail service and rail-related industry. The City of Taunton, settled in 1637, has a unique past of locomotive industry and service. As we dive into that history, the South Coast Rail team also looks forward to continuing that tradition with the return of commuter rail to Taunton.*

Taunton's industrial history dates to the very earliest days of its founding. The naturally-occurring iron in the bogs and banks of the Taunton River allowed the creation of America's second iron works in early Taunton, now Raynham. The iron works was so successful it drew skilled craftsmen to the area, who used their talents to produce tools, nails, and help early Taunton thrive. This foundation in metalworking soon led to many more industries in Taunton, which ranged from textiles, machinery, and stoves to silver. More than 50 silver manufacturing companies were located in Taunton during the 19th century, so many that the city gained the nickname "The Silver City."

Taunton's industrial strength is exemplified by two companies that produced locomotives as the nation expanded West. Between 1846 and 1899, the Taunton Locomotive Manufacturing Company created steam-powered locomotives, though it also branched out to products such as snow plows later on. Eventually, Taunton Locomotive faced competition from another of the city's other successful enterprises, the Mason Machine Works, when it also began building



Problems or emergencies can be reported using the 800 number at each grade crossing sign

locomotives. From its first locomotive, the Rough and Ready, to its last, more than 900 trains were built right in Taunton. Shops for the Locomotive Works were located near the city's downtown, on Wales Street.

The companies that existed during Taunton's golden age of industrial manufacturing benefitted from its location along the Taunton River, which moved goods from throughout New England across the globe. With the rise of rail transportation, the city became even more important as a central hub for transportation.

In the past, passengers would board trains at the original Taunton Station, which was built in 1876. [The Dighton and Somerset Railroad](#) (owned by the [Old Colony Railroad](#)) was the primary rail route from Boston to the South Coast, running between Braintree, along the west bank of the Taunton River through its namesake towns of Dighton and Somerset, to its terminus at Fall River.

The new East Taunton Station is under construction at 1141 County Street. The station will feature a single center-island platform. The high-level, 800-foot platform will have elevators, ramps, and bridges for vertical circulation. Station features will include parking (including accessible and electric vehicle charging spaces), bicycle storage, a transition plaza, canopies, benches, and more.

By restoring commuter rail service between Boston and the cities and towns of southeastern Massachusetts, SCR will open a new chapter in Taunton's relationship with rail.

*Thanks to Katie MacDonald of the Old Colony History Museum in Taunton for contributing to this history. For more information, visit the [OldColonyHistoryMuseum.org](http://OldColonyHistoryMuseum.org).*

## What to Know about Construction:

- Typical hours of construction are Monday-Friday, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM or until dark; crews may arrive at construction sites prior to this time
- The exception is for track outages: these are 24-hour day work periods usually over 4-5 days; communities will be notified in advance of these events
- Construction pest and rodent management are required and ongoing
- Dust control and management are required and monitored
- Safety is embedded in all of the work on South Coast Rail



## Construction Questions

To report a construction-related issue on the South Coast Rail project, call the hotline at 617-222-4099. It will be answered Monday-Friday, between 7:00 AM and 3:30 PM (except holidays). All voicemails left outside of these hours will be received on the following 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM weekday shift. We will respond to all complaints. A separate line is established for off-site improvements in SCR communities, such as for road improvements, crosswalks and sidewalk construction: 423-375-4086.

There is also a phone number for inquiries directly to the Noise Program: [scrnoise@mbta.com](mailto:scrnoise@mbta.com); 617-449-7387

The SCR team is available to talk with or meet with residents, businesses and elected officials during construction to discuss issues and update stakeholders. Write us at [SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us).





A "patient" is assessed at the recent emergency exercise

## Contact Us

For more information, contact us at:

 [SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us)

 617-222-4099

 To learn more about the project and sign up for email updates, visit the website at: [www.mass.gov/southcoastrail](http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail)

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