The Missing Link

We Have a Choice

For over a century, New Englanders have talked about completing the missing rail link in Massachusetts so that trains coming into Boston flow right through the city and out the other side.

It would mean traveling around the state faster than driving, doubling or tripling access to housing and jobs, and connecting people from Maine to Miami.

But all this time, we’ve also been given the same tired excuses from bureaucrats and politicians: It’s too hard or expensive to connect two stations just a mile apart, so it will have to wait. But now, Massachusetts has a choice: South Station is over capacity, so we must either expand the terminal or build the Rail Link.

A New Study

Since both projects solve the same problem, we asked for the first study simply comparing the two. The results are startling.

While both relieve congestion at South Station, that’s where the similarities end. Expanding South Station would be obsolete in 25 years and do almost nothing to relieve road congestion. In contrast, The Link would last 100 years and return $31 billion in benefits by revolutionizing transportation across the Commonwealth and getting 86 million people out of their cars and into trains that are easier and faster.
A Century in the Making

Dozens of cities across America and the world have completed cross-city rail links already, so we’ve known this makes sense for a long time. In fact, The Rail Link was initially postponed due to the outbreak of WWII! Imagine boarding a train in Lowell straight to the South Shore. To go from Gloucester to Worcester, you could just get off in the city, wait on the same platform for a few minutes, and board a train going there instead. Trains will come every seven minutes to outlying stations, and every two in the Link, so you can just show up!

The Benefits of the Rail Link

- Provides $31 billion in total benefits to MA residents
- Quadruples commuter rail ridership, generating an additional 86 million riders each year
- Generates $7 billion in additional fare revenue over 20 years and $8.7 billion in new, transit-oriented development
- Opens up access to nearly half a million jobs
The Current Plan Won't Cut It

Expanding South Station—the state’s current plan—would waste $4 billion in taxpayer money and barely last two decades, while creating no improvements in frequency or service anywhere else on the system. It would do nothing to alleviate our horrific traffic or dire housing shortage across the state. And rather than a new climate-resilient environmental justice neighborhood connecting Dorchester and South Boston, it would use that land for a rail yard that’s submerged every time we have a major storm.

The Conclusion is Clear

The Rail Link is the single most important project for transportation in Massachusetts. It makes regional rail not just possible but successful. It does more to boost housing than any housing bill. And it has huge benefits for climate and racial justice in historically forgotten communities.

Until we build the Rail Link, we won’t just be stuck in traffic, we’ll be stuck in the past. The question is no longer “Can we afford to build the link?” but “Can we afford not to?”