

MBTA purchasing eighty new commuter rail bi-level coaches

The MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board awarded a \$278.5 million contract to Hyundai-Rotem for the procurement of eighty (80) new Commuter Rail Bi-Level Coaches, which will increase capacity by over 14,000 seats daily. A \$41 million contract for engineering and program management services for the project was also awarded to WSP USA Inc., in close cooperation with Keville Enterprises, Inc., and VP Engineering, Inc.

"As ridership on the Commuter Rail system continues to climb, our customers have made it very clear that additional capacity is necessary," said MBTA General Manager Steve Poftak. "This procurement method is the fastest and most efficient way to meet the growing demand and provide our riders with improved service."

Funded by the Commonwealth, the procurement of these eighty Hyundai-Rotem bi-level coaches that will replace single-levels will address an immediate need for vehicles and will provide a more efficient way to add capacity. These bi-levels also include upgrades and improvements like LED lighting and the integration of positive train control; are compatible with the current fleet and infrastructure; and include an ease of maintenance. As these bi-levels are a reproduction of the current bi-level fleet, additional benefits include a workforce familiarity with the design; minimal operating and maintenance training required; guaranteed compatibility with the existing fleet; and minimal design impacts.

The total cost of this vehicle procurement is \$278,589,000 with a total project budget, which includes professional

services, force account, project administration, and more, of \$345,186,459. The Notice to Proceed for the sole-source procurement of eighty coaches will be issued in October 2019 with the first of eighty anticipated to be delivered in September 2022 and the last anticipated in June 2024. In addition to these eighty coaches, the release of a Request for Proposals for additional bi-level coaches is anticipated for November 2019 with an award of procurement of up to 100 coaches, plus options, anticipated for November 2020. The first of those 100 coaches is anticipated to be delivered in July 2024 and the last in June 2027.

Recent studies have shown an increase in commuter rail ridership, which will be further impacted when South Coast Rail comes online and by multiple MassDOT highway projects that are scheduled in the near future. As part of the procurement and vehicle implementation, coach vehicles will be replaced in steps. The first step addresses the immediate need for new coaches, which is best accomplished through this sole-source contract with Hyundai-Rotem, expediting the replacement of the oldest, more unreliable of the aging fleet as well as supporting South Coast Rail's system expansion. The second step is a competitively bid procurement for up to 100 bi-level coaches, plus options.

While addressing current needs, this procurement does not preclude the MBTA from choosing a different commuter rail vehicle type in the future. The future of the MBTA's commuter rail system continues to be studied as part of Rail Vision, which identifies cost-effective strategies to transform the existing network that best supports improved mobility and economic competitiveness in Greater Boston. Rail Vision is currently exploring scenarios for how future commuter rail service could operate, including enhancement in vehicle technology. To learn more about the MBTA's Rail Vision, visit mbta.com/railvision.

New Bedford Election Commission reminds voters of polling places; includes changes to some wards

The New Bedford Board of Election Commissioners reminds the public that voters residing in Ward 1, Precinct D, will now vote at Vibra Hospital at 4499 Acushnet Avenue. This is directly across the street from the precinct's former polling location, Bedford Gardens.

Ward 1, Precinct D is located in the far North End of the city and includes the Sassaquin neighborhood, several streets in the area of the Casimir Pulaski Elementary School, and residents on parts of the far north end of Acushnet Avenue and its side streets. Its former polling location was Bedford Gardens on Acushnet Avenue.

A map of Ward 1 that indicates the location of Ward 1, Precinct D is attached and is available at <https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/city-council/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/council/2013/wardmaps/Ward-1.pdf>.

The City Preliminary Election will be held Tuesday, October 1, 2019.

Voters may cast their votes for Mayor, Councillor at-Large, and Ward Councillor in Ward 1 and Ward 4. As usual, polling locations will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The Election Commission reminds all voters of their polling places. A complete list of polling places in New Bedford is

available at
<https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/election-commission/voter-info/polling-locations/>.

Residents may also contact the Election Office at 508-979-1420 with any questions about their voting status or polling place. The Secretary of the Commonwealth's office also provides voters' polling locations based on address by visiting www.wheredoivoteMA.com.

Beacon Compassion a step closer to selling recreational marijuana in New Bedford

Beacon Compassion, already approved to sell medical marijuana in New Bedford, is hoping to move into the retail marijuana space. **Beacon Compassion is now one of four company's past the early stages of getting the green light to sell recreational marijuana in New Bedford.**

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell submitted a draft amendment to Beacon Compassion's existing host city agreement to the City Council:

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a draft First Amendment to the Host Community Agreement between the City of New Bedford and Beacon Compassion, Inc., that would permit Beacon to proceed with the State application process for the sale of adult-use marijuana at its proposed facility at 366 Hathaway Road.

HOST COMMUNITY AGREEMENT, First Amendment:

Communication-Amendment_Host_Community_Agr._-Beacon_Compassion

Absentee ballots now available for New Bedford's preliminary election

City of New Bedford Preliminary Election will be held on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, and the New Bedford Election Commission has announced that absentee ballots for this election are now available through the Election Commission Office at New Bedford City Hall.

Any registered voter unable to get to the polls on Election Day may vote by absentee ballot at the Election Commission Office during regular office hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., or may request that an absentee ballot application be mailed to their home address. Parents or family members can apply for an absentee ballot on behalf of their children attending out-of-city colleges and universities.

Absentee ballots may be requested up until 12 noon on Monday, September 30, 2019. Election Office open Saturday, September 28 for absentee voting.

In addition, to allow voters to cast an absentee ballot, the City of New Bedford Election Office will open on Saturday, September 28, 2019 from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

In the Preliminary Election on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, New Bedford voters may cast their vote for Mayor, Councillor-at-Large, and Ward Councillor in Ward 1 and Ward 4.

Any city resident who is uncertain about their voting status, designated polling location, has changed their address since the last election, or who wishes to request an absentee ballot, should contact the Election Commission Office at 508-979-1420.

DEA announces “360 Strategy” in the SouthCoast region of Massachusetts to address fentanyl, heroin, prescription drugs and violent crime

DEA New England Division Special Agent in Charge Brian D. Boyle announced today that the SouthCoast region of Massachusetts will be the second location in the Northeast to initiate a comprehensive Diversion Control, Law Enforcement and Prevention “360 Degree Strategy” to help cities dealing with the fentanyl, heroin, and prescription drug abuse epidemic, and the associated violent crime. Boyle announced this strategy to the public today, along with SouthCoast political and community leaders, local, state and federal law enforcement, and medical professionals, substance abuse prevention and treatment experts.

“We must continue to find new and innovative ways to address the growing abuse of fentanyl, heroin and prescription drugs, and the violence that stems from these illicit drug trades,”

Boyle said. "The 360 strategy brings many agencies together that have dealt with this problem separately, into a unifying, far-reaching and prolonged effort to go after the drug trafficking organizations but also to make the communities resilient to their return."

"The opioid epidemic is ravaging communities in Massachusetts, bringing with it drug addiction and a staggering number of overdose deaths," said United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling. "The investigation and prosecution of fentanyl and heroin suppliers is a key component of law enforcement's approach. But it leads to an inflection point: when we arrest a fentanyl supplier, we cut off his customers. It is at this moment that the DEA 360 strategy will prove most effective by introducing community partners, who are best-positioned to intervene and provide resources to drug customers, to make an impact. In the end, our goal is to save lives, and that necessitates a comprehensive, 360 degree approach."

The DEA 360 Strategy is comprised of a three-fold approach to fighting drug trafficking and stemming abuse:

- Enforcement actions targeting all levels of drug trafficking organizations and violent gangs, supplying drugs in our neighborhoods.
- Diversion Control by engaging drug manufacturers, wholesalers, practitioners and pharmacists to increase awareness of the prescription drug and related heroin problem, and to push for responsible prescribing and use of these medications.
- Community Outreach by partnering with medical professionals, governmental and community service organizations to proactively educate the public about the dangers of prescription drug misuse and heroin abuse, and to guide individuals to treatment services when needed.

"The community outreach aspect may be the most important and critical to its indelible success," Boyle said. "We have to

vigorously continue to work on the most effective ways to talk about these programs in ways we've never done before in order to stop abuse, addiction and to save lives."

The 360 Degree Strategy brings together many experts in substance abuse and prevention to address four key groups by engaging in dialogue, providing information and resources to educate young people about the consequences of drug abuse and trafficking:

- Parents/caregivers in the home
- Educators and the classroom
- After school organizations such as the boy and girl clubs and athletic associations
- The workplace

In the short term, the goal of the 360 strategy is to provide as much information as possible in many different forms to reach young people. Officials will work to form a "Community Alliance" that will comprise key leaders from law enforcement, prevention, treatment, the judicial system, education, business, government, civic organizations, faith communities, media, social services and others, to form the core of a long-term group that will cross disciplines to help carry the prevention and treatment messages to the local population during the critical post-operation timeframe.

In the future, DEA and its partners also plan to host multi-day summits to bring community leaders together to look for sustainable, impactful efforts to address drug misuse and abuse, addiction, trafficking and the violence that accompanies it. Other partners will include the U.S. Attorney's Office District of Massachusetts, Bristol County District Attorney's Office, New Bedford, Fall River, Fairhaven and Attleboro Police Departments, CADCA, Elks, Greater New Bedford Youth Alliance, Northstar Learning Centers, Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction, Power Forward, and many others.

“There is no community that is safe from the opioid epidemic—this is a threat to our Nation’s public health and safety,” Boyle said. “DEA’s 360 strategy will utilize every community resource possible to reach our young people so we can prevent that first time use and lifelong battle of addiction.”

Parents and children are encouraged to educate themselves about the dangers of drugs by visiting DEA’s interactive websites at <https://www.wakeup-southcoast.com/>, <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/southcoast/> and <https://www.justthinktwice.gov/southcoast/>.

Taunton Rep. O’Connell pushes to prohibit registered sex offenders from changing their names

Massachusetts State Representative Shaunna O’Connell (R-Taunton) filed legislation that would prohibit registered sex offenders from changing their names. The bill is co-sponsored by 15 other legislators and was referred to the Committee on House Rules on September 18.

According to Boston 25, “registered sex offenders are legally allowed to change their names in Massachusetts and the State Sex Offender Registry Board does not track how often this happens. It turns out, neither do probate courts or law enforcement.”

Here is the full text of the bill:

New Bedford parks will continue to close at dusk until first frost of the season

The City of New Bedford's parks and other open public spaces will close at dusk until the first frost of the season based on the recommendation of the City's Health Department.

Parks have closed at dusk daily since August 16 in response to the risk of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE); health officials have recommended that the closures continue until the first frost of the season, which in Greater New Bedford generally occurs in mid-October, according to the National Weather Service. Multiple positive tests of mosquitoes with EEE in New Bedford and surrounding municipalities have led the state's Department of Public Health to classify the risk level in Greater New Bedford as 'critical' for EEE.

Through October 18, park lights will be turned off at dusk (approximately 7:00 p.m., but gradually beginning earlier through October). Athletic leagues and other organizations utilizing the park should not continue their activities beyond dusk, due to the increased risk of EEE. Should first frost occur before October 18, the City will announce any changes to the dusk park closures.

The same precautionary measures are advised for EEE, West Nile Virus, and the Zika virus. These include the following:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours – While mosquitoes are out at all hours of the day, their peak biting times are from dusk to dawn. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning. Otherwise, take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing, especially if you work or spend a lot of time outdoors.

Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Although it may be difficult to do when it's hot, wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

Apply Insect Repellent when you go outdoors. Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to skin.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

Drain Standing Water – Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or getting rid of items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.

Install or Repair Screens – Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

Mayor Mitchell submits three recreational marijuana host city agreements to New Bedford City Council

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell is submitting host city agreements for three recreational marijuana businesses to the City Council this evening:

M1. COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a copy of a Host Community Agreement with Southcoast Apothecary, LLC; the company is currently seeking a license from the Marijuana Cannabis Control Commission to operate a recreational marijuana dispensary at 115 Coggeshall Street, under the agreement substantial benefits will be provided to the City and to the residents of New Bedford.

M1a. HOST COMMUNITY AGREEMENT, Southcoast Apothecary LLC to operate a recreational marijuana dispensary at 115 Coggeshall Street, New Bedford, MA 02746.

Communication-Host_Agreement-Southcoast_Apothecary__LLC

M2. COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a copy of a Host Community Agreement with Tree Beard, Inc.; the company is currently seeking a license from the Marijuana Cannabis Control Commission to operate a recreational marijuana dispensary at 1 Nauset Street, under the agreement substantial benefits will be provided to the City and to the residents of New Bedford.

M2a. HOST COMMUNITY AGREEMENT, Tree Beard, Inc. to operate a

recreational marijuana dispensary at 1 Nauset Street, New Bedford, MA 02746.

Communication-Host_Agreement-Tree_Beard__Inc.

M3. COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a copy of a Host Community Agreement with Metro Harvest, Inc.; the company is currently seeking a license from the Marijuana Cannabis Control Commission to operate a recreational marijuana dispensary at 606 Tarkiln Hill Road, under the agreement substantial benefits will be provided to the City and to the residents of New Bedford.

M3a. HOST COMMUNITY AGREEMENT, Metro Harvest, Inc., to operate a recreational marijuana dispensary at 606 Tarkiln Hill Road, New Bedford, MA 02745.

Communication-Host_Agreement-Metro_Harvest__Inc.

Public Health Commissioner mandates immediate reporting of vaping-related disease to the Department of Public Health

Any suspected cases of unexplained e-cigarette or vaping-associated pulmonary disease must be immediately reported to the Department of Public Health (DPH) for the next 12 months, as a result of a new mandate issued today by Massachusetts Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH.

As more cases of vaping-related pulmonary diseases are seen nationwide, Commissioner Bharel is using her authority under state regulations to require reporting of this emergent condition. Last month, DPH sent a clinical alert to 25,000 Massachusetts health care providers asking them to voluntarily report pulmonary-related disease associated with vaping.

"We are beginning to hear from clinicians about what they are seeing in their practice as a result of the health alert," Commissioner Bharel said. "Today's action establishes the legal framework for healthcare providers to report cases and suspected cases so that we can get a better sense of the overall burden of disease in Massachusetts. It also will allow us to provide case counts to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as they continue to try to understand the nationwide impact of vaping-related disease."

The DPH regulation authorizes the Commissioner to declare diseases or conditions immediately reportable to the Department, as well as to conduct related surveillance. DPH said it was issuing the new mandate "because this disease is recently identified or suspected to be a public health concern and because it is necessary to collect more information to assess and reduce the potential burden of associated morbidity."

While not rare, today's action is also not routine. The Commissioner last issued a mandate two years ago requiring providers to report cases of amnesia associated with intravenous drug use.

The new requirements were sent to all clinicians, including internal medicine, family practice, general practice, emergency medicine, and clinical care as well as pediatricians, pulmonologists, and nurse practitioners. It was accompanied by a clinical advisory that asks providers to report any case of a person experiencing otherwise unexplained progressive symptoms of shortness of breath, fatigue, chest

pain, cough, or weight loss, of any severity, and an abnormal chest imaging study associated with vaping. The suspected cases are to be reported via a form and sent to a confidential fax line.

Nationally, as of September 6, 2019, 450 possible cases of severe lung disease associated with electronic-cigarette product use or vaping were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Patients have presented with respiratory symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Symptoms worsened over a period of days or weeks before admission to the hospital. Other symptoms reported by some patients included fever, anorexia, pleuritic chest pain, nausea, and diarrhea.

All of those patients reported vaping in the weeks and months prior to hospital admission. Many have acknowledged recent use of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing products; however, no specific product has been identified in all cases, nor has any product been conclusively linked to this clinical syndrome. Some cases have reported using only nicotine-containing products.

DPH is actively investigating several suspected vaping-associated pulmonary cases. There have been no cases confirmed in Massachusetts.

The latest statewide data shows 41 percent of Massachusetts high school students have tried e-cigarettes at least once. About 20 percent of them reported using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days – a rate six times higher than adults. Nearly 10 percent of middle school students say they have tried e-cigarettes.

In 2018, Governor Charlie Baker signed a law that incorporates e-cigarettes into the definition of tobacco, therefore making it illegal to vape where it is illegal to smoke and that raised the minimum legal sale of tobacco products, including

e-cigarettes to 21.

In the past year, DPH has conducted two public information campaigns (see [here](#) and [here](#)) to raise awareness among middle and high-school-aged youth and their parents about the dangers of vapes and e-cigarettes. DPH will reprise both campaigns in the next few weeks and include resources for young people to assist them with quitting.

Brian Gomes to appear on New Bedford's Mayoral and at-Large ballots on Oct. 1

After missing the 5 pm deadline to withdraw for mayor on Tuesday, long-time New Bedford at-Large city councilor Brian Gomes will appear on both the mayoral and at-Large City Councilor ballot on October 1.

Gomes officially filed to run for mayor and at-Large and had until Tuesday at 5 pm to continue to run in both races or just one. It was clear at Tuesday's press conference that his intention was to withdraw from the mayor's race and only run in the at-Large race, but he didn't sign the withdrawal papers until a minute or two past the 5:00 pm deadline.

New Bedford Election Commissioner Manny DeBrito was on scene and stated that a notary of public was also needed and the deadline was missed. During the press conference, Gomes stated his intention was to continue the withdrawal through the elections office and Massachusetts Secretary of State, but that appears to have been denied. According to DeBrito, Gomes

will officially be listed on the ballot for mayor and at-large.

While candidates can run in multiple races, they can't legally serve in both positions. If Gomes wins both races he would have to choose which office to fill. DeBrito provides some clarity should Gomes with both races.

"If Gomes were to choose to serve as Councilor-at-Large, there would be a special election for the position of Mayor, stated DeBrito. "If he were to choose to serve as mayor, the vacancy in the Councilor-at-Large position would be filled by a majority vote of the remaining members of the City Council."

Six residents officially filed to run for Mayor of New Bedford by the August 30 deadline. Four-term incumbent Jon Mitchell, Michael Medeiros, Richard Tyson Moultrie, Jose Perez, and David Pimental will face-off with Gomes in the October 1 preliminary election. The top two vote-getters in the preliminary election will move on to the November 5 municipal election.