



December 10, 2013

Boston Region Metropolitan
Planning Organization
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

Re: South Station Expansion and Layover
Facility project: Widett Circle

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club is writing in opposition to a recent amendment to the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This amendment concerns the possible construction of a layover facility located at Widett Circle in South Bay as an integral part of the planned expansion of South Station. The enlarged rail yard would hold and service commuter rail train sets between their runs and would be situated between the existing MBTA and Amtrak rail yard, and the City of Boston's Tow Lot.

After examining 28 possible sites for the proposed facility, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Environmental Notification Form for South Station issued early this year had reduced its options to three locations, also including Beacon Park Yard in Allston and Readville-Yard 2 at Boston's southernmost point. Of these, only Widett Circle is anywhere close to downtown and has evidently become MassDOT's most favored location.

While this site would significantly reduce the distance that trains must deadhead back and forth each way, sandwiching the yard between South Boston, the South End, Roxbury and Dorchester—and adjacent to the I-93 / I-90 interchange—means that the diesels will be showering yet more fumes and particulates up to 24 hours a day on residents who already suffer the worst air pollution of the entire metropolitan area. Selection of this site would also prevent a startup recycling business from establishing itself in the city and remove valuable industrial real estate from the tax rolls.

Widett Circle is surrounded on all sides by some of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the city. Given all of these factors as well as the semi-secretive manner in which this site was suddenly moved to the top choice, we must reiterate our strong opposition to locating an enlarged diesel maintenance facility in South Bay.

Sincerely,

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