

South Coast Rail Announces Safety First Program

The following is a statement from Jean Fox, the Director of Community Engagement for South Coast Rail.

“The MBTA’s South Coast Rail (SCR) Phase 1 service between Boston and Southeastern Massachusetts will soon become a reality. MBTA passenger trains will begin service to and from stations in Middleborough, East Taunton, Freetown, Fall River, and New Bedford, with layovers in Fall River and New Bedford.

Safety First is an education program aimed at promoting safety throughout the railroad corridor and consisting of materials, meetings, and briefings. Presentations, brochures, videos, and conversations will emphasize Safety First for every age, occupation, and resident. For more information or to request a presentation, send us an email at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us with “Safety First” in the subject line. We’ll be reaching out to schools, libraries, organizations, and neighborhoods. In the meantime, watch our safety videos and our Safety Basics vignette, and please think Safety First.

The first rule of Safety First is always to stay clear of the Right-of-Way (ROW). It is very dangerous and illegal to trespass onto the railroad ROW: it is never safe to be near or around railroad tracks. Only cross tracks in designated locations and obey all warning signs and signals. We’ll be sharing these and other safety basics as we near testing and service. Our goal is to bring an understanding of safety rules to every Southeastern Massachusetts city and town.

We are excited to return passenger rail service to your communities for the first time in 60 years! With passenger trains soon to be operating on the ROW, it’s important to

remind everyone that safety is MBTA's top priority throughout the region. While SCR is eagerly awaited, staying safe around tracks and trains is essential. We don't want you, your family, friends, or pets to end up in a dangerous situation. Keeping the ROW clear for the trains will make your trip by rail safe and reliable, too.

Because the region has not seen passenger trains in decades, people have become comfortable using the ROW for recreation, such as dog walking, ATV and dirt bike riding, running, and taking shortcuts. Sheds, swimming pools, and encampments have been built on and near the tracks, which have also become a dumping grounds for trash and debris. Since 1959, the tracks in this area only saw freight trains a few times a day at relatively low speeds, only recently increasing to 25 mph in certain areas. In the coming months, MBTA test trains will begin operating more frequently at speeds up to 80 mph.

Stay tuned for more information on SCR safety: check the SCR project website and sign up for our email updates. Thank you for remembering to put Safety First."