

NORTON

Attleboro rail plan opposed

■ Alternatives being studied include extending rail lines from Middleboro, Stoughton or Attleboro to link New Bedford and Fall River to Boston.

By Kevin Tocci
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NORTON — Residents and local officials took turns voicing their opposition to having a commuter rail service run through their region from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River.

Representatives from the Executive Office of Transportation and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. held a presentation before a large audience on Tuesday at the J.C. Solomonese School to outline various alternatives the state is exploring to build the South Coast Rail project.

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Selectmen Chairman Robert Kimball Jr. began the session telling the audience where the officials from the region stand on the Attleboro alternative.

"I just want everyone to know that the Board of Selectmen in Norton, Board of Selectmen in Mansfield, Mayor Dumas of Attleboro and Mayor Crowley of Taunton have taken a position where we will take whatever efforts necessary in order to curb the ridiculous idea of putting a train track through this area," Kimball said.

Kimball said the town is also opposed to the rail project going

through the area because of the quality of life problems it will create for residents who live closest to the train.

Todd Castro, an assistant to Taunton Mayor Charles Crowley, read a prepared statement outlining the city's stance on the rail issue.

"The mayor and municipal council in Taunton have unanimously gone on record in opposition to the Attleboro route due to the tremendous impact that the route would have," Castro said. "The trains would also have 15 at-grade crossings within the city limits."

Taunton Planning Board member Dan Dermody said the city openly endorses the Stoughton Alternative for the economic possibilities it holds for Taunton.

Attleboro resident Don Michaud said he sees the obvious advantages the Stoughton line offers compared to the other alternatives being considered.

"The Stoughton Alternative would be best because it would have the highest ridership going through all of those towns, it would have the lowest cost per new rider, result in the lowest loss of wetland areas and would cost less to complete," said Michaud.

According to Kristina Egan, the South Coast rail manager for EOT, the process is in the pre-environmental investigation stage. She said a decision

on where the train will run won't be made until 2010.

"That's when we'll decide the route as well the stations," Egan said.

Egan told the audience she understood some are frustrated that the state is starting over with the project. She said the information gathered at recent meetings has increased the number of possible alternatives.

"We had three alternatives initially and then we generated 60 through this meeting process," Egan said. "It's really only four main routes, but there are all sorts of different modes

meaning ways of transporting yourself."

Heather Graf, the coordinator of the regional coalition Citizens Concerned About Tracks, said she wasn't surprised by the additional alternatives.

"I think it's just too muddy the waters and distract people and take our fo-

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cus away from where it belongs," Graf said. "It's a colossal waste of time, money and energies that should be spent more productively if Gov. Patrick is indeed serious about the South Coast Rail project."

A Jan. 14 session scheduled in Easton was cancelled because of Monday's snowstorm. A rescheduled meeting is set for Jan. from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Southeastern Regional Vocational Tech School, 250 Foundry St., South Easton.