KOPELMAN AND PAIGE, P.C.
The Leader in Municipal Law

101 Arch Street
Boston, MA 02110
T: 617.556.0007
F: 617.654.1735
www.k-plaw.com

George X. Pucci
gpucci@k-plaw.com
(617) 654-1718

October 25, 2013

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL
purvi.patel@state.ma.us
AND BY HAND

Secretary Richard Sullivan, Executive Office of
Energy and Environmental Affairs
Attn: MEPA Office (Purvi Patel)
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Re: South Coast Rail Project
Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environmental Impact Report
(Town of Stoughton)

Dear Secretary Sullivan:

As previously advised, this firm represents the Town of Stoughton in responding to the South Coast Rail Project proposed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation ("MassDOT"). This shall serve as the Town's comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environmental Impact Report ("FEIS/R") issued for the project on August 29, 2013.

I. PROJECT PURPOSE

There remains a fundamental flaw in the stated public purpose of the project, which is "to more fully meet the existing and future demand for public transportation between Fall River/New Bedford and Boston, Massachusetts to enhance regional mobility, while supporting smart growth planning and development strategies in the affected communities." As was made clear to the reviewing agencies in the Town of Stoughton's comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report ("DEIS/R") in May, 2011, relevant evidence contradicts the claim that there is a compelling need to provide commuter rail service between the regions of Boston and the Fall River/New Bedford area.

There is also no evidence to support MassDOT's claim that expansion of commuter rail service from Boston to the Fall River/New Bedford area will increase transit ridership, improve regional air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or support opportunities for smart growth and economic development. These claims were refuted in the Town's prior comments letter and remain entirely conclusory in nature and unsupported by actual meaningful statistics or analysis.

On the issue of smart growth, the project proponent claims that "the project can help cluster people and jobs near train stations, opening new economic development opportunities, while directing growth away from natural areas." This claim is wholly unsubstantiated as there is no evidence that train stations attract residential or commercial uses.

Despite its length of 2,000 pages plus maps and figures, the FEIS/R provides no meaningful analysis of the impacts of the project upon the Town of Stoughton on noise, visual and aesthetic resources, environmental justice, socioeconomics, cultural resources, historic resources and related concerns. Indeed, MassDOT itself acknowledges that the Stoughton Electric Alternative would have greater visual impacts and impacts to historic resources than the other alternatives considered, would be substantially more expensive to construct, and presents the **"worst-case analysis with respect to historic and visual resources."**

The conclusion that there is no practicable alternative to the Stoughton Electric Alternative with less environmental impact is arbitrary and capricious and not based upon substantial evidence. The evidence on the record establishes that the "No-Build Enhanced Bus Alternative" is clearly the most environmentally sound alternative to address the purported need to improve regional transportation between Boston and the New Bedford/Fall River area. In this respect, it is important to note the opposition to the project filed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, which previously noted serious deficiencies in the alternatives analysis presented in the DEIS/R, which deficiencies continue to remain unheeded in the FEIS/R.

There is a continuing absence of any relevant or sound demographic or statistical analysis to conclude that there is a substantial Boston commuting market located in the Fall River/New Bedford area, and no basis to conclude that there is a compelling need for commuter rail service between these two widely disparate regions. Any purported need for this project is far outweighed by the extraordinary cost of the project and the devastating impacts it will have on the Town of Stoughton.

There also continues to be no rational basis to conclude that "regional mobility" will be substantially improved by the extension of the commuter rail through the Town of Stoughton and points south to Fall River/New Bedford, as the extension is unlikely to do anything other than draw riders from other means of public transportation without any appreciable reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

Means of Transportation to Work data for towns along the Old Colony Middleborough/ Lakeville extension and along the Greenbush line demonstrate the actual impact of the commuter rail on commuting patterns for residents. The Middleborough/Lakeville line opened in 1997. As of the 1990 Census, almost no residents of Middleborough or Lakeville used the commuter rail as a way to get to work. By the 2000 Census, 2.0% of Lakeville residents and 2.6% of Middleborough residents used the commuter rail to get to work. From 2000 until the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, which is the most recent data available, the use of the rail as a means of transportation to work has declined on a percentage basis in some areas.

In Lakeville, the increase was nominal up 0.2%, to 2.2%. In Middleborough, usage declined based on those surveyed to 1.9%. These statistics are very similar to those for towns located along the newly constructed Greenbush line, which saw a ridership of the commuter rail increase of only 1.9% to 2.2% of those surveyed between the opening of the Greenbush line and the most recent

Census data from the 2005-2009 American Community Surveys.

Moreover, approximately 25% of these riders switched to the commuter rail from another means of public transportation. Thus, these statistics indicate that the extension or re-opening of a rail line not only does not drive significant increases in rail ridership, but it also merely results in more competition to other modes of public transportation, with no appreciable reduction in the amount of vehicle miles traveled on the roadways of the Commonwealth.

The "ridership analysis" cited in the FEIS/R is entirely refuted by the foregoing evidence of the negligible benefits arising from actual recent expansions of commuter rail service.

Further, as previously noted in response to the DEIS/R, Journey to Work data from the 2000 Census, which is the most recent available at a detailed level, as well as Wage and Employment data from the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development for Fall River and New Bedford indicate that less than 2.0% (695 New Bedford residents and 646 Fall River residents) of residents of either city work in Boston and, therefore, would benefit from the rail extension and the opportunity to use the commuter rail to travel to work. The majority of residents of these two cities work in Fall River, New Bedford, Rhode Island, and other car commuting locations which would not be served by the South Coast Rail extension.

The 2000 Journey to Work data correlates reasonably well with the Journey to Work data from the American Community Survey of 2005-2009 which indicates that 74.9% of Fall River residents and 80.7% of New Bedford residents surveyed work within the same county in which they live. In New Bedford, the primary industries of employment are Health Care and Social Assistance (8,462), Manufacturing (6,664), Educational Services (2,811), Retail Trade (2,596), and Accommodation and Food Services (2,307). These primary employers are also some of the lowest paying industries based on the Labor Department data.

Fall River's primary employment industries are the same as those of New Bedford. The industries that employed the most residents of Fall River as of end of year 2009 are Health Care and Social Assistance (10,193), Manufacturing (4,644), Retail Trade (3,187), Educational Services (2,390), and Accommodation and Food Services (2,333). As with New Bedford, these primary employers are also some of the lowest paying industries based on the Labor Department data.

While MassDOT argues that the lack of public transit to Boston "may" impact the economic development of the New Bedford/Fall River area, the primary industries that residents of Fall River and New Bedford work in, more logically lead to the conclusion that the addition of public transportation by extending commuter rail service to the area will make a marginal difference in the number of people commuting to Boston for work. Based on the Journey to Work data that shows that a limited number of people from the region travel to Boston for work, the state of the Boston commercial market, and the limited success other new rail lines have had in attracting ridership,

there is no evidence that the extension of the South Coast line will spur significant ridership from Bristol County nor will it drive any significant employment opportunities.

Again, the "ridership modeling" referenced in the FEIS/R does not overcome real data based upon actual facts. Ridership along the Stoughton line will not substantially increase by extending the line to provide a means of access to work for New Bedford and Fall River residents. As noted above, Transportation to Work data for residents of other towns where a rail line has recently been opened refute this claim. Means of Transportation to Work data for towns along the Old Colony Middleborough/Lakeville extension and along the Greenbush line estimate the impact of the commuter rail on commuting patterns for residents. These data show at most a 2.2% increase in commuter rail use as a means of transportation to work since the rail opened for both the Old Colony and Greenbush lines. On the Old Colony line, the use of the rail as a means of transportation to work has declined on a percentage basis in some areas as of the 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

Statistics based upon actual recent expansions of commuter rail service plainly indicate that the extension or re-opening of a rail line does not drive significant increases in rail ridership, and certainly not to the degree to which the construction of a catenary electrified train system through the Town of Stoughton could ever be reasonably justified.

II. ADVERSE IMPACTS ON STOUGHTON

A. Economic Impact

MassDOT continues to make the preposterous claim that the proposed electrified commuter rail expansion promotes "smart growth" concepts such as "transit-oriented development." This claim continues to be entirely illusory as there is not a single concrete instance of a vibrant economic community arising around the vicinity of a newly constructed rail line or train station in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Commuter rail locations are exactly that, locations for commuters to park their cars and travel somewhere else. The noise and vibration of commuter trains, and the splitting up of roadways and sidewalks along the rail crossings, lessens the economic value of businesses and residences located in close proximity to rail lines and train stations.

In response, the FEIS/R acknowledges that "transit-oriented development" … "cannot be predicted with certainty or accuracy …" If it cannot be predicted with "accuracy" the claim should not be made at all. In fact, no reasonable person, when presented with actual data concerning development in and around newly constructed commuter-rail stations, could possibly conclude that such construction promotes "smart growth" in the area of the station itself or in the area of the newly constructed train routes. The FEIS/R's continued citation to "transit oriented development" with no concrete examples of such development, is arbitrary and capricious.

As noted in response to the DEIS/R, the blighted condition of the areas around the location of

the train station in downtown Stoughton is instructive. The location of the rail line into downtown Stoughton has never been conducive to economic development of the downtown. In fact, the MBTA has allowed the historic train station to fall into an abandoned state of disrepair. The limited residential and commercial uses which exist in downtown Stoughton exist despite the existence of the commuter rail station, and only because of the dogged determination of the local residents and business owners in trying to maintain a viable downtown district.

For Stoughton, the Corridor Plan projects 1,510 new dwelling units and 425,000 square feet of commercial development within one mile of the station in the next 20 years resulting from the rail line extension. However, this projection is plainly refuted by the damage the rail line into downtown Stoughton has already caused and is also refuted by the experience of the newly constructed Greenbush line through Hingham, where there has been no development anywhere near the scale of the Corridor Plan's projections.

The reality of Stoughton's current development patterns with the existing commuter rail shows that development continues to occur predominantly in highway-accessible locations. Again, the existing rail line into Stoughton only detracts from viable thriving residential or commercial uses in the downtown, particularly highlighted by the blighted and dilapidated condition of the abandoned historic train station which MassDOT chooses to simply ignore when bypassing Stoughton's interests in favor of its preferred but shortsighted regional transportation plan. There is no basis to conclude that extending the rail line through Stoughton would significantly shift current development patterns unless financial incentives are provided to encourage development in the downtown.

The FEIS/R does not respond in any way to these concerns.

B. Stoughton Ridership and Environmental Impacts

Current ridership numbers continue to refute the claim that the South Coast Rail extension will induce people to abandon car travel in favor of train travel. Approximately 5.0% (600+/- people) of Stoughton residents surveyed in the American Community Surveys of 2005 to 2009 reported use of public transportation as their means of transportation to work, approximately 75% of which use the commuter rail. The majority – 83% (10,600 +/- people) – drove to work.

Data from the US Census indicate that public transportation ridership in Stoughton has decreased between 2000 and 2010 despite increases in population. A review of primary workplace locations for Stoughton residents underscores that while almost 2,700 Stoughton residents worked in Boston as of 2000, the balance – more than 11,000 people - work in car commuting locations such as Canton, Brockton, Quincy, and Norwood.

The project proponent continues to ignore unrefuted evidence from the Greenbush line which shows that the MBTA has failed to meet its ridership projections on that line and that a number of

the Greenbush line riders have switched from using the commuter ferry, not from driving their cars. A survey of Greenbush line riders in 2009 found that 46.6% had switched to the commuter rail from the boat while 44.5% previously drove to Boston. David Luberoff, executive director of the Rappaport Institute at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, whose institute has studied the effect of commuter rail on Greater Boston, said that many people who choose to ride trains had been in carpools before, not driving alone into Boston. "Given that we're talking about a couple of thousand people, the impact on congestion will be completely minimal," he said.

According to studies of the Central Transportation Planning Staff report in March, 2010, Greenbush commuter rail ridership is approximately 40% less than that projected.

In response, the FEIS/R inadequately refers to "modeling" which purportedly supports MassDOT's increased ridership claim. However, MassDOT's "modeling" and related conclusory assertions do not refute the hard statistics based upon actual experience with recently expanded commuter rail lines.

The likely impact of the South Coast rail extension on decreasing highway traffic around Stoughton also appears limited, especially given that ridership in Stoughton has been declining in recent years. Further, new stations south of Stoughton will attract people from Easton and Raynham and other surrounding towns who may currently commute from Stoughton away. The declining ridership of existing Stoughton residents coupled with existing riders being drawn away by more southerly station stops means that the extension of the South Coast rail will result in fewer people in downtown Stoughton but more intense train traffic through town, only now much more frequent and intense, in both directions, and with the added nuisance and visual disturbance of electric train infrastructure splitting the Town in half.

C. Stoughton Rail Usage Trends and Related Issues

As previously noted in the Town's Comments in May, 2011, according to the MBTA, there is capacity for 333 cars at the Stoughton parking lot and it is approximately 70% full on any given day. This means 235 to 250+/- people park and ride. The MBTA reported 1,000+/- inbound passengers from Stoughton on a one day audit that occurred in February 2009. These 1,000 passengers represent about 45% of the peak inbound travelers alighting at Ruggles, Back Bay, and South Station according to MBTA 2010 audit data, as follows:

Fall 2010 Peak Morning Alightings – Stoughton Line

Train #	South Station	Back Bay	Ruggles	Total
902	209	199	NA	408
904	381	292	NA	673
906	391	257	128	776
910	186	180	NA	366

Fall 2010 Peak Period Evening Boardings – Stoughton Line

Train #	South Station	Back Bay	Ruggles	Total
917	204	154	54	412
919	294	197	58	549
921	588	220	56	864
923	363	172	49	584
925	154	101	30	285

Approximately 5.0% (600+/- people) of Stoughton residents surveyed in the American Community Surveys of 2005 to 2009, which is the most recent data of this type available, reported use of public transportation as a means of transportation to work. Of these people, 74% to 77% reported using the commuter rail. This amounts to an average of 470+/- Stoughton riders per day in 2010. Data from the 2000 Census show some 950+/- Stoughton riders, indicating that ridership decreased between 2000 and 2010 despite increases in population of approximately 4,050 additional residents over the same period of time, and an estimated increase of 1,564 households. The majority of the residents surveyed – 83% (10,600 +/- people) – drove to work.

Journey to Work data from the 2000 Census, which is the most recent available, show that Stoughton residents work primarily in car-oriented destinations, apart from those that travel to Boston. As shown in the table to follow, while almost 2,700 Stoughton residents worked in Boston, the balance – more than 11,000 people - work in car commuting locations such as Canton, Brockton, Quincy, and Norwood. This correlates with the Means of Transportation to Work data, which shows 83% of Stoughton residents driving to work.

Workplace Location	Employees
Stoughton	2,661
Boston	2,680
Canton	1,220
Brockton	822
Quincy	627
Norwood	450
Randolph	362
Braintree	305
Avon	299
Easton	278
Dedham	275
Cambridge	253
Newton	239
Waltham	185
Westwood	167

Mansfield	161
Foxborough	145
Needham	140
Walpole	140
Weymouth	124
Sharon	114
Wellesley	107
Rhode Island	95

While Stoughton's population increased from 2000 to 2010, the majority of residential development in Stoughton occurred in more suburban settings and highway accessible locations, from North Stoughton to West Stoughton to the Easton line, as shown in the table to follow. Little residential development has occurred downtown and the fact that there is walkable access to public transportation is not a driving force in development patterns in Stoughton. As a result, extending the commuter rail through Stoughton is unlikely to cause any significant increase in housing development in Stoughton's downtown or in commuter rail usage. Even with reasonable population growth in Stoughton, public transit usage declined, another indication that extending the line will adversely affect Stoughton with no reasonably offsetting benefits. The Town also continues to challenge the disingenuous assertions of the project proponent with respect to freight service, which must be accessed and evaluated in a realistic manner.

Development Name	Address	# of Units	Unit Type
Quail Run	12 Buckley Road	132	Apt
Alta at India Woods	30 Stage Coach Road	154	Apt
Villages at Ames Pond	1400 West St	40	Condo
Pond View Village	473 Turnpike St	72	SF
The Lodge	400 Technology Dr	240	Apt
Woodbridge	Mill & Central St	176	Apt
Goddard Highlands	39 Kelsey Dr	104	SF
Downtown Stoughton		14	Condo
Total		932	

There is no evidence to support an increase in Stoughton based ridership, or substantially increased ridership as the result of additional stations being constructed south of Stoughton. Greenbush line Journey to Work data indicates that since the Greenbush line began running the number of commuter rail riders has increased while the number of ferry boat riders has decreased. The MBTA has failed to meet its ridership projections on the Greenbush line. As of October 2010, the MBTA reported an average of 2,133 weekday customers rode the Greenbush line toward Boston, which is about half the 4,200 riders that had been projected within three to five years of opening Greenbush. In addition, a number of Greenbush line riders are former commuter ferry riders, which has seen ridership drop 25% since the Greenbush line opened.

D. Crossings/Depression of Rail Line

The FEIS/R improves upon prior deficiencies in the DEIS/R but still needs further analysis on the engineering concerns noted on pages 9-10 of the Town's comments letter in response to the DEIS/R in May, 2011. The Town's engineering consultant's comments on the FEIS/R are attached hereto and incorporated by reference. Considering the totality of impacts, depression of the rail line continues to be the only viable option which could adequately address and mitigate the adverse effects of this project proposal on the Town of Stoughton.

E. Electric

As previously noted, the Town of Stoughton strongly objects to the "Stoughton Electric" option, regardless of how other issues relating to this project proposal may or may not be adequately addressed and resolved. As acknowledged by the project proponent, the overhead electrical contact system would consist of a network of catenary wires that distribute power from the traction power system to the electric locomotives. The system would have a contact wire and a messenger wire strung above every electrified track in the system with negative feeder wires and static wires and supporting structures to hold the catenary wires in place.

The massive related support system would consist of pole structures with foundations, poles, guys, insulators, brackets, cantilevers, and other assemblies and components. The catenary supports would consist of single track cantilever poles, twin track structures, and multiple track portals.

As was previously noted, this massive, ugly, and dangerous infrastructure would split the entire Town of Stoughton in two, both through its congested downtown area which is already blighted in the area of the existing commuter rail station, and through open space and residential areas which are not now adversely affected by active train service. No city or town in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has ever been victimized by any similar proposal. The finding of "Stoughton Electric" as the preferred alternative in the FEIS/R is an egregious example of arbitrary and capricious decision-making, and substantially interferes with the Town of Stoughton's material rights and interests. The Town urges reconsideration of this finding and revision to a more sensible option.

F. Other Adverse Effects

As previously noted, the Stoughton Alternative, both electric and diesel, received a grade of "C" on the category of permanent loss of interior wetlands and received grades of "F" and "D" respectively on the adverse impact upon protected open space. The Stoughton Alternative also received grades of "F" on the category of required property acquisition and received grades of "D" on the category of municipal tax loss. As a purported response to this, the FEIS/R simply notes that letter grades "have been eliminated," without specifying how exactly the impacts which reflected these dismal grades are to be adequately remedied.

The Town of Stoughton continues to challenge the adequacy of proposed mitigation of such further adverse effects, and the adequacy of analysis and proposed mitigation of the adverse effects the project shall have on historic, cultural and religious uses in the vicinity of the rail line, and the assessment of hazardous materials issues related to this project, including two hazardous waste facilities located within steps of the rail line.

The Town also challenges the FEIS/R's inadequate response to its request that the project proponent be required to reserve funds to ensure adequate mitigation during construction, including, but not limited to:

- the reimbursement for the cost of experts such as engineers and other professionals in planning for the future infrastructure requirements that will go under the rail line in order to insure that the underground sleeves that will hold the sewer, water, and other infrastructure are of sufficient size, as well as ensuring that there is adequate provision for future surface crossings such as sidewalks;

- the reimbursement for the cost of a full time engineer and other specific consultants during the initial planning, design, construction , and post-construction phases of the project to:
    - review the 25%, 50% 75% and final design drawings;
    - review the proposed plans for the impact of drainage on abutting properties;
    - monitor the construction progress and review any changes;
    - act as liaison with the MBTA and contractor and attend meetings with the MBTA, contractor, and community groups;
    - review the adequacy and proper protection standards for historic districts and conservation areas;
    - review the adequacy and standards for sound mitigation, security fencing and visual screening for residential, commercial, and other properties abutting the rail line; and
    - review the adequacy and design standards for the MBTA improvements to the downtown area and reuse of the existing MBTA parking areas.

Assuming a four-year design to completion timeframe, a reasonably estimated out of pocket cost to the Town of Stoughton would be in the range of $750,000 for the Project Coordinator/ Engineer and third party consulting engineers and other experts.

In addition the Town continues to seek to be reimbursed for all other costs associated with the project including, but not limited to:

- legal costs;
- land acquisition;
- infrastructure relocation and replacement;
- drainage improvements;
- required streetscape improvements;
- historic structure related costs;

- conservation/open space related costs;
- downtown improvement costs;
- special security fencing in areas proximate to Public Schools;
- sound and visual screening in residential and commercial areas abutting the rail line;
- endangered species protection funds;
- and other costs which would be identifiable only when the proposed rail right of way plans are available.

III. NO-BUILD ENHANCED BUS ALTERNATIVE

As previously noted, and as has been acknowledged by the project proponent, there is existing adequate public and private bus transportation between Boston, Fall River, and New Bedford, with multiple park and ride locations, and there are substantial means of enhancing this existing service with efficient and inexpensive upgrades which will more than fully meet the purported purpose of the project which is allegedly to enhance the quality of public transportation options between Boston and the Fall River/New Bedford area.

As noted above, the FEIS/R continues to arbitrarily rely upon inadequate data to support the claim that there is a compelling need for enhancement of public transportation between the Boston and the Fall River/New Bedford areas. The entire project continues to depend upon the speculative proposition that "poor connectivity" to metropolitan Boston from the urban areas of New Bedford and Fall River "may constrain" economic activity in the New Bedford/Fall River area. The unduly vague and speculative nature of the purported need for this massively expensive public project is far outweighed by its adverse effects upon the Town of Stoughton and compels a finding that the "No Build – Enhanced Bus" option should be the preferred and chosen alternative.

IV. FURTHER MITIGATION

The Town also continues to note, in addition to the mitigation analysis set forth above, there is aging utility infrastructure crossing the railroad tracks at 15 locations along the rail line in Stoughton. If the railroad line is to be reconstructed as proposed, sound engineering practices dictate that this aging infrastructure be replaced, as follows:

1) Central Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Sewer	15" reinforced concrete pipe	11'	1965	Replace 150' with ductile iron pipe
Water	8"	6'		Replace 150' with 10" ductile iron pipe in sleeve
Drain	18"	6'	1965	Check pipe for condition
Gas				Contact gas company

2) Simpson Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Water	6"	6'	1965	Replace 100' with 10" ductile iron pipe in sleeve
Gas				Contact gas company

3) Easement 850' South of Simpson Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Sewer	12" vitrified clay	Deep	1952	Replace with 150' of 20" ductile iron
Drain	60" reinforced concrete pipe	15'		No replacement necessary

4) School Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Water	6"	6'	1952	Replace with 100' 12" ductile iron pipe in sleeve
Drain	36" reinforced concrete pipe			Needs inspection

5) Rose Street Drainage

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Culvert	2.5' by 2'			Replace with 24" reinforced concrete pipe

6) Porter Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Sewer	12" cast iron	15'	1936	Replace 115' with 18" ductile iron pipe
Water	12" cast iron	6'	1936	Replace 100' with 18" ductile iron pipe in sleeve

7) Railroad Station Drainage

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Drainage	3' by 3'			Replace with 4' ductile iron pipe

8) Wyman Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Sewer	10" vitrified clay	Unknown	1936	Replace with 150' 12" ductile iron pipe

Water	10" cast iron	6'		Replace with 100' 16" ductile iron pipe in sleeve
Drain	15"	4'		Replace with 60' of 18" ductile iron pipe

9) Sewer-393' North of Brock Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Sewer	12" vitrified clay		1961	Replace 160' 12" ductile iron pipe
Drain	36" reinforced concrete pipe			No replacement necessary

10) Brock Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Water	6"	6'		Replace 100' 10" ductile iron pipe in sleeve

11) Drain – 900' South of Brock Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Drain	3' by 3.5'	16'		Granite block culvert, old but good condition

12) Plain Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Sewer	21"		1960	21" sewer is in 48" steel casing filed with grout
Water	6"	6'		Replace with 150' 8" ductile iron pipe in sleeve
Water	8"	6'		Replace with 100' 10" ductile iron pipe in sleeve

13) Morton Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Water	6"	6'		Replace with 100' 10" ductile iron pipe in sleeve

14) Easement 900' South of Morton Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Water	16"	6'	1971	Replace with 100' 24" ductile iron pipe in sleeve

15) 240' South of Access Opening to No. 1801 Washington Street

Utility	Size	Depth	Age	Comment
Culvert	2' by 2'			Replace with minimum 4' by 4' box culvert

V. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, the Town respectfully submits that the finding in the FEIS/R that "Stoughton Electric" is the preferred project alternative is arbitrary and capricious and not based upon substantial evidence. The Town also notes its agreement with the grounds for challenging the FEIS/R set forth in the comments letter of Louis F. Gitto dated September 22, 2013, which are incorporated herein by reference. Should these contentions be rejected, the Town seeks further analysis and adequate mitigation with respect to all adverse effects noted above, and compliance with all other applicable regulatory requirements and standards.

Very truly yours,

George X. Pucci

GXP/man
Enc.
cc: Town Manager (by electronic mail and first class mail)
Mr. Alan Anacheka-Nasemann
Ms. Jean Fox

484884/28514/0001

McMAHON
TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS & PLANNERS

McMAHON ASSOCIATES
45 Bromfield Street | 6th Floor | Boston, MA 02108
p 617-556-0020 | f 617-556-0025
mcmahonassociates.com

PRINCIPALS
Joseph W. McMahon, P.E.
Joseph J. DeSantis, P.E., PTOE
John S. DePalma
William T. Steffens
Casey A. Moore, P.E.
Gary R. McNaughton, P.E., PTOE

ASSOCIATES
John J. Mitchell, P.E.
Christopher J. Williams, P.E.
R. Trent Ebersole, P.E.
Matthew M. Kozsuch, P.E.

October 25, 2013

Mr. George X. Pucci
Kopelman and Paige, P.C.
101 Arch Street
Boston, MA 02110

RE: South Coast Rail Project
FEIS/FEIR for EOEA # 14346
Transportation Peer Review

Dear Mr. Pucci:

McMahon Associates (McMahon), on behalf of Kopelman and Paige, P.C. and the Town of Stoughton, has completed a preliminary transportation review of the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIS/FEIR), dated August 2013, on the South Coast Rail project (EOEA # 14346) proposed by MassDOT.

Based on our review, the FEIS/FEIR has improved the level of detail from the DEIS/DEIR. However, as the project progresses, the proponent needs to provide additional information to properly assess the impacts. Several issues have been identified through our review that merit further response from the Proponent. These issues include, but are not limited to, traffic volumes, capacity analysis, parking, existing and new grade crossings, frontage roads, and traffic signals.

Project Description

The FEIS/FEIR for the South Cost Rail project was completed in August 2013, expanding on the analysis presented in the DEIS/DEIR. The proposed rail corridor will be 50 to 60 miles, starting in New Bedford and Fall River and terminating at South Station in Boston. The corridor will use active freight corridors from New Bedford and Fall River to Taunton, an inactive rail corridor between Taunton and Stoughton, and the current active rail corridor between Stoughton and South Station in Boston.

The FEIS/FIER analyzed the Stoughton Electric alternative within the town of Stoughton because it is expected to generate the most ridership, therefore creating the greatest impacts. This alternative would reconstruct existing track from Canton Junction to Stoughton Station as double track, and construct new double tracks from Stoughton Station to Weir Junction in Taunton. Stoughton Station will be relocated south of the Wyman Street at-grade crossing and will include consolidated parking lots, additional parking spaces, and new station driveways.

South of Stoughton Station, at-grade crossings will be reactivated and a bypass road will be constructed between Morton Street and a grade separated crossing at Totham Farm Road.

Traffic Volumes

As part for the DEIS/DEIR review, it was noted that recent traffic volumes were not used in determining traffic operations and levels-of-service (LOS) on impacted roadways and intersections.

McMahon Comment: We request that additional peak period traffic counts and average daily traffic information be gathered to confirm the volumes presented in the DEIS/DEIR.

Proponent Response: Existing traffic conditions were not evaluated because no changes to parking at the Stoughton Station were proposed at the time of the DIES/DEIR. However, the FEIS/FEIR proposes relocating the Stoughton Station and recent traffic counts, parking analysis were studied to determine potential impacts.

McMahon Response: **The proponent updated traffic volumes at Wyman Street, Brock Street, Plain Street, and Morton Street with supplemental MassDOT data and counts conducted in April 2013. We request that traffic volumes and analysis for Central Street, Simpson Street, School Street, Porter Street, and Plain Street be completed to confirm that the at-grade crossings will operate at acceptable levels-of-service in the future Build condition.**

At-Grade Crossings/Mitigation Improvements

Existing At-Grade Crossings

McMahon Comment: Further information should be provided by the Proponent clearly showing the proposed mitigation identified above within the limits of Central Street to the Downtown Area, including the School Street, Porter Street and Wyman Street at the grade crossings. As a more detailed assessment of the existing and future crossing operations is completed, additional mitigation measures, such as upgraded crossing treatments or grade separation, should be investigated by the proponent.

Proponent Response: Mitigation commitments and a more detailed assessment of existing and future at-grade crossings have been completed.

McMahon Response: **The proponent has generally identified potential improvements to the existing at-grade crossings, but should further develop the designs and identify specific "general improvements" for the affected at-grade crossings. At Central Street, impacts to the relocated driveway, signal coordination, crosswalk, and sidewalk improvements need to be further developed.**

New Grade Crossings

Brock Street
As stated in the DEIS/DEIR and FEIS/FEIR, Brock Street is considered active and has working signals, but is rarely used today.

McMahon Comment: We request further information regarding the proposed warrants and schematic layout of the implementation of a traffic signal at this location.

Proponent Response: There are two measures possible to mitigate impacts at the Brock Street grade crossing. The intersection at Washington Street could be signalized and have northbound left and southbound right turns added. The intersection design could also include changes to the nearby parking lot to discourage motorists from using the parking lot as a cut through.

McMahon Response: **The proponent should investigate the Brock Street at-grade crossing and Washington Street intersection as a combined signal system. Even though the peak hour warrant was met, the signalization of the intersection should be designed to not burden vehicles traveling at non-peak hours.**

Plain Street
Similar to Brock Street above, the Proponent is proposing further study regarding the installation of a traffic signal at the Route 138 and Plain Street intersection to address queues and delays along Plain Street due to the addition of the at-grade crossing.

McMahon Comment: Therefore, we request the Proponent clarify how this qualifies as an "existing grade crossing" as opposed to a "new grade crossing" at Plain Street. In addition, the Proponent should provide further information regarding the proposed warrants and schematic layout of the traffic signal and show how operations of the adjacent Town Spa driveway would operate in the future.

Proponent Response: Updated traffic analysis was completed as part of the FEIS/FEIR. The proponent calls to investigate a traffic signal with pre-emption at the

Washington Street and Plain Street intersection as well as relocating the Plain Street driveway for the Town Spa Restaurant.

McMahon Response: **The Proponent identified that the Plain Street at-grade crossing will require mitigation similar to the Brock Street intersection. The proponent should complete signal warrants, provide a schematic layout of the traffic signal and determine how operations of the adjacent Town Spa driveway would be impacted.**

Morton Street

Operations at the Morton Street/Route 138 intersections would be impacted due to the close proximity of the at-grade crossing. Therefore, the Proponent is proposing to close Morton Street and construct a frontage road to that would run parallel to the proposed track and cross underneath the track at a private grade separated crossing on Totham Farm Road.

McMahon Comment: Further details regarding the proposed physical closing of Morton Street and the private driveways to the south will be accomplished and how traffic will operate using this proposed reconfiguration. In addition, the Proponent should provide details of the bypass roadway proposed to be constructed to the private grade separated crossing on Totham Farm Road.

Proponent Response: Morton Street's close proximity to Washington Street as well as the grades and potential queues along the street suggest the street will be inadequate at servicing vehicles during a train crossing. Therefore Morton Street and the private driveways to the south would be closed and a bypass road would be constructed to the private grade separated crossing on Totham Farm Road. This concept would be further studied in the design phase to evaluate the traffic impacts of these closures and the potential of rerouting traffic to Plain Street. MassDOT would coordinate with the Town of Stoughton during the design process.

McMahon Response: **Details of the bypass road were not fully developed within the FEIS/FEIR and will be completed during the design process. The Totham Farm Road grade separated crossing is discussed later in this document.**

Capacity Analysis

Independent field observations were conducted by McMahon during the AM and PM peak periods at the School Street/Canton Street intersection, Porter Street at-grade crossing, Porter

Street/Route 138 intersection, and Wyman Street at-grade crossing during train crossings within downtown Stoughton.

School Street/Canton Street, Porter Street (Route 27), Porter Street/Route 138

McMahon Comment: Any additional trains added as part of the Stoughton Alternative would increase queuing and delays along School Street and may introduce safety concerns at the at-grade crossing that should be addressed by the Proponent.

Proponent Response: The traffic analysis was updated for the FEIS/FEIR and new train service will have minimal impact on local roadways because crossing frequency will not be increased.

McMahon Response: **Analysis of at-grade crossings was only completed for the proposed crossings at Brock Street, Plain Street and Morton Street. Analysis at existing at-grade intersections with 2030 future build volumes should be completed to ensure traffic growth and project trips will not impact existing at-grade crossings and nearby intersections within downtown Stoughton.**

Wyman Street

McMahon Comment: Any additional trains added as part of the Stoughton Alternative would increase queuing and delays along School Street and may introduce safety concerns at the at-grade crossing that should be addressed by the Proponent.

Proponent Response: The traffic analysis was updated for the FEIS/FEIR and new train service will have minimal impact on local roadways because crossing frequency will not be increased. As part of the station relocation, the proponent may eliminate the Morton Square MBTA driveway and parking area, close the Trackside Plaza South driveway, and realign Morton Street to include a stop sign.

McMahon Response: **Analysis should be completed at existing at-grade intersections with 2030 future build volumes to ensure traffic growth and project trips will not impact existing at-grade crossings. The proponent should investigate the access impacts for the Trackside Plaza businesses due to the driveway reconfiguration.**

Ridership

The DEIS/DEIR discussed existing and proposed ridership at the existing stations. It stated that "since boardings at existing commuter rail stations located near the ends of the existing Providence and Stoughton Commuter Rail Lines are not expected to increase as a consequence of the alternatives, no traffic analyses, beyond the identification of new grade crossing locations, were completed for existing stations or municipalities with existing stations". The FEIS/FIER references a report by CTPS and Appendix 3.2H showing that ridership will decrease at the Stoughton Station due to increased regional bus service.

McMahon Comment: The logic of the reduction of spaces in the Downtown Area parking and impacts to ridership needs to be fully explained by the Proponent. In addition, we request that the Proponent provide information that discusses increased train frequency and the impacts of existing and future ridership projections at the Stoughton Station as part of the Stoughton Alternative. Any information, including a possible origin/destination study of existing vehicles utilizing Stoughton Station should be provided.

Proponent Response: Station relocation was not considered during the DEIS/DEIR process and has since been updated for the FEIS/FEIR. The station relocation will increase the supply of parking and the addition of a second track and additional trains would result in negligible changes in traffic conditions or queue lengths.

McMahon Response: **The proponent should explain the methodology used for trip distribution and generation within downtown Stoughton in regards to new or redistributed trips associated with modal changes of the project. The FEIS/FEIR claims there won't be traffic impacts at existing crossings, but traffic volumes increase due to background growth and construction of the new station.**

Stations

The DEIS/DEIR stated that several existing commuter rail stations would be impacted by constructing an additional track along segments of the existing right-of-way. The FEIS/FEIR proposes relocating the Stoughton Station south of Wyman Street to include up to 701 parking spaces with 17 handicapped spaces and 6 kiss-and-ride spaces.

McMahon Comment: The logic of the reduction of spaces in the Downtown Area parking and impacts to ridership needs to be fully explained by the Proponent. In addition, we request that the Proponent provide information that discusses increased train frequency and the impacts of existing and future

ridership projections at the Stoughton Station as part of the Stoughton Alternative. We request the Proponent address if new ridership projections will lead to the possibility of future station consolidations or modifications.

Proponent Response: As part of the station relocation, parking lot capacity will be increased and at this time stop consolidation is not foreseeable.

McMahon Response: **The Town of Stoughton should be consulted in regard to parking lot relocation and be involved in the design of the new station. Parking counts supplied in Appendix 4.1K indicate that 266 of 466 spots were in use at 4:40 PM. The proponent should consider converting excess spaces to either multi-modal facilities or shared parking with downtown businesses.**

Safety/Crash Rates

McMahon conducted an independent study regarding accident data for the study area and at-grade intersections identified in the DEIS/DEIR for the years 2006, 2007, and 2008. McMahon's analysis found 36 accidents were reported over the three year period at the grade crossing at Canton Street, 22 accidents at the Route 138 and Brock Street unsignalized intersection, 15 accidents at the Porter Street and Rose Street unsignalized intersection, 12 accidents at the Route 138 and Plain Street intersection, and 10 accidents reported at the Morton Street and Route 138 unsignalized intersection.

McMahon Comment: Although we have collected the accident data, it is unclear when the safety threshold at the study area and at-grade intersections is met or if they exceed the average accident rates. A thorough assessment should be provided by the Proponent to ensure that these locations include adequate safety measures.

Proponent Response: As part of the FEIS/FEIR Stoughton station relocation, the Proponent completed an accident analysis including 2007, 2008, and 2009 data. Including the three intersections below.

Intersection	Crash Rate[1]	District 5 Average	State Average
Washington Street (Route 138) at Brock Street	1.19	0.58	0.60
Washington (Route 138) at Wyman Street	0.96	0.58	0.60
Washington Street (Route 138) and Park Street at Pleasant Street	1.15	0.77	0.80

1. Accidents per million entering vehicles.

McMahon Response: **The proponent should address the current accident rate at the existing grade crossings discussed from the DEIS/DEIR comments as well as the three intersections analyzed in the FEIS/FEIR. Potential improvements should be identified for the three intersections that will be impacted during the Stoughton Station relocation, which we note have crash rates well above both statewide and MassDOT District 5 averages.**

Parking

The proposed reconstruction of Stoughton Station includes reconfiguration of the parking lot and driveway. There is also a proposed right turn-in, right-out at the Route 138 and northernmost parking lot access to the south of Wyman Street and a left turn in, left turn out configuration at the Route 138 and southernmost parking lot access.

McMahon Comment: We request the Proponent provide additional information related to the revised parking layouts in the Downtown Area, including parking utilization projections, and existing data and any other relevant data associated with operation of these parking lots and abutting roadways. In addition, any direct and indirect impacts to the reconstructed Stoughton Station due to the reductions of parking should be provided by the Proponent.

Proponent Response: The FEIS/FEIR proposes including up to 701 parking spaces with 17 handicapped and 6 kiss-and-ride spaces. The proponent found that existing supply was adequate and not expected to be decreased during the station relocation.

McMahon Response: **The Proponent collected existing parking utilization and analyzed the impacts of parking relocation. The Proponent should refer to our earlier comment above (under "Stations") regarding the redistribution of parking spaces.**

Peak and Off-Peak Trips

According to the Proponent, existing train frequency from Canton Junction Station to Stoughton Station, along the existing MBTA Commuter Rail alignment, ranges from 17 roundtrip (34 total trains) passenger trains per day on weekdays to no passenger trains on weekends. The proposed operations would have four peak period trains to each of the terminal stations in New Bedford and Fall River.

McMahon Comment: We request the Proponent provide a concise comparison of the number of peak and off-peak trips per each terminal station from Fall River and New Bedford.

Proponent Response: The proposed schedule will have 10 round trip trains (4 peak hour, and 6 off peak) per weekday from each terminal station (Fall River and New Bedford).

McMahon Response: **The proposed schedule results in 40 total trips through Stoughton, an increase of six train trips from existing conditions. However, the Proponent claims no traffic impacts are associated with increased train frequency. The proponent should clearly identify the affects of the additional train trips through downtown Stoughton.**

Freight Service

There is existing freight service several times a week between Canton Junction Station and Central Street in Stoughton. As part of the Stoughton Alternative, freight service will operate via Canton Junction through Stoughton, proceeding directly via Taunton to New Bedford or Fall River.

McMahon Comment: We suggest that any impacts of the freight service along the Stoughton line be clarified and safety impacts addressed. In addition, due to the recent accident of a freight train and MBTA Commuter Rail train in the vicinity of the Canton Junction station, any potential safety concerns between freight and passenger trains needs to be addressed.

Proponent Response: South Coast Rail passenger service is independent of any future freight service expansions. Should freight look to expand to areas where it does not currently operate whether in this area or along any other corridors, a separate environmental review and approval process would be required. Freight expansions and their impacts are, therefore, not included in this FEIS/FEIR.

McMahon Response: **No further action required.**

Railroad Bridges

The DEIS/DEIR did not provide detailed information on the project's impacts on bridges in Stoughton.

McMahon Comment: Additional specific details regarding the rehabilitation or reconstruction at the existing railroad bridges within the Town of Stoughton, including Coal Yard Road and Totham Farm Road, should be provided by the Proponent.

Proponent Response: Appendix 3.2H of the FEIS/FEIR outlined the project impacts on the Coal Yard Road and the Totham Farm bridges. The Coal Yard Road bridge does not currently meet Cooper E80 loading and will need to be rebuilt. The proponent will rehabilitate the abutments and construct a new superstructure to carry two sets of tracks. The bridge will remain open during train operations. The Totham Farm Road bridge is currently inactive and had its superstructure removed fifteen years ago. The bridge will likely need to be completely replaced in order to accommodate two sets of tracks and current loading requirements. The work on this bridge can be completed without affecting normal train operations.

McMahon Response: **The proponent needs to detail the Totham Farm Road frontage road and ensure its geometries and sight lines will work with the proposed bridge.**

Stoughton Train Station

McMahon Comment: Any impacts to the Stoughton Train Station during construction, including hours of construction, dust and noise, temporary busing, and parking impacts should be addressed by the Proponent as well as parking and traffic operation impacts along the abutting local roadways during construction.

Proponent Response: The FEIS/FIER states that MassDOT will develop transportation management plans to detour traffic around construction areas. These transportation management plans will be closely coordinated with the cities and towns affected by each construction element, including emergency response representatives. A robust outreach program would be developed, notifying the public of construction activities through

telephone calls, email blasts, website notices, and flyer distributions. Public information meetings would be conducted, identifying bridge construction and roadway closure locations, intersection construction activities, construction schedules, and temporary traffic, safety, and pedestrian detours through construction areas.

McMahon Response: **No further action required.**

Conclusion

Based on our review and the comments above, the FEIS/FEIR has improved the level of detail from the DEIS/DEIR. However, as the project progresses, the proponent needs to provide additional information to properly assess the impacts. Several issues have been identified through our review that merit further response from the Proponent. These issues include, but are not limited to, traffic volumes, capacity analysis, parking, existing and new grade crossings, frontage roads, and traffic signals.

If you should have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact us.

Very truly yours,

Steven C. Findlen
Senior Project Manager

Gary McNaughton, P.E., PTOE
Vice President & Regional Manager – New England