

Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Secretary's Report  
Meeting of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Board of  
Directors  
Board Room, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Massachusetts  
Wednesday, July 16, 2103

### **Opening Remarks**

I want to start off by noting that we are not seeking Board approval for the Department's Fiscal 2014 operating budget today. This would normally be the custom after introducing the budget at the last meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee on June 25.

This, of course, is due entirely to the actions over the past week having to do with the budget and the transportation revenue bills which could significantly affect the budget that was proposed.

In the meantime, we are being funded by an interim budget based upon FY13 and as approved by the Legislature until a full FY14 budget is passed.

I would propose that a special meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee be called in early August and I would be seeking approval of the FY14 budget by the full Board in September when the budget issues are resolved likely this month.

### **Fairmount Commuter Rail Line Improvements**

I am happy to announce that both I and the General Manager are just back from joining Governor Patrick at the official opening ceremonies for three new stations on the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line. The new stations – Four Corners, Talbot Ave, and Newmarket – will open up a brand new transportation choice for our customers in the Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan neighborhoods.

In the past, folks from these areas expressed the concern that those trains would only rumble through their neighborhoods but would never stop so they could get on. Well, today, that is no more.

Along with the new stations, we are increasing the frequency of trains; we're also piloting a fare structure that makes the cost of riding the train competitive with existing bus service. And at the end of the day, our ardent hope is that we can relieve some of the overcrowding on our more popular bus routes, and also, provide a brand new, attractive, affordable, and efficient means of getting in and out of downtown Boston.

If not for the leadership of the Governor and the support of the neighbors, who believe in the value of transportation investments like this, these stations would have never come to fruition. And only because of Governor Patrick's commitment and the neighbors' advocacy, today, it is a reality.

### **Employee Recognition Program**

This month, we recognize the staff from the T's Employee Assistance Program.

Those folks are:

**Sandra Sullivan**, Manager of the T's Employee Assistance Program

**Julie Frey**, Employee Assistance Program Representative

**Elbert "Al" Copeland**, Employee Assistance Program Representative

**Virginia Wilson**, Executive Assistant

The MBTA Employee Assistance Program staff is charged with promoting a healthy work environment and enhancing the well-being of all employees. The EAP staff provides free, confidential consultation, short-term counseling resources and referrals for any work/life, family or personal issue.

This dedicated group of employees must always be prepared to respond – around the clock – and extend their services and step into whatever crisis may arise. They move quietly through the lives of our employees as they provide care, comfort and solution-based treatment to those in need. And these benefits reach beyond our employees to their spouses, children, parents, co-workers and yes, our customers.

Having an employee that is healthy, happy, less stressed, drug- and alcohol-free, and concentrating on their job, rather than their problems is a safer employee and that benefits all of us. For their dedication to helping our employees stay on track, the MBTA Employee Assistance Program Staff is this month's Employees of the Month.

### **Fall River-Spaghetti Ramps: Fifth Megaproject**

At our last Board of Directors meeting, this board voted to move forward with the fifth and final ABP "megaproject" in Fall River. By entering into a contract to completely reconstruct the Route 79/I-195 ramp system in Fall River, MassDOT reached a key milestone in the Accelerated Bridge Program. This project is a \$197 million effort and along with the other four megaprojects – the Burns Bridge, the Fore River Bridge, the Whittier Bridge, and Longfellow – account for approximately one-third of the total program's \$3 billion budget. The Fall River project will make dramatic safety improvements to the interchange. It also provides better waterfront access, and opens a new door for economic opportunity and potential for a city that has been gaining considerable momentum. I look forward to the work getting started.

### **John Greenleaf Whittier Bridge Update**

On the subject of megaprojects, preliminary work is under way on the Whittier Bridge, to set the stage for the start of major construction later this summer. Also funded through the Accelerated Bridge Program, this project will completely replace the existing bridge that carries more than 73,000 vehicles per day on I-95 over the Merrimack River.

While we certainly recognize this project's scope is massive, we are taking steps to ensure construction impacts are minimized to the best extent possible. In that spirit, we will maintain three travel lanes in the peak commuting direction during periods of higher traffic volumes. In addition, we will be posting signage and message boards to alert drivers of changes in traffic patterns.

In a previous era of bridge building, the sole focus was to answer the question of how to get cars from Point A to Point B. Today's world is much different and nothing illustrates that more than the fact that this project will also have a first-in-the-Commonwealth multi-use path on an interstate bridge.

## **Longfellow Bridge Rehabilitation Update**

Yet another milestone in the Patrick Administration's aim of rebuilding the Commonwealth's infrastructure will arrive this Saturday, July 20. That night we will close half of the Longfellow Bridge and implement a detour for Cambridge-bound vehicles over the Craigie Bridge, which will allow construction to begin in earnest.

This is a major, three and a half year undertaking that will completely rehab the historic and iconic bridge connecting Cambridge and Boston over the Charles River – and will do so while incorporating pedestrian and cycling access throughout construction and as part of the final configuration.

## **Closing Remarks**

In closing, whether it's the addition of new train stations, or rebuilding bridges in a way that incorporates more modes of transportation, the common theme is the importance our transportation infrastructure has on our economy and our quality of life.

Throughout his tenure, the Governor and MassDOT have been clear about his commitment to investing in our infrastructure. And to wit: since 2008, the number of structurally deficient bridges has dropped from 543 to 436, a decline of 19.7 percent. As of the beginning of this year, the Accelerated Bridge Program has completed 121 bridge projects, with another 48 projects currently in construction and an additional 20 projects scheduled to start construction within the next year. Over the course of the eight year program, well over 200 bridges are planned to be replaced or repaired.

But all of this work has been done through either additional resources being devoted to bridges, like the ABP, or through a commitment from each and every member of the Patrick Administration to come through on a promise to the neighbors along the Fairmount Line.

But for the future, we have to continue to ask ourselves, how do we afford the transportation we have today? And how do we pay for the system we want tomorrow?

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