

## **8.0 Public Involvement and Agency Coordination**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a summary of public involvement and agency coordination activities conducted by the Corps and/or MassDOT in the development of the DEIS/DEIR.

### **8.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The Corps published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on the South Coast Rail Project Section 404 permit application in the Federal Register on October 31, 2008.<sup>1</sup> For the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process, the South Coast Rail Environmental Notification Form (ENF) was noticed in the Environmental Monitor on November 24, 2008. Comments on the NOI and ENF were accepted until January 9, 2009. On February 20, 2009, additional information on ridership studies was provided for public review and the deadline for comments on the ENF was extended until March 17, 2009.

The Corps and the MEPA Office of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs held joint Corps/MEPA-sponsored public scoping meetings on December 2 and 3, 2008.<sup>2</sup> The scoping meetings provided an opportunity for the public, interested groups and local, state and federal agencies to comment on potential issues or concerns associated with the proposed project. The outcome of the scoping meetings and the public comment period following those meetings was used to help shape the issues studied in the DEIS/DEIR.

ENF comments were received from federally- and state-elected officials; EPA; the National Park Service; eight state agencies; four regional agencies; ten municipalities; 13 non-governmental organizations; and 45 individuals and businesses. Pursuant to existing MEPA requirements<sup>3</sup>, MassDOT prepared a Response to Comments on the ENF which is attached hereto as Appendix 8.2-A. While the responses to the ENF comments were prepared solely by MassDOT, the Corps has fully considered all comments received as part of the preparation of this DEIS/DEIR.

In addition to the public scoping meetings by the Corps/MEPA office, MassDOT has conducted its own public meetings and workshops throughout the study process. MassDOT notified interested parties, elected officials, and residents of upcoming meetings and new information through fact sheets, newspaper announcements, flyers and posters, cable-televised meetings, and/or e-mail notifications. Additional information on MassDOT's public outreach is provided on the project website (<http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail>).

A public notice announcing the availability of this DEIS/DEIR will be published concurrently with an announcement in the Federal Register of its availability, comment period and deadline, and public hearing dates and locations. Copies of this DEIS/DEIR may be reviewed at the public libraries and other repositories that are listed on the public notice. Public Hearings will be held in the vicinity of the project where members of the public will have an opportunity to provide comments. Comments on the

<sup>1</sup> Federal Register 73:212, 64927-64928 (October 31, 2008)

<sup>2</sup> Scoping meetings were held Dec. 2, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, Woodland Commons Building, 285 Old Westport Road, North Dartmouth and on Dec. 3, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. in the Taunton High School Auditorium, 50 Williams Street in Taunton.

<sup>3</sup> [INSERT REFERENCE FOR MEPA REGULATION HERE]

document may be submitted in writing or may be made orally at the public hearings. Written comments on this DEIS/DEIR must be received by the date specified in the Public Notice, and may be submitted via hand delivery, mail or e-mail to the contacts listed in the Abstract. Responses to comments on the DEIS/DEIR will be provided in the Final EIS/EIR.

### 8.3 AGENCY COORDINATION

Cooperating agencies are agencies that have legal jurisdiction or special expertise in the issues being addressed in an EIS and assist the lead agency in the NEPA process (40 CFR 1501.6). Four federal agencies accepted the Corps' request to serve as cooperating agencies for the preparation of the South Coast Rail EIS: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Copies of the cooperating agency status acceptance letters from the above listed agencies are provided in Appendix 8.3-A.

MassDOT convened an Interagency Coordinating Group of federal and state regulatory agencies to inform the environmental review process. In addition to the South Coast Rail Project Manager for the Corps, the Interagency Coordinating Group includes representatives of:

- United States Environmental Protection Agency
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Narragansett Indian Tribe
- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
- Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office
- Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
- Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
- Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program
- Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program
- Massachusetts Historical Commission
- Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District

This group began meeting in September 2007 and met monthly through November 2009, and less frequently through July 2010. The group meets with the objective of informing the environmental review process for the Project by discussing key items, including project purpose and need, scope of alternatives for study, methodology for obtaining data, and analysis of data. Table 8-1 lists Interagency Coordinating Group meeting topics and dates.

In addition, as required by the Secretary's Certificate on the ENF, a working group was formed to develop a scope for the analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and the potential secondary effects of the proposed Project with, and without, the implementation of the Corridor Plan. Participants in this working group included representatives of the EPA, Corps, and DEP.

A full record of group-approved meeting minutes is posted on MassDOT's Project website: [www.mass.gov/southcoastrail](http://www.mass.gov/southcoastrail).

**Table 8-1 Interagency Coordinating Group Meetings to Date**

<b>Meeting Topic</b>	<b>Date</b>
Project Kickoff and Introduction	September 25, 2007
Project Purpose and Need – Draft	October 23, 2007
Project Purpose and Need – Draft: Phase 1 Screening Criteria	November 27, 2007
Project Purpose and Need – Draft: Phase 1 Screening Criteria; Review of Civic Engagement Input	December 19, 2007
Project Purpose and Need – Final: Phase 1 Screening Criteria	January 3, 2008
Phase 1 Screening Criteria – Final: Range of Phase 1 Alternatives	January 10, 2008
Phase 1 Analysis – Step 1 Screening Criteria Results	February 14, 2008
Phase 1 Analysis – Concurrence on Step 1 Screening Criteria Results; Review Step 2 Results	February 21, 2008
Phase 1 Analysis – Step 2 Concurrence; Review Step 3 Results and Conclusion of Phase 1	February 28, 2008
Phase 1 Analysis – Concurrence on Step 3 Results	March 4, 2008
Phase 1 Analysis – Draft Report; Review of Civic Engagement Input; Step 4 (Circling Back) Analysis	March 21, 2008
Phase 1 Analysis – Concurrence on Advancing Alternatives	April 1, 2008
Smart Growth Corridor Plan	May 27, 2008
Ridership Modeling; Role of the Interagency Coordinating Group	June 19, 2008
Environmental Data Collection Protocols, Potential Station Locations and Rail Operational Analysis	July 17, 2008
Proposed Station Locations; Environmental Review; Data Collection Protocols and Modeling	September 16, 2008
Preliminary Assessment of Alternatives; Environmental Notification Form	October 24, 2008
Discussion on Content of Environmental Notification Form	December 15, 2008
ENF Comments from MEPA; Priority Mapping; Ridership Memo	January 22, 2009
Supplemental Ridership Memo	February 26, 2009
Subcommittee Meeting on Wetlands	April 16, 2009
Subcommittee Meeting on Greenhouse Gases	May 5, 2009
Subcommittee Meeting on Secondary and Cumulative Growth Impacts	May 7, 2009
CAPS model; Secondary Growth Methodology; Wetlands Mapping Methodology	June 18, 2009
CAPS model; Secondary Growth and GHG methodology	July 21, 2009
Rail and Bus operations; Corridor Plan	August 20, 2009
DEIS Process; Secondary Growth Impacts Methodology and Results: Alternatives Analysis	October 22, 2009
CAPS Results' Secondary Growth Impacts	November 12, 2009
Subcommittee meeting on wetland mitigation	February 1, 2010
Subcommittee meeting on wetland mitigation	May 22, 2010
Alternatives Analysis	July 21, 2010