

Attleboro rail route opposed

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Staff Writer

NORTON — From the signs on the wall to the passionate words spoken, the message was clear: The people of Norton do not want a train coming through their town.

South Coast Rail Project Manager Kristina Egan was in Norton Tuesday night to gather public input

on the proposal to extend commuter rail service through southeastern Massachusetts. More than 100 people packed into the Solomonese School gymnasium, which was adorned with several "MBTA go the other way" signs, to attend the two-hour meeting.

"Tonight marks a new beginning in our campaign to get the Attleboro line removed from, considera-

tion," said Heather Graf, coordinator of the grassroots group Citizens Concerned About Tracks.

The Attleboro Alternative would provide 50 miles of rail service from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River by building a 2.7 mile link between existing freight lines in Taunton and existing commuter rail lines

Unpopular commuter rail

From RAIL, A1

in Attleboro.

The Patrick Administration in April announced a timetable to bring rail service to Fall River and New Bedford by 2016. The three main options the Executive Office of Transportation is weighing are the Attleboro Alternative, the long-preferred Stoughton Alternative and the Middleboro/Lakeville Alternative. A fourth option would be constructing new mass transit infrastructure along

Routes 24 and 140. The Stoughton route would be the most direct, but it would run through the environmentally-sensitive Hockomock Swamp in Raynham. It would also present five at-grade crossings in Taunton, as opposed to 15 if the Attleboro Alternative is chosen.

Under previous administrations, the Stoughton Alternative was the selected plan, but the Army Corps of Engineers has requested that the Executive Office of Transportation take a fresh look

at all alternatives, basically starting back at square one. A \$17.2 million state bond bill has funded the study through fiscal 2010. Additional funding will need to be found to pay for the entire \$1.4 billion rail extension.

Egan said the final decision on a route won't

discussed

come until 2010. The commuter service could also include alternatives to trains, such as monorails and buses.

"Tonight is really the beginning of the conversation," she said.

A number of local elected officials spoke against the Attleboro Alternative,

including state Rep. Fred Barrows, R-Mansfield; state Rep. Steven D'Amico, D-Seekonk; state Rep. Elizabeth Poirier, R-North Attleboro; state Sen. James Timilty, D-Walpole; Attleboro Mayor Kevin Dumas and Norton Selectman Bob Kimball.

Todd Castro, executive assistant to Taunton Mayor Charles Crowley, read a letter from the mayor.

"The mayor and municipal council of Taunton have unanimously gone on record in support of the

Stoughton route," Castro said.

Norton resident M Sweeney was one of many who spoke against the Attleboro option.

"It's going to have to go over Chartley Pond and over [Route] 123," she said. "There's a slew of problems just from that 2.7 mile bypass."

Another round of community input forums is planned for March.

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