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Central MA & MetroWest Legislators Comment on Upcoming I-90 Project

(BOSTON) – This week, Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) joined her legislative colleagues in the Central MA, MetroWest and Framingham/Worcester/Grand Junction Caucuses to submit a letter outlining comments on the National Environmental Policy Act Scoping Report for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project. The letter formally expressed the legislators concerns regarding the Project’s decade-long impact on commuters. With the significant existing congestion on the Mass Pike and with a 46% ridership increase between 2012-2018 on the Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail Line that is currently constrained by a lack of parking and capacity during peak service, the impact of lane closures and the potential for reduction to a single track would be detrimental. The legislators asked for actual mitigation commitments that can and will be acted upon to minimize the negative impacts to commuters, stressing that the effort to mitigate the transportation challenges of commuters must be done with equal commitment to the success of the overall project.

Representative Kane, in her role representing the Central MA caucus on the Allston Multimodal Project Task Force, drafted the letter that 44 of her colleagues signed onto, and it addressed 5 key areas of concern and requests, including:

1. Planning and Communication
 - A full, detailed mitigation plan that encompasses all efforts should be developed with input from and review by the delegation and key stakeholders as soon as possible.
 - Develop and implement a two-way communication channel with the Central MA and MetroWest delegation so that legislators are fully aware of project developments that impact their constituents.

- Accelerate the I-495/I-90 Interchange Project to reduce overlap with the Allston Multimodal Project in order to minimize the amount of time commuters are navigating massive construction projects and associated delays.
 - Ensure that there are not simultaneous reductions in lanes on the Mass Pike and a reduction to a single rail track.
2. Reduce Congestion/Travel Time
 - Identify and enhance Park-and-Ride service on the Mass Pike.
 - Provide bus and shuttle service on the Mass Pike.
 - Engage the business community to offer flexible scheduling and work at home options.
 - Incentivize public transportation and invest in real-time information sharing.
 - Engage in scenario planning to determine which main, secondary and side roads in communities off the Mass Pike will be most impacted by drivers using apps such as Waze when traffic is congested.
 - Accelerate programmed work and funding for raised platforms at train stations.
 3. Capacity to increase ridership on the Framingham/Worcester Line
 - A minimum of 9-coach, double stack sets on all peak trains.
 - Investigate feasibility of additional peak service.
 - Expand parking at commuter rail stations.
 4. Reliability of Service on Framingham/Worcester Line
 - Accelerate rolling stock and coach procurements and upgrades.
 - Store a secondary train set to call into service in cases when primary sets malfunction on the line.
 - Schedule for assessing and upgrading all signals and switches.
 5. Frequency
 - Fund and complete new center high platform at Union Station.
 - MBTA must work with municipalities to identify near-term solutions for at-grade crossings.
 - Release the detailed feasibility study of the 3rd track between Framingham and Newton and in MetroWest.

These comments are based in the legislators fundamental belief that the massive and complex I-90 Allston Multimodal Project cannot be successfully planned or constructed unless a strategic review and mitigation plan is adopted and implemented that prioritizes, plans, and funds mitigation efforts that significantly lessen the impact the Project will have for a decade on the thousands of daily commuters from the regions west of Boston. The letter was addressed to Jeffrey McEwen, Division Administrator at the Federal Highway Administration, and Michael O'Dowd, Acting Director of the Bridge Project Management for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

Construction for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project, which involves replacing the viaduct, straightening of I-90 in Allston, building of West Station and making improvements to multimodal transportation, and is anticipated to begin in late 2022. More information on the Project can be found at mass.gov.

Representative Hannah Kane represents the 11th Worcester District, comprised of the communities of Shrewsbury and Westborough, in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

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