



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

July 30, 2018

Stephanie Pollack
Secretary and Chief Executive Officer
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Luis Manuel Ramirez
General Manager
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4510
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Secretary Pollock and General Manager Ramirez:

We write to you today about the Sherman Street highway-rail grade crossing in North Cambridge. Starting on June 29, every commuter train and Pan Am Railway freight train on the Fitchburg Main Line has been sounding its horn as it approaches the crossing. This practice, which began with very little notice to the city and abutters, has had a significant impact on our constituents who live in residential areas near the crossing. The impact is especially severe early in the morning and late at night, when residents' sleep is repeatedly interrupted by horn blasts of 110 decibels or more.

We understand that safety improvements must be made for the crossing to be officially designated a quiet zone by the Federal Railway Administration. The City of Cambridge has initiated that process, filing its Notice of Intent on July 16, and anticipates it will have Supplemental Safety Measures (SSMs) in place within the next three months that will permit ending the use of the horns.

For our constituents, however, three more months of daily and nightly noise is a grim prospect. Therefore, we hope we can work together with you to expedite this process and also find short-term solutions that can bring some relief to our constituents. To this end, the Cambridge delegation would like to request an in-person meeting with you, Cambridge City Councilors and Cambridge transportation department staff. Please let us know some dates and times when you would be available.

Specifically, we would like to discuss the option of temporarily slowing the trains to 15 mph and stationing a flagger at the crossing, which would eliminate the need to sound the horns. We recognize this would cause some delays, but given the proximity of this crossing to the Porter Square Station, they

would be relatively small. Moreover, this would be for a relatively brief time, until the city can complete the SSMS, and could furthermore be limited to the early morning and late night hours. We feel this is an appropriate temporary step to mitigate the impact of this highly disruptive noise.

Second, we respectfully ask that MassDOT and the MBTA submit their comments (or formally indicate their intent not to comment) on the City's Notice of Intent as soon as possible. This will allow the City to move quickly to the next phase of the process.

Finally, our constituents have indicated that different train engineers appear to interpret the requirement to sound their horns differently with regard to volume and duration. We understand the need to comply with all federal requirements, but hope you can work with Keolis to give instructions to its engineers to sound their horns at a minimum volume and duration to satisfy those requirements while reducing the impact on the adjoining neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,



Jonathan Hecht
State Representative
29 Middlesex



Dave Rogers
State Representative
24th Middlesex



Patricia Jehlen
State Senator
Second Middlesex



Mike Connolly
State Representative
26th Middlesex



Marjorie Decker
State Representative
25th Middlesex



Sal DiDomenico
State Senator
Middlesex and Suffolk