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Skanska, D.W. White and state officials celebrate phase 1 completion for MBTA South Coast Rail Corridor project

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Governor Baker, MassDOT secretary Tesler, and MBTA general manager Poftak were joined by elected leaders and community partners to celebrate the substantial completion of the \$159 million contract for South Coast Rail Main Line construction at a ribbon-cutting event at the new Freetown Commuter Rail Station.

Freetown, MA On December 8th, Skanska USA Civil Northeast and joint venture partner D.W. White celebrated the completion and delivery of phase 1 of the MBTA's South Coast Rail Corridor project. Skanska and D.W. White were joined by governor Charlie Baker, Massachusetts Transportation secretary and CEO, Jamey Tesler, and MBTA general manager, Steve Poftak, as well as local and state elected leaders and community partners, to celebrate the substantial completion of the \$159 million contract for South Coast Rail Main Line construction. The celebration took place at a

ribbon-cutting event at the brand-new Freetown Commuter Rail Station.

In partnership with D.W. White, Skanska delivered this section of the South Coast Rail Corridor project on time and under budget, overcoming numerous supply chain pressures and extenuating impacts brought on by COVID-19. The full project promises to deliver a one-seat trip from the southeastern region of Massachusetts to Boston in less than 90 minutes, re-establishing commuter rail service in the area. Key features of Skanska and D.W. White's contribution to this project include:

12 miles of new track

2 new stations in Freetown and Fall River Depot

6 track layover facilities with crew building

7 bridges

10 roadway grade crossings

10 culverts

"The expansion of the South Coast Rail Corridor is a vital enhancement of Massachusetts' public transportation system, offering commuters from the southeastern part of the state a convenient ride to Boston and back," said Paul Pedini, senior vice president of Skanska's civil operations in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. "We are proud to have successfully delivered this significant part of the project that will improve the local critical infrastructure to provide the Commonwealth's southeastern communities with a more reliable connection to Greater Boston."

The \$159 million contract awarded in May 2020 was the first major construction package awarded for South Coast Rail phase 1 and included construction of two brand-new stations in Freetown and Fall River, construction of the all-new Weaver's Cove layover facility, upgrades and modernization work on miles of track that were previously used for freight as well as work on bridges, culverts, and grade crossings. A second \$403.5 million major construction contract for South Coast Rail phase 1 was awarded in August 2020 to build South Coast Rail's New Bedford Line, upgrade the Middleborough Secondary, and construct brand-new stations in East Taunton, Middleborough, two in New Bedford, a layover facility, and the phase 1 signal and communication systems. Once this work is substantially complete, the South Coast Rail project will begin the commissioning process with phase 1 anticipated to begin passenger service by late 2023.

"Following many years of hard work, today is a tremendous milestone for South Coast Rail phase 1 as the first contract for the project nears completion," said governor Baker. "Our administration is proud and excited to have seen the work around this corridor take shape and to celebrate these phase 1 advancements, which will benefit the region with expanded commuter rail service to Taunton, Fall River, New Bedford, and the surrounding communities beginning late next year."

"We're thrilled to have been at the newly completed Freetown station to celebrate phase 1 of South Coast Rail and the upcoming Commuter Rail service to come to the southeastern communities of Massachusetts," said lieutenant governor Karyn Polito. "We are grateful to the project team at the MBTA and MassDOT as well as to the many community partners who have propelled this project forward."

"After years of collaboration and hundreds of millions of dollars in investment, we're pleased to have been at the brand-new Freetown Station to celebrate substantial completion of the first contract for South Coast Rail phase 1, which will provide service between Southeastern Massachusetts communities and Boston," said Tesler. "With the Baker-Polito Administration's strong commitment to establishing passenger train service between the South Coast and Boston, this is an exceptional milestone for MassDOT and the MBTA, and a proud moment for the Commonwealth. South Coast Rail phase 1 is just one of many examples of how the Baker-Polito Administration has transformed the capital planning process to provide an integrated, long-term strategy focused on improvements in all transportation modes and regions of the Commonwealth."

"As work crews make progress on South Coast Rail Phase 1, we're excited to celebrate the completion of Freetown station, which is another major step for the project and bringing a one-seat Commuter Rail ride from Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford to Boston in late 2023," said MBTA general manager Steve Poftak. "This is also an exciting day for all Commuter Rail passengers as we begin to welcome the first of the MBTA's new bi-level coaches into the fleet, expanding capacity for riders. Thank you to the Baker-Polito Administration for their strong support throughout the South Coast Rail project, MassDOT for their solid foundation and continued collaboration, countless local and community leaders for their advocacy, and the entire South Coast Rail project team and workforce for their work on this incredible service expansion project."

“While there have been six governors that have promised us that we’d have commuter rail to Fall River and New Bedford, it is the Baker-Polito Administration that has actually delivered and fulfilled the promise to establish commuter rail service between the South Coast and Boston,” said state senator Michael Rodrigues (D-Westport), chair of the senate Committee on Ways and Means. “Because of the hard work, commitment, and collaboration of the Baker-Polito Administration, MBTA, MassDOT, and our community partners, we are finally getting a 21st century public transportation to and from our capital city and these two great South Coast cities, providing an economic boost to our region and tapping into the unique assets our communities have to offer.”

“Years of advocacy and hard work by state and local officials have helped us reach this milestone, which will only add to the excitement and anticipation of South Coast residents who have waited decades for the restoration of service to Boston,” said representative William Straus. “I thank the governor for making this one of his administration’s top priorities.”

“Thirty years in the making and we are thrilled to finally see the reality of South Coast Rail connecting us to Boston and Boston to us,” said representative Carole Fiola of Fall River. “We credit the determination of so many in our communities, but especially governor Baker and lieutenant governor Polito for pulling the trigger to fully fund this critical connection.”

“Very thankful for the leadership of the governor and lieutenant governor,” said representative Paul Schmid. “We hope they will be with us when the first train runs to Boston in 2023!”

The event also featured state, MassDOT, and MBTA officials riding four of the MBTA’s brand-new, bi-level Commuter Rail coaches, 16 of which are being procured in support of South Coast Rail as part of the \$278.5 million contract awarded in December 2019 for 80 Hyundai-Rotem bi-level coaches. These coaches feature upgrades and improvements like LED lighting and the integration of Positive Train Control, will replace single-level coaches, address an immediate need for additional vehicles, and provide a more efficient way to add capacity. The first four of the brand-new bi-level pilot coaches were received by the MBTA in June 2022, a second set of four delivered in July 2022, a third set of four delivered in September 2022, and a fourth set of four delivered in November 2022, with the remaining coaches delivering on a regular basis through the summer of 2024. All of these new bi-level coaches undergo a robust safety evaluation, inspection, and qualification testing process by MBTA Vehicle Engineering and Commuter Rail staff at the MBTA’s Commuter Rail Maintenance facility in Rochester. The first coaches are anticipated to enter passenger Commuter Rail service before the end of the year with more coaches added on a rolling basis following the completion of qualification testing.