

Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Secretary's Report
Meeting of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Board of
Directors
Barnstable Municipal Airport
480 Airport Road, Hyannis

Wednesday, September 25, 2013

Opening Remarks

Since we last met, we've seen the results of an 18-month process to help educate the public about the challenges facing our transportation system and we've offered a plan outlining solutions.

The results have been a new blueprint to help us move forward that consists of continued reforms, changes to many of our existing practices, such as how we toll; smarter fiscal practices, such as removing employees from the capital budget, and – above all else, new goals to improve our customers' experience.

We'll hear more about the past 18 months shortly, but I want to thank the members of the public for engaging with us and helping to steer an important policy discussion in the right direction and to keep the focus on what their needs are.

We heard loudly, clearly, and uniformly from all corners of the Commonwealth. And what we heard was that our customers want more and better services because of the link between transportation and jobs, education, medical care, and affordable housing. And we heard how transportation improvements can help with new plans for Smart Growth zoning, new development potential, and continued economic stability.

I look forward to continuing those discussions and working collectively toward a solution that will put us on solid footing.

Employee Recognition Program

This month, we have three employees to recognize.

The first is **Kathleen Mahoney**, Airport Engineer from the Aeronautics Division. Kathleen is being recognized for her work as project manager on the Statewide Airport Pavement Management System project. Pavements represent one of the largest capital investments in the aviation system and the goal of this project was to provide the airports in the Commonwealth, the Aeronautics Division and the FAA with the information and analytical tools to help monitor the condition and upkeep of these pavements. The long-term benefits include safe aircraft operations and cost-effective maintenance and rehabilitation planning.

The project entailed working with consultants and the airports to assess pavement conditions, establish a database, develop a website, and training on MicroPAVER, the Army Corps of Engineers' software program for pavement maintenance. Kathleen took it upon herself to learn as much as possible about pavement evaluations to be fully prepared to oversee this important undertaking. She went out with the field crew to learn evaluation techniques and took a week-long course in pavement inspections sponsored by the Air Force.

Kathleen is also a Major in the Rhode Island Air National Guard and commits herself fully to all of her projects – and this one was no exception. Completed under budget and on time, The Statewide Airport Pavement Management System Summary Website went live as scheduled on July 1. A link can be found on the MassDOT Aeronautics website at www.massdot.state.ma.us/Aeronautics

This month we're also recognizing **Daniel Ball**, Blue Line Repairer Foreperson, MBTA Orient Heights Carhouse.

As a Repairer Foreperson, Dan is responsible for organizing the fleet maintenance schedule for the Blue Line trains as well as assigning work to the Repairers. While performing his regular duties as a foreperson, Dan stepped forward and volunteered to create an inventory and serialize the thousands of parts for the fleet of new Siemens #5 cars currently up and running on the Blue Line. Dan worked diligently with the Everett Main Repair Facility, outside vendors and the MBTA's Materials Management department to accomplish this difficult and time consuming task. The meticulous research and documentation that went into this project has provided the Blue Line Maintenance Team with an invaluable resource: records on components, programs and equipment that will allow them to

effectively plan for and project future maintenance needs. The increased availability of parts has also reduced the downtime of the fleet for equipment repairs and improved overall productivity.

As a licensed aircraft mechanic and a volunteer firefighter in his home town of Essex, Dan is a very resourceful team player. He is quick to point out that he is only one part of a very effective team of repairers, foremen, and supervisors that work behind the scenes to provide our Blue Line customers with a safe and on-time ride each and every day: a key factor in increasing ridership.

Last and certainly not least, we recognize **Ronald Vitale**, HOC Operator, Highway Division.

As a Highway Operations Center Operator, Ronald works closely with MassDOT's partners in law enforcement, public safety and life safety to ensure continuity of operations on all MassDOT roadways and facilities. Recently, Ronald stepped up to the plate and volunteered to assist the HOC Management Team when a key member was out of work for an extended period. Ronald put to use what he has learned over the years as one of HOC's senior Operators and was able to provide support coordinating time and attendance, developing variable message sign schedules and codifying nomenclature for intelligent transportation field devices.

Ronald also offered to come in during his off hours in support of key tasks that needed completion, including a number of special projects that were being initiated. He used his understanding of systems and operations along with his interpersonal and organizational skills to help ensure that the department's reduced staffing did not have an impact on the users of MassDOT's roadways.

Ronald demonstrated exceptional dedication to the core mission of the HOC, putting the organization and his peers ahead of personal interests. He took actions above and beyond expectations that inspire other Operators to recognize that they too perform functions that can be called upon to support the many facets of HOC operations.

Chapter 90 Funds

While we continue to make strides toward improving the financial situation at the T and DOT, I'm happy to say that we were also able to distribute \$200 million in Chapter 90 funds for the second straight year.

As we all know, Chapter 90 funds are critical to cities and towns for the maintenance of local roads and bridges. As we, at the state level, continue to make progress in addressing the backlog of repairs, it is important that cities and towns have that same opportunity.

By providing the same, record-high, number of dollars for a second year, we are acknowledging that we understand the situation at the local level and that we are willing partners with them in achieving a shared goal.

John Greenleaf Whittier Bridge

On the subject of improvements, since we last met, we broke ground on the Whittier Bridge replacement project in Amesbury and Newburyport. The \$292 million job is a signature project in our Accelerated Bridge Program and will replace a 57-year-old structure with a new, eight-lane bridge that has major safety improvements. Additionally, the finished product will be a first for MassDOT and the Commonwealth by being the only interstate bridge to have a multi-use path.

The Whittier Bridge is one of just 14 infrastructure projects nationwide selected by the Obama Administration for expedited permitting and environmental review, designed to move projects as quickly as possible from concept to construction to completion.

Route 79/I-195 Interchange Project

Also on the subject of megaprojects, we broke ground on the reconstruction of the Route 79/I-195 interchange in Fall River. This project seeks to replace an 8,700 long, bi-level structure consisting of 111 bridge spans, which is needlessly confusing and has earned itself the fitting nickname: "the spaghetti ramps."

After all is said and done, this interchange will be simplified, operate more efficiently, and will open up new access to Fall River's waterfront, offering up new opportunities for economic development.

But more over, this is the fifth of five megaprojects funded by the Accelerated Bridge Program to get under way.

This Administration's record of investment is reflected in the many road and bridge projects we've all seen around the Commonwealth, but it's punctuated by projects like this one that sustains or creates jobs, fosters economic development, rebuilds our infrastructure, and has the potential to spur continued growth.

South Coast Rail – Final Environmental Impact Statement

In other South Coast matters, I was with the Governor in New Bedford on Monday to announce the Army Corps of Engineers released its Final Environmental Impact Statement for the South Coast Rail project.

MassDOT has identified the Stoughton Straight alternative as its preferred route for providing the best transportation, environmental and smart growth benefits. In its findings, the Army Corps affirmed our choice.

The release of the FEIS is the culmination of more than five years of coordination among the Administration, the Corps and 17 other state and federal agencies.

While additional design, permitting, and construction are still ahead, the FEIS is the culmination of more than 20 years of effort to bring an idea forward to a milestone not seen since the existence of passenger rail to the South Coast, which was deactivated in 1958.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my remarks.