

MBTA South Coast Rail train arrives in New Bedford for emergency first responder training

After years of doubt and speculation, New Bedford residents finally saw the MBTA South Coast Rail train in New Bedford this past weekend.

On Sunday, November 19, 2023, at approximately 10 AM, the MBTA conducted an emergency evacuation training drill in the area of the Whale's Tooth parking lot in New Bedford as part of safety training in support of the start of South Coast Rail passenger service.

The drill was a learning exercise that included a scenario in which a train traveling along this section of track unexpectedly experiences an incident. Several passengers are injured, and others must evacuate the train. This exercise was designed to establish a learning environment for public safety officials to exercise emergency response plans, policies, and procedures as they pertain to a mass casualty event on a Commuter Rail train. First responders received hands-on Commuter Rail equipment familiarization training. To ensure an effective exercise, subject matter experts and representatives from numerous agencies took part in the planning process and the exercise conduct and evaluation.

Agencies that participated in this joint exercise included the MBTA, MassDOT, Keolis Commuter Services, MBTA Transit Police, Mass Coastal Railroad, AECOM, the Federal Railroad Administration, and first responders from New Bedford, Dartmouth, Acushnet, Fairhaven, Norton, Freetown, Mattapoisett, Taunton, and Raynham. The exercise was developed

and led by K&J Safety and Security Consulting Services, Inc.

We were at the scene getting photographs and video which you can see below.

\$5 million project will create walkable connection between downtown New Bedford, train station

Mayor Jon Mitchell recently announced that New Bedford has been awarded \$5 million dollars for a project that will create a more walkable connection between downtown and the new passenger rail station.

The mayor noted, "Public infrastructure investments like these lead to more private investment" while thanking Massachusetts Governor Maura Healy and Lt. Governor, Kim Driscoll.

Making a connection between the passenger train station and downtown, New Bedford will be critical to help local restaurants and businesses feel the positive impact of the south coast rail.

Many thanks to @MassGovernor and @MassLtGov for awarding #newbedford \$5 million for a project that will create a more walkable connection between downtown and the new passenger rail station. Public infrastructure investments like these lead to more private investment. pic.twitter.com/gGSqBL2XGc

\$900,000 emergency response funding associated with South Coast Rail to benefit New Bedford, Fall River

“Rep. Bill Straus (D-Mattapoissett) is pleased to announce an agreement with Massachusetts Transportation Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt to release \$900,000 in local emergency response funding for additional safety equipment associated with the new South Coast Rail service in 2024.

The agreement arose from a renewed request from the Representative during a meeting with the Secretary and MBTA General Manager Phil Eng yesterday, October 11. This money originated as an amendment filed by the Representative with support of the South Coast delegation and was authorized in the 2022 Transportation Bond Bill.

The idea, however, for providing train related safety equipment directly to area Fire and EMS Departments belongs to New Bedford Fire Chief Scott Kruger and the other regional Chiefs from Fall River and Taunton as well as the leaders of locals with the Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts.

The region’s Chiefs and department members are now updating the specific item list for purchase of the safety and extraction equipment that should be available for train related emergency response as needed.

“All of my fellow legislative colleagues from the region have been determined in their advocacy for this emergency response equipment including particularly, Senator Michael Rodrigues, and Representative Carole Fiola,” said Rep. Straus. “Thank you to Secretary Tibbits-Nutt in her role on behalf of the Healey-Driscoll administration.”

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MBTA testing train routes to and from New Bedford and other cities on the SouthCoast

As part of their Right-of-Way education program, Jean Fox Director of Community Engagement at MassDOT is sharing safety reminders on specific topics each month.

This week is Rail Safety Week, an opportunity to highlight safety and remember to take it to heart every week. With school back in session, MassDOT wants to reach out to teachers and parents specifically to encourage them to speak with students and children about putting Safety First. From classroom to home, wherever kids may come across railroad tracks, it is key to make sure they have the knowledge and tools to stay safe.

The MBTA will be testing and commissioning Commuter Rail trains to and from Middleborough, East Taunton, Freetown, Fall River, and New Bedford for the first time in decades. The test trains will travel the corridor, reaching speeds of up to 80

mph, much faster than previous freight trains at 25 mph.

As MassDOT approaches this exciting milestone, they want to remind everyone who lives by, drives, works, or crosses railroad tracks to prepare for high-speed trains to be a frequent sight in the region. It's important to remember that only trains should be on the right-of-way. It is illegal and life-threatening to walk on or along the tracks.

Both adults and students should take the following safety information to heart:

- The ONLY safe place to cross train tracks is at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings—obey warning signs and signals posted there.
- Trains are quieter and faster than you think, and the average train traveling 55 mph can take a mile or more to stop.
- Using the railroad ROW to walk, ride bicycles, or for any other recreational purpose is trespassing and extremely dangerous. Make sure children know how to stay safe around trains!
- Emergency Notification System sign and location at the Concord Street crossing.

It is vitally important that kids know what to do in case of an emergency, such as a vehicle getting stuck on the tracks. The following steps should be memorized so that they are prepared:

- **Get Out:** Leave the vehicle immediately. A school bus driver may open the emergency exit door at the back of the bus. If children are commuting to school in a van, the driver will assist and direct them safely out of the vehicle.
- **Get Away:** Be sure to stay at least 15 feet away from the tracks.

- **Find the Blue and White Sign:** Call the number on the Blue and White Emergency Notification System (ENS) sign and share the crossing ID number with the dispatcher. If there is no ENS sign posted nearby, call 911.

The startup of SCR service represents great opportunities and benefits for the region, presenting new issues requiring education and caution. To ensure the safety message is shared effectively, MassDOT asks teachers and school staff to show their safety videos as part of classes or assemblies. You can also request a presentation by emailing them at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us with "Safety First" in the subject line.

The following resources can help put Safety First:

- South Coast Rail Safety Program – Elementary School
- South Coast Rail Safety Program – Middle School
- South Coast Rail Safety Program – High School

Operation Lifesaver's Student Safety Guide Brochure is available in English and Spanish (Español) with an illustrated safety knowledge test.

South Coast Rail's Safety First fact sheet with additional information and resources is excellent for downloading and sharing.

Safety First is aimed at promoting your safety throughout the railroad corridor. Presentations, brochures, videos, and conversations emphasize ROW safety for every age, occupation, and resident.

“Boston man is profiting off New Bedford residents with exorbitant parking fees!”

The following is an opinion sent to New Bedford Guide. It does not reflect the opinion of New Bedford Guide, nor is it an OP-ED. In fairness and objectivity, we share opinions from our readers whether we agree or disagree with their opinion.

Do you have a counter opinion to this opinion? Have an opinion about something else? Email us at info@newbedfordguide.com.

“A guy from Boston bought the empty lot on Rodney French at the bottom of George St. and he’s charging \$70 for us to park there for 1 month which is crazy for the south end never mind #NewBedford.

I wanna know what the community thinks about people from #Boston trying to profit off of us especially residents who live in a not-rich neighborhood.

Maybe get the community to text this guy and let him know \$70 a month to park in the south end is way too much? I could understand \$20-30 but \$70 is way too much that’s \$840 a year to park!”

NOTICE

Effective October 1, parking will be available only for authorized vehicles. All others will be towed at owner's expense.

If you are interested in monthly parking rentals, please text **617-657-1757** or email **NewBedParking@gmail.com**

Rates starting at \$70 per month. Thank you.

Could New Bedford transform Kings Highway like Fall River's South Coast Marketplace?

Kings Highway has been a hot button topic of discussion as of late, specifically the old "Newport Creamery" building which has been vacant for quite some time. A resident posted in the New Bedford Facebook group wondering why the building is still vacant after so many years.

“When will someone buy that former Newport Creamery on Kings Highway this is getting sickening! That building has been abandoned for centuries. It’s so freaking annoying looking at it.”

This sparked a debate that led to an even bigger question, what is the future of Kings Highway as a whole?



King’s Highway Plaza. Steven Richard photo.

Surely, Kings Highway can not stay as it currently is now with its several vacant buildings, vastly empty parking lots, and dollar stores next to...more dollar stores? “Ray Goyette” commented under this thread which caught some attention stating:

“The entire Kings Hwy plaza could benefit from a massive overhaul. I’m hoping with all the “upscale” improvements

because of the train coming, a developer will wipe out Kings Hwy plaza and start over.”

This is where other residents began mentioning how Fall River has done a fantastic job developing the “South Coast Marketplace” and New Bedford should maybe take some notes.



King’s Highway Plaza. Steven Richard photo.

Since its opening in 2017 the South Coast Marketplace has flourished. We have now seen the additions of Chik-Fil-A, Starbucks, Ulta, Marketbasket, and several other huge names that has completely transformed that area of Fall River. Along with its plethora of popular stores and restaurants, the marketplace has also maintained a clean and modern aesthetic which really adds a nice touch to the area.

On the other hand, Kings Highway almost feels like its sadly been stuck in time. It looks exactly the same as when I was a kid except now there are just more empty buildings.

Rather than complain, I think it is more beneficial to throw out ideas and see if they could work. I think Kings Highway

Plaza could become New Bedford's version of the "South Coast Marketplace", what would you like to see happen to Kings Highway?



SouthCoast Marketplace in Fall River. Steven Richard photo.

South Coast Rail to begin

construction on Church Street, Nash Road in New Bedford

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation has announced new construction for the MBTA South Coast Rail in New Bedford. There will be road and traffic signal work at the intersection of Church Street and Nash Road starting the week of July 17th.

There will be single-lane closures on Church Street and/or Nash Road on weekdays (with weekend work as necessary) between the hours of 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

For roadway-construction issues related to work at this intersection please call 423-375-4086.

Construction will also continue for the new pedestrian bridge across Route 18 and Acushnet Avenue connecting to the New Bedford Station. This construction is taking place in 2 locations:

- Purchase Street (between Pearl Street and Willis Street)
- Near the MassHire Greater New Bedford Career Center (618 Acushnet Ave)

This work is being conducted weekdays, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM and there will be no street parking on the east side of Purchase Street between Pearl Street and Willis Street.

For construction issues related to this New Bedford pedestrian bridge work please call 508-676-3558

New Bedford roadwork sites for the upcoming week of April 17, 2023 – April 21, 2023

“The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of April 17, 2023 – April 21, 2023, and they are as follows:

City offices will be closed on Monday, April 17th in observation of Patriots Day.

Eversource will be working on gas main relays and services on:

- David St from West Rodney French Blvd to Brock Ave
- George St from West Rodney French Blvd to Brock Ave
- Jack and Bore under 140 off of Phillips Rd
- Pequot St from Acushnet Ave to end of Pequot St
- West Rodney French Blvd from Woodlawn St to Lucas St (South of Flood Gates)
- Social St from West Rodney French Blvd to End of Social St
- Harmony St from Social St to EOM

Other:

- Contractor (C. Naughton Corp.) will continue sewer main repair on Timberlane Rd from Briarwood Dr to Hill Rd.
- Contractors (PA Landers and various utility companies) will be working at MassDOT’s Kings Highway project. Minor traffic impacts and lane shifts required.
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working at MassDOT project #609201, located at the intersection of Acushnet Ave & Peckham St/Sassaquin Ave.
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will be closing Wamsutta Street starting 4/17 through 4/28 to install remaining utilities in the street. Detour will be in place for local

traffic with residential access to remain open at all times.

- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future South Coast Rail station platform locations in the city. (Church St at Carlisle St and Wamsutta St at Acushnet Ave.) If you have questions, please email the project team at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us.”

Most recent SouthCoast Rail update shows that New Bedford service is almost here

“The MassDOT has issued a construction update for the upcoming work taking place throughout the area. Test trains, signaling, road lane closures and more are a sign that later this year South Coast Rail will be going through Fall River, New Bedford and more.

Please note: the schedule for this infrastructure project is weather dependent and subject to change without notice.

Berkley: 24-Hour/Day Track and Signal Work at Padelford Street and from Myricks Street to Mill Street

- **Location of work:** Track and Signal work in railroad right-of-way at Padelford Street and from Myricks Street to Mill Street in Berkley
 - **Dates/Hours of Work:** 24-hour/day track work, Wednesday, March 15 through Sunday, March 19.
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Fall River: Collin Street Road Closure for Culvert Work

- **Location of work:** Culvert work in railroad right-of-way near Collins Street in Fall River will require Collins Street road closure (for detour use Clark Street)
 - **Dates/Hours of Work:** Work anticipated to begin Wednesday, March 22 during regular daytime hours, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.
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Middleborough, Lakeville, Raynham, Taunton, Freetown, Fall River, and New Bedford: Signal System Installations and Testing

Installations and testing for the railroad signal system for the entire South Coast Rail Phase 1 is ongoing along the railroad right-of-way and at railroad crossings. Please be advised that during this work, signals may be disabled. In those instances, railroad workers known as flaggers will be in place to safely direct train traffic through crossings, and drivers should heed the flaggers' directions.

The project will also be continuing to run test trains along the South Coast Rail lines to make sure the new signal systems are properly working. Abutters to the railroad may notice the increased train traffic and crossing signal usage.

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Middleborough: Roadwork and Single-lane Closures on Route 105 (South Main Street)

- **Location of work:** Roadwork and traffic signal installation near the New Middleborough Station site (161 South Main Street) on Route 105 across from the I-495 on/off ramps, as well as at the future pedestrian crossing of Route 28 (Grove Street) between the railroad overpasses
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** Single-lane closures on Route 105 on weekdays, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

Taunton: Shoulder and Lane Closure for Utility Installation and Traffic Signal Modifications on Route 140 (County Street)

- **Location of work:** •Utility work on the southbound side of Route 140 (County Street) between Taunton Depot Drive and Industrial Drive •Installation of curb along Industrial Drive
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** Weekdays, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

New Bedford: Test Pits for New Traffic Signal foundations at the Intersection of Church Street and Nash Road

- **Location of work:** •Test pits in sidewalks (to verify location of existing underground utilities) for new traffic signal pole foundations at the intersection of Church Street and Nash Road in New Bedford •Expect temporary lane closures with police detail in place •Traffic signal and roadway work to follow in weeks ahead
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** Possibly Thursday or Friday, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM, weather permitting, otherwise will be scheduled for next week.

Fall River: Test Pits for New Traffic Signal foundations at the Intersection of President Avenue and North Main Street

- **Location of work:** •Test pits in sidewalks (to verify location of existing underground utilities) for new traffic signal pole foundations at the intersection of President Avenue and North Main Street in Fall River •Expect temporary lane closures with police detail in place •Traffic signal and roadway work to follow in weeks ahead
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** Possibly Thursday or Friday, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM, weather permitting, otherwise will be scheduled for

next week.

Fencing Installation: Middleborough, Lakeville, Raynham, Taunton, Assonet, Freetown, Fall River, Berkley, and New Bedford

- **Location of work:** •Installation of fencing along the Middleborough Secondary Line railroad right-of-way at locations between Route 140 in Taunton and the new Middleborough Station site (161 South Main Street, Middleborough). Installation of fencing along the Fall River Secondary Line railroad right-of-way at locations between Richmond Road in Assonet and the Fall River Depot site (825 Davol Street) in Fall River •Installation of fencing along the New Bedford Main Line railroad right-of-way at locations between the East Taunton Station site (1141 County Street) in Taunton and the New Bedford Station Site (Acushnet Avenue at Whale's Tooth Parking Lot) in New Bedford
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** Monday through Saturday, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

Berkley: Railroad Access at Mill Street for Signal Work

Residents of Mill Street in Berkley may notice an increase in frequency and volume of traffic as crews performing South Coast Rail signal work will be accessing the railroad right-of-way and work staging area at the end of the street.

- **Location of work:** Access to railroad right-of-way at Mill Street in Berkley
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** •Typically, Monday through Friday (with weekend work as necessary), 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM •See above for 24-hour work in this area

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Berkley: Railroad Access at Cotley Street

Location of work: Cotley Street in Berkley

Dates/Hours of Work: Please note that the contractor will be using Cotley Street to access the right-of-way for various work activities. This access will be primarily used during the daytime (7:00 AM-7:00 PM) but will also be used 24-hours/day during some activities.

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Berkley: Railroad Work at Myricks Street

- **Location of work:** Work in the railroad right-of-way in the area of Myricks Street in Berkley
- **Dates/Hours of Work:** •Monday through Sunday, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM •See above for 24-hour work in this area

Please note that although regular daytime construction hours begin at 7:00 AM, abutters may notice crews arriving at the construction sites prior to this time.

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Daytime Work on Middleborough Secondary and New Bedford Main Line

Construction is ongoing at station and layover sites and along the railroad right-of-way from Middleborough to New Bedford.

- **Location of Work:** •New Middleborough Station site, 161 South Main Street, Middleborough •East Taunton Station site, 1141 County Street, Taunton •Wamsutta Layover Facility site, 217 Herman Melville Boulevard, New Bedford •Church Street Station site, 387 Church Street, New Bedford •New Bedford Station Site, Acushnet Avenue (at Whale's Tooth Parking Lot), New

Bedford. Middleborough Secondary and New Bedford Main Line right-of-way.

• **Dates/Hours of Work:** •Monday, March 13 through Sunday, March 19, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM •Monday, March 20 through Friday, March 24, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

Daytime Work on Fall River Secondary Line

Construction is ongoing at station and layover sites and along the railroad right-of-way from Berkley to Fall River.

• **Location of work:** •Freetown Station site, 153 South Main Street, Assonet •Weaver's Cove Layover Facility, 2680 North Main Street, Fall River •Fall River Depot site, 825 Davol Street, Fall River •Fall River Secondary Line railroad right-of-way

• **Dates/Hours of Work:** •Monday, March 13 through Saturday, March 18, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM •Monday, March 20 through Friday, March 24, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

Daytime Transportation of Soils

Please note that soils excavated from the railroad right-of-way and roadways during the above work are typically transported during the day by truck to designated project sites.

Dates/Hours of Work: •Regular daytime hours 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.”

MassDevelopment issues Request For Proposals (RFP) for the development of New Bedford State Pier

MassDevelopment has issued a Request for Proposals to redevelop the New Bedford State Pier into a thriving mixed-use asset along the city's waterfront, as envisioned by Senator Mark Montigny since 2008 and based on his legislative language that was signed into law by Governor Baker.

Based on Montigny's language the RFP will garner interest from developers seeking to use the state facility to generate economic development and jobs related industries such as commercial fishing, offshore wind, cargo, marine transportation, fish markets, restaurants, and other potential mixed-uses.

See the full document, including photos and details [here](#).

You can view MassDevelopment's suite of documents, plans, Master Plan, and other documents