

\$850M EXPANSION PLAN FOR SOUTH STATION

Costly temporary solution could put north-south link farther out of reach

SOUTH STATION was last expanded in the mid-1990s, with the addition of several tracks and platforms to accommodate new commuter rail services to the South Shore and Worcester. Nearly two decades later, the Commonwealth is planning to increase yet again the capacity of this busy terminal by taking the South Postal Annex and putting at least seven more tracks on its site ("An \$850m plan to return South Station to bygone glory," Page A1, Feb. 23). Almost completely absent from these plans is any recognition that building more dead-end tracks into South Station is a temporary solution, at best, and would likely be eclipsed again in a couple more decades by the anticipated growth in passenger traffic.

Instead, the state Department of Transportation should revisit its long-shelved plans for a direct rail connection between South Station and North Station that would allow for the through running of Amtrak and commuter trains without the wasteful moves that are now a major cause of congestion at both terminals. A first step would be to put the new platforms underground, allowing the tracks to be extended north at a later time.

At the Feb. 22 Move Massachusetts meeting, state Transportation Secretary Richard A. Davey stated, in response to a question, that the current plan would not preclude the eventual construction of the north-south rail link. However, the

\$850 million price tag is a most costly temporary solution, and it could prevent the rail link from ever being built.

The money should be better spent.

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The writer is chairman of the transportation committee of the Massachusetts chapter of the Sierra Club.

Project would boost transit system, connect people to jobs

LIKE THE other parts of our transportation infrastructure, South Station must be modernized to meet current demand, grow our economy, and make Massachusetts more competitive ("An \$850m plan to return South Station to bygone glory," Page A1, Feb. 23). Today, there are considerable delays on the commuter trains coming from the South Shore and South Coast regions because they cannot fit into South Station. This is costing companies thousands of dollars in lost productivity and hours out of people's lives.

Frustration with delayed commutes will increasingly force commuters into their cars, further clogging our highways. Modernizing South Station would build stronger connections between communities to the south and southwest of Boston, creating economic growth in those regions while reducing congestion and pollution on our highways.

Creating more capacity for commuter trains would facili-

tate South Coast rail, which would boost the economies of the South Coast and Greater Boston by connecting people to jobs. We must make the right decision not only to fund the current needs of our transportation system but to invest in projects that would connect regions, their economies, and people by rail.

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Modernized hub would elevate Boston on world, national stage

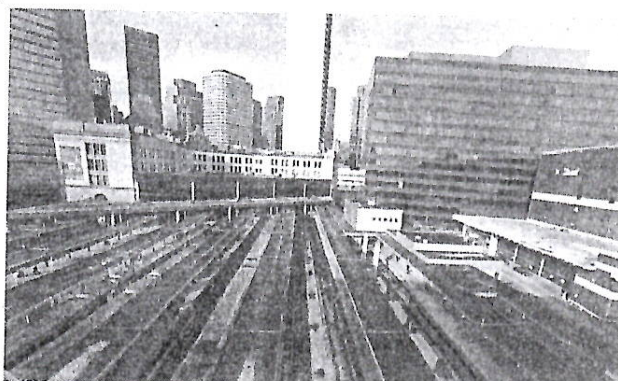
EXPANDING SOUTH Station ("An \$850 million plan to return South Station to bygone glory," Page A1, Feb. 23) would be a major step in improving Massachusetts' economy and Boston's standing as a highly competitive peer to other major cities around the nation and world.

Not only would modernizing South Station alleviate delays for commuters, but it would allow Amtrak to improve service to Boston and Springfield on the Washington-to-Boston corridor. And having South Station ready for the inevitable arrival of high-speed rail in the future would be crucial to our economic growth.

Boston is already a highly desirable destination for meetings and conventions that contribute to our economy. The quick ride from Logan Airport to our convention centers makes it especially appealing to business travelers. By facilitating better, faster service, an expanded South Station — a short walk from the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center — could even draw more conventions to the city.

A lot of work has been done in the public and private sectors to grow our economy. It's time to build on that work by strategically investing in the projects that will allow us to compete and win on the national and global stage.

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Governor Patrick's plan for South Station calls for adding tracks to the station's existing 13.