



South Coast Bikeway Alliance

Swansea – Somerset – Fall River – Westport – Dartmouth – New Bedford
Fairhaven – Mattapoisett – Marion – Wareham

www.southcoastbikeway.com

c/o SRPEDD 88 Broadway, Taunton, MA, 02780

Date: March 14, 2025

Monica Tibbets-Nutt
Secretary of Transportation
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Place, Boston

Chair,
Southeastern Massachusetts
Metropolitan Planning Organization
SRPEDD
88 Broadway, Taunton

Re: Funding for Bike/Walk Projects

Dear Secretary Tibbits-Nutt

A dilemma is emerging for proponents of worthy projects that have been in planning for decades: With a deep political divide between Washington and Massachusetts, can good projects move forward? We are long-time bike-walk advocates for projects in the works for as long as 25 years. We are concerned that cost cutting underway now may be applied to our long-planned investments in the South Coast Bikeway. We request that your office do your utmost to maintain funding to Marion Pathway and other projects like it.

The health and quality-of-life benefits afforded by bike-walk projects are immeasurably large and apolitical. The HighLine in NYC is an example of an important alternative transportation project that delivered health, transportation and social benefits far beyond expectations. Rail Trails and similar projects in less developed areas are no less valuable and critically important to economic development. We hope the Transportation Department will expedite such projects on their merits and implementation ease. Planning for vehicles without attention to the connectivity for social and health infrastructure hurts families and communities.

Bike-walk projects deliver substantial benefits to their community because they address social, health and recreation. Even in areas where opposition has been strong, opponents become fans as soon as projects get built. Funding these projects is good for community wellbeing no matter where they are built, no matter differing political viewpoints.

Marion, Massachusetts, is a case in point. After 25 years of working through a government process, reorganizations and state budget downturns, bidding of a project to turn a railroad right of way into a public path is approaching. The proposed paved car-free path will directly connect affordable housing to recreation facilities and to an industrial park through a 2.5-mile area where roads are impractical. A few culverts, a new gravel base and pavement will make low-stress, healthful, recreational or commuter riding and between two towns a reality for so many people. With this route, the alternative 50 MPH 4 lane road can be avoided.

This project will build upon investments made by the Towns of Mattapoisett and Marion, connecting to a recently completed MassDOT project that has been recognized as an extraordinary regional destination. That project is seeing upwards of 10,000 uses each month. Extending the South Coast Bikeway to Marion will enhance tourism opportunities. Marion has done its part to fulfill the promise. We hope you will see it would be counterproductive to lose funding now.

Federal and state funding for active transportation projects already in the pipeline should be expedited, not cut as state and federal governments come together to reduce waste and inefficiency.

Sincerely,



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CC: David J. Mohler, Executive Director, Office of Transportation Planning
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Kelley Dooner, State Senator
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